

Debate Pack

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By Stefano Fella,
Tim Robinson

14 March 2022

Maintaining peace and stability in the Balkans

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1 Maintaining peace and security in the Balkans

A Westminster Hall debate on Maintaining peace and stability in the Balkans is scheduled for Wednesday 16 March 2022, from 9.00am to 11.00am. The debate will be led by Wayne David MP.

1.1 Instability in the Balkans

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, concerns have been raised about the impact on stability in the Western Balkans.¹

The Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has spoken of the need to

support non-NATO countries that could be the next target of Putin's aggressions, like our friends in the Caucasus and the Western Balkans.²

The EU's high representative for foreign and security policy, Josep Borrell, has said that "[Russia is not going to stop in Ukraine](#)" expressing concerns for Moldova, Georgia, and the Western Balkans. He said there was a need to keep an eye on the Western Balkans "particularly Bosnia, which could face destabilisation by Russia".³

Russia has maintained close relations with Serbia, and the Bosnian Serb leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although Serbia is a candidate for EU membership, it has not aligned with EU sanctions against Russia. However, it did vote for a UN resolution condemning Russia's aggression in Ukraine.

Under the leadership of Milorad Dodik, the Bosnian Serbs have adopted an increasingly assertive separatist stance in recent years. This had led to [warnings that the peace accords that ended the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s could unravel](#).

An article in the NATO review has described the [Western Balkans as a particular target of Russian disinformation](#), with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia the most affected. It says frequent topics of disinformation operations include demonising the USA and NATO, presenting the EU "as weak and divided"; advertising "Russian military might and COVID-

¹ Euractiv, [War with Russia and what it means for the Western Balkans](#), 25 February 2022

² Atlantic Council, [UK foreign minister: Putin's invasion of Ukraine is a 'paradigm shift on the scale of 9/11'](#), 10 March 2022

³ The Independent, [After Ukraine, Europe wonders who's next Russian target](#), 10 March 2022

19 vaccine superiority”, and amplifying “threat perceptions, myths and ethnic tensions”.⁴

1.2

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Following the break of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, and the ethnic conflict that engulfed Bosnia and Herzegovina, a peace agreement was eventually reached in 1995. According to the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (otherwise known as the Dayton Agreement), signed in 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a single state, which consists of two political entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, principally comprising the Bosniak (Muslim)- and Croat-majority areas, and Republika Srpska (RS), principally comprising the Serb-majority area.

Bosnia and Herzegovina [applied for EU membership in February 2016](#). However, it has yet to be granted candidate status, as the EU has said it needs to undergo “deep reforms in the areas of democracy/functionality, the rule of law, fundamental rights and public administration reform”.⁵

Separatism in Republika Srpska

In recent years, the Bosnian Serbs in the Republika Srpska (RS) have adopted a more assertive separatist stance under the leadership of Milorad Dodik. Dodik is currently a member of the three-person collective presidency of BiH, and was previously the President of RS. Dodik has [voiced his ambition](#) to organise a referendum on RS independence, and railed against [various decisions](#) taken by the international High Representative for BiH. The Bosnian Serbs are boycotting key institutions of the state of BiH, and Dodik has announced RS will withdraw from the BiH armed forces.

There is increasing international concern that these developments could lead to a return to the ethnic conflict of the past. In a [report to the United Nations](#) published in November 2021, the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina wrote that BiH “is facing the greatest existential threat of the post-war period”. He said this not only endangered the peace and stability of the country and the region, but could also lead to the undoing of the Dayton Agreement.

After a meeting with the President of Serbia in January 2022 (see below), Dodik said RS representatives [would return to BiH state institutions](#), but that they would continue their work of transferring BiH state competences to RS. Later in January, he said the return to BiH state institutions would only occur if [references to genocide by RS entities](#) are prohibited. The boycott of BiH

⁴ Daniel Sunter, [Disinformation in the Western Balkans](#), NATO Review, 21 December 2020

⁵ European Commission, [European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations: Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), accessed 14 March 2022.

institutions had begun in July 2021 after the High Representative [outlawed denial of the Srebrenica massacre](#) of 1995.

Relations with Russia

Dodik has said he has support from Russia and China. Both Russia and China have [opposed the role of the High Representative](#) in BiH, and Russia has refused to endorse international statements expressing concern at Dodik's actions.

