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**EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES**



**INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL ON EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES**

## EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES

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VOLUME 13 NUMBER 1 (23) APRIL 2022

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# Letter from the Editor

As we enter the new publishing year this spring, change is still the dominant variable in the international relations, the main though not the only area of our research interest. It seems that *realpolitik* returned in its most brutal form. Or how one should name that 19<sup>th</sup> century war reminiscent Russian aggression on Ukraine? Discussing and explaining, not to say forecasting international affairs is an ongoingly demanding effort.

Once again, our respected authors produced an outstanding package of competitive and comprehensive contemplation, having in mind the region of the Western Balkans as their starting point. This future to be part of the EU never enjoyed much relaxed and easy-going political account, though. Hence, also its thought-over should reflect this reality.

*The first* paper unveils the not so much hidden influence the American First Ladies have had on their domestic and world affairs. Although this institution marks basically only the American political spectrum, it has influenced politics elsewhere as well as initiated a handful of discussions all around the globe. One would like to witness additional political influence of women politicians in the region. *Challenging*.

*Our second* discussion goes in the very medias res. The way of the Western Balkans towards the EU and the latter's approach should be changed, intensified as well as become result oriented. There is a strategic stalemate that makes no use neither for the region nor for the EU. Even more, third players are simultaneously intensifying their presence, influence and quasi attractiveness. *Straightforward*.

*The third* article discusses international development cooperation in the case of Croatia, having in mind new development actors. Therefore, the conceptualization of this means of foreign policy was significantly influenced and its understanding upgraded. It points out primarily two-way horizontal partnerships,

which is more in line with the approaches of new development actors of the Global South. *Thoroughly.*

*The fourth* examination focuses on legal aspects and consequences of political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, having set an eye on the agreement-by-agreement approach. Could this practice at the end of the day be understood as the way towards the result, which for one side is a no go and for the other side exactly the opposite? After more than a decade, no clear result is in sight. *Detailed.*

*The fifth* contribution observes another outstanding science fiction novel, that of Clifford Simak's *Way Station*. Its scenery spans through galaxies with a growing network of way stations, providing commuting across that vastness. One station is set on a remote location on a remote planet Earth. Its main promotor, an ageless former Civil War veteran ends up as a member of the galactic diplomacy. *Imaginary.*

*Our last* dwelling presents a rare case of a successful pacifism in the Western Balkans. The way years long dispute between the two neighbors along the Greek-Macedonian border was dealt with, resulted in the Prespa Agreement from 2018. Both countries expressed political maturity, sense for dialogue and possessed political leaders that were up to the task. *Realistic.*

Our first book review discusses geopolitics on general and in details, while the second one its aspects in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the English version is forthcoming). Additionally, there is no enough attention paid to the Western Balkans, as our current Guest View argues.

With the departure of the 2021, we left behind the second Slovene Presidency of the EU Council and our related slogan. However, since the dynamics of international relations and the outcryng breach of international law faced us with a new threat, our current slogan stems from the late 60s, with Ukraine as the 21<sup>st</sup> century Vietnam. See you in autumn.

Ljubljana, April 2022

M. J.

*War, what is it good for? Absolutely nothing!*

**guest view**

**ANETREC – ACADEMIC NETWORK SUPPORTING  
THE EU POLICY TOWARDS THE WESTERN  
BALKANS**

*Silvo Devetak*



# **Anetrec – Academic Network Supporting the EU Policy Towards the Western Balkans**

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**Silvo Devetak<sup>1</sup>**

The systematic integration of Western Balkans countries<sup>2</sup> into the EU is the most important if not the only tool for their social and economic progress and for improving stability and security of this region and Europe as a whole. Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia had as a part of ex-Yugoslavia a long tradition of cooperating with the European Community, since the adoption of the Declaration on the relations between SFR Yugoslavia and the EEC in 1967.<sup>3</sup> In the same time has been Albania an isolated authoritarian country. The Western Balkans region is today an island in the EU space encircled by EU members – Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Italy on the other side of Adriatic.

Unfortunately, the road of these countries towards European integration and system of values has proven to be more burdensome and lengthier than many had hoped a few years ago. The EU council has in 2003 declared in Thessaloniki the “unequivocal support to the European perspective of the western Balkan countries”. In addition, the Council announced, “the future of the Balkans is within the European union. The ongoing enlargement and the signing of the Treaty of Athens in April 2003 inspire and encourage the countries of the Western Balkans to follow the same successful path. Preparation for integration into European structures and ultimate membership into the European

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1 Dr. Silvo Devetak is Professor Emeritus, University of Maribor, Slovenia. President of the Institute for ethnic and regional studies – ISCOMET, director of European centre for ethnic, regional and sociological studies of the University of Maribor, and president of ISCOMET NGO with the participatory status with the Council of Europe. Coordinator of the ANETREC Network ([www.anetrec.eu](http://www.anetrec.eu)).

2 Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Northern Macedonia are the candidate states while Bosnia and Hercegovina and Kosovo the potential candidates. Some figures for the region: population 19,9 mio, surface 218,750 km<sup>2</sup>, total GDP 94,2 billion Euro.

3 In 1968, the Permanent Mission of the SFRY to the EEC has been opened. In 1980 was signed a Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and Yugoslavia. It contained provisions concerning trade, financial aid and cooperation in the areas of industry, science and technology, energy, agriculture, transport, the environment and tourism. By 1980 European Investment Bank granted two loans in total value of 50 million of ECUs to link the Yugoslav high-voltage electricity distribution network to the Greek and Italian grids and for the construction of part of the trans-Yugoslav road.

Union, through adoption of European standards, is now the big challenge ahead. Moving towards European Integration' represents a new important step in the privileged relationship between the EU and the Western Balkans. We will consider its content as our shared agenda, and we all commit to its implementation. The countries of the region will focus their efforts on meeting the recommendations this agenda refers to."<sup>4</sup>

Since then, has the EU adopted many "strategic" and "operational" documents, "progressive reports" and the similar in order to find a way forward.<sup>5</sup> Besides, interesting were the initiatives of Germany and France.

The Berlin Process is a German-led European initiative, whose goal is to facilitate regional cooperation between the Western Balkans six countries with a view to help them fulfil criteria to join the European Union. German Chancellor Angela Merkel launched this initiative in 2014. Its most important component is the so-called "Connectivity Agenda", which first aimed is to link the Western Balkan in the fields of transport and energy; it was later expanded into youth exchanges and economic connections.<sup>6</sup>

On 30 April 2019, the Office of President of France Emmanuel Macron published the "French Strategy for the Western Balkans." The strategy lists three measures: 1) French intensification of the relations with the region in general, 2) the strengthening of bilateral cooperation with the countries of the region in economy, security, justice and defence and 3) the intensification of exchanges with the countries of the region in terms of political-strategic dialogues concerning defence. The strategy put forward also challenges, as are unresolved disputes, various economic and social issues, difficulties in permanently establishing the rule of law, security issues and external influences that divert the region from its European vocation.

As to the EU Commission is maybe the most promising document its "new strategy" towards the Western Balkans adopted on 6th of February 2018 in which it resumed among other the responsibility to

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4 EU-Western Balkans Summit, Thessaloniki, 21 June 2003. 10229/03 (Presse 163)

5 In illustration: In 1999, the EU launched the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), a framework for relations between the EU and countries in the region, and the Stability Pact, a broader initiative involving all key international players. The Stability Pact was replaced by the Regional Cooperation Council in 2008. The 'European perspective' was reaffirmed in the Commission's February 2018 Western Balkans Strategy and in the declarations following successive EU-Western Balkans Summits.

6 The Berlin Process <https://berlinprocess.info>.

develop six initiatives aimed at supporting the reforms in the WB6 countries. The Annex to this instrument contains a timetable for the announced actions, including the supervision of their realization. Almost all actions had been allocated until 2019 when ended the mandate of the than incumbent Commission.<sup>7</sup>

However, after 28 years of “realising” the EU enlargement policy has the EU even retreated its support? In the declaration adopted at the EU-Western Balkans summit held in Brdo, Slovenia on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021 only “reaffirms its unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans and welcomes the commitment of the Western Balkans partners to the European perspective, which is in our mutual strategic interest and remains our shared strategic choice”. All other points of the declaration refer to the “obligations” of the Western Balkans countries.<sup>8</sup>

The Western Balkans countries have with the support of EU and other foreign factors<sup>9</sup> made significant efforts for ensuring peace, transition reforms and regional cooperation. Nevertheless, the region is still rifted with unresolved war crimes problems, with corruption, deficient judiciary, weakness in the rule of law, with the lack of cooperation, with suspicious political and media discourses, with opened border and other problems, with mistrust, animosities, hate speech, with cleavages and hatred between people (mostly on the ethnic and religious basis). Sadly, the younger generation is immigrating, mainly to EU member states, at alarming rates and these are likely to increase even further, thus seriously harming the potential for innovation progress of the region.<sup>10</sup>

The “supervision” of international community, has “limited” the sovereignty of Kosovo and Bosnia and Hercegovina. United Nations Resolution 1244 authorized the deployment of military forces, KFOR, to Kosovo and the establishment of a civilian administration, UNMIK. The Kosovo Force (KFOR) is a NATO-led international peacekeeping force in Kosovo. The purpose of the High Representative for Bosnia

7 European parliamentary research service, Western Balkans enlargement strategy 2018. <https://epthinktank.eu/2018/03/14/western-balkans-enlargement-strategy-2018/> Accessed on 19.12.2021.

8 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/52280/brdo-declaration-6-october-2021-en.pdf>

9 As to the investments and financing of the countries in the region see: The European investment bank in the Western Balkans. [https://www.eib.org/attachments/country/the\\_eib\\_in\\_the\\_western\\_balkans\\_en.pdf](https://www.eib.org/attachments/country/the_eib_in_the_western_balkans_en.pdf)

10 Retaining its most valuable resource? Western Balkan countries lose up to 2.46 billion eur annually due to youth emigration. WFD, London: August 31, 2021. <https://www.wfd.org/2021/08/31/retaining-its-most-valuable-resource-western-balkan-countries-lose-up-to-2-46-billion-eur-annually-due-to-youth-emigration/>. Accessed on 19.12.2021.

and Hercegovina together with the Office of the High Representative (OHR) established in 1995 is to oversee the civilian implementation of the Dayton agreement. They also serve to represent the countries involved in the implementation of the Dayton Agreement through the Peace Implementation Council (PIC).<sup>11</sup> The Principal Deputy High Representative (so far always American) serves as International Supervisor for Brčko, representing the international community in the Brčko District. Some authors had compared the position of High Representative to that of a viceroy, due to its vast powers over Bosnian politics and essential veto powers.<sup>12</sup>

Taking into account the above-mentioned circumstances, the ISCOMET Institute from Maribor, Slovenia, has prepared a proposal of the academic network, which program is supporting the EU policy towards Western Balkans with emphasis on regional cooperation based on reconciliation – ANETREC. The European Commission (Erasmus + programme) has entrusted a consortium of 8 universities and 2 research institutions from Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia, the execution of that 4-year project (2019-2023).<sup>13</sup> The project brought together more than 80 professors and researchers from previously mentioned countries. They work for the project with enthusiasm, as the modest funds of the project do not allow us to enumerate appropriate their cooperation. The ANETREC project is currently the only project, which combines in a common programme such high number of universities and individuals from Western Balkans, Slovenia and Croatia.

The main goal of the ANETREC project is the academic support to the process of implementation of EU policies towards Western Balkans with emphasis on regional cooperation based on reconciliation as a prerequisite for peace, stability and general development in the region.

There are five sets of main goals of the ANETREC project – some of them were already realised – as follows.

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11 The PIC comprises 55 countries and agencies that support the peace process in many different ways – by assisting it financially, providing troops for SFOR, or directly running operations in Bosnia and Hercegovina. There is also a fluctuating number of observers

12 Incumbent High Representative is since 1 August 2021 Christian Schmidt from Germany.

13 ISCOMET – Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies, Maribor (project leader and coordinator); Faculty of Law, University of Tirana; Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo; Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb; Faculty of Law, University of Prishtina; Faculty of Political Science, University of Montenegro; Faculty of Law, University St Kliment Ohridski Bitola; Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade; Institute for Social Sciences, Belgrade. In addition, associate members: Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Belgrade; Faculty of Philosophy, University of East Sarajevo; Faculty of Law, University of Maribor.

**Firstly**, the development of a common teaching program, which consists of six inter-linked subjects:

- 1) Different aspects of EU policies towards Western Balkans with emphasis on the specific nature of each of the countries,
- 2) Theoretical and practical aspects of reconciliation as a prerequisite for peace, stability and development of cooperation in the region,
- 3) The concept of multiculturalism in theory and practice of the Western Balkans,
- 4) Human rights and elimination of all forms of discrimination as the basis for a democratic management of relationships within societies of the Western Balkans,
- 5) The role of religion in developing tolerance, mutual respect and the reconciliation process in Western Balkans,
- 6) The problem of migrations in Western Balkans in the context of the EU relationship towards these problems.

To realize this curriculum, the ANETREC management recorded 82 lectures of 45 professors from all participating universities. These lectures will be held in the ANETREC data base hosted by the ISCOMET Institute in Maribor, and will be from the summer semester of the 2021/22 academic year onward available to use them for online lectures at the participating universities. The subjects will be held independently or as part of existing study programmes. Universities will also have the option to accredit the curriculum as a whole.

The ANETREC project partners do hope that the realisation of this program in the education will have a long-term positive impact on spreading the spirit of reconciliation, tolerance and cooperation among the countries of Western Balkans, Slovenia and Croatia.

Besides, after the ANETREC project ends, the study materials gathered represents a good basis for future development of different forms of common studies and research programmes in the Western Balkans. More than 80 especially young professors and researchers who were indirectly involved in the ANETREC project expressed their willingness to participate in the proposed or similar topics in both education and research. The EU should firmly support these common endeavours!

**Secondly**, as an encouragement for student research of different aspects of EU policies towards Western Balkans, the problems of these

countries in relationship with the EU and the relevant state of affairs in their societies, we carried out a public call to students to write essays on these questions.

A panel of professors from the ANETREC partner universities chose 42 of the best-evaluated essays, which will be published in a special ANETREC publication. The management of the project will invite the authors of the awarded essays to the ANETREC summer school that will be held in July 2022 in North Macedonia. This will be a unique gathering of students from all the Western Balkans countries, Slovenia and Croatia.

Under the guidance of professors, they will organize debates on the content of their essays and other topics regarding EU policy towards Western Balkans and “open issues” on their countries way along the European integration.

The lectures by 10 professors from the EU and Western Balkans will enlarge their knowledge about the mentioned topics and stimulate their personal views on issues that are of paramount importance for the process of European integration and development of their countries and the region as a whole. In this context will be interesting also the exchange of experiences with students from two EU members - Slovenia and Croatia.

**Thirdly**, in addition to development of study programmes, the ANETREC project also gives attention to two political questions:

- 1) In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we are preparing an analysis of segregation in the educational system with suggestions for gradual improvement of current state of affairs, which is deepening the ethnic and religious cracks in their society.
- 2) A team of professors from Prishtina and Beograd, alongside with other colleagues from the project, is preparing a possible academic program of common actions and cooperation between academics and students of both countries, in order to contribute to the creation of positive atmosphere for searching solutions for a gradual, long-term normalization of relationships between the two countries.

The results of both researches will be debated at the Summer School and on specially organized meetings as well.

**Fourth**, the long-term goal of the ANETREC project is to prepare a proposal to establish an EU reference centre for Western Balkans issues, which would offer the EU structure informational support in dealing with the Western Balkans issues and would serve as an educational, research and meeting centre for those dealing with the European integration challenges of this region. The success in realizing this proposal is of course dependant on the engagement of the government of the country that would wish to host such a reference centre.

**Fifth**, the concluding international conference, which will be held in Maribor in 2023, will be an opportunity to not only present and discuss the project's results but to offer a deeper evaluation of the EU policies towards the Western Balkans and to elaborate suggestions for searching solutions of existing problems.



**The Evolutionary Influence of the First Ladies in the Modern and Postmodern American History**

*Sanja Rokvić*

**The Thorny Road to the European Integration of the Western Balkans**

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**Characteristics of International Development Cooperation of New Development Actors:  
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# The Evolutionary Influence of the First Ladies in the Modern and Postmodern American History

Sanja Rokvič<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to accurately analyze the evolution and influence of First Ladies through American modern and postmodern history, from Eleanor Roosevelt to Melania Trump. These two periods had strongly marked the touch of feminine political activities. The influence of the First Lady as an institution grew immensely with the development of industrial and technological eras. The power and influence of the First Lady significantly increased at various times in history when they felt that they must step in and intervene in their husbands' political activities in difficult times. The First Ladies took the lead and responsibly solved their husbands' political agendas with great importance towards domestic and international issues that concerned the United States of America.

The age of digitization dictates First Ladies the need for a daily dose of populism in various structures of the social networks and direct communication with her and her husband's supporters. The symbiosis of emotional intelligence, calmness and elegance is the most important for the silhouette status she represents. In short, always and everywhere is necessary to reconcile given abilities with the protocols that become an integrated part of their lives.

**KEYWORDS:** United States, First Ladies, influence, role

## POVZETEK

Namen te raziskave je natančno analizirati evolucijo in vpliv prvih dam skozi ameriško moderno in postmoderno zgodovino od Eleanor Roosevelt do Melanie Trump. Ti dve obdobji sta močno zaznamovali ženski pridih v političnem udejstvovanju, na kar pa sta vplivala tudi industrijski in tehnološki razvoj. Povečal se je vpliv in moč prve dame, ki je v nekem trenutku posegla tudi v moževo politično delovanje ter se v težkih časih odgovorno spopadala z razmerami, ki so bile predvidene za reševanje njenemu možu. Prve dame so prevzele vodstvo in odgovorno reševanje politične agende svojih mož z velikim pomenom na področju domačih in mednarodnih vprašanj, ki zadevajo Združene države Amerike. Doba digitalizacije prvim damam narekuje dnevno dozo populizma v različnih strukturah družbenih omrežij ter vzpostavitev neposredne komunikacije z moževimi podporniki. Simbioza čustvene inteligence, umirjenosti in elegance, je izjemno pomembna za status silhete, ki jo predstavlja. Skratka, vedno in povsod je potrebno dane sposobnosti uskladiti s protokoli, ki postanejo sestavni del njihovega življenja.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** Združene države Amerike, prve dame, vpliv, vloga

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<sup>1</sup> ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Sanja Rokvič is a PhD student of International Diplomacy and European studies at Faculty of Government and European Studies, Slovenia. Email: srokvi@gmail.com.

## INTRODUCTION

The modern era in the American political history is the period after the World War II. Modernism as the political concept is defined by worshipping the newly created state that embodies the people and the nation, or it can be defined as the Hegelian idea of the state as a spiritual force that alone gives a meaning to an individual's life or in Hegel's words: "the Divine Idea as it exists on Earth" (D'Amato, 2015).

Modernism was characterized with a high industrial progress, the progress in science and the ideas after asserting the progress of all social structures in the system. The military industry grew rapidly.

Modernism in the institution of the First Lady however mainly referred to the struggle for the social equality (Aronowitz, 1988, pp. 99-115). Eleanor Roosevelt can definitely be singled out as a prominent representative of the modernism.

In politics and diplomacy, the end of the modern era is considered to be the end of the Cold War, i. e. it lasts until approximately 1991. The key representative of the Institution of the First Lady in the beginning of postmodern era is Hillary Clinton.

Both the modern and the postmodern eras mark the turning point of the reign of the First Ladies, as these two eras dictated many changes in the way the Institution operated.

The power of the First Lady as an independent institution in the White House has been greatly ignored and underestimated throughout history. Over the last hundred years, we have witnessed how far the tentacles of this institution can reach and what impact they can have on American and global society. The role of the First Lady as an institution and how it operates has changed through industrialization, technological progress, and digitalization.

The strategies of the First Ladies on how they would perform in front of the media and provide them with the information were very varied. Some organized tea parties for journalists; others invited journalists on a yacht sailing. Some organized and sponsored trips; others held press conferences and enjoyed being in the media spotlight; some would withdraw from the media life.

With the development of the industry, women began to secure a better position in society. They have become more educated and maintained more permanent jobs. Their mass involvement in the modern-day age and the ever-changing society provided turbulent changes. The role of the First Lady was no exception.

From a static iconic figure, a faithful companion, an implementer of her ideas to active political participation. The activities of the First Lady intensified through the development of the Institution of the First Lady and the general society itself.

Each of the First Ladies had their specific characteristics that shaped her in a unique form and became a role model to women over the globe. However, how the media decided to portray her uniqueness does not always depend entirely on her. A huge bearing has a group of her employees that shape her qualifications and interests into the Institutional needs. Each one of them chooses her strategy form of a public appearance.

There were several demands for different abilities of First Ladies that were increasing in time with the everchanging and demanding development of society, such as high communication skills, the ability to build relationships, clarifying certain unclear situations, speculations or scandals, the ability to calm down, inspire, invigorate, encourage, and express trust and confidence. The main thing expected as the main trait from the First Lady was her reasonableness, intelligence, the ability to find the communication contact, and path to attention.

When women gained their right to vote, Eleanor Roosevelt fought for human rights and was first First Lady that became a member of the UN. She published her articles in a daily newspaper and was a guest on radio shows several times. Hillary Clinton championed the agendas of her husband. During his tenure as president of the United States of America, she was more involved with his administration than her own. She rejected traditionalism within the institution and secured a senatorial position on the American political scene. Hillary fought and pushed strongly to establish new and meet traditional milestones for the First Lady as an institution. Laura Bush took reigns over her husband's agenda at the most difficult times in recent American history when America was experiencing the worst terrorist attack on its soil. She connected with the citizens, performed in public, and prayed with

them. Laura took it upon herself and decided to travel to Afghanistan, where she advocated and fought for women's rights. For her struggles, her fight for women's rights, and her activism, she was awarded the title of UN Ambassador.

Michelle Obama took advantage of media attention and acted in a populist manner. She wanted to get closer to voters, so she was a regular guest on television and connected to social networks where she communicated with Americans in a new and modern way. On the other hand, Melania Trump charmed every voter with her charm and elegance, no matter which political option they belonged. Melania did not receive classic attention from the mainstream media as they were at war with the agendas of her husband. Melania took great advantage of modern communication methods and communicated with voters of her husband through a social networking platform.

Today the administration office has become strength of the institution of the First Lady as a component as it has its staff and budget. The First Lady today is an institution that is always in the eye of the public. She is constantly being monitored by the media, the political establishment, and journalists as she has become the central figure of the presidency. The former traditional role of presidential women has made room for what many see as a partnership function with the presidency.

Every single one of the First Ladies throughout American history left her own mark on the functioning of her administration, moving barriers and milestones for the jurisdiction of her institution to her successor.

### **ELEANOR ROOSEVELT – WOMAN WHO SHAPED THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

Eleanor Roosevelt has marked her life since her childhood as she lost both of her parents at the very young age, being only 10 years old. Her grandmother took care of her upbringing and soon sent her to school in the United Kingdom. Eleanor marries distant cousin Franklin Delano Roosevelt. She developed into a woman with a great deal of empathy for the disadvantaged people of all social structures, genders, religions, races, and nations. Her constant work to improve the unjust situation of disadvantaged people, on one hand, marked her as most popular, and, on the other, as the most hated woman of her generation.

In 1905 Eleanor married her fifth cousin Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Her uncle Theodore Roosevelt accompanied her as a bride to the altar; at that time was the president of the United States. During the first eleven years of her marriage, Eleanor gave birth to six children, one of whom passed away in infancy. By the time Franklin began serving in the State Senate, Eleanor was building her career as a political aide. Eleanor diligently acquired in-depth knowledge of political activities in Washington during the time of her husband's service as an Assistant Secretary in the Navy. In 1921, her husband contracted poliomyelitis and placed her in the role of a devoted guardian. He was active in the woman's department of the National Democratic Committee and maintained interests in politics. From his successful campaign for governor in 1928 until his passing away, she dedicated her life to his purposes. Eleanor became his second violin, performing in public on his behalf, traveling the world and America, garnering the votes of potential voters (Loizeau, 2015).

She attended 348 press conferences during twelve years of her husband's presidency (1933-1945) which attracted more than a hundred journalists. However, after the outbreak of the Second World War, the number of press conferences decreased enormously due to security measures. All administrative matters from the Early The office were managed and handled by female journalists who organized an association for Mrs. Roosevelt's press conference. Due to the segregation the African American reporters did not receive accreditations as they did not represent any daily newspapers. The press conference project proved to be a success, as it provided details of the everyday life of the Roosevelts' which was very interesting to the public. They also published soft messages to female audiences; the approach taken intended to act as a counterbalance to serious war themes. The exclusion of male journalists from the press conferences encouraged press organizations to hire female journalists, thus stepping into the fight for gender equality in the journalistic profession (Beasley, 2020, p.34).

A couple of years later, some male journalists asked Mrs. Roosevelt some confronting questions about her assessment of administrative ability and critically pointed out the thesis of nepotism that she hired personal friends in well-paid positions. As far as the media is concerned, her efforts have gone far beyond her press conferences. In her daily column, "My day is a diary", Eleanor describes her daily activities in great detail. She first began writing her column at the

end of 1935. Her column was published by 62 newspapers, with a total circulation of more than 4 million readers. She has consistently appeared in newspapers with photographs of various trips, paid and unpaid lectures, as warnings of federal projects to help the unfortunate, advocating for human rights activists, and supporting World War II efforts by visiting American troops around the globe. In 1941, she began a popular column in *Ladies Home Journal* in which she was answering questions to female audiences. She also wrote an autobiography entitled "This Is My Story". She was a frequent guest on live radio broadcasts, where she established direct communication with the listeners.<sup>2</sup>

Eleanor often expressed herself in platitudes, probably because she often disagreed with Franklin in public and clung to the fiction that he had little influence in his administration. However, her words resonated among the average American citizen who responded to her sincere concern for people in need and her abilities to help.<sup>3</sup>

Eleanor was financially independent as she was earning her own money. From 1941-1944 her average wage was \$ 76,000 after a 50% tax deduction and 17% donation and payment of her agent fees; she did not have much left. Some of her opponents complained that she was commercializing her position. The wives of US presidents in postmodern time can make millions by writing books, but only after they leave the White House. In Roosevelt's case, this was not the case, as she continued to make money by writing, lecturing, and appearing on the radio and later television even after Franklin's expected passing on April 12, 1945 (Beasley, 2020, p.36).

In summary, Roosevelt proved to be her own press secretary and communications strategist. She drew her strength from the roles she built as a role model for women, and her husband's political partner in terms of involvement in the media through a variety of channels, including press conferences and personal contacts with women journalists. Eleanor recognized that the First Lady is a public figure and used her as an opportunity to advance both her political agenda and her career as a writer, lecturer, and media representative. She improved the appetite of journalists for news of the First Ladies during the presidency. Eleanor Roosevelt was appointed to delegate the United

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2 First Ladies. First Lady Biography: Eleanor Roosevelt. National First Ladies' Library. Available at: <http://www.firstladies.org/biographies/firstladies.aspx?biography=33> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

3 *ibid.*

Nations General Assembly in 1946 by President Truman. Eleanor was the first chair of the Human Rights Commission where she played a key role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In times of growing tensions between the east and west, she used her prestige and the credibility of superpowers to steer the text preparation process towards its successful conclusion (Adami Routledge, 2018).

Eleanor Roosevelt liked to say, “A woman is like a tea bag. You never know how strong it is until it’s in a hot water.” (Weishan, 2018).

Eleanor Roosevelt as a respectable zealous human rights activist certainly overtook her time and amassed quite a few enemies in America. However, her work and efforts in this area bore fruit. Thanks to her hard work and dedication to her cause, as well as the whole team she worked with, the most of international community is committed to respecting human rights.

#### **ELIZABETH TRUMAN – HIDDEN FROM THE PUBLIC EYE**

As a senator’s wife, before her husband was elected the president, Bess Truman was able to keep her private life away from the public. She took over the function of the first lady from Eleanor after the death of President Roosevelt and served the United States from 1945 to 1953. She did not like to be in the center of media attention, and she interrupted her daily meetings with journalists, which started hosting while Eleanor’s’ mandate.

Bess Truman appreciated a quiet life. She has repeatedly stressed that she was not elected president but her husband and that the public spotlight should be directed to him. Mrs. Truman told the media that they should contact her in writing for all possible questions, which she will also answer in a letter. Together with her daughter, she moved from the White House several times to her second home in Independence Missouri where her daughter Margaret attended school.

She was also involved in the renovation of the White House, showing a great deal of interest in returning Korean veterans, and raised funds for the research in the fight against cancer (Beasley, 2020, pp.36-37).

Far from the public eye, Bess was seen as a valuable member of her husband’s administration, as he described her as a “chief advisor” and “full partner in all transactions, politically and otherwise” (ibid.).

But Mrs. Truman also had her opponents, one of whom was republican congresswoman Clare Booth Luce, a member of the American social elite, who described her as unrefined. Since 1939 when Eleanor Roosevelt resigned from the Daughters of the American Revolution because the organization supported segregation and did not allow black musicians to perform in their concert hall, this organization did not have the First Lady as a member, up until Bess Truman accepted DAR's invitation to a tea party. A black congressman Adam Clayton Powell calls her "the last lady" afterwards. Because of these words, President Truman forbids Powell to enter the White House until further notice. Bess responds to these allegations with a letter to the New York Times in which she explains that she opposes racial prejudice but did not want to sever ties with DAR. Regardless of her withdrawal from the public eye, Bess was a respected First Lady by most Americans.<sup>4</sup>

She did not accept the role of her predecessor but rather updated the average American from the late '40s and early '50s. Bess accepted the role of a mother and a wife, she had a passion for playing bridge, and occasionally in the White House she guested friends from Independence Missouri. In short, Bess performed her duties as president's hostess and worked persistently on goals such as the renovation of the White House, but she had deep and long-standing reservations about her public role. Outside of the public eye, she served as her husband's political entourage and advisor (ibid.).

Her famous quote was: "A woman's place in public is to sit beside her husband, be silent, and be sure her hat is on straight." (Van der Heuvel, 1982).

Bess Truman was a reported kind First Lady who performed her function on her terms and to the best of her abilities and desires, which also testifies how strong her will and determination were.

## **MAMIE EISENHOWER – MAMIE PINK**

Mary Geneva, as Mamie Eisenhower was officially called, took over a function as the First Lady in 1953 and enjoyed that term until 1961. Unlike her predecessor Bess Truman, Mamie enjoyed being the center of the media attention.

