INTEGRITY INITIATIVE
THE BALKANS: CORRUPTION AS A WEAPON OF WAR, THE VULNERABILITIES TO CORRUPTION AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

CONTEXT

Six Balkan countries[1] wishing to accede to EU. Russian hostility to proposal + traditional Soviet ties. Already severe fragility in region catalyzed by hard-line nationalist groups (all sides) and corruption (posing threat to European core values /undermining democracy), and exacerbated by poverty and high unemployment (esp. youth). NATO-related issues[2] (esp. with new accession possibilities) and interests in region of China, Turkey, Gulf States and V4

OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT
1. Awareness of policy / strategy trajectories of non-EU Balkan States, and alignment (or otherwise) and supportiveness to EU policy and strategy 2. Awareness of the vulnerability to corruption of non-EU Balkan States, and corrupt practice that undermines their democratic processes 3. Awareness of Russian (and other) malign influence and strategic thinking in / for the non-EU Balkan States 4. Awareness of Chinese, Turkish and V4 influence in non-EU Balkan States, and associated potential risks to be mitigated and opportunities that might be exploited	1. Understanding of the nature and extent of corruption and malign influence, and vulnerabilities to corruption and malign influence (particularly Russian) that have the potential to / are leading to the undermining of democracy and creation of fragility in the non-EU Balkan States 2. EU policy / strategy considerations in pursuing accession of non-EU Balkan States and the mitigation of risks to the process	Guidance to UK policy and strategy to support eliminating vulnerabilities to corruption in non-EU Balkan States, fighting corruption and mitigating Russian (and associated) malign influence

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[1] Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania
[2] Currently Albania is a full NATO member and Montenegro is a prospective member

APPROACH TO STUDY:

❖ Desk research
❖ Surveys and interviews (inc. donor organisations, media, think tanks, academia, EU, NGOs, other)
❖ Establishment of hubs
❖ Whole II Team integration

KEY ISSUES:

❖ Capture of political systems by powerful officials / elites in a number of states (e.g. Vucic, Serbian President)
❖ Suppression of media
❖ Renewed BBC Serbian broadcasts to counter Russian fake news *[noting e.g. More than 100 Serbian organizations promote friendly ties with Russia, according to a 2016* study *by the Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies, a Belgrade-based think tank. Among them are eight web portals, six Russian outlets and 16 local pro-Kremlin news sources, (Source: Valerie Hopkins, Politico, 30th March 2018)* https://www.politico.eu/article/balkans-bbc-britain-rejoins-battle-for-influence-russia-soft-power/*]*
❖ Kosovo a major problem: association of (mostly) Serb municipalities not formed, and Vucic wishing to annex (all or part) of the Serb area (also Serbia does not recognize Kosovo's independence) thus threatening stability of region
❖ 5 EU Countries, China, Russia and India don't recognize Kosovo
❖ Albania still looking to declare a Greater Albania, also having potential to threaten stability of region
❖ Anti-corruption efforts in the Balkans said to have stagnated, esp. between 2012-17, (source: Cornelia Abel, Balkan Insight, 21st February 2018, http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/watchdog-warns-captured-political-systems-haunt-the-balkans-02-21-2018)
❖ Major EU and NATO concerns (as well as HMG) re Russian influence in region
❖ China's (esp. BRI) influence
❖ Renewed interest in region of Turkey and Gulf States, and in Islamisation