Dodik has said that if the EU were to impose sanctions, then RS would declare its independence. He has also said that RS would "[defend ourselves with our own forces](#)" and that if NATO intervened "we will ask our friends – who told us clearly and loudly they never abandon their friends – to help us".⁶

Dodik met with President Putin in Moscow in December 2021. According to Dodik, Putin reiterated his backing for "joint economic projects" in the RS including a new gas pipeline, further fuel deliveries and a planned solar plant. Dodik also said that Russia also has "[a series of objections about disregard for the Dayton peace agreement](#)".⁷

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February, Dodik said [BiH would not be joining EU sanctions against Russia](#). However, he said that he supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine, in the same way as he supported the territorial integrity of Serbia and BiH. Sanctions against Russia were supported by the two other members of the BiH collective presidency, but without the support of Dodik they could not be adopted. Nevertheless, BiH voted in favour of the [United Nations resolution condemning Russia's actions](#) in Ukraine and calling on it to withdraw on 2 March 2022.

International Reaction

The USA, UK and EU have reaffirmed their support for the territorial integrity of BiH. A [joint EU-US statement](#) in October 2021 expressed concern about the divisive rhetoric in the country. The USA, UK, EU, Germany, France and Italy also [condemned a decision by the RS parliament](#) in December 2021 to begin working on the withdrawal of RS from aspects of the BiH state apparatus, including its tax system, judiciary and army.

US sanctions against Dodik were expanded in January 2022. [The USA accused Dodik of undermining state institutions](#) and the territorial integrity of BiH, as well as corruption. Germany, other EU Member States [and the European Parliament have called for EU sanctions](#) against Dodik, but Dodik claims to have support from some EU leaders. [Hungary has opposed sanctions](#).

The EU-led force (EUFOR) [Operation Althea](#) is currently deployed in BiH, on the basis of a [UN Security Council mandate](#), to support BiH authorities in the

⁶ Euractiv, [Dodik: EU Commission will not sanction Republika Srpska](#), 15 October 2021

⁷ Bloomberg, [Putin Backs Bosnian Serbs Against 'Liberal' West, Dodik Says](#), 3 December 2021

maintenance of a safe and secure environment. Prior to February 2022, it consisted of around 600 military personnel. But at the end of February, it was announced that a further 500 personnel would be deployed in BiH “as a precautionary measure”. A EUFOR statement referred to the “deterioration of the security situation internationally” which had “the potential to spread instability to Bosnia and Herzegovina”, although the EUFOR assessment was that there was “currently no threat to the safe and secure environment that would require EUFOR's support”.⁸

1 Further reading

For further discussion of developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina see Commons Library Debate Pack [Stability and peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), 30 November 2021

1.3

Serbia

Russia and Serbia have maintained close relations since the 1990s. Russia opposed the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999, and President Putin [cited it in attempting to justify Russia's action against Ukraine](#).⁹

Russia [has allied with Serbia](#) in opposing Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence from Serbia, and blocking it from joining the United Nations. In November 2021, Serbia's President Aleksandar met President Putin in Sochi, confirming an [agreement on gas supply](#) viewed as advantageous for Serbia.

Serbia has not aligned itself with EU sanctions against Russia following the invasion of Ukraine. Serbia's President Vučić has however declared “support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine” and Serbia voted in favour of the [United Nations resolution condemning Russia's actions](#) in Ukraine and calling on it to withdraw on 2 March 2022. There have been public demonstrations both [in favour](#) and [against Russia's invasion](#) of Ukraine since it began in February 2022.

Some reports suggest that President Vučić has sought to distance Serbia from the separatist activities of Milorad Dodik in BiH. President Vučić has emphasised [the need to respect the Dayton Agreement](#) and the constitution of BiH.¹⁰ Vučić met with Dodik in January 2022 and called on him to return RS

⁸ European Union Force in BiH, [EUFOR Reserve Activation 2022](#), 24 February 2022

⁹ Politico, [Pandering to Putin comes back to bite Serbia's Vučić](#), 7 March 2022

¹⁰ Financial Times, [Bosnian Serb leader Dodik defiant over sanctions as tensions flare](#), 13 January 2022

to the work of the joint institutions in BiH. Vučić was nevertheless critical of the US sanctions against Dodik and of “political stakeholders” who are “jeopardising the stability of the entire region with untruths and insinuations, and are [trying to shift the blame on to the Serb people and RS](#)”.¹¹

1.4 Kosovo

The NATO intervention to end the Serbian crackdown on the ethnic Albanian separatists in Kosovo in 1999, was followed by a period of United Nations Administration with a NATO-led force keeping the peace. In 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared independence after the failure of negotiations on its final status.

Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo have remained high since. In 2018, there was discussion of land swaps between Serbia and Kosovo, as part of talks to normalise relations between the two. There was some encouragement from the USA and the EU for this deal, but it was [opposed by Germany and other EU Member States](#). There were fears that this would set a precedent for redrawing other territorial boundaries in the Western Balkans and lead to further instability in the region. There was also opposition in Kosovo and the plan did not come to fruition. However, [proposals to re-draw borders across the Balkans](#) were revived in 2021 causing consternation across Europe.

In February 2022, Kosovo’s President Vjosa Osmani accused Russia of [using Serbia to destabilise the Balkan region](#). In March 2022, Kosovo’s prime minister, Albin Kurti, said that he feared a longer war in Ukraine would increase chances of spillover in the Western Balkans “because it is in the [interest of the Russian Federation to have new battlegrounds](#).” Kurti added that “Putin still considers NATO intervention in Kosovo as the most important recent international single event” and that Putin “wants the state of Kosovo to fail in order to show that NATO success was temporary, just like in Iraq and Afghanistan”.¹² In a visit to the UK at the beginning of March 2022, Kurti stressed that Kosovo would like to join NATO as soon as possible. He referred to Russian influence over Serbia and suggested this might be used to provoke a proxy conflict in the Western Balkans.

Kurti also referred to developments in late 2021, when he said Serbia was “[ready to attack](#)” at the Northern border with Kosovo and Serbian troops at the border were inspected by Russia’s ambassador to Serbia. This related to a [dispute over number plates](#). Serbian protestors had blockaded the border after drivers of vehicles with Serbian licence plates had been told they had to replace them with temporary “RKS” Republic of Kosovo plates or turn round. The Kosovan government sent special forces in to keep the border open,

¹¹ Euractiv, [Vucic asks Dodik and Republika Srpska to participate in state institutions](#), 17 January 2022

¹² The Guardian, [Russia may pressure Serbia to undermine western Balkans, leaders warn](#), 11 March 2022

leading the Serbian government to in turn send military jets and tanks to the scene. Both Kosovo and Serbia were asked to cool tensions by the EU and US. Following an [EU-mediated deal](#), the two sides agreed to [allow NATO troops to guard the border crossings](#).

1.5 Montenegro

Montenegro [declared independence](#) from the post-Yugoslav state of Serbia and Montenegro following a referendum in 2006. It had previously been subject to NATO bombing during the 1999 Kosovan war.

Montenegro has a large Serbian population, which is traditionally sympathetic to Russia. Relations with Russia deteriorated when Montenegro joined sanctions against Russia in 2014 following its annexation of Crimea and involvement in hostilities in Eastern Ukraine. Montenegro joined NATO in 2017 and has applied to join the EU.

Russia condemned Montenegro's accession to NATO. It called Montenegro's membership of NATO "[damaging for the stability of the Balkans and Europe as a whole](#)". In 2016 Montenegro [accused Russia of sponsoring a failed coup attempt](#), allegedly designed to stop Montenegro from joining NATO.

In May 2019, a court in Montenegro sentenced a group of plotters, including two pro-Russian opposition politicians, and nine Serbs to custodial sentences of up to 15 years for staging an attempted coup. Two alleged Russian agents involved in the plot were tried in absentia.

1.6 The Western Balkans and EU membership

Albania, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey are all [candidate countries](#) to join the EU. These are all countries that have applied to join the EU, and with whom the EU has approved the beginning of accession negotiations. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are recognised as potential candidates, and have stabilisation and association agreements with the EU. Albania (2009), Montenegro (2017) and North Macedonia (2020) have already joined NATO.

Accessions were begun with Turkey in 2005, but they [made little progress before stalling completely](#) and seem unlikely to be revived in the near future. Accession negotiations with Montenegro and Serbia have been slow, and negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia have yet to start.

At the Western Balkans summit in October 2021, the European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, [emphasised that the future of the Western Balkans six](#) - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, North

Macedonia and Kosovo – was in the EU. But some Member States are reluctant to move forward with the accession of these Member States.¹³ In the case of Kosovo, some EU Member States - Slovakia, Romania, Greece, Cyprus and Spain – [do not recognise it as an independent state](#).