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<sup>4</sup> Miller Center. Bess Truman. Available at: <https://millercenter.org/president/truman/essays/truman-1945-firstlady> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

She often dressed in pink dresses, even her bedroom in the White House was also in pink. On numerous occasions, the newspapers chose her as the best-dressed public figure.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in her time, she also became a fashion icon. During her tenure, most of her attention was devoted to supporting her husband and all ceremonial duties.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of her expected duties, she found enough time to dedicate to certain charities. Thus in 1956, she launched a fundraising campaign for the American Heart Association and later gave her support to create benefits for retirees, military personnel, and widows. Mamie also contributed to the fight against segregation through symbolic actions as she invited African-American children to the Easter scroll at the White House, and accepted honorary membership in the National Council of Black Women (Beasley, 2020, pp.37-38).

Mamie supported her husband in good and bad, and one of the great challenges was the health problems both of them faced. Her husband suffered a heart attack in 1955, had abdominal surgery in 1956, and had a stroke in 1957. Mamie on the other hand was facing heart disease caused by a rheumatic case from childhood and also suffered an injury to her inner ear called Menier's disease, which affected her balance. Occasional scrutiny of the First Lady stumbling and losing balance, pointed out by the media, fueled ugly and baseless rumors that she has trouble drinking. (Caroli, 2010).

Mamie used to say: "Every woman over fifty should stay in bed until noon.." <sup>7</sup> She surely had a sense of humor.

In short, Mamie was extremely popular with the crowd and was accepted by important people. She successfully performed her duties as First Lady. She was known for her friendly parties and warm receptions, White House officials reported that she closely monitored them and always pointed out any mistakes. She did not like to speak at the press conferences, she rather listed upcoming events. Although she did not change the way the institution of the First Lady worked,

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5 Mamie Eisenhower is instantly recognized by her hairstyle which was arranged in "bangs". The fashion of the day had changed to shorter, informal hairstyles which had led to a decline in the wearing of hats. The term "bangs" was a name applied to the short, curled fringe that sits high on the forehead.

6 White House History. The Eisenhower's Bedroom. Available at: <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/photos/the-eisenhowers-bedroom> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

7 National First Ladies Library. Quote Quiz. Available at: [http://www.firstladies.org/quote\\_quiz.aspx](http://www.firstladies.org/quote_quiz.aspx) (Accessed 4 February 2022).

Mamie Eisenhower was very popular with many American women who imitated her youthful style known as “Mamie Style”.

### **JACQUELINE KENNEDY- THE SAD STAR RADIATING THE HOLLYWOOD FAME**

In addition to the most beloved First Lady, she was rightly called the saddest First Lady. Maybe that is just a part of what the media called the Kennedy’s Curse. Jackie met her future husband John F. Kennedy at a celebration sponsored by a mutual friend, a journalist by the name Charles Bartlett. Later that year John F. Kennedy became a senator and their relationship became quite intense. Although he proposed to her very quickly, Jackie did not immediately agree to his marriage proposal. Later on, she said “Yes”, and they engaged in the spring of 1953, shortly after they got married in September the same year.

Soon after the marriage, their problems began. At first, John was ill and suffered from Addison’s disease, which led to two spinal surgeries, and suffering followed in terms of posterity. Jackie had her first miscarriage a year later, in 1955, and then she gave birth to a stillborn child. Later on, when they talked about the girl they lost, Jackie sentimentally called her Arabella. They had their first child, daughter Caroline in 1957, and in 1960, they became parents of a boy named John F. Kennedy Jr. Despite the difficulties in her life and the splendor that was visible only at first glance, Jackie was already considered a fashion icon of her time and was very helpful when it came to the career of her husband, she was very elegant, educated, enlightened... However, this was not helpful for the happiness in their marriage. John was unfaithful and cheated on Jackie, this became known several decades afterward. It is well documented that she knew about all of John’s affairs. Jackie knew who his mistresses were, where and when he met them, she did not suffer too much because of it as long as she wasn’t experiencing public shame. John’s biggest affair and the one that she despised and feared the most of all was, of course, the one with Marilyn Monroe (Anthony, 2013, Jones, 2001, Quirk, 1996).

The controversial lifestyle chosen by the president has led to greater involvement of the First Lady in the media. Jackie shone with Hollywood fame; she organized her public relations administration, had her press secretary, and was very focused on exposing herself on television as much as possible, which was considered modern at the time. Some might even think she was competing with Marilyn for the

media and Mr. Kennedy's attention. Jackie Kennedy was the first to appoint a press secretary and establish press policy in the modern age of television. By the 1960s, the importance of image-making in politics increased in value as television focused on visual images and celebrities. Mrs. Kennedy seemed perfectly suited to the TV era, but her physical attractiveness and youth worked against her once the media realized it could profit from relentless public demand. The press hounded Jackie from the moment she married John F. Kennedy until the last day of her life when she was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. Kennedy's relationship with the press could rightly be called an oxymoron: she was "privately public" in all things concerning her role as the First Lady (Natalle 2020, pp. 43-44).

Before her term as the First Lady was over, Kennedy became the most photographed woman in the world and the paparazzi followed her everywhere she went.

As a good mother Jackie tried to shield the amount of public exposure her children received, so she made sure that all photographs or stories about her children leaving the White House had to meet with her approval first.

The role of the First Lady morphed into a movie star and Kennedy's picture along with bogus stories and rumors on the front page of the tabloids right alongside the real Hollywood stars. Unfortunately, the media devoted most of its content promoting her to the popular imagination rather than creating any kind of substantive political profile while she served as the First Lady. As the First Lady of the United States, she was constantly in the public eye and became known for her superior taste and impeccable style that is still admired today (Natalle, 2020, p. 60).

Mrs. Kennedy was known by these words: "We should all do something to right the wrongs that we see and not just complain about them."<sup>8</sup>

As it is written at JFK's Library "Jacqueline Kennedy captivated the nation and the rest of the world with her intelligence, beauty, and grace. With a deep sense of devotion to her family and country, she dedicated herself to raising her children and to making the world a better place through art, literature, and a respect for history and public service."

<sup>8</sup> JFK Library. Role of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Available at: <https://www.jfklibrary.org/about-us/about-the-jfk-library/history/role-of-jacqueline-kennedy-onassis> (Accessed 4 February 2022).

## **CLAUDIA ALTA JOHNSON – LADY BIRD JOHNSON, ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST**

When Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson<sup>9</sup> came to the presidency on November 22, 1963, after tragic circumstances as John F. Kennedy was shot and assassinated. Mrs. Johnson said that it was most appalling circumstances the way she came to the position of the First Lady, one for which she was not prepared to take on.

She was very active First Lady. Early on, she began to educate herself about presidential politics, as the wife of the Vice President; she often replaced J. Kennedy in her duties. And when L.B. Johnson became First Lady, invaluable experience worked in her favor (Eksterowicz, Watson, 2006).

Her marriage was strenuous due to her husband's dominant nature and illegitimate love relationships, but they managed to establish a professional partnership based on mutual political respect.

L. B. Johnson often advised her husband on speeches, appointments, and campaigns, serving as his trusted political adviser. She was very interested in illiteracy, poverty and civil rights, as well as the aesthetics of the White House and its surroundings. She had her own public relations representative as she was aware that good media relations are essential to the success of her efforts (Andersen Brower, 2016).

The highly professional relationship between the Johnson couple has contributed to the advancement of the First Lady and to the greater professionalization of the Office. Although L.B. Johnson can be attributed a patronizing position, traces of independence and autonomy can be observed in her work (ibid.).

When she was asked by the reporters, how she views her position in the White House, she repeatedly said, it would be shown by actions, not words. And cartoons showed the results. Johnson made very successful use of her abilities and revived renewed and updated the First Lady's' activist model, created by Eleanor Roosevelt. Johnson has been an active advocate for her projects, increasing the scope of the First Lady's work, engaging in legislative content if needed, and always

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<sup>9</sup> Lady Bird Johnson was born as Claudia Alta Taylor in Karnack, Texas. As a child a family nurse declared that Claudia was as "pretty as a ladybird". The nickname stuck.

using the media, accompanied by her spokeswoman, who advised her which news would have a ripple effect (Smith, Carlin, 2000, p.67).

At the Annual Convention of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association on October 1, 1965, Lady Bird Johnson said: "Where flowers bloom, so does hope- and hope is the precious, indispensable ingredient without which the war on poverty can never be won".

She quickly realized the effectiveness of the support she gave to her husband. In addition to her qualities, which she radiated, in the campaign, she helped to get her husband elected, and redefined the role of the First Lady.

### **PAT NIXON – STRENGTH OF A TENDER HEART**

Originally known as Thelma Catherine, but commonly known as Pat Nixon met her husband during her students' years. After two years of courtship, they get married. During the Second World War she volunteered at the Red Cross, and later on in her political activities as the Second and the First Lady she encouraged volunteering around the country. She advocated for gender equality, human rights, and she also knew how to stand among the protesters, who protested against the war in Vietnam. Mrs. Nixon traveled extensively with her husband during the second lady's tenure, and was called as "ambassador" by President Eisenhower (Hobgood, 2000, pp. 93-109).

Pat was a direct, holistic-hearted woman who made contact with people without an intermediary. She was an extremely warm hearted, dull woman, so hugs, handshakes, words of encouragement, and personally signed letters to the wounded in battle and warm words were not foreign matter to her. She took the time to listen to student protesters and attended on campus rallies carrying food and clothes to the hungry and homeless (ibid.).

She was in the position of the First Lady from 1969 to 1974; she resigned two years after the water gates affair broke out.

Pat Nixon first learned about the criminal actions that came to be cumulatively known as the Watergate scandal and soon come to engulf the Administration only from the media. She and her daughter had been specifically left uninformed by the President and

his advisors of the details of their actions and decisions as they were in the midst of it all. When the First Lady first comprehended the potential damage that the secret tape recordings made by the President could create, she offered the unsolicited advice that he should destroy them while they were still legally considered private property - advice he did not follow. While she fully believed her husband was innocent and telling the truth to the American people, she became deeply disturbed by how isolated he became within a small circle of advisors.<sup>10</sup>

“Even when people don’t know how to speak your language, they can tell you if you have love in your heart.” this message is inscribed on her tombstone.

### **BETTY FORD – RISING AWARENESS OF THE HEALTH CARE ISSUES**

Betty Ford, born Elisabeth, would have never imagined that one day she will become the first Lady of the United States. Already being elected to the Second Lady was very surprising to her, and she was beginning to get used to the new position. The ungrateful “Watergate” affair happened and put her in this position.

Betty first enjoyed the role of a dancer, then a wife, mother of four, and last but not least, a companion of a successful politician who came into presidential shoes. Betty served at the First Lady Institution from 1974 to 1977.

A couple of months after entering the White House, she is diagnosed with breast cancer and undergoes a successful mastectomy. After this event, she raises women’s awareness and teaches them the importance of early detection. She also works in other areas as a strong advocate for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), and she was a leader of the Women’s Eight Movement. She defended the right to abortion, so she gained fame as one of the most outspoken First Ladies in American history, commenting on every topical issue of the time, from feminism, equal pay, the equal rights amendment, sex, drugs, abortion, and gun control. She has also raised a high-level o of awareness about addiction (Gutin, 2020, pp.115-116).

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<sup>10</sup> Miller Center. Thelma Nixon. Available at: <https://millercenter.org/president/nixon/essays/nixon-1969-firstlady> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

Ford and her staff were very successful in the communication with the press and media largely because of her candor. The way Ford shared its cancer state operation and recovery, its support for the Equal Rights Amendment, and an open approach to many controversial issues on television earned the respect of the media. In addition, the media protected the First Lady by not reporting on some of the developments they observed about her health and her behavior. Betty Ford's retirement was not something that she expected. Perhaps her extensive experience with the national press has made it easier to accept a title published in the Washington Post on April 22, 1978: "Betty Ford says she is addicted to alcohol" (Gutin, 2002, p.124).

The story told readers that the former First Lady had a double addiction to alcohol and prescription drugs. She entered Long Beach Rehabilitation Hospital and showed up a few weeks later clean and sober. Four years later, in 1982, this institution bore her name. She knew how to answer questions and provide the background that journalists had to tell. She was not afraid to share opinions, and unlike some of her predecessors and successors, she has seen in the media allies, not adversaries. This was quite important as the media told the story of a woman who became famous for a historical disaster and her revelations about her breast cancer and later her work with addiction. Admired and respected remains one of the most respected first ladies in American history (ibid.).

One of her quotes was: "I believe the equal rights amendment is a necessity of life for all citizens. The cabinet sometimes felt that I shouldn't be so outspoken."

### **ROSALYNN CARTER – THE RISE OF THE STEEL MANGOLIA**

Rosalynn Carter served as the First Lady of the United States from 1977 to 1981 as the wife of President Jimmy Carter. In her essence, there is a synthesis of gentle femininity and unusual firmness for which she was known and described in many articles as "the Steel Magnolia".

After the Water Gate scandal, the American public was disgusted by anyone who had a connection with the White House. The scandal caused a very unwelcomed reputation for the representatives of her public relations team. The press secretary of the First Lady also had a very demanding task ahead of her; she needed to return the trust of the public. Both the public relations team and the press secretary were

assigned with a task to create a positive image of the First Lady that will help alleviate mistrust and give new hope to the American public in the First Lady as an institution, in which they succeeded (Davis, Simon et. al., 2020, pp.143-144).

At the beginning of her service as the First Lady, Rosalynn was an equal partner with her husband in areas of her private and professional life. She participated in internal and international political affairs and visited seven of the Caribbean and Latin American countries, where she met with their leaders to discuss substantive matters related to defense and trade. Although she was well prepared, and despite the reports that she performed well, critics questioned whether she should have assumed such a prominent role knowingly that Rosalynn was not elected in that position (Davis, Simon et al., 2020, p.131).

After her critics questioned her role, Rosalynn decided not to participate in such trips any longer connected with a political agenda. Although she traveled to various parts of the world, these trips were only for ceremonial occasions and humanitarian missions.

Rosalynn mainly focused her efforts on improving the quality of mental health care and promoting other projects that would benefit others. Her mission as a First Lady finished in 1981 when her husband lost the election to President Reagan.

One of her inspirational quote's states: "You have to have confidence in your ability, and then be tough enough to follow through." Rosalynn possessed these qualities as the First Lady of the United States.

### **NANCY REAGAN – THE BOSS'S WIFE**

Nancy Reagan was originally a Broadway actress, and this is one of the reasons she has had many difficulties adjusting to the expectations of the White House and the operation of the institution of the First Lady and the protocols connected with it. Unlike her predecessors, Nancy was never in touch with the life of Washington DC (Bentley, Mack, 2020, pp.153-155).

She held the position from 1981-to 1989. In her first term, press portrayed her and described as an egocentric, shallow, self-centered spendthrift. In the second term, she made a controversial decision

to bring an astrologer to the White House during her husband's hospitalization and offered him a place to live. She wanted to make this astrologer a personal advisor to her husband and hers. Of course, after the president came back to the White House, the astrologer had to move out. During this period, she had numerous fights with his husbands' personnel (Bentley, Mack, 2020, pp.163-166).

She supported the Foster Grandparent Program and was very concentrated on the fight against drug and alcohol abuse among young people. She visited many prevention and rehabilitation centers and held an international conference for the First Ladies of 17 countries on this topic (ibid.).

In the last years of the presidency, the Reagan couple worked together out of necessity. The president resented her for lobbying against him in the slaughterhouse. She warned him that counselors were working against him, but he didn't listen to her. In 1986 a major scandal erupted in which the media reported that America was selling weapons to Iran in exchange for the release of hostages. The report claimed that part of the proceeds gained from weapon sales to Iran was used in funding the Ultras group that fought against the Nicaraguan government. The president made several statements to the media, which later proved inaccurate. The First Lady was well convinced that his staff is hiding vital information from the president and blamed the head of the cabinet for the affair that happened. The First Lady's response in public was not to make any public statements about the scandal because she didn't want to cause harm to her husband even more (Bentley, Mack, 2020, pp. 164-166).

As Bentley and Mack wrote Nancy Reagan was, indeed, "the boss's wife" in every sense. "Despite some missteps along the way, her relations with the media always led back to that core. Ironically, the former actress chose not to create a special role as the First Lady, but, rather, to play herself in a supporting role. She played that role her way and took it with her into history." (Bentley, Mack, 2020, p.168).

One of her most inspiring quotes was: "There's a big, wonderful world out there for you. It belongs to you. It's exciting and stimulating and rewarding. Don't cheat yourselves out of this promise."

## BARBARA BUSH – SUPER GRANNY PROMOTING LITERACY

Barbara Bush was a representative of the traditional patriarchal pre-feminist era and accompanied her husband from the beginning of his political career and remained with him until his death. She lived by the principle “in good and in bad”. Barbara said that she never had any regrets about her decision to drop out of higher education, however, later on, in the seventh decade of her life; she admitted that if she was born in a different time, she could have become an executive director. Her main message was to be aware of her essence, to live life to the fullest, and to feel good about it (Marton, 2010, pp. 174-306).

She was the mother of six children. One of her daughters suffered from leukemia and died at the young age of three years old. Before she took on the role as the First Lady, she already had experience as the wife of a congressman, a diplomat, and as the wife of the Vice President of America. She spends eight years in the role of the Second Lady, which solidifies her name on the American political scene. When her son Neil was diagnosed with dyslexia, she became active in all matters connected to American literacy. She started working with various literacy organizations, and she spent a great deal of time researching the factors that contribute to illiteracy. She has traveled throughout America and the world, either with the president on business trips or alone.<sup>11</sup>

In 1984 she wrote a children’s book *C. Fred’s Story*, in which she tells the story of the adventures of a cocker spaniel family named C. Fred. She donated the entire proceeds of the book to literacy charities (Johnson, 2018). By the year 1985, she felt free to talk in public, where she often used her sense of humor for which she was known. Mrs. Bush selected Anna Perez as her press secretary. At the time of her selection, this was a historic move as Anna Perez was the first African-American lady to be chosen to be in this position.<sup>12</sup>

In 1988 she supported her husband for the third time in the presidential campaign. Barbara was a speaker at the convention of the national party that nominated her husband for the presidency. During her speech, Barbara promised voters she would remain a traditional First Lady,

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11 First Ladies. First Lady Biography: Barbara Bush. National First Ladies’ Library. Available at: <http://www.firstladies.org/biographies/firstladies.aspx?biography=42> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

12 *ibid.*

and no matter what, she will always fight for the ideology and political views of her husband. The campaign highlighted her interest in church, gardening, and spending time with her family, criticizing her fashion and style, drawing attention to her snow-white hair and disinterest in wearing designer clothes. In general, she avoided discussing political issues, especially those where her opinion was contrary to the ones of her husband. Bush was elected and sworn in as the president.<sup>13</sup>

As the First Lady, she devoted her activities primarily to the literacy of Americans. She has chaired several reading organizations, as well as literacy committees. She also founded the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, which supported programs where parents can learn together with their children. She was a regular guest on television programs like “Oprah Winfrey Show” and the national radio program “Mrs. Bush’s Storytime”, where she tried to raise literacy awareness.<sup>14</sup> Barbara was also very active in other active issues such as access and decision-making on abortion, LGBT rights, civil rights, and AIDS awareness.<sup>15</sup>

When she died, President Trump made a statement: “Among Barbara Bush’s greatest achievements is recognizing the importance of literacy as a fundamental family value that requires nurturing and protection .” (Trump, 2018).

Barbara used to say: “To us, family means putting your arms around each other and being there.” White House staff recognized her as the kindest First Lady that entered the White House so far.

### **HILLARY CLINTON – FIRST LADY IN CHARGE**

Hillary Clinton was a typical emancipated representative of the postmodern period. She knew how to reconcile a successful business life with a personal one, which was very useful for her when she stepped in the shoes of the First Lady in the White House. This helped Hillary to achieve her goals as she moved the milestones of the First Lady as an institution, one that formed into an active one in the field of the political agenda of her husband. Together with her husband, they worked as a team, and she was his equal partner in politics. That is why

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13 *ibid.*

14 She would read bed time stories for children.

15 *ibid.*

in the media they were repeatedly referred to as “Billary” represented as an equal couple. Hillary served in the White House as the First Lady from 1993 to 2001 (Gutin, 2006, p.278).

Like many of her predecessors, Hillary faced many challenges. There were in the form of various scandals, scams, and cheating. One among those, the most resounding one, was the Lewinsky<sup>16</sup> affair. In the face of these challenges, as a couple, the Clinton’s showed that if the couple is willing, they can overcome every challenge in life. In addition, to politically activate herself, she secured herself a seat in the Senate even before the end of Bill’s term. Hillary also worked with charities and provided help to families with young children and founded the Clinton Foundation. As a mother, she felt the need to connect with other mothers in need and help them in this way.

One of her famous quotes: “It is often when night looks darkest, it is often before the fever breaks that one senses the gathering momentum for change when one feels that resurrection of hope amid despair and apathy.” to the NAACP<sup>17</sup> in 1995.

Hillary, like Eleanor, pushed the milestones of the operational institution of the First Lady and overtook the time in which we live. In any case, the return of Hillary on the American political scene can be expected, as she still hasn’t shown her hidden political attributes yet.

## **LAURA BUSH – THE POWER OF COMPASSION**

Laura Bush has served as the First Lady from 2001-2009 as the wife of George W. Bush. As a child, Laura was extremely shy. She was raised in a religious family whose main value was literacy. Laura fell in love with books, so she completed her studies in literature and librarianship. In her late teens, she experienced a great tragedy that accompanies her entire life. In a car accident, she was the driver as she crashed into a car, and her friend died at the scene. She finds her consolation in books.<sup>18</sup>

At the age of 31, she meets George at a picnic organized by a common friend, and soon she marries him. She acquires knowledge about

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16 Bill Clinton’s affair with his assistant Monica Lewinsky is generally known as the Lewinsky affair.

17 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), interracial American organization created to work for the abolition of segregation and discrimination in housing, education, employment, voting, and transportation; to oppose racism; and to ensure African Americans their constitutional rights.

18 Laura Bush. Available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/first-ladies/laura-bush> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

political campaigns and other activities connected with the presidential run from his parents. Throughout her husband's campaign for the governor, all that mattered to Laura was that she didn't have to speak in public as she wasn't the best speaker. She was fearful of performing.

In 2000, she was an indispensable part of her husband's campaign for President of America, where she travelled thousands of miles and conducted numerous interviews. Many of the interviews were broadcasted live on television. In her public statements, Laura acted confident, calm, sophisticated, and eloquent as it befits the First Lady. This was an enormous transformation, one that indicates the high expectations by the public and American society to the role of the wife of the President of the United States.

At the beginning of her stay in the White House, she did not want to get too involved in her husband's political agenda. She was reserved and made sure her projects matched her husband's ideology and reflected her interest. The safe tradition in which she appeared to the public would most likely have become her constant. The events of September 11, 2001 turbulently changed her role as a First Lady, America was wrapped in black. The terrorist attacks on the United States put Laura and her husband at the center of global media attention (Boyd Caroli, 2010, pp. 283-309).

It was at a time when her husband, obviously very shocked, could barely hold back tears and anger during the television appearances, and Laura took care of it with her concentration and calm. She visited the wounded in the Pentagon attack, shares her fears with the viewers on television appearances, connects with stunned and mourning Americans, and prays with them over a plane that crashed into the World Trade Center. She addressed an open letter to parents, teachers, and students, asking them to protect the youngest from the consequences of this terrorist action. These were some most difficult and tragic moments that America has ever faced (Watson, Eksterowicz, 2006, p.316).

Laura has proved to be the perfect First Lady, a lady who calms, gives hope and inspiration is a sensual, gentle, calm, and stable mother of the nation. The wider world public appreciates and welcomes her activities. With its symbolic function, she provided a great deal of social influence.

She became an American Ambassador in the UN for her fighting for equal education of Afghani Women. She travelled to Afghanistan several times.

One of her famous quotes is: "Leadership is not about popularity, it is about doing what is right." And while she served as the First Lady, she did the right thing.

### **MICHELLE OBAMA – THE MOM IN CHIEF**

Michele Obama and her husband Barack wrote a turning point in American history as they became the first African-American presidential couple to take this position.

Firstly, public relations experts sharply criticized her speeches in the campaign, saying they were too sincere, especially those who also had a partial political connotation – about health, reform, etc., but her honest and open heartfelt speech reached the hearts of Americans, who gave their voice in the elections.

In 2009, she moved to the White House with her daughters and husband. She did not show much interest in taking the lead role in her husband's administration. She was more focused on choosing the right school for their daughter, the question of whether her mother should also move to Washington, and which dog to buy, that would help her daughters to adjust to the change by moving to the White House. Feminists criticized her passive style of the president's wife in a shadow. Despite her enviable education, she had no interest in taking over the leadership of a major task force, no interest in fashion, she self-proclaimed the title of "mom in chief" (Boyd Caroli, 2010, pp.335-360).

Her public image was candid, her interviews reflected her views on children, dogs, gardens, and healthy eating but the administration rejected requests for her position on important issues, as they wanted to portray a successful lawyer and businesswoman as impartial.

In the institution of the First lady, she supported and was active in projects related to the issue of youth obesity. She connected Americans to support the soldiers, war veterans, and their families in the recovery and integration into the education system and casual work. She was

also active in the African Girls Literacy Project.<sup>19</sup>

Her role was more traditional, not taking over the agendas of her husband but certainly supporting him in his conscientious work.

In the eyes of the American public, she was primarily a loving and caring mother, followed by her husband's support and life companion. While visiting abroad, she was sympathetic in her confusion when she didn't know what to do. At the G20 summit, her first external visit with her husband since being elected president, she talked to Queen Elisabeth about uncomfortable shoes, and unknowingly violating protocol, touched her arm to show her support. The photographer captured the gesture and announced it in the media the next day, commenting on Michelle's protocol violation. The Queen rescued her from the humiliation by touching Michelle's cross with her hand (Obama, 2019, pp. 380-384).

Given all the potentials and abilities that she possessed as the First Lady and one of the most educated, she did not take the opportunity to build a new milestone within the institution of the First Lady, broadened the spectrum of activities, in the more important political sphere than its predecessors. However, she opened a new updated way of communication and redirected the work of the First Lady to social networks. She popularized and presented the institution of the First Lady to the citizens and the role and the importance of the First Lady through direct contact, which was made possible by modern technology.

Michelle and her husband had undoubtedly opened a new chapter in American history, a chapter that is sprinkled by the possibility of success, regardless of origin, racial, religious, or gender identity. They ensured that possibilities are and will be for anyone brave enough to intervene in the fight to create them.

One of her famous quotes states: "Every day you have the power to choose." Her choice was made.

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19 Obama White House Archives. First Lady Michelle Obama. Obama White House Archives. Available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/realitycheck/node/357156> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

## MELANIA TRUMP – THE EYE OF A TIGER

Melania Trump also made history in America as the first foreigner to take the position of the First Lady. The media was not the most sympathetic to her. Even before she had a chance to represent her position, she was declared to be at war with the media, as they had a different view on the political agendas of her husband. Melania repeatedly pointed out in the media that she does not agree with everything her husband says or does, however, she supported him as she thought he fought for the right cause. Her words were “He will make America great again”. That was the slogan on which he won the presidential election. Melania performed the function of the First Lady from 2017 to 2021. The eldest daughter of Donald Trump, Ivanka, helped her with this function and took over on some of the duties of the First Lady.

As a former photo model, Melania represents a symbol of glamor, prestige, and elegance. She always made sure that she appeared in the most fashionable clothes of top brands, and according to that, she would choose the appropriate accessories such as a handbag, jewelry, hat, sunglasses, depending on the occasion. It is no coincidence that wherever Melania appeared, she took over and turned attention to herself.

She had a characteristic feline look, so the media gave her the nickname “The eye of a tiger”. Melania did not immediately move into the White House as she waited for her son Barron to finish the school year. She traveled to many countries with her husband and went on her solo trip to Africa and Asia. During her solo trip in Africa, she visited African children from Ghana, Malawi, Kenya, and Egypt, with whom she participated in one of her projects “Be best”.

In Asia, however, she took pictures along the Great Wall of China and thus supported her husband in building the American Wall.<sup>20</sup>In her project “*Be best*” she fought against cyberbullying among children, as it is one of the biggest causes of suicide among young people, did not gain much popularity in the media, as they were more inclined to the political agenda of her husband.

She has repeatedly been criticized for unfairly obtaining an American visa, although she has pointed out that she has always acted “By the

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<sup>20</sup> Trump has built a wall on the border with Mexico, with the goal of preventing the illegal border crossings.

book”. At state receptions and visits, she appears glamorously. While she was visiting Queen Elisabeth, Melania acted in a very sophisticated manner, as if she was present in the royal environment every day. Melania was a lady in any sense of this word and accepted any criticism calmly and with a smile. She was never upset in front of the media. One of her quotes states: “Make America great again is not just a slogan. It is what has been in his heart since the day I met Donald Trump.” Voters believed them.

Probably, this was not their last attempt at a presidential race. Melania’s role as the First Lady of the United States can be best described as traditional.

### **SOME COMPERATIVE FINDINGS**

Platts and Fritz (2017) have pointed out that: “A four-part typology has been developed to describe the expanding role of first ladies using historical and contemporary examples to illustrate. This typology includes the roles of hostess, teammate, champion, and policy advocate, keeping in mind that the roles have been simplified and the classifications are not mutually exclusive. Although the four role types roughly map onto chronology—with early first ladies fitting into the hostess category primarily and contemporary first ladies increasingly taking on the champion and advocate role - the typology is best viewed not as an evolutionary trajectory but rather a description of the distinct yet overlapping modalities through which first ladies exert their influence. Most first ladies today still balance these multiple overlapping and, at times, conflicting responsibilities.”

If we use this typology on the First Ladies of the modern and postmodern period, we can divide them into the following groups:

- Hostess: Mamie Eisenhower, Jacqueline Kennedy, Betty Ford, Nancy Reagan and Melania Trump.
- Teammate: Bess Truman, Pat Nixon, Barbara Bush, Michelle Obama.
- Champion: Eleanor Roosevelt, Lady Bird Johnson.
- Policy Advocate: Rosalynn Carter, Hillary Clinton, Laura Bush.

According to the typology of the First Ladies we can show their common characteristics in the tables below.

