

# Laboratory Western Balkans - Vol. 1

Can Zeyrek (ed.)

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Can Zeyrek



## Foreword

In his book *The Third Wave* Samuel P. Huntington characterized the transition from authoritarian rule to a democratic system as the main phenomenon of the global political developments of the late twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> He described the difficulty to explain why, how and with what immediate consequences this third wave of democratization between 1974 and 1990 was set in motion.<sup>2</sup> Huntington made the analytical attempt to explain a specific type of regime transitions, which occurred within a limited period of time between the 1970s and the 1980s in South Europe, East and South-East Asia and Latin America as well as in Central and East Europe in the end of the twentieth century. His work provides a solid basis to distinguish the third wave regime transitions from the first and second wave transitions. The major difference in contrast to the first and second wave is that an authoritarian counter-wave does not seem to come in. Here, in the meantime, well-argued doubts have been expressed in authoritarianism research. Doubts may also be raised with a view to some of Yugoslavia's successor states. Here, tendencies of authoritarian (re-) stabilization are observed. This is especially true for the Western Balkans Region. Strictly speaking, one cannot speak of an authoritarian counter-wave but rather of persistence in or a reconstitution of autocratic order, with no previous path to democratization in any area ("Lost in Transition"). This makes the region particularly relevant for transformation and authoritarianism research on the *fourth* wave of democratization since the end of the 1980s. Hence, the Western Balkans is to be understood as a 'laboratory', where four processes are linked: Transformation after state collapse, external democracy promotion, manifest ethnic-nationalist and religious-fundamentalist conflict and tendencies of authoritarian (re-)stabilization.

This first volume of 'Laboratory Western Balkans' bases on the papers presented at the International Workshop on the 'Consolidation of Democracy in the Western Balkans' at the Yaşar University in Izmir/Turkey on March 2012. It is intended as a contribution to research on political regimes in the Western Balkans and concentrates on some aspects of transformation, democratization and conflict studies. The workshop offered a great opportunity to present and discuss new perspectives and findings in the respective areas. In this context, some of the research results are presented in this present work. Two further volumes are foreseen on 'Regime Hybridity' and 'Democratic Transition versus Stabilization of Autocratic Regimes'.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Huntington, Samuel P. (1991): *The Third Wave*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, xiii.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

The first article introduces the new concept of embedded transformation which aims at developing an innovative approach to transformation research. It describes major interdependent areas of conflict affecting the path to democratization. It serves as an empirical tool to trace the effects of state disintegration, foreign interference and the consequences of ethnic/religious conflict. Subsequently and resorting to Wolfgang Merkel's concept of *system change* the process of transformation in former Yugoslavia and the path to democratization in the post-socialist successor states are traced with a specific focus on the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this connection the political, social and economic context conditions are scrutinized in order to explain the causes of the collapse of the political system in the Yugoslav state. Siret Hürsoy analyzes the crisis management challenges and risks to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as one of the main external actors in the Western Balkans. In this context he examines NATO's Lisbon Summit Declaration of 2010 and its new strategic concept and the future role of the alliance. Nazif Mandacı focuses on the prospects of reconciliation in the Western Balkan region. Lastly, İnan Rüma's article investigates the significant role of external democracy promotion in Bosnia and Herzegovina and discusses the attempts of the 'international community' to weaken nationalist parties. Furthermore he points at the deep crisis of legitimacy in that country.

Can Zeyrek, Göttingen 2014

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