The process of accession would in any case be lengthy, given the need for applicant states to align themselves with EU law in all areas and [meet economic and political conditions](#).¹⁴

Commentators have warned that the reluctance of some EU leaders to move forward with EU accession for the Western Balkan countries [is fuelling instability in the region](#), and making some countries more prone to Russian influence.¹⁵

EU accession and sanctions

EU candidate countries are [expected to align themselves](#) with any sanctions adopted by the EU. The [European Parliament adopted a resolution on 1 March 2022](#) regretting that Serbia had not done so in relation to EU sanctions adopted against Russia. It said that this damaged Serbia's accession process to the EU. It reiterated its expectation that EU accession candidates align with EU legislation and also with the EU's common foreign and security policy.¹⁶

Montenegro, North Macedonia and Albania have been added to a [list of "enemy states"](#) by Russia (alongside the EU, UK, USA and other allies) for aligning themselves with sanctions against Russia.

¹³ Euractiv, [EU ministers narrowly find common ground on enlargement promises to Western Balkans](#), 14 December 2021

¹⁴ See also European Commission, [EU Enlargement package 2021](#), 19 October 2021

¹⁵ Centre for European Reform, [Reviving European policy towards the Western Balkans | Centre for European Reform](#), 15 December 2021

¹⁶ [European Parliament resolution of 1 March 2022 on the Russian aggression against Ukraine \(2022/2564\(RSP\)\)](#), 1 March 2022

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Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

[After Ukraine, Europe wonders who's next Russian target](#)

Independent
10 March 2022

[How the 'Kosovo precedent' shaped Putin's plan to invade Ukraine](#)

Balkan Insight
Dean B. Pineles
9 March 2022

[Serb volunteers answer call to fight in Ukraine](#)

Balkan Insight
Nermina Kuloglija and Azra Husaric
8 March 2022

[Russia adds Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia to 'Enemy' list](#)

Balkan Insight
Samir Kajosevic
7 March 2022

[Serbia's loyalty to Putin threatens renewed conflict in the heart of Europe](#)

Euractiv
Faton Tony Bislimi
3 March 2022

[Russian Ambassador to Serbia says OHR in BiH should be abolished](#)

N1
10 February 2022

[War with Russia and what it means for the Western Balkans](#)

Euractiv
Alice Taylor and Zeljko Trkanjec
25 February 2022

As Russia invades Ukraine, the EU must seek to protect the Western Balkans

Open Democracy
Ian Bancroft
27 February 2022

Ukraine invasion: Kosovo requests permanent US military base and Nato membership

i News
Benjamin Butterworth
27 February 2022

'Creating chaos': Russia fans flames in the Balkans to threaten EU and Nato

Independent
Borzou Daragahi
17 February 2022

Ukraine crisis 'very sensitive' for Russia-backed breakaway state

Al Jazeera
Amanda Coakley
11 February 2022

Secession threats and nationalist strife shock Bosnia as EU offers limited response

Politico
Una Hajdari
18 January 2022

Western Balkans and the EU in 2022: Resolution of problems or escalation of crises?

European Western Balkans (Centre for Contemporary Politics)
Sofija Popović
12 January 2022

What a new American base in Albania means for regional security

TRT World
Hamza Karcic
12 January 2022

How Bosnia became an easy target for the far right

RUSI
Harun Karčić
12 January 2022

EU 'regrets' Serbian PM participation in Bosnian Serb nationalist extravaganza

Euractiv

Georgi Gotev

11 January 2022

Russia is playing with fire in the Balkans

Foreign Affairs

Ivana Stradner

27 December 2021

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Press releases

PM call with President Vucic of Serbia: 4 March 2022

Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street

4 March 2022

Today the Prime Minister spoke to President Vucic of Serbia about the situation in Ukraine.

Both the Prime Minister and President Vucic reaffirmed their unwavering support for Ukraine's territorial integrity, and the Prime Minister praised Serbia's decision to condemn Putin's war in the historic United Nations General Assembly vote earlier this week.

The UK would continue to support Serbia's efforts to promote stability in the wider region, the Prime Minister added.

The leaders agreed to continue to work together on a range of issues, including across the energy sector.

President Vucic thanked the Prime Minister for the UK's leading role during this time of crisis.