**Table 1: Characteristics comparison of the First Ladies determined by the typology as a Hostess**

CHARACTERISTICS	M. Eisenhower	J. Kennedy	B. Ford	N. Reagan	M. Trump
Appearance (tidiness, beauty)	√	√	√	√	√
Charm	√	√	√	√	√
Eloquence	x	√	x	√	x
Calmness	x	x	x	x	√
Elegance	√	√	√	√	√
Self-confidence	√	√	√	√	√
Sophistication	x	x	x	x	x
Readability	x	√	x	√	x
Higher education	x	√	x	√	x
Emphasizing traditional values	√	√	√	√	√
Innovation	x	√	x	x	x
Maternal sense	√	√	√	√	√
Tenderness	x	x	√	√	x
Expressing disagreement with the husband's ideology	x	x	x	√	√
Supporting her husband	√	√	√	x	√
Desire for political power	x	x	x	x	x
Influencing the husband's decisions	x	x	x	x	x
Realization of her ideas, projects activities	√	x	√	x	x
Involvement in scandals	x	√	x	√	√

**Source:** *Own elaboration.*

Table 1 shows that the First Ladies that were defined by the typology as Hostesses put a lot of effort into their appearance. They are recognized as traditional, charming, elegant and confident ladies. They have strong maternal sense but do not have much influence on their husband decisions, and they do not have any desire for the political power.

**Table 2: Characteristics comparison of the First Ladies determined by the typology as a Teammate**

CHARACTERISTICS	Truman B.	Nixon P.	B. Bush	Obama M.
Appearance (tidiness, beauty)	x	√	x	√
Charm	√	√	√	√
Eloquence	x	√	√	√
Calmness	x	√	√	x
Elegance	x	√	x	√
Self-confidence	x	x	√	√
Sophistication	x	√	x	√
Readability	√	x	√	√
Higher education	x	x	√	√
Emphasizing traditional values	√	√	√	√
Innovation	x	x	√	x
Maternal sense	x	x	√	√
Tenderness	√	√	√	√
Expressing disagreement with the husband's ideology	x	x	x	x
Supporting her husband	√	√	√	√

Desire for political power	x	x	x	x
Influencing the husband's decisions	√	x	√	√
Realization of her ideas, projects activities	x	x	√	x
Involvement in scandals	x	√	x	x

**Source:** *Own elaboration.*

Table 2 shows that the First Ladies that were defined by the typology as Teammates put a lot of effort into their charm. They are recognized as traditional, tender, supporters of their husbands. They have no desire for the political power.

**Table 3: Characteristics comparison of the First Ladies determined by the typology as a Champion**

CHARACTERISTICS	Eleanor Roosevelt	Lady Bird Johnson
Appearance (tidiness, beauty)	x	√
Charm	√	√
Eloquence	√	√
Calmness	√	√
Elegance	x	√
Self- confidence	√	√
Sophistication	√	√
Readability	√	√
Higher education	x	√
Emphasizing traditional values	x	√
Innovation	√	√
Maternal sense	√	√
Tenderness	√	√
Expressing disagreement with the husband's ideology	√	x
Supporting her husband	√	√
Desire for political power	√	x
Influencing the husband's decisions	√	√
Realization of her ideas, projects activities	√	√
Involvement in scandals	√	x

**Source:** *Own elaboration.*

Table 3 shows that the First Ladies that were defined by the typology as Champions put a lot of effort into their charm. They are recognized as eloquent, self-confident, sophisticated, innovative and tender First Ladies. They support their husband and have strong influence on their husband's decisions as well as they put their project activities and ideas to the realizations.

**Table 4: Characteristics comparison of the First Ladies determined by the typology as a Policy Advocate**

CHARTER	Carter R.	Clinton H.	Bush L.
Appearance (tidiness, beauty)	√	√	√
Charm	√	√	√
Eloquence	√	√	√
Calmness	√	x	√
Elegance	√	√	√
Self- confidence	√	√	√
Sophistication	√	√	√
Readability	√	√	√
Higher education	√	√	√
Emphasizing traditional values	√	x	√
Innovation	√	√	√
Maternal sense	√	√	√
Tenderness	√	x	√
Expressing disagreement with the husband's ideology	x	x	x
Supporting her husband	√	√	√
Desire for political power	√	√	√
Influencing the husband's decisions	√	√	√
Realization of her ideas, projects activities	√	√	√
Involvement in scandals	x	√	x

**Source:** *Own elaboration.*

Table 4 shows that the First Ladies that were defined by the typology as Policy Advocates put a lot of effort into their appearance and charm. They are recognized as eloquent, elegant, self-confident, sophisticated, high educated and innovative First Ladies. They support their husband and have strong influence on their husband's decisions as well as they put their project activities and ideas to the realizations and have a strong desire for the political power.

Several different typologies can be hidden in one First Lady, so they could be divided differently. In this case they are defined by the typology that prevails.

## CONCLUSION

The wives of modern-day presidents, politicians, diplomats in today's postmodern time can be best described as complicated, mysterious, impenetrable, cold but glamorous, elegant, eloquent, and polished highly-sophisticated ladies. Their personalities, ideologies, ambitions, expectations are very different and can rarely be understood. Areas focused on finding and analyzing these patterns are political science combined with gender studies, sociology of culture, and diplomatic

studies, as First Ladies by definition manifest themselves in an international environment and by pursuing international political and diplomatic activities (Borelli, 2011, p.1).

As a public figure and a wife of the man holding the highest office in the United States, the First Lady was highly exposed in the eye of the public for a period in time lasting over a hundred years. She is often associated with prestige, fashion, and social chronicles, especially by the media. Thus, the First Lady is a mirror reflection and a means of comparison for women in the particular society.

With considerable media attention given to her as an Institution, she is in everyone's eyes, and every move taken by the First Lady is a subject of critical appraisal. For many women, she is an inspiration. Through her behavior and actions, she can draw attention to the social problems and the problems of the disadvantaged population she sees and wants others to see. At the same time, her courage is proof of female intelligence and its importance for every society.

The First Lady is a symbol that represents the homeland abroad and a message about the position of women in the home environment. It is a message that other cultures receive about their country, thus creating an image of women from different parts of the world.

The position of the First Lady from its inception to the present day is associated with (non)equality gender perception. In the past, being the First Lady was an indicator of women's subservience and their (in) importance in the public and political spheres compared to men.

However, the high desire, driven to achieve social equality, and the diverse abilities of the First Ladies as an Institution pushed milestones in the functioning in the United States, which at certain (postmodern) times placed themselves in a completely equal position with her husband. Thus, they showed America and the world that the First Lady can in certain situations be a completely equivalent substitute for her husband and that the First Lady institution has no limitations in its operation. Every one of the First Ladies sets the limits and boundaries for themselves.

Being a lady is a gift to humanity, but being the First Lady is a mission that broadens the horizon of a rusty society.

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# The Thorny Road to the European Integration of the Western Balkans Region

SILVO DEVETAK<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The so far EU enlargement policy towards the WB6 countries needs fresh strategy and operational programs for its realization. The new approach should stimulate developments that are contributing to the stability and progress of WB6 countries and of the region as a whole. In doing this the EU should develop more systematic cooperation with other international organizations. Reconciliation is a precondition for an efficient EU enlargement process. Therefore, the EU should find ways and means to support, with adequate measures, the elaborated and well-aimed reconciliation processes, which achievements would create a favorable environment for the solution of particular existing problems in the region and thus ensure the systematic integration of WB6 countries into the EU system of values. Besides, the needs genuine regional cooperation based on reconciliation tenet. For its credibility, the EU should first declare strongly its "one voice" commitment to the close cooperation with the WB6 countries, aimed at realizing their overwhelming inclusion in the EU political and economic structure and the emerging common foreign, security, and defense policy as well.

**KEYWORDS:** Western Balkans, enlargement policy of the European Union, reconciliation, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia

## POVZETEK

Dosedanja *širitvena* politika EU do držav ZB6 potrebuje svežo strategijo in operativne programe za njeno uresničitev. Nov pristop bi moral spodbujati razvoj, ki prispeva k stabilnosti in napredku držav *WB6 in regije kot celote*. EU bi morala razviti bolj sistematično sodelovanje z drugimi mednarodnimi organizacijami. Sprava je predpogoj za učinkovit proces širitve EU. Zato bi morala EU najti načine in sredstva, da z ustreznimi ukrepi podpre izdelane in dobro usmerjene procese sprave, katerih dosežki bi ustvarili ugodno okolje za reševanje posameznih obstoječih problemov v regiji in tako zagotovili sistematično povezovanje držav ZB6 v sistem vrednot EU. Poleg tega regija potrebuje pristno regionalno sodelovanje, ki temelji na načelu sprave. Če želi EU ohraniti svojo verodostojnost, mora najprej odločno izraziti svojo „enoglasno“ zavezanost tesnemu sodelovanju z državami WB6, katerega cilj je uresničitev njihove velike vključenosti v politično in gospodarsko strukturo EU ter nastajajoče skupne zunanje, varnostne, pa tudi obrambna politika.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** Zahodni Balkan, širitvena politika Evropske unije, sprava, Albanija, Bosna in Hercegovina, Kosovo, Črna gora, Republika Severna Makedonija, Srbija

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1 ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dr. Silvo Devetak is Professor Emeritus, University of Maribor, Slovenia. President of the Institute for ethnic and regional studies – ISCOMET, director of European centre for ethnic, regional and sociological studies of the University of Maribor, and president of ISCOMET NGO with the participatory status at the Council of Europe. Coordinator of the ANETREC Network. Email: iscomet@siol.net

## INTRODUCTION

Taking into account the strategic importance of the Western Balkans (in continuation WB6) region for the EU on the one side and the entangled relations between the states in the region on the other, the step-by-step integration of these states into the EU is the most important, if not the only, tool for the social and economic progress of the WB6 states and for improving the stability and security of the region and Europe as a whole.<sup>2</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina (in continuation of BiH), Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, as part of ex-Yugoslavia, have had a long tradition of cooperation with the European Community since the adoption of the Declaration on the Relations between SFR Yugoslavia and the EEC in 1967.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, Albania was an isolated, authoritarian country. The term “Western Balkans” does not correspond either to geographic nor geo-political realities; it was “invented” by the EU in order to divide Bulgaria and Romania, which were supposed to become EU members, from other Balkan countries. The WB6 region is now an island in the EU space, surrounded on the other side of the Adriatic by Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Italy.

Unfortunately, the road of WB countries towards European integration and values has proven to be more burdensome and lengthier than many had hoped a few years ago. The EU council declared in 2003 in Thessaloniki its “unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries. The future of the Balkans is within the European Union. The ongoing enlargement and the signing of the Treaty of Athens in April 2003 inspire and encourage the countries of the Western Balkans to follow the same successful path. Preparation for integration into European structures and ultimate membership in the European Union, through the adoption of European standards, is now the big challenge ahead... Moving towards European Integration represents a new important step in the privileged relationship between the EU and the Western Balkans. Its content shall be considered as our shared agenda, and we all commit to its implementation. The

2 Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, and Northern Macedonia are the candidate states, while Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are the potential candidates. The region has a population of 19.9 million people, a land area of 218,750 square km, and a total GDP of 94,2 billion euros.

3 In 1968, the Permanent Mission of the SFRY to the EEC was opened. In 1980, a Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and Yugoslavia was signed. It contained provisions concerning trade, financial aid, and cooperation in the areas of industry, science, and technology, energy, agriculture, transport, the environment, and tourism. By 1980, the European Investment Bank granted two loans with a total value of 50 million ECUs to link the Yugoslav high-voltage electricity distribution network to the Greek and Italian grids and for the construction of part of the trans-Yugoslav road.

countries of the region will focus their efforts on meeting the recommendations this agenda refers to.”<sup>4</sup>

Since then, has the EU adopted many “strategic” and “operational” documents, “progressive reports” and the similar in order to find a way forward?<sup>5</sup> Besides, interesting were the initiative of Germany and France. The Berlin Process is a German-led European initiative whose goal is to facilitate regional cooperation between the Western Balkans Six (WB6) countries with the view to helping them fulfill criteria to join the European Union (EU). German Chancellor Angela Merkel launched this initiative in 2014. Its most important component is the so-called “Connectivity Agenda,” which first aimed to link the WB6 together in the fields of transport and energy; it was later expanded into youth exchanges and economic connections.<sup>6</sup>

On April 30, 2019, the Office of President of France Emmanuel Macron (Ambassade de France en Macédonie du Nord, 2019) published the “French Strategy for the Western Balkans.” The strategy lists three measures: 1) the French intensification of relations with the region in general, 2) the strengthening of bilateral cooperation with the countries of the region in the economy, security, justice and defense, and 3) the intensification of exchanges with the countries of the region in terms of political-strategic dialogues concerning defense. The strategy put forward also challenges, as are unresolved disputes, various economic and social issues, difficulties in permanently establishing the rule of law, security issues and external influences that divert the region from its European vocation.

As for the EU Commission, perhaps the most promising document is its “new strategy” toward the WB6 of February 6, 2018, in which it resumed, among other things, responsibility for developing six initiatives aimed at supporting reforms in WB6 countries. The Annex to this instrument contains a timetable for the announced actions, including the supervision of their realization. Almost all actions are allocated until 2019 when ended the mandate of the than incumbent Commission [European parliamentary research servis, 2018].

4 EU-Western Balkans Summit, Thessaloniki, 21 June 2003. 10229/03 (Presse 163).

5 In 1999, the EU launched the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP), a framework for relations between the EU and countries in the region, and the Stability Pact, a broader initiative involving all key international players. The Stability Pact was replaced by the Regional Cooperation Council in 2008. The “European perspective” was reaffirmed in the Commission’s February 2018 Western Balkans Strategy and in the declarations following successive EU-Western Balkans Summits.

6 The Berlin Process. Available at: <https://berlinprocess.info>.

However, after 28 years of “realizing” the EU enlargement policy, has the EU even retreated its WB6 support? In the declaration adopted at the EU-Western Balkans summit held in Brdo, Slovenia on October 6, 2021, only “reaffirms its unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans and welcomes the commitment of the Western Balkans partners to the European perspective, which is in our mutual strategic interest and remains our shared strategic choice.” All other points of the declaration refer to the “obligations” of the WB6 countries.<sup>7</sup>

The WB6 countries have, with the support of the EU and other foreign factors<sup>8</sup>, made efforts to ensure peace, transition reforms, and regional cooperation. Nevertheless, the region is still rifted with unresolved war crimes problems, with corruption, a deficient judiciary, weakness in the rule of law, with suspicious political and media discourses, with open borders and other problems, with mistrust, animosities, hate speech, with cleavages and hatred between people (mostly on an ethnic and religious basis). Sadly, the younger generation is immigrating, mainly to EU member states, at alarming rates, and these are likely to increase even further, thus seriously harming the potential for innovation progress in the region (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2021).

The “supervision” of the international community has “limited” the sovereignty of Kosovo and of BiH. United Nations Resolution 1244 authorized the deployment of military forces (KFOR) to Kosovo and the establishment of a civilian administration (UNMIK). The Kosovo Force (KFOR) is a NATO-led international peacekeeping force in Kosovo. The purpose of the High Representative for BiH, together with the Office of the High Representative (OHR), established in 1995, is to oversee the civilian implementation of the Dayton agreement. Both also serve to represent the countries involved in the implementation of the Dayton Agreement through the Peace Implementation Council (PIC).<sup>9</sup> The Principal Deputy High Representative (so far always American) serves as International Supervisor for Brčko, representing the international community in the Brčko District. The role of the High Representative has been compared to that of a viceroy due to its vast powers over Bos-

7 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/52280/brdo-declaration-6-october-2021-en.pdf>.

8 As to the investments and financing of the countries in the region, see European Investment Bank (2019).

9 The PIC comprises 55 countries and agencies that support the peace process in many different ways - by assisting it financially, providing troops for SFOR, or directly running operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is also a fluctuating number of observers.

nian politics and essential veto powers.<sup>10</sup> Relations between the states in the region are, as already said, entangled with political, ethnic, and religious animosities and security risks.

This European region is strategically important for achieving peace and political stability in the EU. Therefore, it is essential to develop new ideas and fresh operational approaches in the EU policy towards WB6 countries in order to ensure the progress of the WB6 countries and the region and to keep peace and stability in Europe as a whole. The author puts forward some considerations that could be useful in further structuring and especially in implementing the updated EU strategies towards WB6.

### **AN ENTANGLED INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

In elaborating fresh policies towards WB6 and in their implementation, the EU has to be aware of the presence and interests of other international powers in the region. The WB6 is, due to their regional characteristics, a typical mid-region, exposed to the contradictory influences of the most influential agents of international relations, which are usurping the political and socio-economic instability of the states and the disunity of the region as a whole, also through adopting the historical and confirmed approach of *divide et impera*. The EU's policy toward the WB 6 thus has to cope with the interests of other states that are involved in this part of Europe.

Major international actors are using their financial and political power to gain influence in the Balkans. Weak local governments continue to balance among competing nations. The USA is taking the WB6 and its neighboring states in accordance with its confirmed policy of permanent confrontation with Russia. As the new cold war "front line", by supporting, in addition, the line that spans from the Black to the Baltic Sea (Romania, Poland, three Baltic States) and including also the states on the coast of the Adriatic Sea, first of all Croatia, Albania, and Montenegro.<sup>11</sup>

During his visit to Russian neighbors, Georgia and the Baltic states, aimed at assuring the USA's support against Russian aggression, US Vice-President Pence visited on August 2, 2017 Montenegro. He spoke at the Adriatic Charter Summit, which was attended by the leaders of

10 Incumbent High Representative since 1 August 2021 is Christian Schmidt from Germany.

11 See: <http://three-seas.eu/> (Accessed on 10. June 2019).

Montenegro, Croatia, Albania, and Slovenia (all NATO members), as well as Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Kosovo. He confirmed Washington's commitment to the region and said Balkan states must be "resolute and uncompromising" toward Russia, which he called "an unpredictable country that casts a shadow from the East." He underlined that "Russia continues to seek to redraw international borders by force and, here in the Western Balkans, Russia has worked to destabilize the region, undermine democracies and divide you from each other and the rest of Europe." (Chan, 2017).

However, the US has been the main international factor in stopping the bloody war in BiH by pushing the belligerent "factors" to sign the Dayton agreement. The Trump administration pushed forward with Serbia and Kosovo to sign on September 4, 2020, an agreement on economic cooperation (Muharremi, 2021) that contains some political points (declaration of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, and opposition to the Chinese 5G system) (Stojanović and Bami, 2020).

Joe Biden is no stranger to the Balkans. He began the first of his regular visits to the region back in the early 1990s, initially to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and later to Kosovo. The relationship regarding the western Balkans between the EU and the US has deteriorated in the last four years. Donald Trump's special envoy, Richard Grenell, created havoc and annoyed many in the EU and the region with his foreign policy adventurism, side-lining the EU's efforts and devising initiatives that had little to do with creating peace and prosperity (Morina and Tcherneva, 2021). Biden's special relationship with the Balkans should ease the path to a resumption of joint efforts in the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Balkans. A re-energized US policy in the region could be transformative, especially when working in tandem with the EU (Dragojlo, Kovačević and Sinoruka, 2021). As one of the first steps, Biden issued an Executive Order allowing the US government to seize property and suspend entry into the US of individuals who are contributing to the destabilization of the Western Balkans (Šemić, 2021). The US "strongholds" in the region are Kosovo,<sup>12</sup> Albania, and partly Northern Macedonia.<sup>13</sup> The political elite of Montenegro is divided on this issue in spite of being a member of NATO.

12 The Cam Bondsteel facility in Kosovo build up without any agreement is the biggest US base in Europe.

13 In illustration: North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania have with the US the agreement on exempting all Americans (and even some non-nationals) from accountability for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. These agreements, in the form requested by the US government, are illegal under the Rome Statute, are not required by US law and are in controversy with EU law.

The WB6 is seen by Russia as an arena where it can achieve significant effects with relatively few resources, predominantly through “soft” methods and intelligence, to distract, weaken, and divide the Western community of states.<sup>14</sup>

China’s efforts to maintain and expand its presence in WB6 countries, particularly in the economic field, also contribute to “raising the value” of the Balkans in the current process of the world’s new geopolitical division. Germany, France, and Italy called attention to the fact that the EU should be given powers to rule on whether or not Chinese takeovers of major European companies are motivated by political rather than economic goals. This refers, of course, also to the WB6.<sup>15</sup> In 2021, China, with a 32-billion-euro budget, developed 136 projects in the WB6 region, 61 in Serbia, 29 in BiH, 15 in Northern Macedonia, and 8 in Albania. China does not recognize Kosovo but nevertheless has a Liaison Office in Pristina and has realized some economic projects through firms in Northern Macedonia (Stojkovski, et al., 2021).

Balkan countries do not want to have to decide between warm ties with China and Russia political and strategic commitments to the West – but they may have to. Serbia’s foreign policy envisages accession to the European Union in combination with preserving friendly relations with Moscow and Beijing and the development of relations with Washington. Belgrade is determined to stay military neutral and refrain from joining NATO or other military alliances (Vangeli, 2021).

Turkey has been, since 1990, “re-discovering” the Balkans.<sup>16</sup> The Gulf States have been struggling to keep pace with others in expanding their presence and influence in that part of Europe (also by spreading Wahhabism).<sup>17</sup>

14 Russia does not play a significant economic role in the Western Balkans: only 6.6% of foreign direct investment in the region comes from Russia and Russia’s share of regional foreign trade is 3.9% for exports and 5.3% for imports. However, the region is dependent on Russia for its energy supply, though this dependence is waning. Viewed as a whole, Southeast Europe is only a sideshow in Moscow’s strategic thinking, albeit one that should not be underestimated. See also Bechev (2018).

15 Beijing appears to be a “stabilizer” and hence an apparent ally of the EU, since China supports the states’ integration into European structures, and its long-term investment in the region means that, unlike other external actors, it is not in its economic and strategic interests to destabilize the Balkans, a region that is often described as a “powder keg”.

16 Turkey officially supports the Euro-Atlantic and European integration of the Western Balkan states; it is also pursuing an independent “neo-Ottoman” foreign policy with the aim of creating its own sphere of interest. In addition to economic activities, Ankara’s resources are mainly poured into trade, banking, construction, telecommunications, and critical infrastructure (e.g. Prishtina, Skopje, Ohrid, and Zagreb airports), with a primary focus on soft power and the cultural and religious ties that have grown over the centuries and that are now being systematically expanded. See also Aydıntaşbaş (2019).

17 Arab countries are increasingly making economic investments, particularly in tourism, construction (e.g. Belgrade Waterfront), agriculture, aviation (Air Serbia) and military technology, and are also providing loans and generous development aid. This investment is not restricted to the Muslim countries of the Western Balkans.

The EU's policy should not follow the Cold War philosophy, aimed at building new frontlines in confrontation with Russia, but should stimulate the progress of the Balkans as an area of peace, security, and progress - in the context of the future peace and stability in Europe, in which construction and management should have the EU's decisive, autonomous role. As a result, it is critical to avoid the situation that existed in Ukraine in 2013, when the EU platform for the Vilnius summit on the eastern neighborhood put Ukraine in an "or-or" position, contributing to the subsequent dramatic events in this country with so many huge, obviously long-term negative consequences for Europe's stability, peace, and development as a whole.<sup>18</sup>

### **THE EU NEEDS FRESH POLICIES**

After years of taking the WB6 region for granted, there were great expectations that the European Commission's strategy paper, published in February 2018, would herald a new and more determined EU engagement. Unfortunately, this has not been the case, raising serious concerns as to whether some member states fully grasp what is at stake in the region. Driven mainly by domestic concerns, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Bulgaria are set to kick the can further down the road. The Dutch Parliament has even called for the suspension of visa-free travel for Albanians. This shows that the member states are ultimately governing their decision-making regarding enlargement within and between them by political and not by Copenhagen criteria. As an example, the Albanian Prime Minister, Edi Rama, has blamed the nationalism of the EU's more powerful member states for his country's (and Northern Macedonia's) failure to make any real progress in their EU integration process (Sinoruka, 2021).

The credibility of the EU will be called into question if the EU does not implement its strategies and policies in a fruitful way. Especially if the people of the region will not be convinced that the results of the EU's policy changed the current problems in their country for the better and hence improved the quality of their lives. Indicative in this regard is, for instance, the statement in the research of the Institute of European Democrats that "keeping the status quo can only generate

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18 At the very beginning of that crisis the former American Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Henry Kissinger said: "The European Union must recognize that its bureaucratic dilatoriness and subordination of the strategic element to domestic politics in negotiating Ukraine's relationship to Europe contributed to turning a negotiation into a crisis. Foreign policy is the art of establishing priorities. To treat Ukraine as part of an East-West confrontation would scuttle for decades any prospect to bring Russia and the West - especially Russia and Europe - into a cooperative international system" (Kissinger, 2014).

disenchantment in these states and a possible democratic regress. A new EU leadership could see here the makings of an early win for its current foreign and security policy as well as a sign of the strength of the EU's soft power.”(Sebe, 2021)

Therefore, there is an urgent need to improve the EU WB6 enlargement process policies and the interconnected activities with new, fresh initiatives and programs. They should be elaborated based on the evaluation of so far achievements and shortcomings and first of all on the analyses of the real situation in the region and each WB6 country.

The new, improved, fresh policy supported by adequate financial resources should include the support for the further continuation of all achievements of the Berlin Process, including those that have not yet been realized by particular WB countries or by them as a whole,<sup>19</sup> the relevant proposals of the French strategy of 20 April 2019 and other stakeholders. The new policy should be the outcome of the European Commission's consultations not only with the WB6 governments but also with other stakeholders in the region (regions and local communities, chambers of commerce, professional and civil society organizations, etc.).

The new strategy and the operational programs for its realization should not be confined to the “classical model”—to the mere fulfillment of the requirements of the EU *Acquis Communautaire*—but should stimulate developments that are also contributing to the progress of WB6 countries and of the region as a whole. It should also stimulate the creation of necessary preconditions for the realization of the aims of EU policy. For instance, reconciliation, support for accelerating war crimes cases in the context of the reconciliation process, regional cooperation of states and people, the improved, new, role of national minorities in inter-state cooperation, and relevant political, cultural, economic, and similar developments, interconnected with and supporting the realization of the *acquis communautaire* platform.

In addition, it would be commendable to address the recognition and implementation of social and economic rights, particularly for the most vulnerable social strata, which is becoming increasingly relevant in the context of general dissatisfaction towards politics and social dis-

19 For instance, custom union, removal of Kosovo's 100 percent customs on import from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina violating the free trade agreement (CEFTA).

illusion, especially among the younger generations <sup>20</sup> and groups of people who live “on the other side” of the poverty gap. <sup>21</sup>

The European Commission and other stakeholders should more precisely explain to the WB6 and the wider EU public the aims of the new EU policies and disseminate them as far as possible in a way that will be understandable for ordinary people. In the same language, it would be commendable to explain to people the membership prospects of all WB6 countries, thus mobilizing them in favour of building up the criteria that are necessary for becoming a member of the EU.

In assessing the results of the EU’s improved policy, it will be commendable to be flexible: in addition to common criteria mandatory for all, it would be necessary to take into account the traditions of each country, their so far achievements and specific interests as well. The realization of the improved EU policy would also require a revision of the EU negotiation process. At present, the EU negotiates the accession process largely with the elites of the WB6 countries. Local communities, chambers of commerce, professional associations, education and research institutions, civil society associations and institutions, and similar entities will need to be included in this process in the future. This will be the proper way to promote shared “values” or principles and to increase the pro-European attitude of the population. As to the civil society organizations, it is necessary to support their independence and to avoid the situation that could be discerned now, of them being transformed into “proxies” of EU delegations, particular states or political parties. Moreover, it would be commendable to avoid “privatization” and “bureaucratization” of current and eventual new structures.

In realizing its improved policy, the EU should develop more elaborate cooperation with other international organizations (UN, OSCE, WB, IMF, and others). Cooperation with the OSCE should be developed, especially in fields where it has achieved remarkable results in developing activities that have contributed to reconciliation, stability, and the democratic development of WB6 countries (Devetak, 2016). As to NATO, it will be commendable if the EU evaluates carefully what is in

20 According to the World Bank Development Indicator has been in 2016 the percentage of youth unemployment in labour force aged 15-24 as follows: B&H - 62,3, Kosovo - 57,7, Macedonia - 47,3, Serbia - 43,3, Albania - 39,8 and Montenegro - 37, 7. In comparison - EU - 22,7 and Germany 7,2.

21 According to the World Bank Development Indicator the following percentage of people lived in 2013 at 5,50 USD per day: Macedonia - 13 %, Albania - 10,3 %, Kosovo - 5,8 %, Montenegro - 2,4 % and Serbia - 2 %.

the common interest of both organizations concerning WB6 and what is the particular strategic interest of the U.S. as a leading NATO power that does not coincide with the interest of the EU and its (present and future) members in the Balkans area.

### **RECONCILIATION IS A PRECONDITION FOR AN EFFICIENT EU ENLARGEMENT PROCESS**

Reconciliation is *conditio sine qua non* for developing understanding, cooperation, and progress in the WB6 region. Having in mind the current political, security, and socio-economic circumstances in the WB6 region and in each of the member countries in particular, should the EU find ways and means to support, with adequate measures, the elaborated and well-aimed reconciliation process, which achievements would create a favorable environment for the solution of particular existing problems in the region and thus ensure the step-by-step integration of WB6 countries into the EU system of values.

Reconciliation means finding a way in which two situations or beliefs that are opposed to each other can agree and exist together. It is a very complex task (Kjell-Åke, 2006). Its ways and means should be elaborated after analyzing the factual situations and finding an adequate methodology for building up activities that could create an adequate environment and stimulate solutions to the existing problems (Bloomfield, et al., 2003). In post-conflict societies where past injustices remain unresolved; there exists a latent risk of a renewed outbreak of violence, years or decades later. Therefore, reconciliation has become increasingly important in the context of conflict prevention and development cooperation.<sup>22</sup> The well-known scholar on peace building, Johan Galtung, distinguished between “negative peace” as the outcome of efforts to stop physical or personal violence (direct violence) and “positive peace” as the goal of efforts to end indirect structural and cultural violence (indirect violence) that threaten the economic, social, and cultural well-being and identity of individual human beings and groups (Galtung, 1969).

I would like to draw attention to the following proposals, which could be considered in elaborating the new EU-WB6 policy:

1. The EU should support and make mandatory proper forms of reconciliation processes, which should be established both on

<sup>22</sup> See Mainstream Conflict Prevention (2005). The drafting of this Issues Brief was led by Germany's International co-operation enterprise for sustainable development (GTZ), 2005.

a bilateral (for instance, reconciliation between Serbs and Croats; between Bosnians-Serbs-Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina; between Serbs and Albanians; between Macedonians and Albanians; between Slovenes and Croats and so on and so forth) and a multilateral, regional level as well. As to the later, it will be commendable to organize common activities dedicated to the specific areas of reconciliation, aimed at finding ways and means for developing positive future activities and programs on these issues.

