
THE BELERİ CASE AND BALKAN POLICY

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10.01.2024

Ekathimerini (8 January 2024)

Constantinos Filis

The situation in some parts of the Western Balkans(*) is volatile and problematic in the rest. Prospects of joining the European Union have faded and the fresh momentum stemming chiefly from Ukraine but also from Moldova in the shadow of the Moscow-Kiev war has stumbled on the unwillingness of certain member-states in the union to accelerate enlargement, as well as on the inability of national governments to carry out reforms bringing their countrys system up to EU standards. I remember being in Washington, DC, a year ago, and hearing the cry of despair from North Macedonias then-foreign minister, Nikola Dimitrov, concerning the grave consequences on the Western Balkans stability and democratization if their citizens began to lose faith in EU intentions for enlargement.

Greek policy has perforce entered a new cycle 20 years after the first EU-Western Balkans Summit took place in Thessaloniki, so it is essential that we formulate a comprehensive rather than piecemeal approach. Greece has serious unfinished business with Albania because of the case of Fredi Beleri (the jailed ethnic-Greek mayor-elect of Himare), while we are also stalling over the implementation of the terms agreed with North Macedonia, losing precious time, given that the upcoming elections in the neighboring country are likely to see the resurgence of the nationalist VMRO, which opposes the Prespes name deal with Greece.

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(*) AVİM considers the term "Western Balkans" to be a politically motivated separatist terminology and insists on the use of the geographical and historical identification "Balkans" regarding the region.

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