Baroness Goldie looks forward to a safer and more prosperous future for Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans, December 2021

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

4 January 2022

It's a privilege to be here in Sarajevo and, may I say as the first UK Defence Minister to visit this country for a decade, it's a trip that has been long overdue.

It was also a great honour to represent the British Government at the Armed Forces Day commemoration earlier this morning, where we celebrated the formation of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina some 16 years ago.

It was fantastic to reflect on the inspirational way different communities came together to build a trusted and respected organisation, that remains a true partner to the UK to this day.

The key takeaway from the event was a profound sense of hope, because despite the conflict of the past, we came up with a powerful way forward... and that was partnership.

Partnership between separate communities and nations based on a shared commitment to a set of deeply held principles - tolerance, justice and a desire for stability.

So, in the aftermath of war we saw the UN, NATO and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe come together to ensure stability in the Western Balkans - in which the UK played a prominent part.

We saw the setting up of a Peace Implementation Council with UK personnel permanently stationed at NATO HQ in Sarajevo, and the NATO KFOR mission to support security in Kosovo.

Crucially, we saw partnership embodied in this impressive Peace Support Operations Training Centre which the UK opened back in 2003.

In the past 18 years it has proved a catalyst for cooperation. Not just by providing world-class peace support and humanitarian training and education, but also by bringing countries together - as evidenced by the presence of our friends from Serbia, Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

As I said to General Masovic [Ma-sho-vitch] this morning, the UK's commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina is ironclad.

That's why our militaries routinely train together, share expertise and enhance their collective capacity to defend our people.

We're also finding our cooperation is having a broader global impact. At a time when women and girls are finding themselves on the frontline of conflict, you are playing a major role in helping provide greater protection, whether hosting a Women, Peace and Security Conference in 2019 or encouraging more women to join your forces.

This positive action, along with our enduring partnerships, is going to be as important as ever in this new era of global competition and sub-threshold threats.

Indeed, as our Integrated Review set out earlier this year, the days of binary states of peace and war are long gone. Instead, we are faced with a growing array of threats designed to sow discord and confusion, whether it's cyber-attacks and disinformation campaigns, or the use of proxy forces and drone swarms.

Our review was also clear that partnerships of all kinds are going to be crucial to defending our way of life and securing our prosperity in the coming years.

So, while it would be easy to look at today's world with a sense of despair, anyone who comes to this centre will return with a renewed optimism.

Who of those who went through the trauma of conflict here would imagine that just a few years later lives would have been rebuilt, communities revived and the region as a whole flourishing?

And that they would have a single, united armed forces, prepared to defend its people from whatever threats come their way?

In an uncertain era, it is our strong partnerships that provide the greatest hope for a safer and more prosperous future for this country and this region.

4

PQs

European Security

08 Mar 2022 | 710 c187

Asked by: Stephen Doughty

I welcome what the Minister has said about co-ordination with the G7 on Ukraine, but does he agree that Putin seeks to create instability and insecurity elsewhere in Europe at the same time, including in the western Balkans, Moldova and the Caucasus. Can he tell us what he has been doing with G7 counterparts and our partners in the EU to address those attempts to create instability across the rest of Europe?

Answered by: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary met the Prime Ministers and representatives of the western Balkans just last week. The hon. Member is absolutely right that we must not allow the situation in Ukraine to have a destabilising effect on other parts of the continent or, as my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate and Knaresborough (Andrew Jones) said, other parts of the world. We will continue our close engagement with partners in the region and beyond to ensure that we deal with the situation in Ukraine and do not allow it to have a destabilising effect more broadly.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Politics and Government

15 Feb 2022 | 119483

Asked by: Andrew Percy

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the tensions between Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Answered by: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK supports Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) territorial integrity. Threats from within the Republika Srpska to withdraw from BiH State institutions are dangerous. We have called on those responsible to cease this destabilising and divisive rhetoric. We condemn Russian interference in the crisis, which undermines stability. The UK is committed to upholding the Dayton Peace Agreement. The UK, along with our Allies, is offering visible and practical support to BiH's territorial integrity, to maintain the Office of the High Representative, and the peace stabilisation mission (EUFOR). The Prime Minister's appointment of Sir Stuart Peach as Special Envoy to the Western Balkans, demonstrates the UK's ongoing commitment.