2. It is necessary to continue and conclude efficiently the persecution and punishment of the perpetrators of war crimes in the wars of 1990-1999. The lack of sufficient coordination and close cooperation between international stakeholders and a general reticence on the part of the national authorities to engage meaningfully with past wrongs have resulted in a situation where many perpetrators of war crimes remain unpunished and individual victims have barely received any reparations.

The international tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague has closed its procedures. Persecuting and punishing those who commit war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as compensating victims, will thus remain in the hands of national jurisdiction and, thus, in many cases, under the influence of the political elites in power. For example, it was impossible to organize the prosecution of the leaders and members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (among the suspects are the president of the republic, the government, and the national assembly) who allegedly committed war crimes and crimes against humanity during and after the war in Kosovo. The international community thus established the Kosovo Special Chamber with a seat in The Hague. The EU nominated 19 judges of this court.<sup>23</sup> However, punishment of perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity could produce even greater animosity between people if it is not the first element of the reconciliation process!

3. Existing narratives in the region are obstructing regional recon-

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23 On 3 August 2015, the Kosovo Assembly adopted Article 162 of the Kosovo Constitution and the Law on Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office, following the Exchange of Letters between the President of Kosovo and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in 2014. This structure has jurisdiction over crimes against humanity, war crimes and other crimes under Kosovo law in relation to allegations reported in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Report of 7 January 2011.

ciliation and cementing existing prejudices that can incite repetition, divisions, mistrust, and denial. It is necessary to overcome the historically-rooted hatred that has been revived in the recent wars for the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and “flavoured” with new ethnic, religious, and political “incentives”. This negative attitude is supported, as an example, by the existence of parallel, segregated (ethnic) schools, by the teaching of history that creates ignorance of pupils or negative attitudes towards others and by the part of the mass media in general (Koulouri, 2002 and 2009).<sup>24</sup>

Reconciliation is not only the matter of politicians but also of all of the other social factors that could influence public opinion in a positive, constructive way regarding relations between neighbors – educators, historians, researchers, philosophers, writers, poets, musicians, journalists, sportsmen, and similar social factors. As a result, it is necessary to more precisely elaborate on the support of projects in the fields of education, culture, science, media, and similar in the new EU policy documents.<sup>25</sup>

The exchange and cooperation of youth could be one of the “tools” of reconciliation. At the Paris meeting of the Berlin Initiative, held on July 4, 2016, as part of efforts to promote reconciliation in the region, an important emphasis was given to the role of youth, with the establishment of a Regional Youth Cooperation Council. According to the Final Declaration by the French Chair of the Summit, this Youth Council will be modelled on the 50-year experience of the Franco-German Youth Office and will “support activities that promote reconciliation of the peoples as well as programs on remembrance, diversity, intercultural exchange, regional mobility, citizen participation, and the promotion of democratic values” (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2016). However, for the time being, there is no evidence of the impact of these offices’ activities on social relations in particular countries or in the region as a whole.

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<sup>24</sup> See also Kaprinis (2006).

<sup>25</sup> One of the commendable examples is the Program of academic network for support of academia in 6 Western Balkans countries the EU policy towards the Western Balkans with emphasis on regional cooperation based on reconciliation ANETREC. The project proposal was prepared within the Erasmus+ call-2018-by nine universities from the WB6. Proposed actions: 6 virtual teaching programs (EU policy towards WB6; reconciliation; multiculturalism; human rights and discrimination; religion; migration), summer school, training seminars, international conference on EU enlargement policy towards the WB6 countries with emphasis on regional cooperation based on reconciliation). See: [www.anetrec.eu](http://www.anetrec.eu).

4. The EU needs new approaches to the role of national minorities in the bilateral and regional cooperation. The WB6 region is a patchwork of national minorities of nations living in new sovereign states in the neighboring country before but Albania being a part of a common state. The control of one's ethnic territory has been the main goal of the recent Balkans nationalistic wars. Besides, due to the former migration a great number of members of "other" ethnic origin are living not in "their" nation-state but "another" state and some of them not fully enjoying the rights deriving from the constitutional status of a national minority.

Due to the fact that in the region, all political entities are based on ethnicity, the interest of the "mother nation" in "its" minority in neighboring states could be a source of conflict and political tensions. The spread of ideas that it is necessary to unite all Albanians (currently living in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia), all Serbs (at least those currently living in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Northern Kosovo), and all Croats (currently living in BiH) into one state will be the most dangerous thing in this regard. These dangerous notions are usually supported by the "idea" that it is necessary to "adjust" the borders in order to satisfy national interests and ensure peace in the region.

This is the main reason why it is necessary to affirm another role of national minorities in inter-state relations. The "declaration on democracy, human rights, and protection of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities in South-Eastern Europe", adopted on February 25, 2001 by the participants of the conference organized by the ISCOMET Institute in Maribor, Slovenia, to which took part participants from all parts of the former Yugoslavia, was the first action dedicated to this goal (ISCOMET, 2001).

In this context, it would be commendable to consider the support of more advanced ways and means of protecting minorities than the classical ones embodied in inter-state agreements. One of the already functional forms is the creation of so-called "common cultural spaces", which enables free linguistic and cultural flows across the (open) state borders while respecting the states' sovereignty and territorial integrity and the principle of not inter-

fering in internal affairs. Such an approach to the role of minorities in inter-state relations in the WB6 region would probably weaken the aspirations to “unite” the national minorities with the “mother nation.”

5. Having in mind the hesitation of political structures to assume this responsibility, the reconciliation processes should be elaborated and launched in parallel by civil society organizations, education and research institutions, by religious communities or other non-governmental organizations and entities. The EU should support and co-finance their well-elaborated reconciliation projects, coordinated by those who have experience and enjoy credibility in this field.<sup>26</sup> The state authorities should assume the responsibility of at least not blocking them if they are unprepared or unable to support these reconciliation endeavors.

The religious communities of the region, especially the monotheistic religions (Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Islam) could have a very important role in contributing to the conciliation, respect of otherness, peaceful inter-human relations, and thus stability in the region of WB6. This showed the results of the project “Contribution of Religious Communities to Reconciliation, Respect of Diversity, Democracy, Human Rights, Protection of Minorities, Co-operation and Stability in South Eastern Europe” (the so-called “Maribor Initiative”). It was realized between 2001 and 2003 in the frame of the WT1 of the Stability Pact for South for SEE. The coordinator was ISCOMET - Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies from Maribor, Slovenia. The EU co-financed it upon the decision of the Council. In the framework of the project, the first appeals of all major religious communities from the former Yugoslavia for the “removal of the consequences of the war” and “reconciliation and cooperation” were adopted at the gatherings in Slovenia on 2 December 1994 and on 21 September 1997, respectively, followed by pertinent meetings in Serbia, Romania, and Moldova (ISCOMET, 2001a).

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26 One positive example is the EU co-financed project “Academic network supporting EU policies towards the Western Balkans with emphasis on regional cooperation based on reconciliation - ANETREC”, which joined 9 universities and research institutes from WB6 countries and Slovenia and Croatia. They developed, among other things, an online education program, the academic proposals for Serbia-Kosovo reconciliation. See: [www.anetrec.eu](http://www.anetrec.eu).

## THE WESTERN BALKANS REGION NEEDS GENUINE REGIONAL COOPERATION BASED ON RECONCILIATION TENETS

Regional cooperation based on reconciliation tenets is a workable tool for consolidating peace, stability, and progress in the region and for its European integration. In spite of some positive achievements, as is the agreement of friendly relations between North Macedonia and Bulgaria and a lot of particular cooperation between the WB6 countries and from time to time expressions of “good bilateral relations” between particular states and common “declarations of good will”, for instance, at the periodic conferences of these countries in the frame of the so-called Brdo/Brijuni process<sup>27</sup> or at Berlin Initiative summits<sup>28</sup>, relations between the countries which succeeded the former Yugoslavia are still riddled with the revival of old animosities, especially with the consequences of the wars in the nineties.

The EU will contribute to the reconciliation process in the WB6 region if it supports and finances more targeted and relevant multilateral and regional cooperation projects, enhancing the cooperation and good neighbor relations between the WB6 countries in the fields of culture, science, education, etc. The already established Regional Youth Cooperation Council (RYCO) with a seat in Tirana and the functioning civil society forum could, with well-elaborated programs and their efficient management, substantially contribute to the improved cooperative attitude in general and to new forms of constructive cooperation in the region. The Regional Cooperation Council, with its seat in Sarajevo, could, with proper programs and adequate management, have an important role in the region.<sup>29</sup>

As to the economy, Bela Balassa, a professor of political economy at John Hopkins University, defines economic integration as both a “process and a state of affairs. Economic integration comprises the set of political and economic measures to eliminate discrimination between economic units that belong to different national states. It represents the absence of discrimination between national economies” (Balassa,

27 Brdo - Brijuni Process in informal cooperation initiated in March 2010 (at that time named as Brdo process) by Slovenia and Croatia to strengthen relations between the countries of the region of Western Balkans so that the strengthened cooperation in the region would help its faster progress towards the European integration. The most important meetings of leaders of Western Balkans States were July 2013, Brdo, Slovenia, July 2014 Dubrovnik, Croatia, June 2015 Budva; Montenegro, May 2016, Sarajevo, BiH and June 2017, Brdo, Slovenia, 2018 in Skopje, North Macedonia, 2019 Tirana, Albania.

28 See: <https://berlinprocess.info/> (Accessed on 12 May 2019).

29 See: <https://www.rcc.int/> (Accessed on 23 May 2019).

1961). Free trade in the region shows the political diversities in the region that are somehow “covered” by the Central European Free Trade Agreements (CEFTA) on trade. However, poor trade between the WB countries could not be an enhancing factor for developing common interests in this field.

The Berlin Initiative has so far produced few results, as, for instance, the signing of the Transport Community between the EU and five WB6 countries; the proposal of an Action Plan to develop a Regional Economic Area (REA), aimed at consolidating a market of some 20 million people and attracting investment and generating growth and jobs. The Action Plan is, in fact, a “declaration of intentions.” It is divided into four sections: trade, investments, mobility, and digital integration. The Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), whose members are all WB6 countries, will remain the legal basis for the REA. Unfortunately, the EU was unable to persuade the Kosovo government to lift the 100 percent tariff on imports from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which constituted a serious breach of the CEFTA agreements (Marjanović Rudan, 2018).

However, the real political situation in the region is shown by the fact that it was not possible to come to a common understanding on any of this action. Because of the rejection of Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina did not sign the treaty on transport community. Albania and Kosovo were opposed to the formation of REA; the latter also opposed the ambitious project of a free customs union proposed by Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia, as well as participation in the Regional Youth Cooperation Council (RYCO), which would be based in Tirana.<sup>30</sup> Indicative is the fact that there is still a visa regime between Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It would be commendable to reinforce engagement on security and migration,<sup>31</sup> including reinforcement of cooperation on fighting organized crime, countering terrorism and violent extremism, and on border security and migration management. Europol liaison officers should be posted in the region, Joint Investigation Teams should be

<sup>30</sup> The reorganization of RYCO is included as a task in the new EU strategy of February 2018.

<sup>31</sup> The EU should find solutions for the migrants and asylum seekers who are stocked in BiH because they cannot reach the desired EU countries. Perhaps it will be commendable to consider providing an on-spot asylum process, organizing the recruitment of labor by employers from EU countries, providing money for establishing businesses in BiH for those who decide to remain there, and supporting the BiH authorities in returning back to their countries of origin those migrants who do not have conditions for asylum.

further promoted, and status agreements with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency should be concluded.

The idea of creating a “mini-Schengen” came in October 2019, as Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama and Prime Minister of North Macedonia Zoran Zaev, together with President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić met in Novi Sad. They declared that this initiative is open to all of the countries of the region and that it will strive to achieve “four freedoms” in the Western Balkans (flow of goods, people, services, and capital). To promote this idea as a truly regional one, Serbia insisted on attracting all of the six countries of the WB to join the initiative, even Kosovo, which it did not recognize (Živanović, 2019).

Serbia and Albania have already adopted biometric IDs for traveling in both countries, and all three countries signed a memorandum on cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. At the meeting of the three premiers in Skopje on July 29, 2021, they agreed to change the denomination of the initiative to “Open Balkans.” In addition, the three premiers announced that border controls between the three countries would be abolished by 2023. In Skopje, the leaders signed three documents: a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation on Facilitating the Import, Export, and Movement of Goods in the Western Balkans; a Memorandum on Free Access to the Labor Market; and an Agreement on Cooperation in Disaster Protection (Jakov Marusic, 2021). At the next meeting in Tirana, held on December 20, 2021, the three premiers signed five agreements, which covered labor market access, the interconnection of electronic identification schemes, and cooperation in veterinary medicine and food safety. There were two further agreements on economic cooperation between Serbia and Albania and between North Macedonia and Albania (Sinoruka, 2021).

EU Enlargement Commissioner, Oliver Varhelyi, spoke via video link to praise the Open Balkan initiative as a successor to the Berlin Process. He urged other states to join the initiative. After the second meeting of the three premiers, European Commission Spokeswoman Ana Pisonero told the Belgrade journal *Danas* that the EU supports the leaders’ commitment to regional cooperation, which is an essential element of the European perspective of the western Balkans and an integral part of the stabilization and association process. The idea was also supported by the American administration, in the agreement

on Serbia-Kosovo economic cooperation signed in Washington in September 2020.<sup>32</sup>

However, Kosovo, BiH, and Montenegro did not join the initiative. On the occasion of the Open Balkan meeting in Tirana, the opposition party even organized demonstrations against the meeting of the three premiers and the “diabolical Serbia in particular.”<sup>33</sup> In the frame of the Berlin process, the Trieste Summit adopted the Multi-annual Action Plan for Regional Economic Areas (MAP REA).<sup>34</sup> Some critics of the Open Balkans initiative are of the opinion that its goals overlap with MAP REA (Muminović, 2020).

On the contrary, the Open Balkans is a very important initiative not only for developing the cooperation aimed at “four EU liberties” but also for “taking away” ground for changing the borders of aspirations and for diminishing the impact of hate speech and spreading hatred among nations of the western Balkans. Therefore, it would be commendable to include the so far initiated modes of regional cooperation-and the new one that will be in due time elaborated-in the improved EU policy towards the WB6 as an important element for strengthening peace, stability, and the way to the progress of the western Balkans.

It will be commendable to explore and elaborate properly on new, much more advanced forms of regional cooperation based on reconciliation tenets. As illustrations: 1) cross-border cooperation and establishment of cross-border regions on the legal basis of the EU Regulation of 2013 on a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) (for neighbors which are EU members)<sup>35</sup>; and 2) the stimulation of establishing the so-called Euro-regional Cooperation Groupings (ECGS) on the basis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Protocol to the Madrid Convention of the Council of Europe (for all countries).<sup>36</sup> It will also be commendable to stimulate the establishment of common regional entities in the fields of technology and sciences.

32 Kurti's tougher stance comes after the previous Kosovo PM, Avdullah Hoti, pledged to join the initiative as part of an agreement signed in separate documents with Serbia's President Vucic under former US President Donald Trump's auspices in Washington in September 2020.

33 See note 27 (Kissinger, 2014).

34 Multi-annual action plan for a regional economic area in the western Balkans – map. Regional Cooperation Council (Co-funded by the EU. [https://www.rcc.int/priority\\_areas/39/multi-annual-action-plan-for-a-regional-economic-area-in-the-western-balkans-map](https://www.rcc.int/priority_areas/39/multi-annual-action-plan-for-a-regional-economic-area-in-the-western-balkans-map) (Accessed 19 December 2021).

35 See: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1302&from=EN> (Accessed 11 May 2019).

36 See: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/206> (Accessed 11 May 2019).

The solution of open border problems is a tool for stabilization and the promotion of good neighborhood relations between the WB countries. North Macedonia is the only country in ex-Yugoslavia that does not have open border problems with its neighbors. Despite the repeated pledges by both the EU and the countries of the region, there has been little progress in resolving these disputes. The latest stand-off between Croatia and Slovenia, with Croatia refusing to accept the Court of Arbitration's ruling on the maritime border demarcation in the Bay of Piran, does not set a good example for the region. Unresolved border disputes, particularly those between EU member Croatia and its other Western Balkan neighbors (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro), undermine the credibility of the EU enlargement process and, in particular, the member state directly involved. The president of the European Commission, Juncker, reiterated on several occasions that the EU is "not willing to import" open border problems through the membership of a given state. Nevertheless, the European Commission should be adequately "involved" in searching for solutions to the border problems between the WB countries (and between Slovenia and Croatia as well) as it is obvious that these countries are not able to find solutions by themselves. The cooperation with the OSCE in this regard will be useful.

## CONCLUSION

If the structure of the EU is to keep its credibility, then it should first declare strongly its "one voice" commitment to the close cooperation with the WB6 countries, aimed at realizing their overwhelming inclusion in the EU political and economic structure and the emerging common foreign, security, and defense policy as well.<sup>37</sup> If the EU wants to avoid history repeating itself to haunt those who forget the lessons of the past, it will need to demonstrate by its actions the irreversibility of the accession process for the Western Balkans and treat the countries in the region as future members. The EU's policy should not follow the Cold War philosophy but should stimulate the progress of the Balkans as an area of peace, security, and progress - in the context of the future peace and stability in Europe, in which construction and management should have the EU's decisive, autonomous role. The reconciliation is a *sine qua non* condition for achieving results.

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37 A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security, Council of the European Union Brussels, 21 March 2022 (OR.en) 7371/22.

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# Characteristics of International Development Cooperation of New Development Actors: *The Case of Croatia*

Jana Arbeiter<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the characteristics of Croatia's international development cooperation. International development cooperation, which is a very broad concept and often difficult to define, is understood in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a variety of public and private international activities aimed at supporting development priorities, set in internationally agreed development goals. Based on a review of primary and secondary sources, a conceptualization and operationalization of key concepts, and a critical analysis of the characteristics of Croatia's international development cooperation, the article offers insight into how Croatia uses the principles of international development cooperation. With a short history as a development actor, the analysis shows that Croatia perceives traditional development cooperation in terms of official development assistance as inefficient, not offering enough possibilities for actors such as Croatia. That is why its development cooperation focuses through two-way horizontal partnerships, which is more in line with the approaches of new development actors of the Global South. According to our analysis, this can help Croatia maximize the potential of development cooperation as a means of foreign policy.

**KEYWORDS:** international development cooperation, official development assistance, South-South cooperation, new development actors, Croatia

## POVZETEK

Članek obravnava značilnosti mednarodnega razvojnega sodelovanja Republike Hrvaške. Mednarodno razvojno sodelovanje je izjemno širok koncept, ki ga je pogosto težko opredeliti. V 21. stoletju ga razumemo kot različne javne in zasebne mednarodne aktivnosti, ki so usmerjene v podporo razvojnim prioritetam, ki so določene v mednarodno dogovorjenih razvojnih ciljih. Članek na podlagi analize primarnih in sekundarnih virov, konceptualizacije in operacionizacije ključnih konceptov ter kritične analize značilnosti hrvaškega mednarodnega razvojnega sodelovanja, ponuja vpogled v to, kako Hrvaška uporablja načela mednarodnega razvojnega sodelovanja. Na podlagi kratke zgodovine kot razvojnega akterja, analiza hrvaškega razvojnega sodelovanja kaže, da Hrvaška tradicionalno mednarodno razvojno sodelovanje v okviru uradne razvojne pomoči razume kot neučinkovito, ki ne ponuja dovolj možnosti akterjem, kot je Hrvaška, zato se njeno razvojno sodelovanje večinoma izvaja preko dvosmernih horizontalnih partnerstev, kar je bolj v skladu z aktivnostmi novih razvojnih akterjev z globalnega Juga. Na podlagi analize zaključujemo, da tovrstno razumevanje in izvajanje razvojnega sodelovanja Hrvaški lahko pomaga čim bolj izkoriščati potencial, ki ga ponuja razvojno sodelovanje kot sredstvo zunanje politike.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** mednarodno razvojno sodelovanje, uradna razvojna pomoč, sodelovanje Jug-Jug, novi razvojni akterji, Hrvaška

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1 ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jana Arbeiter, PhD, is an Assistant Professor and Research Associate at the Centre of International Relations of the Faculty of Social Sciences (University of Ljubljana). The article is a result of the research programme "Slovenia and its actors in international relations and European integrations" (P5-0177). Email: jana.arbeiter@fdv.uni-lj.si

## INTRODUCTION

Many changes witnessed at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have had a major impact on the international community and, consequently, on the conceptualization of international development cooperation (IDC). For decades, IDC was understood purely in terms of (official) development assistance (ODA),<sup>2</sup> which emerged after the Second World War and was officially defined by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1969. However, this has been challenged by the changing balance of power, new global economic and political structures, and new actors. The conceptualization of IDC moved beyond the bipolar interpretation of the world, where a one-way relationship between countries of the Global North (aid donors) and Global South (aid recipients) determined the characteristics of development cooperation. New development actors, which were often on the receiving end of this one-way relationship, exposed the importance of reciprocal partnerships, where all partners involved can gain and learn from each other.

This paper analyses the characteristics the IDC of Croatia, which is a very interesting and peculiar development actor. As a post-socialist country that became independent in 1991, Croatia experienced the process of post-war reconstruction, peace-building, state-building, and democratic transition. This puts it in a specific place in the global development cooperation community, which is worth analyzing, especially due to the fresh experience and knowledge that it gained on its own development path. Moreover, what makes it interesting is also its dual role in the development community. On the one hand, it is a member of the European Union (EU), one of the most important global development actors providing more than half of the global ODA. And on the other hand, it is a member of neither the OECD nor the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and often defies traditional rules of development cooperation in its strategic documents. In addition, due to its significant economic progress since declaring independence (World Bank, 2020), Croatia officially became one of the developed countries, according to economic standards, although it still claims that it faces some transformational challenges in socio-political and economic terms (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018).

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2 ODA comprises assistance from official sources of financing, which are aimed exclusively at promoting the economic development and prosperity of the countries of the South. It represents official financial flows directed by OECD countries to the countries and territories on the list of recipients of ODA. It can only be provided by countries and multilateral institutions, and constitutes any transaction whose main objective is to promote the economic development and prosperity of developing countries (Alonso, 2018).

Therefore, its position as a development actor could easily be challenged.

However, Croatia offers certain interesting comparative aspects, which make it an interesting development actor to analyze, even though its ODA figures fade in comparison with the major global development aid providers. Knowledge and experience gained from the post-war transition are unfortunately still needed in countries facing armed conflicts or still in this process. Therefore, despite its small size and capacity, Croatia can be an important development partner in this sense (Lulić Grozdanoski, 2015). Its unique position in the development community could also be viewed from the lens of its experience from the EU-accession process, which is crucial for the development of the region—particularly given that most of the potential candidate countries for EU membership are in its immediate neighborhood, and that the EU enlargement to the Western Balkans experienced some fatigue after Croatia’s accession (Jazbec, 2021). Hence, Croatia may soon become a very well-known and well-positioned development partner, with knowledge and experience that developing countries seek (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018).

Even though much attention in the literature has been directed at new development actors, such as newly industrialized countries,<sup>3</sup> post-socialist countries,<sup>4</sup> and Southern Powers<sup>5</sup> (Momani and Ennis, 2013; Tok et al., 2014; Lightfoot, 2010; Oprea, 2012; Sidiropoulos et al., 2015; Arbeiter et al., 2019; Palagashvili and Williamson, 2021), there is still a considerable gap in the research of the IDC used by new development actors, which are small in both size and capacity, but nevertheless shape the IDC system. This is why this paper aims to analyze the characteristics of Croatia’s IDC. Through a review of primary and secondary sources, a conceptualization and operationalization of key concepts, and a critical analysis of the characteristics of Croatia’s IDC, we will try to show how Croatia uses the principles of IDC.

## **WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION?**

International Development Cooperation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a very broad concept that covering a wide range of public and private international activities and interventions aimed at supporting national and

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3 E.g. South Africa, Thailand, Philippines, Mexico.

4 E.g. Slovenia, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia.

5 E.g. Brazil, China, India.

international development priorities (Alonso and Glennie, 2015). It is a foreign policy instrument that has slowly evolved from foreign and development aid, becoming an extremely powerful instrument for countries to contribute to sustainable development and improvement of living conditions for everyone (Heiner et al., 2014; Alonso and Glennie, 2015; Alonso, 2016).

Although encompassing a whole spectrum of public and private activities aimed at supporting national and international development (Severino and Ray, 2009), its origins are rooted in the post-war spirit that strongly determined international relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is impossible to deny the fact that IDC is based on the regulation of the international system that was established after the Second World War and was determined by asymmetric power relations between the Global North and South. Development aid at the time was mainly used to create a favorable (economic and political) environment in the recipient country for (mostly economic) activities of the donor country (Bučar, 2011a). In fact, former colonial relations continued under the pretense of altruism, where despite formal independence, countries of the Global South served as a political and economic “experiment” for countries of the Global North. Although countries of the Global North tried to conceal the idea of economic imperialism behind the idea of altruism (Veltmeyer, 2005), development aid primarily served as a foreign policy instrument to enable a favorable international economic environment for donors’ own economic and political activities (Maizels and Nissanke, 1984; Benko, 1997; Alesina and Dollar, 2000; Bučar, 2011a; 2011b).

However, the political and, consequently, economic emancipation of the countries of the Global South—especially after the fall of the bipolar system at the end of the Cold War era, when the socialist system *de facto* collapsed—led to great shifts in the international community. The countries of the Global South began to develop rapidly, asserting their patterns of development cooperation and challenging the old neoliberal discourse of the Washington Consensus paradigm (Spence, 2012). However, this wave of new state and non-state actors not only influenced the shift from a unipolar to a multipolar international community, but also resulted in a move from a one-dimensional to a multidimensional understanding of development. They challenged the Eurocentric view of development, which was based on the premise that all developing countries are the same and that only a one-size-fits-all approach could bring progress. Their actions influenced the

expansion of development policies and activities needed for ensuring overall development in terms of economic, environmental, social and political factors (Mawdsley, 2012).

New (development) actors from the Global South, which had a unique experience and perspective of their own development, saw the opportunity to share their own practices with partner countries faced with similar challenges, which led to the idea of South-South Cooperation.<sup>6</sup> They demanded more balanced and horizontal relations between development partners, thus directly rejecting the classical approach to development strategies embodied in ODA and the hierarchical relations between donors and recipients (Santander and Alonso, 2018). The departure from the OECD's monopoly over development cooperation not only gave new impetus that allowed new actors to point out and address the shortcomings of 20<sup>th</sup> century development cooperation, but also resulted in the (re)emergence of even more new development (state) actors and an expansion of the concept of IDC (Waltz and Ramachandran, 2011; Chaturvedy et al., 2012; Santander and Alonso, 2018).

Unlike ODA, which was, and still is, aimed exclusively at promoting the economic development and prosperity of developing countries through public funding, IDC is a much broader concept that includes public and private international activities and interventions aimed at supporting national and international development priorities, which are combined into commonly agreed goals (e.g. Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals) (Alonso and Glennie, 2015). It includes a number of (new) actors, which were previously not recognized as development actors. In addition to the countries of the Global South, which were and still certainly are among the most vocal and influential when it comes to developmental goals, principles and activities, we can also observe an increase in the number of official providers of ODA who joined the traditional donors in adhering to DAC rules (e.g. new EU and OECD members) and providers of IDC that are not part of the DAC but nevertheless report to it regularly (e.g. Arab countries, Croatia, etc.) (Grimm et al., 2009; Klingebiel, 2014; Alonso, 2018).

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6 South-South Cooperation is based on mutual benefits, where economic ties are desirable and promotion of own interests of partners in development cooperation is not prohibited (Mawdsley, 2012; Quadir, 2013). Moreover, the relationship between the partners is based on horizontal demand-based ownership (Park, 2011), where partners in development cooperation with an equal position can strengthen their strong political commitment to such cooperation and utilize their comparative advantages (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018).

In addition to state actors and multilateral institutions, IDC activities are also carried out by private companies, foundations and non-governmental organizations. Even though their main purpose was once to only directly carry out development activities, non-state (and private) actors did not actively participate in the shaping of the IDC field (Alonso, 2018). However, companies, private foundations, religious organizations, non-governmental organizations, etc. have now become important actors in the IDC system, contributing to it with additional capital, resources, new priorities and a different organizational culture (Alonso, 2018).

Therefore, it is pointless to limit development cooperation only to ODA and its objectives, where only a limited number of actors may participate (*ibid.*). On the contrary, complex development issues require complex solutions, which is why heterogeneity of actors and processes should not be understood as a weakness, as it allows different actors to develop on their own, regardless of any prescribed recipes experienced by other actors (Benko, 2000). Countries, multilateral institutions and private (non-state) actors can, through their activities, together provide more opportunities for boosting development (Klingebiel, 2014). The old hierarchical donor-recipient relationship, where only a limited number of actors defined the rules of the game, proved as often ineffective. New actors in the development field have challenged existing structures with demands for a fairer distribution of responsibilities among countries, and highlighted the importance that development issues and capacities of individual countries are so diverse that development strategies must take into account a wide range of factors that significantly affect development (Mawdsley, 2012; Alonso, 2018).

International Development Cooperation is therefore much more than just the mere concept of ODA, which is aimed exclusively at promoting the economic development and prosperity of developing countries and represents official financial flows of OECD countries toward the countries and territories on the ODA list of recipients (Alesina and Dollar, 2000; Bučar, 2011a; Arbeiter et al., 2019). In addition to ODA, IDC activities also include total official support for sustainable development (TOSSD),<sup>7</sup> triangular cooperation,<sup>8</sup> Aid for Trade, partici-

7 TOSSD includes all officially supported sources of financial flows that promote sustainable development. It includes ODA activities and non-concessional and other debt instruments, equity and financial investments released from the private sector through official interventions (Alonso and Glennie, 2015; Alonso, 2016).

8 Triangular cooperation involves at least three actors and is not limited to two South-South cooperation partners. In fact, participation of a DAC member is often desirable (Alonso, 2016).

pation of private actors in infrastructure projects, South-South (development) cooperation,<sup>9</sup> capacity building and policy changes that can ensure overall development (Alonso and Glennie, 2015; Alonso, 2016; 2018; Horner, 2020). Among other things, this long list is due to the fact that more and more actors are increasingly involved in development cooperation and are changing its traditional framework.

