



# A 'Perfect Storm' for NATO

**Peace with Women Fellows  
Exercise 2023**

Hosted by HFX and CCS

Monday, October 30, 2023  
9:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

## Scene Setter

In July 2027, intense weather and heavy rain led to an increase in flash floods, torrential rain, and hailstorms throughout the Balkans for two long weeks. The weather events caused widespread evacuations, transport disruptions from roads being swept away, and damage to critical infrastructure after many bridges collapsed across the region. In August, severe flooding damaged critical energy infrastructure, creating disruptive blackouts particularly in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Slovenia. The outages lasted for days, even weeks in some areas, making it difficult for affected populations to safely evacuate to short-term shelters that must now be accommodated for the long-term.

Though Balkans countries have previously aided each other in fighting natural disasters, the intense flooding of rivers has strained the ability of neighbors to help neighbors. Additionally, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, though bolstered in recent years, is overextended, as there is also high-intensity flooding in Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. Thus, the Civil Protection Mechanism has only had the capacity to dispatch limited aid to full member states in the region (Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, and Slovenia). NATO member states have sought assistance from NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), but those resources are also stretched thin across a continent underwater.

Discontent with the EU and NATO is rising among Balkans countries as each is left to fight flooding on its own. Some anti-EU and anti-NATO politicians in the region are particularly vocal about the limited support offered to the Balkans given the efforts from Balkans countries in previous natural disasters, such as the extreme flooding in Slovenia in 2023. The countries not experiencing flooding are only able to offer limited assistance (Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania). Slovenia is further limited because a 120-year flood—the third in 15 years—devastated parts of the country in May 2027 and rebuilding is an ongoing process, during which they have welcomed Chinese financing for new infrastructure.

Outside the Balkans, a spring heatwave on top of years of drought has caused an uptick in migrants from parts of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Earlier in the decade, most climate and conflict driven migration in the MENA region was internal, from rural areas to the cities. But in 2027, the drought is harsh enough that overwhelmed urban areas lack water and reasonably priced food, pushing greater numbers of people to seek refuge in the EU via the Balkans countries. There is growing concern that nativist political movements in some Balkans countries could seize on these developments to push forward an anti-immigrant agenda, as they did during the 2015 migrant crisis.

## Background

The Balkans consist of ten countries—Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia. Drought, heatwaves, and tropical storms present the greatest climate-related risks to the region and have the potential to devastate economies and livelihoods, especially those rooted in agriculture.



# Additional Reading

IMCCS:

**[Climate Security Snapshot: The Balkans](#)**

*Geopolitical Monitor:*

**[Balkans Heatwave Underscores Climate Security Risks in Europe](#)**

Floodlist:

**[Southeastern Europe – Floods Prompt Evacuations in Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania and Kosovo](#)**

*The New York Times:*

**[Floods, Fires and Torrential Rains Further Bedevil Europe](#)**

Associated Press:

**[Slovenia has suffered its worst-ever floods. Damage could top 500 million euros, its leader says](#)**

Wikipedia:

**[2023 European Heatwaves](#)**