Trans-Dniestr

15 Feb 2022 | 119490

Asked by: Andrew Percy

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of tensions in the Republic of Moldova between the Moldovan government and Transnistrian separatists.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK supports a sustainable resolution of the Transnistrian conflict, with a special status for the Transnistrian region. Wendy Morton MP, former Minister for Europe and Americas, discussed Transnistria with Moldovan Prime Minister Gavrilita in London in November, and reaffirmed the UK's support for Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Our Ambassador to Moldova regularly discusses developments in meetings with Moldovan President Maia Sandu and in meetings with the de facto leader of Transnistria, most recently on 7 February. The UK continues to support the efforts of the OSCE 5+2 format, the high level working group of which meets regularly in order to discuss the conflict. We note the recent appointment of a Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration, enabling Chisinau and Tiraspol to each have a Chief Negotiator to discuss a range of issues directly.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: NATO

9 Feb 2022 | 117084

Asked by: Alicia Kearns

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress has been made on plans to increase the number of NATO staff in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Answered by: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK remains committed to ensuring peace and upholding international law in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). We support the NATO Headquarters in Sarajevo, including through the secondment of UK staff officers, who are building the capacity of the BiH Armed Forces. At the NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Riga in December, the Foreign Secretary took part in discussions about how best to support stability in BiH. We are in close contact with our NATO colleagues who are actively working to increase staffing in BiH. Through NATO, as well as our bilateral relationship, the UK will continue to support BiH in implementing domestic reforms and tackling challenges to peace and security.

Republika Srpska: Sanctions

03 Feb 2022 | HL5576

Asked by: Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with other states about the application of sanctions of political leaders in Republika Srpska, in light of the political unrest occurring there.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We welcome the announcement by the US of the imposition of a number of restrictive measures on individuals and an entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Sanctions are an important part of the UK toolkit for the Western Balkans, in response to corruption and destabilising activities. We are actively discussing this issue with partners, including the US. However, it would not be appropriate to speculate about future sanctions targets as to do so could reduce their impact.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Politics and Government

02 Feb 2022 | 111695

Asked by: Alex Sobel

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and what steps the Government is taking to help maintain peace in that country.

Answering member: Chris Heaton-Harris | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK takes seriously talk of secession and other threats to undo the progress of the last twenty-six years in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). These are clear challenges to the peace and stability envisaged by the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP). Those responsible must cease this destabilising and divisive rhetoric. As a member of the UN Security Council and Peace Implementation Council Steering Board, the UK is committed to upholding the GFAP in BiH. The UK coordinates with our partners to support BiH's territorial integrity and to maintain the peace stabilisation force (EUFOR) and the Office of the High Representative. We work closely with various multinational bodies such as the Council of Europe, NATO, the OSCE and UN to encourage the authorities in BiH to meet their obligations to those who elected them. On 13 December, the Foreign Secretary hosted Western Balkans Foreign Ministers at Lancaster House, and took forward discussions on how to support stability in BiH. Following this meeting, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to the Western Balkans, Sir Stuart Peach, visited BiH and reiterated the UK's enduring commitment to the country.

Balkans: Security

28 Jan 2022 | 111658

Asked by: Owen Thompson

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of the impact of any potential Russian invasion of Ukraine on security and political stability in the Balkan region.

Answered by: Chris Heaton-Harris | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are observing a concerning pattern of Russian behaviour that threatens the rules-based international system and aims to hamper the Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries of the Western Balkans and elsewhere. As set out in the Integrated Review, the UK takes the threat from the Russian State extremely seriously and we will continue to call out Russian aggression. The Prime Minister has appointed Sir Stuart Peach as Special Envoy to the Western Balkans. He has long experience in the region, as former UK Chief of the Defence Staff and Chair of NATO's military committee. Sir Stuart is undertaking extensive travel across the region and working closely with international partners to promote regional stability, security and reconciliation. In addition, we are using our diplomatic heft, and our Conflict, Stability and Security Fund programmes to strengthen regional stability, increase resilience against hostile state activity and cyber-attacks.

Trans-Dniestr: Politics and Government

28 Jan 2022 | 111657

Asked by: Thompson, Owen | Party: Scottish National Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to monitor the political and military situations in Transnistria with regards to a potential Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Answering member: Chris Heaton-Harris | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Our Embassy in Chisinau closely monitors political and military developments in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, including through regular dialogue with the Government of Moldova, the OSCE Mission to Moldova, and international partners. Members of the Embassy regularly visit the Transnistrian region in order to assess the situation at first hand and to discuss developments with a variety of contacts there, including the de facto leadership.