Hence, the concept of IDC is understood in this paper as a foreign policy instrument aimed at ensuring minimum social standards, reducing international inequality, and providing public goods at the international level (Alonso, 2018). Emphasis is placed on inclusive partnerships of all IDC (private and non-private) actors, which promote transfer of knowledge and horizontal cooperation at bilateral and multilateral levels. They promote mutual sharing of practices and experiences, support active cooperation for the provision of international public goods, and help correct market failures and rules that hinder or undermine the implementation of development goals (Alonso and Glennie, 2015). It is therefore a concept by which all actors (Global North and Global South) take responsibility for reducing poverty and integrating economic, social and political changes, in order to fully contribute to the implementation of development goals.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF CROATIA'S INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

Conceptualizing and understanding IDC is not an easy task and it needs constant reconsideration that reflects development practice(s). This is why understanding the characteristics of the IDC of a specific country is highly important, offering new insights on how different (new) actors understand and implement IDC. New development actors often have important experience from their own development path and have gained unique expertise that gives them an important comparative advantage in the global development arena (Palagashvili and Williamson, 2021). The memory of their development “struggle” is often still fresh in such countries, which is why they are more susceptible to the issues and needs of other (developing) countries.

One such example is Croatia, which walked a rocky but important road from being an ODA recipient to becoming a new development

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9 South-South cooperation aims at achieving development goals, while protecting the interests of the countries of the Global South by uniting at the multilateral level and enhancing efforts for soft empowerment of the countries of the Global South. It creates alternative structures for knowledge exchange and strengthening regional relations between the countries of the Global South. It is a combination of economic and development cooperation (Zimmermann and Smith, 2011; Alonso, 2016; 2018).

partner. Drawing from its own experience of military aggression and humanitarian crisis, post-war reconstruction, democratic transition and becoming a member of the EU, Croatia gained an in-depth understanding of what recipient countries need and how development cooperation can be improved (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018). That is why the next section of the paper focuses on Croatia’s IDC and its characteristics, analyzing what Croatia wants to achieve with its IDC, which actors are helping it to achieve these goals, and how.

**GOALS (AND PRIORITIES)**

The goals of Croatian IDC are defined in the Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Abroad, which was adopted in 2008 and sets the legal basis of Croatian IDC. These goals are then further elaborated in the National Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Republic of Croatia for the period from 2017–2021 (hereinafter National Strategy for Development Cooperation), adopted by the Croatian parliament in 2017, and complemented by the strategic and geographical priorities, which support the implementation of Croatia’s IDC goals.

As presented in Table 1, the general goals of Croatia’s IDC are focused on eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable development, ensuring global peace and security, reducing inequality, promoting economic development and assisting in humanitarian crisis (Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Abroad, 2008, Article 4). These goals are then further elaborated by more specific, strategic goals, which in addition to peace and security promote transfer of knowledge that Croatia gained in its democratic transition toward EU accession and finding its place in the development arena as a new and small development actor (National Strategy for Development Cooperation, 2017, Article 7).

**Table 1: Objectives and priorities of Croatian IDC**

GENERAL GOALS
Alleviation of poverty and hunger
Promoting sustainable economic, social and environmental development
Social and environmental development
Ensuring global peace and security
Promoting general access to education
Improving the quality of basic health services
Promoting economic cooperation
Assistance in humanitarian crises

STRATEGIC GOALS	
1. Promoting policies for the preservation of peace, interdependence of international security and development, prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts.	
2. Promoting and applying one's own unique experiences of war and post-war democratic transition, as well as experiences of EU accession in international development projects.	
3. Creating preconditions for closer cooperation and global recognition of new and small donors.	
4. Significantly involving national political, economic, and social stakeholders, and strengthening the support of the Croatian public for development and humanitarian policy.	
5. Encouraging the implementation of comprehensive development programs with a smaller number of consolidated, targeted and effective projects, and ensuring a gradual increase in allocations for ODA, in accordance with international commitments.	
6. Harmonizing the national legal and budgetary framework with a view to implementing development and humanitarian policies more effectively.	
SECTORAL PRIORITIES	GEOGRAPHICAL PRIORITIES <sup>1a</sup>
The dignity of every human being	Southeast Europe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Education</li> <li>– Health</li> <li>– Protection and empowerment of women, children and youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Bosnia and Hercegovina</li> </ul>
Peace and security and the development of democratic institutions	Southern and Eastern Neighborhood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Post-war transition</li> <li>– Accession to the EU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Jordan</li> <li>– Ukraine</li> </ul>
Responsible economic development	Developing countries

**Source:** *Own elaboration based on the Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Abroad (2008); National Strategy for Development Cooperation (2017).*

In addition to the goals, Croatia also defined sectoral and geographical priorities, which are interlinked and “selected according to the political, economic and security interests of the Republic of Croatia and are intertwined by the specific knowledge and experience in peacebuilding and security, post-war reconstruction, recovery, state-building and comprehensive pre-EU reforms” (National Strategy for Development Cooperation, 2017, Article 5). However, what needs to be emphasized is that sectoral and geographical priorities were also selected based on the core national (foreign policy) priorities, enhancing the capabilities of partners and Croatia’s overall interest to strengthen bilateral cooperation with selected countries (National Strategy for Development Cooperation, 2017, Articles 5.1 and 5.2; MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018).

### Croatia’s IDC goals and priorities set in its legal and policy framework

1a Countries identified within geographical priorities, as set in the National Strategy for Development Cooperation, can be expanded by the implementation program, which is prepared by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia.

suggest that Croatia wants to encourage sustainable development, implementation of sustainable development goals (SDGs),<sup>10</sup> and enhancement of its national political, economic, and social goals (National Strategy for Development Cooperation, 2017). However, it is also important to note that Croatia also identifies its goals in terms of the principles of South-South Cooperation (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018), defining its own development identity through economic and development cooperation, where mutual benefits of partner countries are desirable in order to empower its international influence, economic independence, and reduce its dependence on more (economically) developed countries (Gray and Gills, 2016; Gosovic, 2016; Bergamaschi and Tickner, 2017).

## ACTORS

Croatia's IDC goals, which are set to "create the conditions for closer cooperation and global recognition of new and small donors that have similar and comparable advantages, challenges and priorities," are pursued by different state and non-state actors. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA)<sup>11</sup> is the main actor for Croatian IDC and is responsible for coordination of the country's development and humanitarian activities (OECD, 2021). Together with other ministries and national bodies,<sup>12</sup> it implements IDC based on the principle of policy coherence for development (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019).

Moreover, the comprehensiveness of Croatian IDC also depends on cooperation with other, non-state actors, such as the private sector, civil society, academic community, and religious communities (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018). Croatia claims to actively cooperate with civil society organizations (e.g. Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity) in order to strengthen its IDC (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018; Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019). However, the 2019 Development Education and Awareness Raising report for Croatia states that

10 National Strategy for Development Cooperation (2017, Article 5.1) directly identifies priority SDG areas, such as good health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), sustainable production (SDG 12), life below water (SDG 14), life on land (SDG 15), and peaceful and just societies (SDG 16).

11 The two main directorates responsible for IDC are the Directorate for Economic Affairs and Development Cooperation and the Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (OECD, 2021).

12 The ministries and other national bodies participating in Croatian IDC are the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defense, the Croatian Meteorological and Hydrological Service, the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, the Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Croatian National Bank, the Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Croatian Veterans, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Energy, the Ministry of Science and Education, the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of the Interior, Central State Office for Croats Abroad, etc. (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019, p. 6).

the country does not use the full potential of the civil society sector (Bosanac, 2020). Even though the role of civil society organizations in the development community is often understood as a protector of human rights, democratization, gender equality, etc., which needs to be critical of government wrongdoings, its role in IDC is also paramount. This may be one of the reasons why the MFEA opened in 2021 a call for IDC projects in cooperation with civil society organizations that have experience in implementing such projects and can help empower vulnerable groups, promote economic development, and strengthen democracy in neighboring countries (MFEA, 2021).<sup>13</sup> Only through mutual cooperation and trust between the two can Croatian IDC be enhanced.

While the role of civil society organizations is not as clear as one would expect, this is not the case with Croatian private companies. They are identified as an important non-state actor in its IDC, especially those that have interest and want to be present in the partner countries set as a geographical priority (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018). In addition to private companies, Croatia also sees great value in the role of the academic community, which can help with raising awareness about development cooperation, as well as religious communities, which can help with its development agenda especially in the countries where Croatia has limited diplomatic presence (ibid.).

## ACTIVITIES

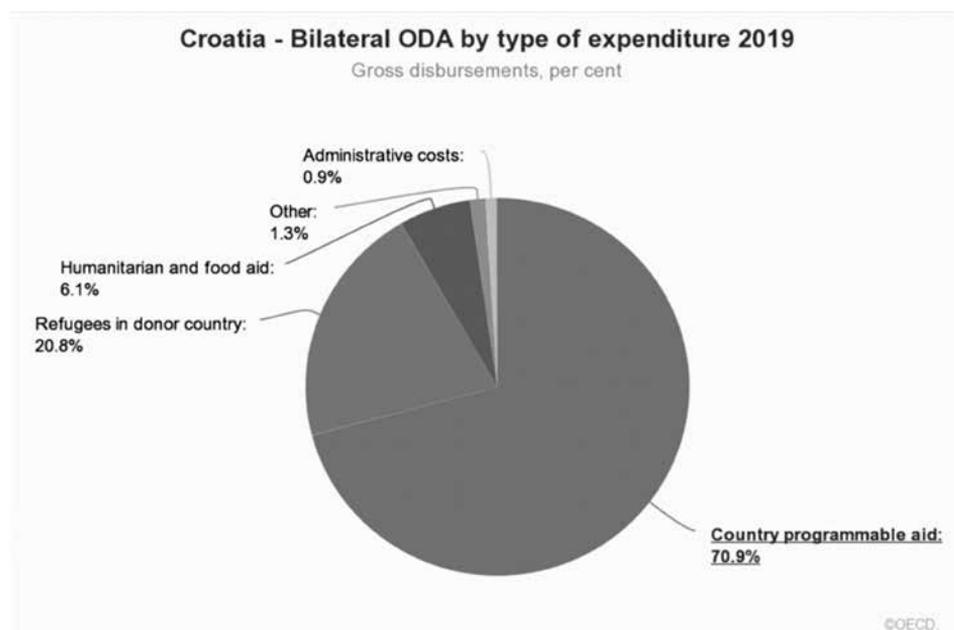
One of Croatia's main goals is to improve its political and economic position in the international community, and enhance its own and its partners' development. It tries to achieve this by involving a diverse range of political, economic, and social stakeholders in its development partnership, using a variety of traditional and non-traditional IDC activities or instruments (MFEA, 2021). Croatia acknowledges the importance of ODA as an important instrument (activity) of IDC, but it does not shy away from other non-traditional IDC activities (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018; Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019; OECD, 2021).

In terms of its traditional IDC activities, Croatia provided in 2019 USD 74 million, which equaled to 0.13% of its gross national income (GNI) for ODA. Preliminary data for 2020 show that Croatia provided 0.15%

<sup>13</sup> Before 2021, the MFEA had published only two open calls for cooperation of civil society organizations in development projects—one in 2014 and the other in 2020 (Bosanac, 2020).

of its GNI for ODA, translating into USD 84.5 million (OECD, 2021). However, more than two thirds (72%) of its development funds in 2019 went through international organizations, 97.4% of which was Croatia's contribution to the EU budget and the European Development Fund (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019; OECD 2021).<sup>14</sup> Croatia's bilateral development spending in 2019 amounted to USD 20.4 million of gross bilateral ODA (which includes earmarked contributions to multilateral organizations). As shown in *Figure 1*, 70.9% of bilateral ODA was for country programmable aid, 20.8% funds for refugees, 6.1% for humanitarian and food aid, 0.9% was spent for administrative costs, and 1.3% was unspecified bilateral ODA expenditures (OECD, 2021).

**Figure 1: Bilateral ODA by type of expenditure 2019**



**Source:** OECD, 2021. *Development Co-operation Profiles: Croatia*.

In line with its National Strategy for Development Cooperation, 73.1% (USD 14.9 million) of Croatia's gross bilateral ODA was allocated to European countries and 7.6% (USD 1.6 million) to countries of the Middle East (OECD, 2021). According to official OECD data (2021), most of the bilateral ODA was allocated to Bosnia and Herzegovina (85.9%),

<sup>14</sup> Croatia's overall multilateral ODA accounted for 78.9% of its total ODA in 2018, whereas an estimate for 2020 is 76.3% of total ODA.

followed by Turkey (7.1%), Afghanistan (3.2%), the Syrian Arab Republic (1.3%), Albania (1.3%), Ukraine (0.6%), and Kosovo (0.6%).

However, according to the 2019 Report on the Implementation of Official Development Assistance of the Republic of Croatia Abroad, the largest development partners were Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, and Kosovo (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019, p. 14). The reason is that the report includes non-traditional activities in development cooperation that are not considered ODA (*ibid.*, p. 15).<sup>15</sup> These activities are knowledge transfer, capacity building, triangular cooperation, South-South cooperation, technical cooperation, and different project-type interventions (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018; Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019; OECD, 2021).

Non-traditional activities in Croatian IDC are implemented based on its partners' requests through direct diplomatic channels or multilateral fora (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018), and encompass programs for resocialization and employment of veterans, mine-risk education, humanitarian demining, advocacy for the prohibition of landmines, activities that provide and coordinate technical assistance to countries in economic and political transition, transfer of knowledge and experience from Croatia's transition, activities in the framework of war reconstruction and reconciliation processes, etc. (*ibid.*, pp. 26–43). Specifically, it reports on its South-South cooperation activities with post-conflict societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Colombia.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is Croatia's key development and economic partner, the training and expertise on the Euro-Atlantic Integration Process is shared, projects on veterans' economic and social rehabilitation are being implemented, as well as projects and activities related to demining and sustainable return of refugees (*ibid.*, pp. 46–48). In Afghanistan, on the other hand, the focus is on small-scale projects aimed at state building, improved education, health conditions, and development of small enterprises. The emphasis of both partners was on strengthening the role of women, youth, and children, which are understood to be key accelerators of change in a post-conflict society (*ibid.*, pp. 44–46). Moreover, Croatia's experience with decommissioning of mine stocks, mine-risk education, and humanitarian demin-

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15 Taking non-traditional IDC activities into account, Croatia reports that its official contribution to sustainable development was primarily directed toward bilateral cooperation, which amounts to 97.7% of its IDC (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2019).

ing is shared in Colombia as well as Ukraine, where it also focuses on psycho-social assistance for veterans and other civilians, and peaceful reintegration of temporarily occupied territories (*ibid.*, pp. 49–53).<sup>16</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Croatia can be described as a unique development provider with distinct characteristics. Comparing it to its northern neighbor Slovenia, a member of the EU, OECD and DAC,<sup>17</sup> one would assume that Croatia's path would be similar. However, this is not the case. Despite being formally recognized as a donor, Croatia is a development provider, which is not a member of the OECD and DAC, even though it reports to them regularly on a voluntary basis. The reasons for this are certainly numerous, but we must by no means forget the fact that Croatia was one of the six republics that made up former Yugoslavia, one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement (Udovič, 2022),<sup>18</sup> which aimed at reducing the economic and political dependence of the South from the North and served as one of the driving forces of South-South cooperation (Gray and Gills, 2016). This leads us to think that Croatian IDC is not defined only by global trends, but also by its historical memory, which is reflected in its present development activities.

As summarized in Table 2, Croatia understands its IDC as a foreign policy instrument for encouraging sustainable development and, most importantly, peruse its own political and economic goals. What is important is that Croatia does not only acknowledge the importance of non-traditional, new development actors, such as fast-growing economies and the private sector, but also welcomes various forms of development cooperation, which is reflected in the characteristics of its IDC. Two-way horizontal development partnership is understood as more effective than the classical donor-recipient relationship, which is why Croatia understands IDC in terms of non-traditional development activities, such as technical cooperation, transfer of knowledge, capacity building, triangular

16 More details on Croatian IDC activities in partner countries are available in its official reports (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018; MFEA, 2022).

17 Slovenia joined the EU in 2004 and at the same time, according to World Bank standards, turned from a development assistance recipient to a donor (Arbeiter et al., 2019). It became a member of the OECD in 2010 and joined the DAC in 2013.

18 The Non-Aligned Movement was established in Belgrade in 1961, based on the idea from the Bandung Conference conclusions of 1955 (Udovič, 2022), which also paved the way for the Group of 77. Both coalitions aimed to defend and promote the collective interests of the Global South and improve common negotiating positions within the international system (Ghali and Ostojčić, 2014; Dimitrijević, 2021).

cooperation, and South-South Cooperation. These activities involve state and non-state actors that can help utilize Croatia's own development experience in the international community.

**Table 2: Characteristics of Croatia's IDC**

GOALS	ACTORS	ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encouraging sustainable development</li> <li>- Implementation of SDGs</li> <li>- Empowering its international (political and economic) position</li> <li>- Enhancing bilateral (economic and development) cooperation with selected countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (and other ministries)</li> <li>- Private companies with interests in partner countries</li> <li>- Civil society organizations</li> <li>- Academic community</li> <li>- Religious communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bilateral and multilateral ODA</li> <li>- South-South cooperation</li> <li>- Technical cooperation</li> <li>- Triangular cooperation</li> <li>- Knowledge transfer</li> <li>- Capacity building</li> </ul>

**Source:** *Own elaboration.*

It is not surprising that Croatia could be described as a “bridge between what is traditionally seen as North and South development cooperation” (MFEA and UNOSSC, 2018, p. 5). Based on its strategic and geographical priorities, it is clear that Croatia shaped its IDC in terms of its own political, economic and security goals. Therefore, its main development cooperation partners are countries in its immediate neighborhood and countries that can (in)directly influence Croatia's security.

In conclusion, one could use this analysis to assume that Croatia is not on its way of becoming a traditional development actor. Based on the conceptualization of IDC presented in this paper, Croatia's development characteristics are more in line with new development actors that help lead the international community toward a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of development and IDC. This positioning offers Croatia a special platform to actively engage in the international development architecture, contributing its own experience in order to maximize the potential for utilizing as many benefits as development cooperation can offer.

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# Brussels Agreements: *Is Serbia recognizing Kosovo step by step?*

Ismet Hajdari<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Under the auspices of the EU, Pristina and Belgrade negotiate in Brussels since 2011 for the normalization of their bilateral relations. Over the years, various agreements were reached on specific disputes as the parties move toward the most sensitive issue: Kosovo's political status. This study examines whether the prevailing trend in the negotiations, so far, could indicate the most likely solution for Kosovo's final status at the end of the process. The pivot around which the research piece revolves is the "First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations" (First Agreement) by which Serbia endorses Kosovo's independent integration in the EU, that is afforded only to sovereign states. After analyzing the legal implications of this and other agreements, and using qualitative research methods, the author ascertains that Serbia, step-by-step, with every new agreement, acknowledges to the government in Pristina a clear legal and political authority over the entire territory of Kosovo. There is not a single agreement reached in Brussels in which Serbia does not anticipate the status of an independent entity for Kosovo. This agreement-by-agreement micro-recognition approach *de facto* lays the groundwork for the final macro-diplomatic recognition of Kosovo by the end of the negotiations.

**KEYWORDS:** Brussels agreements, Kosovo, Serbia, recognition

## POVZETEK

Pod okriljem EU se Priština in Beograd od leta 2011 v Bruslju pogajata za normalizacijo dvostranskih odnosov. V preteklih letih so bili sklenjeni različni sporazumi glede spornih vprašanj, počasi pa se strani približujeta najbolj občutljivemu vprašanju: političnemu statusu Kosova. Ta študija preučuje, ali bi lahko dosednji trend v pogajanjih pomagal pri projekciji najverjetnejše rešitve za končni status Kosova na koncu tega procesa. Osrednje središče, okoli katerega se vrtila celotna raziskava, je »Prvi sporazum o načelih, ki urejajo normalizacijo odnosov« (Prvi sporazum), s katerim Srbija podpira neodvisno integracijo Kosova v EU, ki je mogoča samo za suverene države. Po analizi pravnih posledic tega in drugih sporazumov ter po uporabi kvalitativnih raziskovalnih metod avtor ugotavlja, da Srbija korak za korakom z vsakim novim sporazumom priznava Prištini jasno pravno in politično avtoriteto na celotnem ozemlju Kosova. V Bruslju ni niti enega dogovora, v katerem Srbija tekmeču na drugi strani pogajalske mize ne predvideva statusa neodvisnega subjekta. Ta pristop mikropriznavanja po dogovorih *de facto* postavlja temelje za končno makrodiplomatsko priznanje Kosova do konca pogajanj.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** Bruseljski sporazumi, Kosovo, Srbija, priznanje

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1 ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ismet Hajdari is a journalist and academic researcher. He earned his Ph.D. in political sciences at the South East European University-SEEU (North Macedonia). Lectures European Integrations at the International Business College (IBC-M) in Kosovo. Email: i.hajdari@ibcmirovica.eu

## INTRODUCTION

The paper examines the most likely impact of dozens of agreements – which Kosovo and Serbia have reached so far with the goal of resolving separate bilateral issues in the negotiations held in Brussels under the EU's mediation – on the final agreement on the political status of Kosovo. This issue represents a major dispute between Pristina and Belgrade. Relations between the former belligerents have never been good. They additionally deteriorated since Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008, and continuously produce political antagonisms between the two nations. The primary research purposes that prompted this paper intend to identify the major trend of the Brussels negotiations up to now and to establish if this trend lays the ground for the negotiations to address the most sensitive dispute between the parties - the political status of Kosovo. The paper's hypothesis is that the prevailing course of negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia on the normalization of their relations and resolving other specific issues have been mostly marked by realism, recognizing the reality imprinted by Kosovo's new political status, proclaimed with its declaration of independence.

The paper hypothesizes that both the mainstream of the negotiations until now, as well as the outline of the future status of Kosovo, can be projected on the basis of agreements adopted between the parties in Brussels regardless of whether this was the goal of the parties when they entered the process. Another hypothesis argues that Serbia is tacitly validating Kosovo's own path towards international integration, starting with regional and EU integration, where only sovereign countries are granted participation and membership. To attain the objective of this research, a qualitative approach was employed; secondary data was collected from relevant websites, books, articles, journals, newsletters and publications.

Seeking to provide more insight into the matter, the author pays special attention to analyzing, among others, the core and legal nature of the main accords, starting with the First Agreement. The official negotiating teams of the two countries are not accessible as primary sources for addressing the research question due to their lack of transparency in revealing anything significant about the negotiating process and its background. That is why analyzing the impact of the main accords turned out to be the most logical method to address the

research question. Such an approach leads to the conclusion that Serbia has agreed with Kosovo on a series of exclusively sovereign matters, tacitly granting, through implicit or explicit acts, the status of an independent and equal opponent to its rival on the other side of the Brussels negotiating table. Interpreted from the perspective of realism the true impact of the most important Brussels agreements led the author to assess that the majority of Brussels agreements can be considered a legal overture for the potential final diplomatic recognition of Kosovo.

### **“COMPREHENSIVE NORMALIZATION” – THE FINALE OF DECADE-LONG TALKS**

The Kosovo–Serbia negotiations are a series of EU facilitated talks between the governments of the two states. Rejecting its independence, Serbia still claims Kosovo to be its southern province. Kosovo, on the other hand, considers Serbia to be a neighboring state and expects the negotiations under EU auspices to end with mutual recognition. The negotiations began in Brussels, in March 2011. The dialogue has been chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (who is at the same time the Vice President of the European Commission), and the team in the European External Action Service (EEAS). Meetings and working groups are convened at various levels in Brussels, both technical (at chief negotiators’ level) and political (at Prime Ministerial and/or Presidential level). The Brussels negotiations have been the first negotiations between the two sides, breaking the ice since Kosovo declared independence in 2008. Serbia fiercely opposed the move towards independence, and took the issue to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for their advisory opinion (Lowen, 2009). The Court’s verdict was that “the declaration of independence of Kosovo adopted on 17 February 2008 did not violate international law.”<sup>2</sup> After the verdict, the UN General Assembly adopted, in its sixty-fourth session in September of 2010, a resolution in which the body “acknowledged the 22 July (2010) advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on whether Kosovo’s declaration of independence was in accordance with international law.”<sup>3</sup> The resolution transferred to the EU a mandate for facilitating a dialogue for the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, expecting that the proposed dialogue between the par-

2 <https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/case-related/141/141-20100722-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf>; (Accessed 21 May 2021).

3 <https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/case-related/141/141-20100722-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf>; (Accessed 21 May 2021).

ties would help promote cooperation, achieve progress on the path to the European Union and improve the lives of the people”.<sup>4</sup>

The EU-facilitated negotiations are set to serve the interests of both Kosovo and Serbia. Notably, progress in dialogue, the implementation of agreements reached so far and the normalization of relations with Kosovo, are key conditions for Serbia to advance in its EU accession negotiations. Kosovo’s progress on its EU path is also linked to progress in the dialogue. The first stage of the dialogue, between 2011-2012, was referred to as the ‘Technical Dialogue’. It led to a series of technical agreements addressing the most pressing issues of concern in their bilateral relations and communication, including freedom of movement across the border, for persons and cars. Belgrade has agreed to give Pristina copies of land registries and documents from the Registry of births, deaths, and marriages in Kosovo which it had in its possession prior to 1999; the parties agreed on mutual recognition of each other’s university diplomas; Belgrade has agreed to accept Kosovo Customs stamps stating “Customs of Kosovo”; a mutual trade embargo between Serbia and Kosovo has been lifted, paving the way for goods to flow freely through the two countries; integrated operations at crossing points between Kosovo and Serbia were agreed; independent representation of Kosovo at regional organizations was agreed; and liaison officers have been exchanged between Belgrade and Pristina.

The second phase began in 2013 and is referred to as the “High Level Dialogue”. Chaired by the High Representative-Vice President of the European Commission, it resulted in the First Agreement, signed between Kosovo and Serbia on Friday 19 April 2013. Considered a crowning achievement of the Brussels talks, it promptly triggered significant benefits for the parties in the EU accession processes. “After the EU brokered agreement on Friday, at the General Affairs Council on Monday morning the European Commission formally recommended to EU Member States that EU accession negotiations with Serbia and negotiations on an SAA with Kosovo be opened.”<sup>5</sup> In July 2017, the EU facilitated dialogue moved to pursuing a comprehensive normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. In its 2018 strategy (*A Credible Enlargement Perspective for an Enhanced EU Engagement with the Western Balkans*), the European Commission inaugurated a new ob-

4 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/479/71/PDF/N0947971.pdf?OpenElement>

5 [https://web.archive.org/web/20130430071833/http://ec.europa.eu/top\\_stories/2013/190413\\_\\_eu-facilitated\\_dialogue\\_en.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20130430071833/http://ec.europa.eu/top_stories/2013/190413__eu-facilitated_dialogue_en.htm) (Accessed 12 August 2021).

jective of the Brussels talks between Kosovo and

Serbia: “effective and comprehensive normalization of Belgrade-Pristina relations” (European Commission, 2018). The Commission added that “without effective and comprehensive normalization of Belgrade-Pristina relations through the EU-facilitated Dialogue there cannot be lasting stability in the region” (ibid.).

A comprehensive, legally binding normalization agreement is urgent and crucial so that Serbia and Kosovo can advance on their respective European paths (ibid.).

The dialogue format named by the European Commission as the “comprehensive, legally binding normalization agreement”, has been welcomed by all involved governments and third parties as it was seen as a strong motivator which will aid in accomplishing the task of finding a solution to the political status of Kosovo as the most intractable issue on the agenda of the Brussels negotiations. Although it produced the First Agreement, the High Level Dialogue proved more vulnerable than “the Technical Dialogue”. Led by the Prime Ministers of Kosovo and Serbia, respectively, the negotiations under their conductor’s baton always aligned the tune of the outcomes of the talks with issues deemed important by the domestic public, delaying them when it was in their interest. Namely, postponing negotiations ahead of elections, with the intention of politically profiting from the talks at home as much as possible, and not rushing into compromises which could lead to them suffering political damage at home. In order to accelerate the dialogue and increase the commitment of the negotiating parties to formulate a comprehensive, legally binding normalization agreement at the end of the talks, the Council of the EU, in April 2020, appointed Miroslav Lajčak as EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues (Council of the EU, 2020).

The tasks of the new EU Special Representative will be to achieve comprehensive normalization of the relations between Serbia and Kosovo<sup>6</sup>, improve good neighborly relations and reconciliation between partners in the Western Balkans (ibid.).

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6 The asterisk is the result of a 2012 agreement between the parties to allow Kosovo to represent its institutions without the authority of the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), in regional fora. The Brussels-negotiated Agreement on Regional Representation and Cooperation states that Kosovo shall be referenced at regional meetings and in regional agreements with an asterisk and a footnote reading “This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.”

Under the auspices of the EU, pressured by Lajčak, and attempting to make progress towards a more comprehensive agreement, Pristina and Belgrade recently made “full progress” in the areas of economic cooperation, missing persons and displaced people. Also, as Lajčak pointed out, Pristina and Belgrade “discussed for the first time, as part of the negotiations of a legally binding comprehensive agreement, arrangements for the non-majority community and also the settlement of mutual financial claims and property” (EEAS, 2020).

## **MAJOR AGREEMENTS BETWEEN KOSOVO AND SERBIA**

Kosovo and Serbia have reached dozens of agreements in the framework of negotiations of normalization of relations and the resolution of many open issues among them. There is no publicly available and reliable official overview of everything that Kosovo and Serbia agreed on during the negotiations, which is a significant hurdle in analyzing the agreements and leads to misinformation being spread among their respective audiences. It is unclear if this is a conscious decision by both of the parties, or if it is mere negligence. The parties even differ in the number of agreements reached. The morass of agreements explains the lack of transparency towards the public. Also, since the dialogue is the first form of official contact between the two sides after the 1998-1999 war, both sides have tried to evade accusations of leniency or compromises being made towards the opposite side.

