



BELGRADE
SECURITY
CONFERENCE



PATHWAYS TO **FREEDOM**

17-19 NOVEMBER 2025

SAVA CENTER

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THEMATIC AGENDA

implemented by



BCSP Belgrade Centre
for Security Policy

Day 1 Monday, 17 November

Opening Ceremony

Film dedicated to **Ksenija Atanasijević**,
Serbian philosopher and the first female professors at the University of Belgrade

Serbia's Moment of Truth: Can Justice Prevail?

Since late 2024, Serbia has been experiencing its deepest political and institutional crisis in over a decade. Triggered by a tragic event in Novi Sad and fuelled by mass protests against murderous corruption and impunity, the crisis has exposed a collapse of trust in institutions, the instrumentalisation of state repression by the ruling party, and the government's refusal to engage in a dialogue with the opposition and civil society. The protests, led by students and supported by wider civic initiatives, have raised demands for political change but face fierce repression.

The European Union has so far reacted with mixed signals – condemning violence but failing to exert decisive pressure. The possible scenarios for the period ahead range from prolonged status quo and authoritarian entrenchment, through EU-mediated compromise, to escalation, repression, or even early elections. Each scenario carries significant implications for Serbia's democratic future, the resilience of its society, and the credibility of its EU integration path.

This panel will explore what pathways could lead Serbia out of crisis and how democratic renewal might be achieved in practice. What are the realistic pathways for Serbia to move out of the current political deadlock? Can early elections or EU-mediated dialogue create space for democratic recovery? How can student-led and grassroots movements sustain momentum and translate street energy into sustainable political change? How should the EU respond to authoritarian drift in Serbia, and what role might Russia or other external actors play in shaping the outcome?

The Lighthouse Award 2025 Ceremony to be followed by a cocktail reception

Day 2 Tuesday, 18 November

Transatlantic Relations: Still a Pillar of International Order?

The transatlantic relationship faces a defining moment amid overlapping crises – wars in Europe and the Middle East, authoritarian assertiveness, and the weakening multi-lateral norms. Traditional pillars of cooperation – NATO, democratic governance, and an open international order – are under strain as U.S. and European priorities diverge.

With the Ukraine conflict dragging on, alliance cohesion is crucial for European security and global deterrence. Yet widening transatlantic and inter-European rifts over responses to Middle East violence, humanitarian protection, and international law highlight deeper challenges. Beyond these crises, great-power competition, climate insecurity, and democratic backsliding raise doubts about the alliance's ability to adapt to a multipolar world.

This panel will examine whether the transatlantic partnership can still act as a stabilising force. How resilient is its security architecture under sustained pressure? How do policy differences across the Atlantic affect the West's ability to uphold norms and manage crises? What role can the transatlantic partnership play in addressing global instability? What are the long-term consequences for global governance if cooperation between the West falters?

Indo-Pacific's Future, World's Fate: U.S.–China Competition and the Role of Regional Actors

The Indo-Pacific has become the central stage of 21st-century power politics, marked by intensifying U.S.–China rivalry, military build-up, economic decoupling, and fragile red lines – none more critical than Taiwan. The United States has reinforced its role through initiatives like AUKUS and the Quad, with Japan and Australia emerging as frontline security actors alongside Washington and its allies. Meanwhile, China continues to expand its influence through military presence in the South and East China Seas and economic projects such as the Belt and Road.

Japan has deepened defence cooperation with the U.S., South Korea, and the Philippines, positioning itself as a key actor in regional stability and a central pillar of the Quad. Europe is also seeking a stronger role through its Indo-Pacific strategy, promoting rule-based order, economic engagement, and conflict prevention, though questions remain about its effectiveness.

This panel will explore the risks of U.S.–China confrontation, the evolving role of Taiwan in global security, and the capacity of regional actors, as well as Australia and Europe, to shape outcomes. Can existing frameworks manage escalating tensions, or is a new security architecture needed? What are the key flashpoints, and how might economic interdependence and diplomacy help contain them?