We have repeatedly made clear that any Russian incursion into Ukraine would be met with strength, including massive economic consequences through

coordinated sanctions by allies and partners targeting Russian financial transactions, assets, and individuals.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Politics and Government

25 Jan 2022 | 108463

Asked by Sir Mark Hendrick

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of recent events in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their geopolitical implications on the Western Balkans.

Answering member: Chris Heaton-Harris | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK supports Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) territorial integrity. Threats from within the Republika Srpska to withdraw from State institutions are dangerous, and amount to an attempt at de facto secession. We condemn Russian interference in the crisis, which undermines EU and NATO accession ambitions, sows division, and undermines stability. We work closely with partners in the Western Balkans (WB) region to strengthen stability, democracy and rule of law, and to tackle organised crime and corruption. The Foreign Secretary convened a meeting of WB Foreign Ministers in London on 13 December, to discuss strengthening economic and security ties and supporting freedom and stability in the region. The appointment by the Prime Minister of a Special Envoy to the Western Balkans, Sir Stuart Peach, clearly demonstrates the UK's ongoing commitment to the region's stability. The Special Envoy has already visited BiH and Albania.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Politics and Government

11 Jan 2022 | 99080

Asked by: Alicia Kearns

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the US Administration's decision to impose sanctions on Bosnian Serb leader, Milorad Dodik, for threatening the stability and integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Answering member: Chris Heaton-Harris | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Sanctions are an important part of the UK toolkit for the Western Balkans, for both corruption and destabilising activities. Experience has shown they work best when used in close coordination with our partners, and we are actively discussing with partners, including the US, how best to use these tools to target both the leaders of these moves, and those around them who help and facilitate. We keep all evidence and potential designations under close

review. We will consider targets, guided by the objectives of the relevant sanctions regime and the evidence. It would not be appropriate to speculate about future sanctions targets as to do so could reduce their impact.

Ukraine: Territorial Integrity

10 Jan 2022 | 706 c272

Asked by: Andrew Gwynne

[...]

The threats made to Ukraine are part of a wider pattern of behaviour by Russia, ranging from Belarus to the Balkans, to test NATO and the west. We also have to tackle Russian misinformation, as it is a huge tool in President Putin's arsenal and has been used to devastating effect against our allies. What steps are the Government considering taking to counter that huge problem, along with other grey zone attacks?

Answered by: Ben Wallace | Ministry of Defence

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The false narrative is that, somehow, NATO is surrounding Ukraine, when only one 16th of Russia's border is shared with a NATO member. It is also a false narrative to say that NATO, as some sort of single entity, looks to expansion. People seek to join NATO often as a result of other issues. The question for the Kremlin is why so many countries have sought that membership.

On what I am doing to counter that information, I think we all have a role to play. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has engaged the media, and I will

continue to do so as well. This House had an extremely good debate on the subject, and I listened to many Members' speeches. I urge anyone who has not read the debate, to read it. It is important to call out the false playbook. I also urge right hon. and hon. Members to read the article written by President Putin himself in July last year in which he exposes his real views towards the people of Ukraine.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Peace Negotiations

10 Jan 2022 | 98312

Asked by: Stephen Doughty

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the level of adherence by relevant parties to (a) the Dayton Peace Accords principles and (b) other agreements on peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Answering member: Chris Heaton-Harris | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK takes seriously talk of secession and other threats to undo the progress of the last twenty-six years in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). These are clear challenges to the peace and stability envisaged by the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP). Those responsible must cease this destabilising and divisive rhetoric. As a member of the UN Security Council and Peace Implementation Council Steering Board, the UK is committed to upholding the GFAP in BiH. The recent appointment of Sir Stuart Peach as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to the Western Balkans shows our strong commitment to the region. The UK works closely with our partners to support BiH's territorial integrity and to maintain the peace stabilisation force (EUFOR) and the Office of the High Representative. We work closely with various multinational bodies such as the Council of Europe, NATO, the OSCE and UN to encourage the authorities in BiH to meet their obligations to those who elected them. On 13 December, the Foreign Secretary hosted Western Balkans Foreign Ministers at Lancaster House, and took forward discussions on how to support stability in BiH.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: EU Accession

6 Jan 2022 | HL5010

Asked by: Earl of Dundee

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take, if any, to progress the candidacy of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards full European Union membership in 2022.