This research could not establish the exact number of agreements reached by the two parties since 2011, when the negotiations were launched. Each of the parties often prefers to talk about the agreements that are in their favor, as Serbia has been doing lately with the obligation of Kosovo to form the Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities (A/CSMM). Agreements like the reciprocal recognition of school diplomas are rarely if ever mentioned by Belgrade. On the other hand, the establishment of the A/CSMM is not a priority for Kosovo, says its Prime Minister Albin Kurti.<sup>7</sup> The priority for Kosovo, according to him, is a mutual recognition between the two countries within the framework of a comprehensive and binding agreement at the end of the negotiations, which would resolve, at the same time, all unresolved specific issues in the package. A list of 17 agreements, that Belgrade has reached with Pristina so far, has been published on the

<sup>7</sup> The Agreement on the A/CSMM “is not in the interest of Kosovo Serbs and is a service of official Belgrade,” said Kurti (<https://www.koha.net/arberi/300252/kurti-e-borrelli-perplasen-per-asociacionin/>).

website of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of the Republic of Serbia (Office for KiM, 2012). In addition, six annexes were also published on this website. They specify the agreements already reached or determine the dynamics of their implementation. It is also not clear whether the parties treat them as annexes or separate agreements. According to Kurti “there are 33 agreements between Kosovo and Serbia, and two thirds of them have not been implemented by Serbia”.<sup>8</sup> An independent and specialized website for the Kosovo-Serbia negotiations says that “Kosovo and Serbia reached 38 agreements”.<sup>9</sup> These agreements are generally classified in agreements and sub-agreements, while the factors upon which these classifications are made, have not been strictly determined. However, according to this source, the typical form of the agreement classification is based on topics, which leads us to 15 agreements and 23 sub-agreements. The agreements are often classified based on their nature, respectively as technical or political. In this regard, 10 agreements are considered political and the rest of the 28 are technical. The Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosova (ASHAK) has taken the most serious step, so far, in determining the results of the Brussels negotiations, publishing a complete set of all agreements, whether political or technical, major agreements or their annexes, agreements or sub-agreements. According to their calculations, Kosovo and Serbia have reached, to this day, a total of 27 agreements under the auspices of the EU (ASHAK, 2020). In the continuation of this research, the paper will focus only on the main agreements that serve the function of addressing the research question and tackling its hypothesis, but not the technical accords like those about car plates, diplomas, mutual recognition of chambers of commerce, etc.

### **FIRST AGREEMENT OF PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE NORMALISATION OF RELATIONS**

Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi and his Serbian counterpart Ivica Dačić, initialed in April 2013, in Brussels, the “First agreement of principles governing the normalization of relations” (The First Agreement). The brief, fifteen-point, text is the first top-level bilateral agreement between Serbia and Kosovo since the 1998-1999 war, (ASHAK, 2002, pp.67-69). Until today, this agreement is considered to be the biggest success of the talks on the normalization of the relations between the two countries. It is also considered to be a crowning achievement

8 *ibid.*

9 <https://dialogue-info.com> (Accessed 25 December 2021).

of the talks where the two parties, acting and treating each other like sovereign entities, have advanced the furthest in negotiating matters which are strictly speaking sovereign. Prelec (2013) says that the First Agreement between Kosovo and Serbia “is an earthquake in Balkan politics.”

The ground lurched, familiar landmarks toppled, the aftershocks are still rumbling and the new contours are only slowly emerging (ibid.).

Bieber (2012) notes that by the First Agreement “it is the first time that Serbia has accepted the Kosovo government to represent Kosovo at the international level directly, rather than being formally represented by the UN mission or being able to participate, but without a mandate.”

As a result, this solution could be path-breaking for Kosovo in the future (ibid.).

The First Agreement contains just two pages and 15 separate articles (Gazeta Zyrtare, 2013). The first 12 of them are dedicated to the normalization of the situation in the tense Serb-majority region of North Kosovo<sup>10</sup> and to the integration of this region into the current rule of law and administrative system in Kosovo as well as to the dissolution of the parallel and Belgrade-backed systems which have existed and functioned in North Kosovo since the war. Paragraphs 1 to 6 concern the establishment, scope, and functions of the proposed A/CSMM. The First Agreement envisages in its first article that the A/CSMM will be established in Kosovo.<sup>11</sup> Paragraphs 7 to 9 concern police and security structures and conclude that “there shall be one police force called the Kosovo Police. All police in northern Kosovo shall be integrated in the Kosovo Police framework. Salaries will be only from the KP,” (Ibid.). This has been a major step taken by Serbia towards the recognition of the government in Pristina as the only power exercising governmental functions effectively in the northern part of the country, over which Serbia earlier had political control. One of the major preconditions for

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10 The region is composed of four municipalities with ethnic Kosovo Serb majority: North Mitrovica, Leposavić, Zvečan and Zubin Potok. The region functioned independently from the institutions in Kosovo, as they refused to recognize the independence of Kosovo.

11 Political wrangling over Kosovo's status between Pristina and Belgrade has resulted in Kosovan authorities not allowing yet the formation of the A/CSMM. This organization would later turn into the major dispute between the parties in the Brussels talks particular regarding the A/CSMM's powers: for Serbia, it should be a union or community of municipalities with executive powers, while for Kosovo, it is merely an inter-municipal association like the Kosovo wide that already exists to help local governments coordinate and share expertise. The paper will not deal further with this dispute as it does not reflect significantly on the major research topic as well as on the research question and hypothesis.

an international recognition of a state is control over its territory. De la Cuba (2011, p.125) ads that the government of this state “must be in principle effective.”

It must exercise an effective control over the population and territory of the State meaning it must be in a position to exercise all governmental functions effectively (ibid.).

Scholars agree that the First Agreement *de facto* recognizes Kosovo’s sovereignty over the northern part of the country which, with the encouragement by the Serbian government, had taken a consistently hard line towards and refused any loyalty to or cooperation with the government in Pristina. This tacit transfer of sovereignty over North Kosovo was further confirmed by a commitment of both parties, included in Article 8 of the First Agreement, that “members of other Serbian security structures will be offered a place in equivalent Kosovo structures”. Prelec (2003) assesses this as “the transfer of all security sector staff in Kosovo from Belgrade’s payroll and jurisdiction to Pristina”. This “transfer of authority” becomes even more important, knowing that owing to its direct physical connection to Serbia through Kosovo’s northern border and effective control of the fields of education and health-care by the Serbian system, many considered earlier North Kosovo to be a locked Serbian territory instead a Serb enclave within Kosovo. The territory was by far the largest of the Serb-dominated areas within Kosovo and, unlike the others, directly linked to, related to, and even partly geographically integrated into the Serbian mainland. Belgrade’s transfer of control over this region handing over its security structures to Pristina was additionally enhanced by Article 10 of the First Agreement, which envisages the judicial integration of the region in the Kosovo system by stating that “the judicial authorities will be integrated and operate within the Kosovo legal framework” (ASHAK, 2020, p.68).

When the separate and Belgrade-loyal rule of law structures in North Kosovo were dislodged by their integration into the Kosovo rule of law system, the third step in the transformation of the political reality in North Kosovo, brought by the First Agreement, consists of Serbia’s compliance with paragraph 11, which relates to the participation of North Kosovo’s Serbs in the upcoming local elections that were organized by Kosovo authorities. The paragraph stated that “municipal elections shall be organized in the northern municipalities in 2013

with the facilitation of the OSCE in accordance with Kosovo law and international standards” (ibid.).

The local 2013 elections were held in November. These were the first elections in which Kosovo Serbs participated in significant numbers since the independence declaration of Kosovo. They have continued to do so ever since, and this is another tectonic pro-Kosovo outcome of the First Agreement. The beginning of the participation of ethnic Serbs in North Kosovo in the political life of the Republic of Kosovo and the integration of the rule of law sub-system in the North into Kosovo’s one were considered by many observers as fundamental concessions made by Serbia towards setting up Kosovo’s sovereignty over the whole territory of the country.

### **THE “EUROPEAN” RECOGNITION OF KOSOVO BY SERBIA**

Further analysis of the First Agreement shows that, unintentionally or not, all the above-mentioned changes in the functioning of North Kosovo were just a prelude for an accord between Kosovo and Serbia envisaged in Article 14 of the First Agreement, which most explicitly recognizes Kosovo’s separate journey towards the membership in the EU. “It is agreed that neither side will block, or encourage others to block, the other side’s progress in their respective EU paths,” reads the First Agreement (2003, p.2). The recognition by Serbia of Kosovo’s independent path towards the EU, at first glance, might seem to be an insignificant commitment without any major effects on the current state of their relations, in particular if Belgrade continues to not recognize Pristina. But, the majority of independent commentators argue that paragraph 14 of the First Agreement essentially represents a separate and high-level political recognition of Kosovo by Serbia as an independent entity on its path to the EU and in developing its relations with the Union, including those concerning its European integration. Prelec (2013) appraises these developments as “tectonic shifts, whose effects will be felt no matter what happens with the early attempts to implement the deal”. Also, the fact that the parties have been discussing and making agreements on their European future, according to Lehne (2013), means that dialogue has “a strange dual nature. It was about resolving open problems between long-term adversaries, but it was also about meeting the conditions necessary to make further progress toward the EU.”

In its founding acts, the EU has committed itself to be open to all European countries who want to be a part of it, provided that they deliver in their reforms and transformations as required by European standards. This advantage of becoming a member of the EU can only be used by countries on the European continent. They can embark on the European integration journey if they see their future in EU membership and if they are willing to adopt and implement European standards in all major areas and fields of their legislature and institutional functioning. Therefore, from the EU point of view, only states and not provinces or territorial autonomies can embark on the EU path. In its conditions for membership, the European Commission insists that “the Treaty on the European Union states that any European country may apply for membership if it respects the democratic values of the EU and is committed to promoting them”.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, providing an independent “European path” for Kosovo that the two parties agreed to in Brussels, can only mean one thing: it is the path that leads Kosovo’s transformation from non to EU country and its admission into the European family, respectively. Commenting on paragraph 14, Serwer (2013) said: “This provision acknowledges implicitly that Kosovo is an independent and sovereign state. It will progress towards the EU at its own pace and enter separately without Serbia exercising a veto”. Serbia’s reconciliation with Kosovo’s independent journey in European integrations and towards becoming a member of the EU can be interpreted as a politically soft or “European” recognition of Kosovo by Serbia. It is not a *de jure* acknowledgment of the Republic of Kosovo but a recognition of the right of Kosovo to independently conduct its foreign policy in relation to the EU or, as Coppieters (2018, p.345) points out, it is allowing “an entity to be identified as a state, irrespective of whether or not it is recognized, [...]”. “In accordance with this agreement, each will apply for EU membership as an independent and sovereign state.” (Serwer, 2013).

All these comments confirm that paragraph 14 of the First Agreement contains the greatest official deviation of Serbia from the policy of non-recognition of Kosovo as an independent state so far. It can also be considered the country’s most significant move towards the full recognition of Kosovo to act as an independent state within the European framework. But, it does not mean that the status dispute between Kosovo and Serbia has been overcome. Lehne (2013) says that after the First Agreement “the full normalization of bilateral relations between

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12 [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/conditions-membership\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/conditions-membership_en)

Serbia and Kosovo is still years away,” but the First Agreement “should make it easier to complete the journey when the time comes”.

Researchers have also been interested in wider impact of the First Agreement:

All this will—if correctly implemented—represent an important step toward more normal relations between Serbia and Kosovo and should help to defuse one of the remaining hot spots in the Western Balkans (Lehne, 2013).

Of course, relations between Serbia and Kosovo will remain on the agenda and the agreement does not resolve the many remaining questions, but it might turn out to be a bigger step than the mediators and the parties have anticipated. (Bieber, 2012).

There are only two sure things about the agreement, both are very important, and neither is spelled out anywhere in its text. The first is that the Serbian government has given up on keeping northern Kosovo in its system and has ceded its authority to Pristina. The second is that Belgrade has implicitly recognized that Kosovo is a state (Prelec, 2013).

Even envisaging a set of separate local powers for the North can serve as additional evidence that the First Agreement explicitly provides for the integration of the North into Kosovo’s constitutional and legal framework with respect to the police, the judiciary and with regard to elections. The 15-point document grants devolved powers to North Kosovo pertaining to economic development, education, healthcare and urban planning, and a number of mechanisms that allow for a certain degree of autonomy in justice, policing and electoral matters in relations with Pristina. The North also gets a district appellate court and a role in choosing a district police chief.

Alongside Thaçi and Dačić, on behalf of the EU, the First Agreement was initialized by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission, Catherine Ashton, who was also chaired the negotiations that preceded the conclusion of the agreement. By this, the EU recognized that it was a third party to this deal, elevating the First Agreement to a multilateral one by being a third-party in its conception. Hailing the First Agreement, the European Commission (2013) reaffirmed the logic of

the separate and independent paths of Kosovo and Serbia inaugurated by the First Agreement when it comes to their European integration, saying in a press release that it was a “historic agreement” between Kosovo and Serbia that “paves the way for decisive progress in their EU perspectives”, (Ibid.). This made Lehne (2013) underline that “the Serbia-Kosovo agreement proves that clever diplomacy combined with the power of the prospect of EU enlargement can still deliver significant results”.

### **AGREEMENT ON REGIONAL REPRESENTATION AND COOPERATION**

In 2012, Kosovo and Serbia reached an agreement that enabled Kosovo to participate in regional organizations and arrangements as an independent political entity (Office for KiM, 2012). The Agreement on Regional Representation and Cooperation confirmed Kosovo and Serbia’s “commitment to effective, inclusive and representative regional cooperation” and, further, envisaged that Kosovo “participates on its own account and speaks for itself at all regional meetings”. Moreover, it stipulates that Kosovo will enjoy the same status at “meetings with EU institutions in the context of the European agenda,” (Ibid.). The agreement makes no mention or qualification of Kosovo as a state, but grants it the same rights that only states enjoy at international gatherings: to take part equally, speak on its own and sign multilateral agreements. Bieber (2012) describes importance of this recognition:

Serbia recognizes Kosovo as a separate entity with a government, while stopping short of international recognition. Such a solution could open the door for membership in other international organizations and also eventual EU membership. The step to extending this solution from regional meetings to international organizations is small and has now become conceivable.

Judging by the profound effects that this agreement on the strengthening of Kosovo’s international image and subjectivity, the author is of the opinion that it could rank immediately after the First Agreement by its importance. Nevertheless, Serbia has managed to slightly relativize Kosovo’s ability to participate independently in regional organizations and gatherings, because the agreement stipulates that the only denomination that can be used for Kosovo at regional forums is the one with a footnote (Kosovo\*) that reads: “the designation is without prejudice to position on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion

on the Kosovo declaration of independence” (Office for KiM, 2012). In the author’s perspective, the footnote represents the most controversial of all of the Brussels agreements as it tries, unsuccessfully, to pacify two irreconcilable international official assessments: “Kosovo can enjoy substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia” (UNSC Resolution 1244<sup>13</sup>) and that “the declaration of independence of Kosovo adopted on February 17 did not violate international law” (ICJ, 2010).<sup>14</sup>

## AGREEMENT ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS

After two years of negotiations, in 2013, Kosovo and Serbia reached the Agreement on Telecommunications. They agreed to allocate an international country code to Kosovo, to define the border of telecommunications operations between the two parties and to regulate the issue of unlicensed operators from Serbia in Kosovo:<sup>15</sup> VIP, Telekom Srbija, and Telenor (Balkans Policy Research Group, 2013). The agreement granted Kosovo the right to administer its own country code, like other independent states do. In January 2016, Austria applied for the country code on Kosovo’s behalf, and in December 2016, the **International Telecommunications Union (ITU) allocated** to Kosovo the +383 international country code. Kosovo’s country code started to function in February 2018 and it is when the country won its telecommunications independence. Serbia’s recognition of Kosovo’s sovereign right to regulate its telecommunication and administer its own international country code represent a huge step forward for Pristina towards universal international recognition. While a separate international country code alone cannot make a state independent, however, it strengthens Kosovo’s independent image and sovereign standing in the eye of the international community. To Philpott (2020):

Sovereignty, though its meanings have varied across history, also has a core meaning, supreme authority within a territory. It is a modern notion of political authority.

That was exactly what the agreement acknowledged to Kosovo, enabling it to become the holder of telecommunication sovereignty on

13 [https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/old\\_dnn/Res1244ENG.pdf](https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/old_dnn/Res1244ENG.pdf)

14 This topic merits a separate academic research and will not be evaluated further in this paper.

15 Prior to the agreement, these telecommunication providers had operated in the territory of Kosovo along with domestic operators, creating two parallel telecommunication systems in the country: The Serbian unauthorized system and Kosovo’s system.

its territory. At the same time, Serbia's green light to Kosovo's own country code is not only a new contribution to the EU's project of the negotiations building bridges between Kosovo and Serbia but can be considered a "another building block in the embankment of Kosovo's independence," being *de facto* continuously built during the Brussels negotiations.

### **AGREEMENT ON INTEGRATED BORDER MANAGEMENT (IBM)**

Kosovo and Serbia reached the Agreement on Integrated Border/Boundary Management (IBM) in 2011. Using the IBM model of the EU, the Agreement envisaged the gradual establishment of joint points at all six border crossings (Merdarë, Bernjak, Mutivodë, Jarinje, Dheu i Bardhë/Konçulj, and Muçibabë/Depce), along the entire border line between Kosovo and Serbia that stretches over a total of around 380 km. Joint IBM points would be built with financial assistance of a total of over 21 million euros from the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The Agreement envisages that three of these crossing points (Merdarë, Bernjak and Mutivodë) would be hosted by Kosovo and the other three (Jarinje, Dheu i Bardhë/Konçulj and Muçibabë /Depce) by Serbia. The joint IBM points (and later permanent IBM buildings) will be located in the neutral zones, and officials of Customs, Police and other border agencies will work and perform the necessary controls next to each other and, even, together. The two governments agreed to not display symbols of their respective jurisdictions in these common IBM areas (ASHAK, 2020, p.29). The aim of IBM was to establish the free movement of people and goods, by enhancing coordination within and between agencies (Border Police, Customs, Veterinary and Phytosanitary services) and ensure open, but secured, borders. Parties committed to gradually harmonizing their legislation with the EU Acquis and, in particular, to applying the concept of IBM, given that both countries are part of the EU's Western Balkans agenda. So far, only the Mutivode and Merdare crossing points are completed. Construction for the remaining four permanent crossing points has yet to begin, leaving the IBM agreement still unfulfilled (*ibid.*).

IBM marks a successful and important agreement as it addresses and successfully solves an issue which has been always one of the most sensitive subjects of the negotiations: the line of the territorial division between the parties. The Agreement also represents the continuation of Serbia's tacit and, step by step, partial recognitions of Kosovo within

the Brussels negotiating framework. Rudolph (2005) stresses the importance of borders for constitution of a state by saying that “borders serve as an increasingly important symbolic function in maintaining stable conceptions of national identity that constitute the cornerstone of the nation-state”. For the first time in the Brussels dialogue, IBM would ensure a clear assignment of applicable legal responsibilities and liabilities to each party’s jurisdiction, recognizing the reality on the ground that the parties are territorially divided by a border. The Agreement was built upon the fact that there are sovereign regimes on both sides of the border that control the movement of people, goods, services and capital across their territories and borders. With the IBM Agreement, Serbia tacitly not only recognized Pristina’s jurisdiction over Kosovo’s territory. Moreover, establishing crossing points between the two territories, Belgrade *de facto* quietly also agreed to principally demarcate the existing border between Serbia and the sovereign jurisdiction of Kosovo, although *de jure* it does not officially recognize its existence.

Another significant implication of the IBM Agreement concerns North Kosovo, whose secession from Kosovo and annexation by Serbia many scholars identified as Belgrade’s main political goal and gain which would compensate for the loss of the entirety of Kosovo. According to the Agreement, everything that applies in general to the newly established regime along the whole border between Kosovo and Serbia is also valid in Kosovo’s northern border section and at two border crossings (Brnjak and Jarinje) with Serbia. By adopting the IBM Agreement, Belgrade has recognized *de jure* the north as an inseparable part of Kosovo’s territory. Concerning the North, the Agreement recognizes that the border between Kosovo and Serbia stretches over Bernjak and Jarinje and not some 40 kilometers further south and along the Ibar River between northern and southern Mitrovica. Bernjak and Jarinje are being controlled nowadays by police and customs officers employed by Pristina and with the flag emblem of the Republic of Kosovo on their shoulders.

### **AGREEMENT ON CUSTOMS STAMPS**

Kosovo and Serbia reached the agreement on Custom Stamps in 2011 (ASHAK, 2020, p.27). With only three articles, it is the shortest of the agreements that the parties reached in the negotiations. But this does not diminish the significance of this agreement, as it relates to an ex-

clusively sovereign matter. The second article of the Agreement reads: “The Custom stamps, stating ‘Kosovo Customs’, as confirmed to all CEFTA parties, will be accepted [...]”.<sup>16</sup> Inclusion of CEFTA<sup>17</sup> in the text of the Agreement can be interpreted as that the recognition of independent Kosovo Customs was not approved directly by Belgrade, but it was settled within the CEFTA mechanism, which recognized Kosovo Customs stamps on behalf of its members, including Serbia. However, the recognition of the Kosovo Customs stamps by Serbia is indisputable, whether it is done directly or through CEFTA or done tacitly or publicly. Since its conclusion, the Agreement has been implemented on the border between Serbia and Kosovo. Pristina can boast of being a holder of one of the most important symbols, but also prerogatives of sovereignty, which only independent states have and results in the collection of duties levied by a government on imported goods. Evaluating a role that the customs service plays for independent countries, Adeniji (2018, p.1) says:

“The customs service plays a major role in the economic wellbeing of any given country. Equally, significant aspect of the same is that it plays a key role in the sovereignty of a country. “

The implementation of the Custom Stamps agreement alone took time, but over years, it made significant progress, enabling the free movement of goods; regulating the trade between the two countries, allowing Kosovo’s export to and through Serbia; and enabling Kosovo to join the World Customs Organization, an important international step towards its universal recognition by advancing its economic relations and trade with the world.

## **AGREEMENT ON ENERGY**

Serbia and Kosovo reached the Agreement on Energy in 2013. This Agreement enabled Kosovo to operate independently in controlling its energy system and cooperating with other states in the field of energy transmission (ASHAK, 2020, p.40). The necessity to normalize the energy relations between Kosovo and Serbia came as a result of Serbia’s control over Kosovo’s energy infrastructure that continued

16 The other two articles of the agreement concern the obligation of Kosovo and Serbia to “make every possible effort to ensure free movement of goods in accordance with CEFTA” and that “all accompanying documents and communication will also reflect this usage”.

17 The Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) is an international trade agreement between countries mostly located in Southeastern Europe.

even after Pristina declared independence. Kosovo's Transmission System Operator (KOSTT) was part of SMM (Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia) Control Bloc, which was coordinated by Serbia's Transmission System Operator (EMS). KOSTT could not operate independently also because it was not recognized by the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity (ENTSO-E). It disabled Kosovo to charge other countries' companies using its energy transmission routes, resulting in financial losses for Kosovo.

Agreement on energy aimed at normalizing energy relations between the two parties' transmission system operators (KOSTT and EMS). In December 2019, KOSTT and Albania's transmission system operator (OST) signed the agreement on establishing a regulatory block of energy system Kosovo-Albania. It was followed by an agreement between KOSTT and ENTSO-E, signed in April 2020, on terms for connecting to the European electric grid. This marked the end of Serbia's control over Kosovo's energy infrastructure and the reliance of its system on the Serbian power grid. The agreement established Kosovo's electro-energetic independence from Serbia by establishing Kosovo's control over its energy system. Nowadays, Kosovo is no longer a part of the SMM control block but operates as an independent regulatory zone within the **Kosovo-Albania Regulatory Block (AK block)**, under the synchronous area of Continental Europe.

#### **AGREEMENT ON EXCHANGING LIAISON OFFICERS**

The Agreement on Exchanging Liaison Officers between Kosovo and Serbia was reached in 2013. Parties agreed to have the liaison offices set up inside the premises of EU delegations in both countries (ASHAK, 2020, p.63). This is the first time Kosovo and Serbia have ever exchanged official representatives. The aim was to establish direct relations and communications between the parties and set up the pre-conditions for directly solving everyday problems that might appear. Comparing the status guaranteed by this Agreement to the liaison officers on the both sides, with the one guaranteed to accredited diplomats by the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (UN, 1961), it can be concluded that there are no essential differences between the two diplomatic statuses. Kosovo-Serbia liaison officers are treated in the same way as diplomatic representatives of sovereign states. They enjoy identical privileges that diplomats have by default: inviolability of office, documents and official correspondence; 24/7 protection of

official premises and private residence; personal inviolability and 24/7 protection; freedom of movement and travel; immunity from civil or criminal prosecution in receiving country; tax exemption for all articles for official and personal use; diplomatic car plates; and the same treatment of the family (except for personal protection) (Ibid.). What is more, the two liaison officers enjoy additional one privilege that accredited diplomats do not have. Namely, the agreement does not provide for the possibility that they may be declared *persona non grata* by the host country, which is envisaged for diplomats under Article 9 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations if they engage in activities incompatible with their diplomatic status. Here is what the Convention says on the matter:

The host nation at any time and for any reason can declare a particular member of the diplomatic staff to be *persona non grata*. The sending state must recall this person within a reasonable period of time, or otherwise this person may lose their diplomatic immunity (ibid., pp. 4-5).

Thus, the agreement provides the liaison officers of Kosovo and Serbia with maximum diplomatic privileges that are enjoyed, under international law, only by diplomatic staff of sovereign countries. In practice, this is of great political importance for Kosovo since Serbia, as the receiving country, has allowed for it to post its diplomatic representatives to Belgrade for the first time since the declaration of independence.

#### **AGREEMENT ON MUTUAL VISITS OF OFFICIALS**

The parties in the Brussels negotiations set, in 2014, specific rules and modalities for the visits of Kosovo officials to Serbia and vice versa. Accordingly, they agreed by mutual consent that respective parties will announce and notify the other side of visits by their officials to the other party (Office for KiM, 2012). The agreement is based on absolute equality of the parties when it comes to official visits, introducing in this regard complete reciprocity between Kosovo and Serbia. It can be interpreted as a diplomatic victory for Kosovo, as Pristina has been in the position, for the first time, to grant or refuse official visits from Serbia. Another important privilege of Pristina, established by this agreement, consists of the right of Kosovo high officials to visit Serbia. The agreement *de facto* recognizes the sovereign right of the parties to exercise jurisdiction over their territory by deciding, in this case,

whether representatives of the other party will be granted or rejected to visit their territory.

### **AGREEMENT ON THE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT**

The Agreement on the Freedom of Movement was reached in 2011 (Balkans Policy Research Group, 2013), enabling citizens to travel freely within or through the territory of the other party. The most important part of the agreement are the clauses that enable citizens to cross the border with an ID card and recognize each-others' driving licenses. Practically, it means that Kosovars can go to Serbia with their Republic of Kosovo IDs. Prior to this agreement, respectively from 2008, Kosovo citizens were not allowed to travel to/through Serbia unless they had a Serbian or UNMIK ID/passport. They could neither enter Serbian territory with RKS vehicle plates. Instead, were required to buy three-day provisional plates and 15-days vehicle insurance.<sup>18</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

The research piece finds that, within the framework of the Brussels agreements, Serbia has *de facto* reconciled with a much more independent status for Kosovo than Belgrade recognizes it *de jure*, by still considering the youngest European democracy a “southern Serbian province”. A series of sovereign powers over Kosovo have been granted to Pristina which by international law belong and can only be enjoyed by governments that are sovereign on the entirety of the territory they declare as their own. Based on the current mainstream of the Brussels negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia and the content of the agreements reached so far between them, the conclusion of the research conducted for this piece also reached a positive answer to the question whether is it possible to project what the talks on the future status of Kosovo could lead to. The research confirmed the hypothesis that the output of the negotiations largely fits into the reality established by Kosovo's declaration of independence, since Serbia has so far agreed that Kosovo: take an independent path of integration within the EU and independently cooperate with the Union, which is

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18 A dispute over national license plates recognition between Serbia and Kosovo has escalated into a troubling situation involving border protests and military presence in September 2021, when Kosovo decided to establish a reciprocity in recognizing Serbian license plates. According to a provisional agreement a temporary measure (until a permanent solution is found) consists of introducing stickers that will be placed over each country's insignia on number plates at border crossings in order to cover them up.

a right that only European states enjoy; independently participate and sign agreements at regional conferences; establish sovereignty over at times secessionist Serb majority in North Kosovo; achieves telecommunications sovereignty by obtaining its own international area code; withdraws from Serbia's electricity distribution network; establish six border crossings along the entire border line with Serbia which indicate the exact position of the boundary between the two sides not unlike a true demarcation; use its own customs stamps; accredit official representatives in Belgrade with the highest diplomatic privileges identical to those recognized by the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (UN, 1961, pp.1-21); as well as the ability to grant and reject visits by Belgrade officials to Kosovo. Also, citizens of Kosovo can travel to Serbia or through its territory with the IDs issued by the Republic of Kosovo.

The research also established that the agreements empowered Kosovo to govern all essential issues that have, until now, been brought up on the agenda of the Brussels negotiations. These issues mostly concern exclusively sovereign topics. They already have, and will have, such great legal implications for future relations between the two parties that it can be concluded that for the past eleven years, topic-by-topic, Serbia has been extending a discretionary recognition of Kosovo, reaching as of now a stage that can be qualified for the most part as *de facto* recognition of Kosovo, or as Baty (1922, p.483) says as "*de facto* entrance into relations".

Any entry into relations with the new state, as a governing authority, implies recognition of its statehood. The same, *mutatis mutandis*, is true of the new government of an old state. (ibid., p.469)

Seeking an answer to the research question, the author confirmed that the prevailing course of negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia and the agreements on resolving specific problems, for the most part, have been marked by the recognition of the reality in Kosovo launched by the independence declaration. It leads to a conclusion that both the prevailing trend in the negotiations so far as well as the outline of the future status of Kosovo can be projected on the basis of agreements adopted between the two sides in Brussels up until now and before the end of negotiations. Consequently, this leads to a grounded confirmation of the second hypothesis, which argues that Serbia tacitly validates Kosovo's own international path, agreeing with its regional and EU integrations as an independent entity.

There is no major issue or dispute that has not been resolved in Brussels in favor of Kosovo. The most important one that remains to be solved is finding a common ground on its status. With each new agreement, Serbia has moved a step further away from treating Kosovo as its constituent part, and, in parallel, a step more towards recognizing Kosovo's political uniqueness. The most impressive testimony to the silent evolution in Belgrade towards the tacit recognition of the factual situation in Kosovo is the First Agreement. As Belgrade's biggest stride in the recognition of its negotiating partner in Brussels, it acknowledged and granted Pristina a clear legal and political authority over the entire territory of Kosovo, affecting the domestic legal orders in both Kosovo and Serbia.

Even some scholars close to Serbia's state ideology admit that within the scope of the Brussels negotiations Serbia does exactly what it resolutely publicly rejects back home, ie that there is a discrepancy between the daily churn of rhetoric towards Kosovo and the fundamental concessions made at the negotiating table in Brussels. Denunciating the First Agreement, Serbian international law expert, Smilja Avramov (2013) asked how it is possible that "the government from Belgrade reaches an agreement with a part of its own territory". "I think that the agreement is indirectly the recognition of Kosovo," (ibid.). The similar assessment came from Russian academic Elena Guskova, who said that "the agreement between Belgrade and Pristina is not only formally an agreement, but it is an agreement on the recognition of Kosovo's independence, because they have a border, Serbian municipalities are completely subordinated to the Constitution of Kosovo..." (ibid., p.2).