Deconstructing Democracy: Back to Basics or Reinvention?

In recent years, the rise of authoritarianism has shifted from a regional concern to a systemic challenge to democratic norms, institutions, and alliances. Autocratic regimes – from Moscow to Beijing – have grown more assertive, wielding military aggression, disinformation, and economic coercion to expand their influence and discredit democratic models.

Yet the threat to democracy is not only external. Across the West, illiberal currents are advancing internally. Elected leaders in democratic states increasingly resort to authoritarian tactics: eroding judicial independence, capturing media, weakening civil society, and undermining trust in elections. Authoritarian practices are crossing borders and corroding democracies from the inside. Once seen as exceptions, these trends now stretch from Central Europe to North America, shaking the very foundations of the liberal democratic order.

This panel will explore how democracies are being tested – and how they are responding. In an era of geopolitical instability and democratic backsliding, key questions arise: What led to the crisis of democracy and what needs to be fixed? How can trust in democratic governance be restored? Is democratic order as such still possible or should it evolve into new forms? How can democracies defend themselves without succumbing to illiberalism? And what would it take to rebuild global democratic solidarity in a world increasingly defined by power politics and ideological rivalry?

Unarmed in the Unseen War: How to Counter Hybrid Threats in Europe?

Eastern and southeastern Europe today face mounting pressure from Russian hybrid warfare. Drone and missile incursions threaten critical infrastructure and civilian lives. Disinformation campaigns erode trust in institutions, polarise societies, and weaken democratic resilience. Electoral meddling demonstrates Russia's intent to shape political outcomes far beyond its borders. Together, these tactics contribute to an atmosphere where the region appears to stand on the brink of war.

This panel will examine how these threats intersect with Europe's internal vulnerabilities and divisions, highlighting the risks for neighbouring countries and for the continent's overall security architecture. It will explore the extent to which hybrid operations destabilise governments, undermine Euro-Atlantic integration, and fuel authoritarian tendencies. At the same time, it will address the urgent question of how European and transatlantic actors can mount a coordinated and credible response.

How are Russian drone and missile incursions reshaping security perceptions in Europe's east and the Balkans? In what ways do disinformation and electoral interference erode democratic resilience? How prepared are European states to counter the hybrid dimension of Russian aggression?

EU Enlargement at a Turning Point

The EU has reaffirmed that the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia are part of the European family, and 2025 was hailed as a symbolic year for a renewed wave of enlargement. Yet despite stronger rhetoric from Brussels, uncertainty persists. Candidate countries struggle to reconcile optimistic messages with slow progress, while public trust in the process continues to erode.

At the same time, internal EU dynamics cast a long shadow. The mantra of "no enlargement without reform," coupled with the growing influence of right-wing populists across member states, raises doubts about the Union's political will and capacity to deliver. Enlargement is again caught between geopolitical urgency and domestic hesitation.

This panel will debate whether enlargement can remain credible in the face of competing pressures. Can transitional models such as phased integration offer real solutions? How will the rise of populism within the EU shape the political space for enlargement? Can the EU accession process still assure genuine democratic improvement in candidate countries, and what is the interplay between geopolitics and democracy in shaping these outcomes? And what are the consequences for Europe's security and credibility if this momentum falters?

Day 3 Wednesday, 19 November

While the first two days of the Belgrade Security Conference will explore the critical challenges facing European and global security, Day 3 is designed to take these discussions even further, diving deeper into the key topics already introduced. Expect a day full of surprises, with complex issues explored in more detail, offering participants the opportunity to engage in rich, participatory discussions.

We are excited to reveal the following panels, which will tackle the most pressing questions from a variety of perspectives: *Lost in Geopolitics? Post-Yugoslav Views on Security, Sovereignty and the Future of Europe*; *Resetting Enlargement: A New Approach towards the Western Balkans*; *Peace Matrix: Sequencing Peace for European Security*.

The full agenda for 19 November is still being finalised and will include even more engaging sessions and discussions. Stay tuned for updates – the complete line-up will be published by 27 October.

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