Answered by: Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Decisions on EU enlargement are for EU Member States to make. We will continue to support all countries of the Western Balkans in their sovereign choice to pursue Euro-Atlantic integration.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Politics and Government

6 Jan 2022 | HL5005

Asked by: Earl of Dundee

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their position on Dayton Accords (1) revisions, and (2) international actions, including negotiations with the Bosnian Serbs, in order to strengthen Bosnia and Herzegovina's central government.

Answered by: Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The importance of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), which brought an end to the 1990s conflicts, cannot be overstated. However, it was worded to enable local actors to make changes in the future. As Lord Ashdown said, "Dayton is the floor, not the ceiling". The United Kingdom remains committed to BiH's security, democracy and prosperity. The international community will offer support, but it is essential that the authorities in BiH themselves make reforms based on broad consensus and for the greater good of all citizens.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Peacekeeping Operations

22 Dec 2021 | HL5008

Asked by: The Earl of Dundee

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage the international community to invite Bosnia and Herzegovina's adjacent states to join NATO interventions, particularly (1) Croatia, and (2) Slovenia.

Answering member: Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK remains committed to ensuring peace and upholding international law in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Slovenia is a member of EUFOR, has personnel at NATO HQ in Sarajevo, and contributes to NATO's KFOR mission in Kosovo. Croatia also has military personnel in KFOR. In recent weeks, there have been a range of productive discussions on the Western Balkans in multilateral fora, including at the NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Riga, which the Foreign Secretary attended.

Balkans: Arms Trade

07 Dec 2021 | 86146

Asked by: Catherine West

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of Russian arms sales to (a) Republika Srpska and (b) Serbia on peace and stability in that region.

Answering member: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We reject recent attempts by Russia to undermine the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and to close his Office prematurely. These efforts undermine regional security. We will continue to provide effective support to BiH in implementing domestic reforms, and tackling challenges to

peace and stability. The UK's approach to Russia more widely is clearly set out in the Integrated Review.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Peace Negotiations

02 Dec 2021 | HL4193

Asked by: Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to impose sanctions on those undermining the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Answering member: Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Sanctions are an important potential element in the UK toolkit for the Western Balkans. A specific legal regime is in place that allows sanctions to be imposed on individuals to counter anti-Dayton activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Experience has shown that sanctions are most effective when used in conjunction with other partners, and we are in close touch with our allies. We keep all evidence and potential sanctions designations under close review. It would not be appropriate to speculate about future sanctions targets as to do so could reduce their impact. We will also continue to use the wider range of tools we have available, including support for the High Representative and his executive powers, our programming work to strengthen the rule of law, media environment, civil society and the democratic process, and our public and private diplomatic engagement. We take a comprehensive approach in BiH, aiming to tackle corruption and state capture as well as targeting those who undermine the integrity of the state.

5 Other Parliamentary material

5.1 Debates

[Russia's Grand Strategy](#)

6 January 2021 | House of Commons | 706 cc205-51

Motion that this House has considered Russia's grand strategy

[Bosnia-Herzegovina](#)

16 December 2021 | House of Lords | 817 cc520-44

Lords motion to take note of the importance of the constitutional integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and of upholding the Dayton Agreement

[Bosnia and Herzegovina: Stability and Peace](#)

2 December 2021 | House of Commons | 704 cc1083-123

Motion that this House notes the concerning political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina; expresses its support for institutions set out in the Dayton Peace Agreement, and the office and work of the High Representative, Mr Christian Schmidt; and supports continued efforts by the UK Government and its allies to ensure peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to uphold the provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement

6 Further reading

6.1 Library briefings

[Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Dayton agreement](#), Lords Library Note, 9 December 2021

[Stability and peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), Commons Library Debate Pack, 30 November 2021

6.2 Committee publications

[Promoting dialogue and preventing atrocities: the UK government approach](#)

International Development Committee inquiry

The aim of this inquiry is to consider the effectiveness of the UK Government's approach to atrocity prevention, including the Government's work in promoting dialogue and reconciliation between communities. This inquiry will use the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a case study, looking at the past and to the future.

[The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the FCDO's response](#), Foreign Affairs Committee, Oral evidence of 18 January 2022, HC 1034, 20 January 2022

6.3 Policy paper

[Meeting of Western Balkans Foreign Ministers, Lancaster House, 13 December 2021: Chair's conclusions](#), Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 14 December 2021

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