The sovereign competencies over Kosovo that were acknowledged so far during the Brussels negotiations are so conclusive, that Serbia will never again be legally in a position to call for *Restitutio ad integrum* even if negotiations, in the worst case scenario, fail and Serbia never recognizes Kosovo. Simply put, the Brussels agreements has launched the snowball of Serbia's recognition of Kosovo, and the snowball grows bigger with each new tacit coming to terms with the reality of its independent existence. Prelec (2013) says that even only with the First Agreement it will be easier for Serbia one day to give up Kosovo:

This is the first high level agreement between the two states, and shows that Serbia can deal with Kosovo as an equal. It is a kind of de facto recognition of Kosovo and that may be its greatest long-term significance.

Whatever else happens, it is easier today to imagine that Serbia may one day formally recognize the independence of its former province.

Elaborating on the division within the EU over its recognition policies and using the example of Kosovo, Coppieters (2018, p.343) says that, in this case, the Union managed to overcome this division “by engaging actively with the contested entity.”

Such a policy—where the EU is divided on the question of recognition but united on the question of engagement—may be defined as a ‘policy of engagement without recognition’. (ibid.)

Settling exclusively sovereign matters involving Kosovo through implicit or explicit acts, therefore, anticipating the status of an independent entity for its negotiating rival on the other side in a step-by-step manner, Serbia applies the same “engagement without recognition policy”. This policy of agreement-by-agreement adopts micro-recognitions of Kosovo, laying the ground for final and macro-diplomatic recognition of Kosovo, if and when the day for it comes. This does not mean that *de jure* recognition will come soon. Those among the political elite in Belgrade who will dare to take this step nowadays will certainly risk to commit a political suicide. Since it is realistic to expect that Serbia will continue to refuse to recognize Kosovo in the long run, the parties should focus on making another stride by the end of the Brussels talks, like Serbian commitment not to lobby against universal international recognition of Kosovo despite its refusal to do so itself, which would enable peaceful coexistence and cooperation between the two Balkan neighbors.

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# Clifford D. Simak's Way Station: *In the Diplomatic Service of the Galaxy*

Milan Jazbec<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on diplomatic aspects of the pioneer classical science fiction novel *Way Station* by Clifford D. Simak. Its main diplomatic characteristic is providing consular services, in this case on behalf of the Diplomatic Service of the Galaxy. The combination of consular services and protocol activities offers support to travelers across the Galaxy, which is the main diplomatic theater in the case of the *Way Station*. This is a de facto consular posting situated on Earth, providing a short-cut route to other parts of this wing of the galaxy. The liaison officer, i.e., a consul, is the inhabitant of the Earth on a remote American mid-west location, far away from the public eye. His diplomatic immunity takes the form of immortality, though only when he is within his posting's premises. The disclosure of this fact coincides with a Galactic political turmoil with the fate of Earth in the focal point. Simak created a skillful narrative, full of diplomatic aspects and messages, to a final relief of the Galactic authorities, represented in the novel by a Diplomatic Supervisor.

**KEYWORDS:** diplomacy, science fiction, Clifford Simak, *Way Station*, protocol, liaison officer, consular services

## POVZETEK

Prispevek analizira diplomatske vidike enega pionirskih klasičnih romanov znanstvene fantastike *Tranzitna postaja* Clifforda D. Simaka. Osrednja diplomatska značilnost romana je zagotavljanje konzularnega servisa v imenu galaktične diplomatske službe. Kombinacija konzularnih storitev in protokolarnih aktivnosti nudi podporo potnikom preko galaksije, ki je osrednje diplomatsko prizorišče v *Tranzitni postaji*. Ta je dejansko konzulat na Zemlji, ki zagotavlja bližnjico v druge dele galaksije. Častnik za zvezo, dejansko konzul, je Zemljan v zakotnem kraju ameriškega srednjega zahoda, daleč od oči javnosti. Njegova diplomatska imuniteta se kaže v nesmrtnosti, ki jo ima, kadar se nahaja znotraj uradnega prostora. Njegovo razkritje sovпада z galaktično politično krizo, v ospredju katere se znajde usoda Zemlje. S spretno pripovedjo pripelje Simak svoje besedilo, polno diplomatskih vidikov in sporočil, do zaključka, v olajšanje galaktične avtoritete, zastopane v osebi diplomatskega nadzornika.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** diplomacija, znanstvena fantastika, Clifford Simak, *Way Station*, protokol, častnik za zvezo, konzularne storitve

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1 ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Milan Jazbec, PhD, Professor of Diplomacy, poet and writer. Former Ambassador of Slovenia to North Macedonia (2016 – 2020) as well as to Turkey (2010 – 2015), accredited also to Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria, and State Secretary at the Slovene Ministry of Defense (2000 – 2004). Employed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia. Email: milan.jazbec@gmail.com

## INTRODUCTION

All in all, diplomacy is about three key actions: observe and report.<sup>2</sup> And as for the third one, it's about protecting interests of bodies of private and corporate law of the sending state in the receiving state.<sup>3</sup> The first sentence comprises diplomatic functions and diplomatic relations, while the second one those of consular affairs. Diplomatic business has been since mid-sixties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century codified in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the consular one, since the same period, additionally in the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Diplomatic business includes both diplomatic and consular affairs, meaning that diplomats can also exercise consular relations<sup>4</sup> and consuls are by definition diplomats as well (and can, too, under certain conditions, exercise diplomatic functions, i.e., diplomatic acts<sup>5</sup>).

Diplomats do not always perform their work in diplomatic mission in teams of various size, structure and shape, but also all alone, as a one-person team. This means that diplomats do not always perform their duties in huge, noble and distinguished premises of ministries of foreign affairs of a receiving state or in their missions abroad as well as in even bigger halls, where international conferences take place, but also on outer postings, working alone. In such cases, diplomats usually exercise consular functions, mostly taking care of those passing through for whatever reason. Circumstances and theatres of such care-taking vary significantly, since social and other conditions that determine diplomatic work, differ heavily. As a matter of fact, in diplomacy almost unprecedentedly.

We dwell significantly on these latter and much fewer known aspects of diplomatic business later on when we focus our research interest on one of the groundbreaking science fiction novels, namely the *Way Station* by Clifford D. Simak. His main protagonist operates physically in his homeplace, taking care about traveling demands and needs of passersby, but his diplomatic environment encompasses far more than the whole galaxy. For his outside world nothing particular is going on,

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2 Comp. functions of a diplomatic mission, Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Article 3. Comp. also Jazbec, 2021.

3 Comp. second function of a diplomatic mission, Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Article 3, and consular functions, Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, Article 5. Comp. also Jazbec, 2021.

4 Comp. Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Article 3, paragraph 2, and Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, Article, 3 and 70.

5 Comp. Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, Article 17 (Performance of diplomatic acts by consular officers).

practically unnoticed and most of the time even less important. This is, though, for the maintenance of a wider spread galactic transportation of species and goods of vital interest. This way station is part of an ever-growing transportation infrastructure that enables swift, easy and rational commuting across the oceans of stars.

This specific aspect of consular work, as a part of a broader diplomatic context, and its analysis is in our focus. Also, in this case our approach remains the same as in our previous researches: works like the one discussed here help us understand and comprehend diplomacy better and more thoughtfully. At the same time, they also enrich diplomatic studies and the study of diplomacy. Such works offer a more comprehensive view in complying with the literature works as well. It is also important to point out clearly that some science fiction authors include diplomacy in their narrative on purpose, as an inevitable part of the scenery. Some do this between the lines of their texts, but still rather easy recognizable, and some do not do this at all. They may perhaps encompass the essence of diplomatic business in a broader sense with possible details included, but diplomatic aspects and element have to be detected and uncovered. Their texts should yet be interpreted this way. Interpreted successfully, to find out basic aspects and elements of diplomacy from various points of view and of its understanding. Simak's *Way Station* could be listed as an exemplary piece of this sort.

We try to answer two research questions in this paper. Firstly, how does the distinguished author present and perceive bilateral diplomacy and the role of the diplomat on the posting, acting primarily as a liaison officer, the inhabitant of the Earth in the service of the Galactic Diplomacy, who offers all the possible and necessary support to travelers across the Galaxy, and secondly, what the contribution of this monumental work of Simak is to diplomatic studies and their expertise on the phenomena of diplomacy as exercised in this text.

The following methods are used in this research: analysis, comment, comparison, synthesis, interpretation, generalization, and – since the author is a career diplomat – also the method of observing through one's own participation.<sup>6</sup> Hence also a lot of his own experiences are included in the texts, not necessarily always supported by quotations from related sources. This is, however, one of the ways to form theoretical backing, stemming from practical examples and expertise from

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6 For more on the latter method see Burnham, 2004 and Mason, 2002.

the spot, having in mind their contemplation. Last but not least, with our research endeavor we try to further add to the innovative study of diplomacy in literature, in particular in science fiction.

## **DIPLOMACY AND VARIETY OF ITS APPEARANCES**

Diplomacy could be – and as well is – a lone business of a one-person posting, implementing primarily one task only. This particular type of noble and attractive profession as it is often described (comp. Barder, 2014) presents the diplomatic mainstream, but it is nevertheless of immense importance. Practically, diplomatic business at its core could be executed in numerous ways and approaches, all with the very same goal; what makes no difference from the point of view of importance of a single diplomatic activity, act or deed. What counts is the fulfilment of the mission. Additionally, through the process of its completion, such one-goal missions usually are *via facti* complemented with certain and unexpected topics. Diplomacy is a dynamic process of a kaleidoscope nature, unpredicted and colorful.

Diplomats who on remote locations take care about comfort and protection of those passing through, work by definition far from public eyes – although diplomacy as an activity and profession used to be fully like this.

How does such occupation look like? We will present a few elements that we see important and will hence upon analyze the Simak's discussed novel.

Firstly, a liaison officer's job, if we do not speak about those engaged at multilateral events and bilateral visits, but of those on outer postings, is an individual task. Secondly, we could generally define it as a job of a consul. This is the closest to the definition. Thirdly, the closest, since such activity also demands strong knowledge from protocol, meaning an eye for consistency, formal and human touch within it, operational flexibility and sticking to the rules of profession. However, fourthly, it is advisable to have also expertise and knowledge from the broader field of diplomacy, conditionally speaking politically diplomacy. Fifthly, basic knowledge and skill from negotiation is advisable as well. Arranging issues for, by the rule, various categories of formal passers-by, who represent at least indirectly their authorities, demands also a certain dose of persuasion skills. Last but not least and sixth, the neces-

sity to stay off the scene is a must. Officials, who commute, by the rule do not neither need nor want publicity. If they do, they do it mostly at the final destination and not at whatever stopover transit location. And in any case, by their own choice.

Out of any listing and an indispensable part of any diplomat, in such outer posting in particular, are diplomat's professional and personal characteristics. We speak here about the qualities of an ideal diplomat: "Truth, accuracy, calm, patience, good temper, modesty and loyalty" (Nicolson, 1988, p.67), with "intelligence, knowledge, discernment, prudence, hospitality, charm, industry, courage and even tact (..) taken for granted" (ibid.).

This is more than understandable, if we have in mind the fact that the wellbeing of dignitaries, who commute across, is in hands of a consul, whom passersby do not know, mostly will never see again, but they – passersby – deserve and demand proper diplomatic treatment. And also a personal one, since at the end of a day, diplomats/consuls have to have a human touch. Representing states and performing on their behalf, without having a touch for people, is not much worth. This goes in particular for consuls, who deal with destiny of a single human. Or, as it is the case in the Way Station, with beings of different forms, origins and sensitivity that commute across the Galaxy. The consul must take care of them all the best he can.

This is even more important, since in the case of Way Station, we speak about a supra national diplomatic authority and service. It must be like this to be able to provide relevant service for such variety of top commuters. Four questions rise in such cases. Firstly, recruiting persons for diplomatic business, as we already described it, from entities that are not members of such supra national authority. Secondly, the process of selection for the diplomatic job. Thirdly, qualifications that selected persons have to fulfill. And fourthly, concrete needs that determine both the recruitment and skills of recruited persons.

With this, the latter one, we also point out what Benko (1998, p.40) says about the diplomacy, namely that it is always in a function of a concrete social and historical situation. One can easily imagine that, although diplomatic service of a Galaxy could be an extrapolation of diplomacy as we know it, social and historical circumstances in which it operates

are completely different.<sup>7</sup> Still, basic premises, methods and approach remain the same. This means that we stem from the understanding of diplomacy as Barston (2006), Berridge (2022), Feltham (1994), Nicolson (1988), Satow (1994) and a variety of others see it. Diplomacy is the management of relations between states (and other actors), negotiation, maintaining of an international dialogue, settling issues by peaceful means, but also skill, profession, organization and process. It is performed by career diplomats primarily, but also by other ad hoc envoys, representatives, influential persons, as a need may demand.

As such, this profession is an everlast, since a precondition for all those aspects of diplomatic activity is the physical presence of the representative of the sending authority at the receiving authority. Nothing can replace this form on the long run. And nothing out of that frame would be diplomacy. But this could be – and is – complemented by a variety of choice.

## WAY STATION

The discussed author – Clifford D. Simak – and his novel – *Way Station* – represent what we understand today as a classic of the science fiction genre. Along with Asimov, Bradbury, Clarke, Dick, Heinlein, Le Guin to name but few, Simak has ever been in the narrowest circle of those, who defined this area of fiction writing.

*Way Station* was first published in 1963, coming out after several of his other science fiction texts (like *Time and Again*, *City*, *Ring Around the Sun*, and *World of the Red Sun* as his first one, appearing already in 1931), becoming and remaining his masterpiece (Williamson, 1988). Along with winning three Hugo Awards and one Nebula, a decade and a half later, Simak was awarded the Grand Master Nebula for his lifetime achievements, by the Science Fiction Writers of America.<sup>8</sup>

*Way Station* and its author belong to that stream in the genre that situate their works in their familiar, not to say home place: “The setting is the rural Midwestern landscape he has loved all his life” (ibid.). Additionally, and even narrower, the author portraits much of himself in the main character: “Enoch is Simak himself, at least in his solid de-

7 The fact that we discuss a fictional diplomatic service does not influence our analysis. This is the way of analysis of any fictional piece of literature.

8 <https://nebulas.sfwaw.org/grand-masters/clifford-d-simak/>

gency, his love of nature, and a deep humanism that holds him to his post while generations live and die outside the time-shielded house" (ibid.). Both of these are pretty much normal and understandable for any fiction writing. His style is so fluid, so natural and persuasive that it becomes very easy for practically any reader to identify with the surrounding, while trying to copy paste and adapt it to his home place.<sup>9</sup> Heinlein (quoted from Williamson, ibid.) defines this Simak's approach like that: "I think this result from similar backgrounds and similar tastes. You were born on your maternal grandfather's place - and so was I, three years later and three hundred miles southwest. We are country boys who will never get the mud off our boots".

Simak places his discussed narrative there, where we all belong to: to the native Earth and within it to the place, where one is born and spends his life. And also the plot's time is pretty much close to that of the author's current: "Sixty-odd years younger than Enoch (...)" (ibid.).<sup>10</sup> So he chose to define with *Way Station* that spans however across the Universe, with rather unconventional science fiction parameters: basically his place and his time. Alien beings that commute through *Way Station* and pass by from places all across the Universe, via facti come to the Earth and bring the scenery to it as well. Hence, it is not the main protagonist that would need to travel to different worlds to meet unknown beings from there. Also, the concrete time dimension of the *Way Station* is nothing particular for a science fiction classic: novels by definition perform their stories in past, close or remote. However, it is the main character's immortality what defines science fiction's approach and substance mostly, along with the galactic space and institutions that he is in a service of. Overall, *Way Station*, much contrary to the *Time and Again*, defines one of the approaches in science fiction with, to simplify, here and now.

The plot is simple as well. The main protagonist was chosen by the Galactic Authority to become a caretaking post (his old house as premises) for those dignitaries, who commute across the Universe. Enoch thus became part of the service, doing his job consistently, efficiently and without noise as well as any particular care for world (i.e., Earth's) politics. Nevertheless, his outstanding age, practically immortality, giv-

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9 This author still remembers, when reading *Way Station* for the first-time decades ago, that he immediately positioned the House in the cottage across the road, close to the creek, where his old neighbour was living. She was close to eighty, living alone the major part of her life, being very polite, nice, open, and with a certain, unexplained veil of mystique around her.

10 Simak was born in 1904 and died in 1988.

en by a special protection and for the purpose of the service, attracted interest of the intelligence service and things got complicated. However, the upheaval echoed across the Galaxy and was on the edge of provoking an unprecedented diplomatic scandal. On the other side, it coincided with quarrels and different interests between various alien species of the Galaxy in their power struggle. Enoch, for his personal qualities and natural skills as well as with the help of his neighbour Lucy, brought the consequent galactic affair to a successful end. Consequently, the Earth maintained a possibility to become part of the galactic community, and the protagonist was enabled to continue with his mission. Throughout the story, the author is demonstrating an outmost ability of providing synergy and complementarity of his perception of nature and dimensions of an immense cosmic vastness in various senses. Diplomacy is an essential tool of achieving this in a most persuasive way.

In a remote American Midwest (“...on a high bluff above the junctures of the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers, near the town of Millville. That quiet rural landscape has always been home to half of his imagination.” – *ibid.*), far from public eyes and interest, the story of cosmic relations and rich with diplomatic aspects, from quite a routine to a galactic climax, is masterfully developed to a classical piece of the genre. It has been so particular for Simak’s style (“What brought in the new readers was a new kind of story – better written, more human, more sensitive /.../.” – *ibid.*) that brings together “rural America (...) and the great galactic society” (*ibid.*). This formula builds upon “a sense of mystic kinship of land and life, of time and space” (*ibid.*), resting on Simak’s “strong theme of universal understanding” (*ibid.*). Overall, it produced a style, typical for Simak, “usually described as gentle and pastoral”<sup>11</sup>, being a skillful and touchy combination of a master of pen.

We dare to understand this as Simak at its best as well as diplomacy within at its best (“*Way Station*, with its strong theme of universal understanding ...” – Williamson, 1988). One could find a confirmation for this in the fifth function of a diplomatic mission: “Promoting friendly relations between the sending State and the receiving State, developing their economic, cultural and scientific relations”.<sup>12</sup> Diplomats use each opportunity to develop friendly relations and this is their univer-

11 <https://nebula.sfw.org/grand-masters/clifford-d-simak/>

12 Comp. functions of a diplomatic mission, Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Article 3. Comp. also Jazbec, 2021.

sal mission. This mission does not recognize any borders in either time or space.

## **THE PERCEPTION OF DIPLOMACY IN THE WAY STATION**

### **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

Though diplomatic dimensions of the science fiction novel *Way Station* are not so recognizable at a first glance, there are plenty of them. Looking at the novel through diplomatic glasses, the text presents a comprehensive piece of diplomatic edition. It is placed within a highly unusual setting, revealing it through the story of a man that was chosen by the galactic authority to be part of the official commuting service that spans across the universe. De facto he was recruited as a consul in the service of the Galaxy. This presents the main diplomatic frame of the novel. To introduce the scenery, we will have a look at how he was chosen and why, what the diplomatic premises of the way station looked like, and what his duty was.

The representative of the Galactic Administration appeared in the courtyard of Enoch Wallace on one hot summer afternoon: "The day was hot and sultry and there was not a breath of moving air" (Simak, 1988, p.24). Enoch was sitting on the door steps, resting, contemplating and observing the surrounding: "He did not see the traveler until he turned in at the gate" (ibid., p.25). But it appeared more than that: "There was something about this traveler that disturbed him" (ibid.). That "certain strangeness" (ibid.) cleared up soon, since "the stranger was not sweating" (ibid., p.26).

The meeting continued to be an embarrassing one:

"And you have a far way to go?"

"No," the stranger said, "I believe that I have gotten to the place where I am going" (ibid.). (...) "I have been looking for a man and I think that man is you" (ibid., p.27)

"But me," Enoch said, astonished. "Why should you look for me?"

"I was looking for a man of many different parts. One of the things about him was that he must have looked up at the stars and wondered what they were".

"Yes," said Enoch, "that is something I have done" (ibid.). For a moment, he seemed to be taken away by the topic, long forgotten.

"I've sometimes wondered," Enoch said, "if the stars are other suns,

might there not be other planets and other people, too" (ibid.). (...)

"You believe that?" asked the stranger.

Enoch said, "It was just an idle notion."

"Not so idle," said the stranger. "There are other planets and there are other people. I am one of them."

"But you ..." cried Enoch, then was stricken into silence.

"For the stranger's face had split and began to fall away and beneath it he caught the glimpse of another face that was not a human face" (ibid., pp. 27-28). The shock of the getting together was rounded up. He named the stranger Ulysses henceforth.

Enoch was not chosen by chance, as we learn from their discussion later on, at one of their next meetings:

"You'll do," the alien said. "You will do all right. I did not misjudge you and it makes me proud."

"Misjudge me?"

"You do not think that I just came walking in here cold? I know about you, Enoch. Almost as much, perhaps, as you know about yourself. Probably more" (ibid., p.52).

His memories were still alive as if it were only yesterday: "That was how it started, Enoch thought, almost a hundred years ago. The campfire fantasy had turned into fact and the Earth now was on galactic charts, a way station for many different peoples (...). There were no such things as strangers" (ibid., p.28). So, it meant "there was intelligence throughout the universe" (ibid., p.33).

According to the Earth time, the way station was established soon after the end of the American Civil War.<sup>13</sup> In the novel, though, we follow its story, appearing in the theatre, almost a century later.<sup>14</sup> Hence, the main promotor must have been the oldest person in the world: "Chronologically, he is one hundred and twenty-four years old" (ibid., p.2). His physical appearance, though, was much different:

"You say he looks like thirty."

"Not a day beyond it. Maybe even less than that" (ibid., p.3).

After his recruitment, they transformed his old farmhouse into the premises of the way station, along the galactic diplomatic and security

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<sup>13</sup> From 1864 to 1868.

<sup>14</sup> The exact Earth year is 1964; one year after the Way Station was published.

rules and practice. Though, from the outside and from the distance, the timeworn building remained as if it were the same. His antiquated home was turned to diplomatic premises, totally renewed and protected. Still, a careful observer would notice the difference: "Bathed in that light, the house was somehow unearthly, as if, indeed, it might be set apart as a very special thing" (*ibid.*, p.12). Additionally, from the outside, "[T]here was something covering this house which made it slick and smooth – so smooth that dust could not cling upon its surface nor could weather stain it" (*ibid.*, p.15). Further on, also "[T]he windows were black. (...) He could see nothing but the blackness, as if the light hit the window and was absorbed by it, sucked in and held by it" (*ibid.*).

With this, we are already getting acquainted with the galactic system of traveling across the universe, "travelling star to star" (*ibid.*, p.28).<sup>15</sup> Highly advanced, educated and knowledgeable, though among themselves extremely different civilizations have developed a system of way stations all across the galaxies that enables them to commute.<sup>16</sup> The network was slowly spreading to different parts of the universe. To be able to travel through that part of the galaxy, where our solar system is, the need appeared to establish one station also on the Earth: "Because," Ulysses said, "we are a traveling people. We need a travel station here. We want to turn this house into a station and you to keep the station" (*ibid.*, p.54). It was a natural part of a broader cosmic outreach: "They're expanding the network all the time," said Enoch. "They needed a station in this solar system to carry out their extension into this spiral arm" (*ibid.*, p.70).

Though Enoch being highly surprised, the explanation was simple: "We could not build a station, for then we'd have people asking who was building and what it might be for. So we are forced to use an existing structure and change it for our needs. But the inside only. We leave the outside at it is, in appearance, that is" (*ibid.*, p.55). The house, transformed into station, became thus part of huge logistical endeavor for travelling purposes: "From star to start," Ulysses said. "Quicker than the thought of it. Faster than a wink" (*ibid.*). Or with a comparison that fits in the time when they first met: "This is just another railroad and the Earth is just another town and this house will be the station for this new and different railroad. (...) For it will be no more than a resting

<sup>15</sup> For more on how the system worked, see Simak, 1988, pp.62-63.

<sup>16</sup> It is obvious what Simak is telling to the reader: education and knowledge is the way forward for Homo sapiens on its progress to the civilizations of the galaxy: "Out among the stars lay a massive body of knowledge (...)" (1988, p.61).

and a switching point. No one on the Earth can buy a ticket to travel on the railroad” (ibid.).<sup>17</sup> His career as a keeper started, employed by the Galaxy.

A team of anonymous architects and experts from the Galactic Service (“...the screwball architects, who had designed, and the slap-happy crew of workmen who had built the station.” – ibid., p.170) completely changed the house’s interior: “It was all gone and now one room remained. (...) Now the house was one great room. One side of it was the galactic station and the other side the living space for the keeper of the station” (ibid., p.31).<sup>18</sup> All in all, “the house was no more than a house, although wondrously preserved” (ibid., p.12), but it “was alien now” (ibid., p.29). At the end of the day, everything remained to be the same as it ever has been for the last century: “He lives in the same house. Not a thing’s been changed. And the house apparently has aged no more than the man” (ibid., p.10).

Being in the service of the Galaxy as a diplomat, caretaker meant that Enoch should be at disposal to his authorities regardless of the time dimension he used to experience and lived it. Hence, he was attributed what according to the Earth standards would be immortality: “... he did not age inside the station, that he only aged when he stepped out of it, that he aged an hour or so working in his garden, that he could age for fifteen minutes sitting on the steps to watch a lovely sunset” (ibid., p.47). Since beings from the universe using the system lived incomparable longer than it was by Earth standards, they need a station keeper that would age wise to be close to their merits. It would make no sense to recruit and educate a new one each 40-50 Earth years that must have been much shorter than the galactic ones. It would present too much of an unnecessary work for the Galactic Recruitment Service. Ulysses indicated this clearly at one of their early meetings: “... for the two of us shall work together for many of your years” (ibid., p.52). According to diplomatic standards, one could understand this new aspect of his personality as the diplomatic immunity.

17 Railroad came to Millville, Enoch’s birthplace, when he was just a kid (ibid.). After almost a century in the galactic service, he must have been an outstanding, extraterrestrial expert in those things, no more in a need of such primary comparisons.

18 The description of the house and the comparison with the railroad evokes in this author his childhood memories: his uncle and the spouse of one of his aunts were keepers of the railroad. Their duty was to close the crossing of the railroad with the country road each time when a train was passing by (for compensation on this, they lived in the railroad cabin, using it both as a house and as the official place, without any renting costs). The system used to be manual (as a child, this author once did that procedure by himself, a thrilling experience) and later on electricity driven. It was abolished in early seventies of the previous century, when the automatic one was introduced.

As the time was passing by and Enoch being fully engaged in his new assignment, which he liked extraordinarily, he was getting more and more alone. Apart from daily contact with the postman Winslowe Grant and occasional contacts with his first neighbour Hank Fisher and his daughter Lucy, he wasn't neither seeing nor meeting anybody. That loneliness was obvious to him: "But there was one thing, the aliens could not provide - the human contact he'd maintained through Winslowe and the mail" (*ibid.*, p.47). Such feelings grew strong, when he was not outside: "Once shut inside the station, he'd be cut off completely from the world he knew, for the newspapers and the magazines were his only contact" (*ibid.*, pp.47-48). As the official keeper, he also did not need to bother about his living necessities, since what he needed it was all "part of the ration regularly provided him by Galactic Central" (*ibid.*, p.64).

He practically lived a diplomat's life as if he were on an outer posting, that according to his superiors in the Galactic Administration he was. With a practical difference - he was serving in his home. But that fact only increased the feeling of him being lonely and alien as well. He was bound to and torn between the Earth and the galaxy, asking himself whether he is himself still a human or not: "He still was human. Funny, he thought, that he should stay human, that in a century of association with these beings from the many stars he should have, through it all, remained a man of Earth" (*ibid.*, p.29). But still, he was breathing thin air: "A man, he told himself, must belong to something, must have loyalty and some identity. The galaxy was too big a place for any being to stand naked and alone" (*ibid.*, p.48). Not seldom, he felt "[A]s if he were a man who has walked away from his own humanity" (*ibid.*, pp.18-19). No wonder, since he "had a greater world than anyone outside this station had ever dreamed about. He did not need Earth" (*ibid.*, p.98). And - how could it have been otherwise?

From the early days of coming from the war, he maintained the habit of taking a regular walk, to keep him fit and well: "He needed sun and soil and wind to remain a man" (*ibid.*, p.99). However, with the course of time in the galactic diplomatic service, those walks showed another important aspect: "It was the walks, he thought, more than anything, perhaps, that had kept him human and a citizen of Earth" (*ibid.*, p.48).

It was not only this. Enoch also remained in his time with those long-forgotten habits, although he was following development of sci-

ence and the rest: “He’s an anachronism, something living from another age” (ibid., p.18).

### **KEEPING THE COMMUNICATION – INSTRUCTIONS AND THE JOURNAL**

Diplomats, when on posting, work per instructions. Generally speaking, those instructions are summed up in the five functions of a diplomatic mission, but on a concrete, daily level its instructions that guide the diplomat. Therefore, a communication system is established between the central diplomatic authority and its missions around the globe, galaxy, and universe, whatever the diplomatic environment consists of. Additionally, diplomats are persons of pen: they write reports (cables) and various papers throughout their career. And many of them keep journal for the official use or only personal reasons; for possible memoirs or just by habit.<sup>19</sup>

Instructions are basically the only thing that provides a feeling of being a part of a big system. They give a notion of identification with the diplomatic service and are not only a pure working guidance. When speaking of diplomatic relations and business, those instructions primarily refer to political aspects of relations, while in the case of consular affairs; they are very practical, full of logistic data and similar technicalities. Hence, they must be exact, clear and straight to the point. There shall not be the slightest sense of a possible misunderstanding in the interpretation by the receiver (or by various receivers, if it appears so).

When an instruction was coming in, he first, when being in the house, heard the typical sound: “The message machine whistled shrilly (...)” (ibid., p.19). Following this, “[T]he machine built up its hum and the message began to form on the plate, faint at first and then becoming darker until it stood out clearly” (ibid., p.20). Then Enoch was able to read:

“NO. 406301 TO STATION 18327. TRAVELLER AT  
16097.38. NATIVE THUBAN VI. NO BAGGAGE. NO.  
3 LIQUID TANK. SOLUTION 27. DEPART FOR STA-  
TION 12892 AT 16439.16. CONFIRM.” (ibid.).

<sup>19</sup> Among the most known and best diplomatic diaries count “The Moscow Years: 1956-1958” and “The Moscow Years: 1969-1971”, authored by Veljko Mićunović, twice the Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow. In between he also served as the Ambassador to the United States 1962-1967. Comp. <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/08/03/obituaries/veljko-micunovic-66-is-dead-was-former-yugoslav-envoy.html>

His reply was immediate:

“NO. 406301 RECEIVED. CONFIRM MOMENTARILY.” (ibid.)

This is an example of a typical instruction, not only in this science fiction masterpiece.<sup>20</sup> We know who is sending whom and for what purpose. An average reader cannot decode numbers of the sending and the receiving authority or the time. However, it is also not necessary. Both of the authorities are well acquainted with them and this will do. The text by itself is short, dry, formal and exact. No phrases or similar stylistic additives are needed. And the reply – confirmation as a matter of fact – is, as we can see, even dryer, shorter and formal as well. One of the main reasons why such texts should be very rational and short, is, apart their undoubted equal understanding by all included, also the fact that both the sender and the recipient send and receive many of such texts continuously. Hence, with such stylistic approach they are at least to a certain extent less burdened with reading.<sup>21</sup> The instruction is then followed by preparations to receive the commuter, along his wishes and needs.<sup>22</sup> The respected author offers a few case examples of diplomatic instructing and reporting in his text.<sup>23</sup>

One can also claim this is an example of a typical, already a routine diplomatic, better to say consular instruction. It demands from the receiving post and its keeper to act accordingly and provide the service it is in a need of the passerby. Their numbers went high and the majority hardly appeared twice or more: “There were many of them who passed through only once, although there were a few who showed up every week or so – old, regular travelers who had become close friends” (ibid., pp.67-68). Ridiculous or not, he got to learn more individuals in the universe than on Earth: “He knew no one in London nor elsewhere in the world” (ibid., p.57).

To enable beings transiting through the station (immediately, with practically no stop over time, or with a short stop, or even – exceptionally – visiting him) two materializers were provided, the usual one and the official, emergency one. They were securely connected and positioned to the tank through which the commuter appeared, and

20 Comp. Asimov (1988), Clarke (1995), Le Guin (1992) etc.

21 For more on the style and structure of diplomatic reporting, see Jazbec, 2009, pp.169-173.

22 We provide the presentation of this action later on.

23 Comp. Simak, 1988, p.85.

to the one through which he left (ibid., p.56.). As it was the case with the message machine, also the materializer gave a note upon the arrival: “Across the room the materializer beeped for attention and Enoch swung around. The Thuban had arrived. He was in the tank, a shadowy globular blob of substance (...)” (ibid., p.59). And the travel was continuing “with the creature itself going on and on until it reached its final destination to carry out the purpose of its journey” (ibid., p.63).

Anyway, in the case of Ulysses coming to meet Enoch, communication shared a personal touch. It is even friendly and warm. An example would tell the following:

“NO. 406,302 TO STATION 18327. WILL ARRIVE  
EARLY EVENING YOUR TIME. HAVE THE COFFEE  
HOT. ULYSSES.” (ibid., p.49)

This casual and relaxed mode of communication was in spite the fact that Ulysses was “an inspector for this and several other stations” (ibid., p.56) and henceforth “could have used the official materializer at any time he wished without prior notice” (ibid.), what he never did. Enoch felt “a touch of pride” (ibid.) for this attitude and understood it as “a courtesy, which all the other stations on the great galactic network might not be accorded (...)” (ibid., pp.56-57). This, i.a., illustrates how in diplomatic business personal relations are important. On the spot, at the receiving authority, nothing can replace direct, face-to-face, personal contact between the two sides. And the efficiency of formal relations or of executing the instruction, depends also on the personal note. It is people that provide relation and the relation depends on people. Or on any other beings or creatures, not in any case necessarily human.

Consequently, his reply went in the same manner, professional and with the touch as well:

“NO. 406302 RECEIVED. COFFE ON THE FIRE.  
ENoch.” (ibid.)

Three issues should be pointed out also for the galactic consular communication system.

Firstly, the system was based on a highly advanced technology beyond Enoch's understanding, also after his centennial long service. He established a practice to check everything prior to the Ulysses's arrival, to be on the safe side. However, he knew he could not do anything in case of a malfunction.

Secondly, along with the written exchange of messages, emergency calls were possible as well. They were bound directly to the Galactic Central, to a relevant point of contact in the Administration. Enoch used it, when one of the Hazers died in the station (we discuss it from the consular point of view in the next part of the text): "He put in a call for a connection direct with the Galaxy Central, then stood waiting, gripping the sides of the machine with both hands" (*ibid.*, p.92). He was tense and expecting instructions in this highly new, unusual and sensitive case. In a brief, exact and instructive discussion, he received all the information he needed to take care of the body.

Thirdly, keeping the journal of the daily work. From one point of view, such practice is rare in consular and diplomatic business. It used to be well dispersed and provided many outstanding reports, studies and memoirs as well. From another one, nowadays, when diplomats are in a possession of advanced and diverse communication and related technology, daily journal could rather easily be constructed from various reports, cables, face book, instagram and e-mail messages.

In Enoch's case, the reader can follow his journal practically from the very beginning and gets acquainted with the way he works, contemplates and gets more and more into the heart of galactic diplomatic business. Keeping the journal appeared as an inherited part of his job: "It had been a rule he'd set himself from the first day that the station had begun its operation - that he never skipped the journal" (*ibid.*, p.148). He simply felt a need that "he must record in detail exactly what had happened (...)" (*ibid.*, pp.147-148).

However, keeping the journal demanded a lot of notebooks and ink: "... he does a lot of writing. He buys these big, bound record books. In lots of a dozen at the time. He buys ink by the pint" (*ibid.*, p.7). That fact moreover helped the CIA agent to reveal the unusual business that Enoch was occupied with.

## FROM THE STATION KEEPER TO A CONSUL AND HENCEFORTH TO A DIPLOMAT

Whatever the author's ambition and plan with this novel were, Simak skillfully presented and developed transition of his main protagonist from a simple station keeper to a learning by doing consul and henceforth to an experienced and in a galactic crisis proven as well as successful diplomat.

Enoch Wallace was from the beginning on engaged as a station keeper, nothing more, what he was well aware of by himself: "There had been certain instances when, chatting with the travelers, they had told their purpose, but with the most of them he never learned the purpose – nor had he any right to learn it. For he was the keeper only" (ibid., p.63). Certainly, at the beginning of his employment, one could speculate, Enoch could hardly wish for something more. Everything was so unimaginably new for him. Though, already as a simple keeper, to put it that way, he was before now performing a consular job – taking care of passersby, their wishes and needs.<sup>24</sup> In particular, when there was a special need or a special official purpose.

Generally speaking, his task was the protection of interests or, practically speaking, consular protection, as presented in the already mentioned second function of a diplomatic mission: "Protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, within the limits permitted by international law."<sup>25</sup> Since the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations in its Article 5 defines consular functions more detailed, listing and presenting 13 of them, he was not entrusted all of them. That was also not necessary, since he was primarily engaged as a station keeper.

In any case, he was not just a simple keeper, despite not being aware of this, since he did not know that profession and the way it functions. As a matter of fact, he was *de facto* a consul from the very beginning. And as it always is in the diplomatic profession, urgency polishes and improves the engaged one. In Enoch's case, it was the death of the Hazer, who afforded himself a short stop over at the Earth's way station: "There had been many of them since that day in 1915 and there was one he remembered in particular – the old, wise one, the philosopher,

<sup>24</sup> As we already indicated, referring to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, it is all about taking care of interests of bodies of private and corporate law of the sending state in the receiving state or at their transiting through third states.

<sup>25</sup> Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Article 3.

who had died on the floor beside the sofa" (ibid., p.91).

That was the first time that Enoch the keeper faced such an awkward and exceptional situation. Still, he reacted professionally; one could speculate that also due to his tough wartime experience.<sup>26</sup> During the direct emergency phone call with the Galactic Central, which he took immediately, he explained the situation, received concrete instructions, clarified the procedure, although much remained opened and left to his immediate improvisation, as he only best knew: "PROCEED AS IF THE VEGAN WERE ONE YOUR OWN" (ibid., p.94).<sup>27</sup>

Consequently, Enoch cleaned the room, took care of the luggage,<sup>28</sup> prepared the grave, read a quote from the Bible and buried the late one in his courtyard, close to his long-gone parents. Even more, on a simple tombstone he carved a modest epitaph dedication in their language, to show the last sympathy: "Per instruction, he followed the Vegan habit: "The Vegan must remain upon the planet of its death, its body to be disposed of according to the local customs obtaining on that planet" (ibid., p.93). The newborn consul did it all well and with human touch. The latter is not exactly necessary in a consular business and would hardly be part of any rules, but shows instead dignity, respect and raises impressions high on the other side. It is personality that provides the efficiency of any business, including the diplomatic one. The reader can see the confirmation of it during the later course of the narrative, where diplomatic aspects come in the forefront.

Taking care of the dead ones is one of the most difficult parts of a consular work.<sup>29</sup> The reader should therefore not be surprised by the Aesopian description of the Central's reaction to the news: "There was no hesitation and there were no questions from the other end. Just the simple directions (as if this was something that happened all the time) of how the situation should be handled" (ibid., pp.92-93). And the reader should as well not be surprised by the following: yes, each career consul would support that impression. Such situations do

26 "He was with the Iron Brigade, which was virtually wiped out at Gettysburg in 1863. But Wallace somehow managed to get transferred to another fighting outfit and fought down across Virginia under Grant" (Simak, 1988, p.3).

27 This whole case is presented on pages 91-97 of the novel. For a career consul there is an interesting detail that Enoch was not in a need of providing the death certificate, since Vegans used telepathic capabilities also for such purposes (what would make work of consuls much easier from this point of view, had it been true, of course).

28 »His luggage? There is a trunk"? "Keep it. It is yours. It is a token for the services you perform for the honored dead. That also is the law" (ibid., pp.93-94).

29 This author started his diplomatic career as a consul. His first major task in that capacity was to take care of four of his nationals that died in a heavy snowstorm on the skiing resort. He felt exactly as Enoch did: "There was a coldness and a loneliness in the station (...)" (ibid., p.92).

happen frequently and hence they present a routine process for the consul. Routine in a sense that each step in the procedure should be well known, trained and performed without any hesitation, almost automatically. Each such case (and many other in a consul's life) is highly touchy, since they deal with a person's destiny. And exactly for this reason, the consul must somehow be protected so that the constant repetition of such feelings does not get into him too deep. When going home after the daily shift is finished, the consul must not remain to live among such cases, but in the vicinity of his closest ones. The routine of the procedure is the best guarantee for this and a fence from that pressure.

Speaking of the Enoch's diplomatic metamorphosis, one should point out two aspects.

Firstly, since the adoption of both Vienna Conventions on diplomatic and on consular relations<sup>30</sup>, diplomatic agents (i.e., diplomats) and consular officers (i.e., consuls) are both formally and by the rule diplomats. Their status is to a certain extent different (like the scope of diplomatic and of consular immunity) and their work as well (diplomats deal with issues that are in their final essence political, and consuls pursue protection of interests), but these differences do not influence the already made general statement. According to this, Enoch was diplomat in the service of the galactic diplomacy from the very first day on. For the purpose of this paper and for the diplomatic analysis of the discussed novel, we do not see a need to discuss terminological and status issues of his position in details, according to both the conventions and definitions of terms they define and use.

Hence and secondly, Enoch's transition from primarily consul to more of a diplomat has been steady and in a manner taken for granted. It basically followed the stream of events and was the way Enoch reacted to them, in particular those which were out of his main and primary task of the station keeper. Here, his personal characteristics (reliability, responsibility, human touch, devotion to the job and identification with it) and skills (discipline, determination, taking things as they were, discussing, but not questioning the basic aspects of a task) helped him to perform what he needed to do and enabled him to be up to a challenge. At the same time, it was the way he professionally matured, coming deeper in the understanding of what his occupation was as well as

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30 The diplomatic convention was done in 1961 and ratified in 1964 and the consular one in 1963 and in 1967.

transiting from a kind of possible local employee at the very beginning to a diplomat at the end.<sup>31</sup>

It brought him self-assurance and also credit of the employer. The latter was obvious from the offer of Ulysses, when discussing Enoch's professional and personal future in an optional case the way station on Earth would possibly be closed: "You can stay here and live out an ordinary life on Earth or you can be assigned to another station. Galactic Central hopes that you would select to continue on with us" (*ibid.*, p.119). This clear statement and further employment offer confirmed how Enoch made his name in the galactic consular service and how much his work was appreciated. He for sure must have stand out for both his professional proficiency as well as for his personal qualifications. Ulysses the inspector brought him this message on behalf of the galactic authorities, what confirms that in the human resources department they were discussing his case. But one can also be sure, judging from the novel and its narrative that must have been for sure also Ulysses's strong personal belief. Additionally, this illustrates how, in spite of all the spectacular public impressions about diplomatic work, this profession is demanding, while diplomats need broad education and strong personal qualifications.

### **THE GALACTIC UPHEAVAL AND THE DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT**

With a method of induction, as if one would be reading a scientific essay, Simak brings the reader to the galactic crisis, which, for Enoch, turned out to be an opportunity. We briefly present the plot with an aim to make its diplomatic analysis henceforth more approachable.

Enoch's age, after serving the Galaxy authorities for a century, awakened the attention of CIA for him. To support his presumption, the agent Claude Lewis secretly uncovered the remnants of the Vegan and took them to Washington. In parallel, a Cold War alike confrontation leading to a probable war, was gaining heavily on momentum, in spite of diplomats doing their best in New York to prevent it. When the case of the missing alien body was discovered, the Vegans, despite having some understanding for Enoch, could not keep that unprecedented scandal unnoticed. Some of the civilizations in the Galaxy were not

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31 We are not exactly aware of this status transition, but according to a variety of terms and their definitions in both conventions, one could possibly discuss them in detail. However, for this diplomatic interpretation of the novel, these aspects do not play any significant role.

in favor of a further expansion of the commuting network across the universe that the Vegans and others were pursuing. Hence, those entities used this affair as an additional pretext for their case. The chances were high that the way station on Earth would be closed, with all the humiliation for the Earth's civilization and its lost cosmic future. At the peak of the crisis, the so-called Talisman, the galactic Holy Grail to use a popular comparison, was stolen. It appeared that the galactic thief tried to hide himself and the trophy on Earth, arriving through its way station. However, the thief was caught by Enoch and the Talisman saved by Lucy, his young deaf-mute neighbor with meta-human capabilities. This breakeven part revealed Enoch as a diplomat and Lucy as the talisman saver, but also as its future keeper, the person for whom the Galaxy was desperately in a search for. From the stream of events on a remote Earth and its even more remote location, we arrive to a solution for the galaxy.

As for Enoch, the crisis started when he learned that the alien body was excavated and taken away. He understood it as his fault, although there was no way how he could do otherwise - also without the epitaph in a strange language, the third, new grave would raise the attention of the watchers.

His second mistake to be, was when he brought - without hesitation as well as thinking - Lucy in the house to protect her from his cruel father: "She came seeking my protection. Her father used a whip to beat her" (ibid., p.112). She was there, when Ulysses arrived, being surprised twice: first with her presence there. "Nobody should (...), and then when she was not afraid of him: "You see," Ulysses cried, delighted, "I think she may like me" (ibid., p.113). In spite of this, Ulysses wasn't bothered too much with that mistake: "It's not that," Ulysses told him. "She's just a complication and I do not like further complications. I came to tell you, Enoch, that we are in trouble" (ibid.). As we indicated earlier, Lucy proved to be a solution for the lost Talisman issue and even more, a materialization of a person the Galaxy was in search for, to keep Talisman safe and useful. It would be safe to say that Lucy getting acquainted with Ulysses presents the breakeven point of the whole story.<sup>32</sup> The key to the solution was presented in a form of a complication.

Two situations in the aftermath stand out as typical diplomatic ones,

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<sup>32</sup> This part is presented in Simak, 1988, pp.113-120.

with Enoch in their focus. They show diplomatic environment, circumstances and the stream of activities through which Enoch both diplomatically matured and emerged as a diplomatic crisis manager.

Firstly, when Ulysses explained him what everything the stealing of the body initiated, he also told him that a formal representative of the Vegans will arrive to hand over a diplomatic protest to him as the Earth representative:

“The Vegan who will be arriving here this evening is an official representative charged with delivering an official protest.”

“To me?”

“To you and through you, to the Earth.”

“But the Earth is not concerned. The Earth doesn't even know.”

“Of course it doesn't. So far as Galactic Central is concerned, you are the Earth. You represent the Earth.” (ibid., pp.117-118)

Enoch was by circumstances made a representative of the Earth and found himself in the midst of galactic diplomatic business. Even more, although being an employee of the Galactic Central, he was at the same time treated as a representative of the Earth. Technically speaking there could exist different views upon this his position, but symbolically and in a diplomatic language and message, he was recognized and, in this case, also accepted as such. This was neither automatic nor self-understandable. On the contrary, it was a conscious decision of a relevant galactic authority to treat him like that. This is diplomacy.

The protest was handed over in a typical diplomatic manner, though with an audience: Ulysses was present and Lucy as well, the former on the Galaxy's part and the latter on the Earth's one, however without any formal recognition as such by either side. It was her accidental presence that de facto put her this status. It is the way diplomacy works. The fact of the audience itself gave additional importance to Enoch's status and to the whole diplomatic procedure he was an active part of.

It was, of course, Hazer, who started the formality:

“I am sorry”, he told Enoch, “that our meeting must be such as this. Although under any circumstances, I am glad to meet you. I have heard of you. It is not often that a being of an outside planet is the keeper of a station” (ibid., p.120).

Hazer's opening follows a typical diplomatic handbook. For Enoch and his position, the continuation is of even greater importance: he learned that he was not one of a vast majority of anonymous station keepers. And his stakes were higher also due to the fact that he was recruited from one of the outside planets, what was not common practice as well.

While acquainting himself with Lucy ("... she is not afraid." Ulysses chuckled. "Not even me," he said. - *ibid.*, p.121), the formal act of the protest took place:

"You know why I am here?" he asked.

"I believe so."

"It's a matter I regret," said the Hazer. "But I must ..."

"If you'd rather," Enoch said, "we can consider that the protest has been made. I would so stipulate."

"Why not?" Ulysses said. "There is no need, it seems to me, to have the three of us go through a somewhat painful scene." (*ibid.*, p.122).

Ulysses, who informed Enoch about the protest, telling most probably more than he should have in a formal situation, acted highly diplomatically. As a matter of fact, he was the only one speaking most clearly on the galactic position: Enoch was representing Earth, being at the same time an employee of the Galaxy, while the Hazer was speaking on behalf of the Vegans, but had to take care as well at least partially of the Galactic interests (pushed by those who were opposing the Vegan approach).

"The Hazer hesitated.

"If you feel you must," said Enoch.

"No," the Hazer said. "I am satisfied if an unspoken protest be generously accepted." (*ibid.*, p.122)

Upon Enoch's insistence, they left afterwards to check the grave. Inspecting it, the Hazer got shocked:

"No one told me," said the Hazer, speaking softly.

"Told you what?"

"The memorial. And what is written on it. I was not aware that you knew our language. (...)"

"What matters, and matters very much, is that when you wrote, you thought as one of us." (*ibid.*, p.125)

The whole experience gave Enoch additional self-assurance: "This

business touches Earth and I must approach it from an Earthman's viewpoint. In this particular instance I am not simply the keeper of a galactic station" (*ibid.*, p.123). He was starting to be formally aware of his professional evolution, becoming a diplomatic representative as well as of symbolic and practical aspects of this. His statement raised no objections from the galactic diplomatic audience. Hence, it was for the first time that Enoch became so deeply conscious of his diplomatic mission and that he also gave her a public elaboration.

Secondly, as for a possible war on Earth, chances were high.<sup>33</sup> During the discussion between Enoch and Ulysses, the latter showed some slight optimism: "There is a way," Ulysses said, "to prevent a war" (*ibid.*, p.137). It became clear there could be an intervention from the galactic authorities, upon a formal request from the Earth's side. Ulysses continued with presenting the idea:

"You could apply for its application."

"I?"

"As a representative of the Earth." (*ibid.*)

His possible appearance and the procedure would look like this:

"You could appear before Galactic Central and appeal for us to use it. As a member of your race, you could give testimony and you would be given a hearing. If there seemed to be merit in your plea, Central might name a group to investigate and then, upon the report of its findings, a decision would be made." (*ibid.*)<sup>34</sup>

Enoch was again in the position to be the formal representative of Earth in front of the Galactic authorities. He was fully aware he was not in possession of any authorization or credentials from any of the Earth's bodies to appear in such capacity. More to that, he was not expecting to be received by the Galactic authority in that capacity. Generally, and primarily, he still was a station keeper, nothing more. So, there might be persons, more qualified and suitable for this ad hoc diplomatic task. However, as a brief deduction showed, he was the only one:

"You said I. Could anyone on Earth?"

"Anyone who could gain a hearing. To gain a hearing, you must know about Galactic Central and you're the only man of Earth who does.

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<sup>33</sup> See Simak, 1988, p.136.

<sup>34</sup> The reader should be aware of a diplomatic style of this explanation, which is built primarily on conditional: could, would, might, and not on binding expressions.

Besides, you're a part of Galactic Central's staff. You have served as a keeper for a long time. Your record has been good. We would listen to you." (ibid.)

This serves as the best, most direct and unconditional acknowledgement of Enoch as a diplomat: accepted as a formal representative of the Earth and at the same time the staff member of the Galactic Central, i.e., its diplomatic wing. States send and accept envoys in international relations and with these facts, they recognize each other. It is not enough to be sent, the envoy, a diplomat, must be received as well. Enoch was recognized as a diplomat in a double sense. From one point of view as a possible representative of the Earth and from another as a staff member of the Galactic Diplomatic Service.

This offered him a possible opportunity to act on behalf of the Earth in front of the Galaxy Central, and being accepted, being listened to. Diplomats of the sending authority at the receiving authority use all their potential to gain audience at the receiving authority, the higher, the better. Only then are they in a position to do, what they are supposed to: to forward the message and to receive the feedback. Enoch was granted this already in advance with being promised he will be accepted and listened to.

Whether Enoch was a diplomat or not and whether he was an official representative of the Earth or not he performed skillfully in both situations. He proved himself a diplomat and was taken as such. The only missing formal point was that his credentials for the Earth's destiny were not known and even less recognized by the relevant Earth authorities. However, for the practical aspects of this galactic diplomatic crisis management and its outcome, it hardly made any difference. One could, of course, speculate, would this all have happened, hadn't there been a severe crisis (the Earth's and the galactic one as well) - or not? But, following the narrative, it did happen and Enoch proved to be a diplomat. Or to put in an additional way, became one, emerged as a one.

## CONCLUSION

As another in a series of classical science fiction masterpieces, the *Way Station* provides a highly useful, intriguing and substantial insight in the way diplomacy functions as a part of this genre's narrative. With a liaison, a way station keeper, situated on Earth, in his hometown, the central character offers an educating view in this particular aspect of diplomatic, i.e., consular business.

Enoch Wallace, as the main protagonist of the novel, had one diplomatic task only: to provide all the necessary support services that being from various parts of the galaxy were able to commute through this region of the interstellar space. He was posted in his home place, but neither as a local staff nor as a fully authorized consul or diplomat. The postings premises presented his old family house, transformed from within for official purposes. His diplomatic immunity materialized in a form of immortality, judging by the Earth's standards.

After almost a century of an undisturbed and routine, but highly interesting, diverse and useful service, things got complicated, with the destiny of Earth, but as well as that of the Galaxy at stake. Drastic change of the dynamics in the whole narrative also offered Enoch opportunities to show his capabilities and potentials that spanned beyond his formal and narrow consular task. He proved to be an outstanding diplomat, tested in a galactic crises management episode, while also proving the proficiency of a station keeper. From this position, the reader follows his transformation to a consul and to a diplomat, respected and fully accepted by the Galactic Central, de facto the Galactic Diplomatic Service, his employer.

Apart this focal finding, our research points out as well some of the main characteristics of the station keepers, i.e., liaison's occupation.

This is, in the first place and having in mind the outer postings, an individual task. Next, it could be, not only generally, defined as a job of a consul. For its efficiency, such activity also demands strong knowledge of protocol (consistency, formal and human touch, operational flexibility, sticking to the rules of the profession). Further on, in any case it is advisable to possess certain expertise and knowledge from the broader field of diplomacy (i.e., politically diplomacy). Additionally, basic knowledge and skill from negotiation is advisable as well. Sub-

sequently, because of a variety of formal and informal passersby, that could produce a mixed diplomatic environment, in parallel or at the same time, also having a certain dose of persuasion skills is welcome. Last but not least, the feeling of staying off the scene is a must. Officials, who commute, by the rule neither need nor want publicity. This set of skills includes or should rest upon a package of diplomat's qualities, like accuracy, calm, responsibility, determination, patience, modesty and loyalty as well as knowledge, hospitality, courage and tact.

This toolbox is heavily supported by examples in the novel, from which many quotations were taken to support these findings. They present a rather rounded up view upon the presence and role of diplomacy, in particular bilateral one, with the emphasis on consular specifics and its richness. At the same time, this serves as a clear illustration of the author's understanding and usefulness of diplomacy. Even more, the main narrative and the stream of its development rest on diplomacy, though hardly being in the forefront (apart, for example, the scene of the diplomatic protest).

The Way Station's contribution to diplomatic studies, within the intersection and correlation between diplomacy and science fiction literature, is important, focused and also innovative, i.e., the main protagonist is in the service of the Galactic Diplomacy, posted in his remote home place on Earth, dealing with issues of galactic importance. Hence, one could easily claim that in addition to its broader diplomatic frame and approach, the novel could also serve as a mini manual for a diplomatic liaison's job. Combining both these aspects together within a science fiction novel with the theatre here and now, Simak produced a text that uncovers rich, educating and particular implementation of diplomacy.

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# A Pacifist Initiative Seeks Recognition: *The Prespa Agreement*

Leonidas Makris and Zoran Zaev<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Contrary to the infamous inability of Balkan states to resolve their differences, North Macedonia and Greece managed to reach an important agreement signifying the end of a decades-long dispute over the name of the former. The Prespa Agreement was primarily reached due to the leadership and the painstaking efforts of the former Prime Ministers Zoran Zaev and Alexis Tsipras. In the present text it will be argued that the agentic power of the Balkan stakeholders was the most decisive factor for the termination of the dispute. In addition, it will be stressed that it is about time that powerful international actors like the US and the EU should fulfil their promises and support North Macedonia in its aspiration to join the latter. This will not only serve their geostrategic interests, it will duly reward a rare expression of Balkan pacifism which is still seeking for recognition. This paper is based on an interview with the former Prime Minister of North Macedonia, Zoran Zaev, a key player in the settlement of the long-lasting disagreement.

**KEYWORDS:** North Macedonia, Greece, Prespa Agreement, EU

## POVZETEK

Severni Makedoniji in Grčiji je v nasprotju z zloglasno nezmožnostjo balkanskih držav, da bi rešile nesoglasja, uspelo doseči pomemben dogovor, ki pomeni konec desetletja trajajočega spora o imenu prve. Prespanski sporazum je bil dosežen predvsem zaradi vodenja in mukotrpnega prizadevanja nekdanjih premierov Zorana Zaeva in Alexisa Ciprasa. V pričujočem besedilu trdimo, da je bila agenturna moč obeh balkanskih promotorjev najbolj odločilen dejavnik za prekinitev spora. Poleg tega je poudarjeno, da je skrajni čas, da močni mednarodni akterji, kot sta ZDA in EU, izpolnijo svoje obljube in podprejo Severno Makedonijo v njenih prizadevanjih, da se pridruži EU. To ne bo služilo le njihovim geostrateškim interesom, temveč bo ustrezno nagradilo redki izraz balkanskega pacifizma, ki še vedno išče priznanje. Prispevek temelji na intervjuju z nekdanjim predsednikom vlade Severne Makedonije Zoranom Zaevom, ključnim akterjem pri reševanju dolgotrajnega spora.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** Severna Makedonija, Grčija, Prespanski sporazum, EU

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1 ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Dr Leonidas Makris obtained his PhD from the LSE (Department of Government) and he currently teaches political theory at the Democritus University of Thrace (Greece). Email: lmakris2@yahoo.com  
Zoran Zaev is the former Prime Minister of North Macedonia. Email: Zaev44@gmail.com

## INTRODUCTION

Following a prolonged period of political instability, plagued by corruption scandals, inter-ethnic conflicts and violence in parliament (Straveska, 2015), the election of the former Prime Minister Zoran Zaev and his Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), in 2017, constituted the first change in governance after 11 years of Gruevski's - former leader of the VMRO-DPMNE party - dominance in the political arena of North Macedonia (Chrysogelos and Straveska, 2019). Zaev's left-oriented government had to face Gruevski's political legacy, namely a fragile economy, decaying political institutions and tense inter-ethnic relations (Chrysogelos and Straveska, 2019; Satanakis, 2018). Thus, the consolidation of democracy as well as the interception of the nationalist hegemony were rendered paramount priorities of his government's agenda, in which the "society for all" doctrine - referring to the construction of a multi-ethnic, egalitarian society- occupied a central position (Satanakis, 2018).

Having been imperative to achieve internal cohesion within an ethnically fragmented society, the new reformist coalition government (including the Albanian Party, Democratic Union for Integration) pinned its hopes for integrity, democratization and security on the country's EU and NATO accession. Hence, the former Prime Minister committed himself to removing any hurdles blocking the road to the Euro-Atlantic integration, them being two major bilateral disputes with Greece and Bulgaria; countries that maintain veto power in both institutions (Satanakis, 2018, Vankovska, 2020). It is noteworthy that Zaev's foreign policy signalled a departure from his predecessor's nationalist, confrontational and highly provocative stance to a pacifist course of action, which proved fruitful, since it reached the Prespa Agreement, which is considered to be a "a rare moment of success for Europe" (Smith, 2018). The agreement provided resolution to one of the most intractable disputes in the Balkans - the 'Macedonian issue' - through compromise, exercise of soft power and mutual recognition, heralding an era of peace for the country but also for the whole Balkan region.

The difficulty in resolving the 'Macedonian question' lay mostly in the fact that identity was at the core of this dispute, with mutually antagonistic discourses being engineered by both sides, allowing the conflict to simmer for decades (Loizides, 2020). Starting from the disintegration of Yugoslavia, in 1991, a long sequence of events followed,

characterised by moments of conflict escalation<sup>2</sup> and de-escalation. Most importantly, in 2006, the newly elected VMRO-DPMNE government embarked on an “anti-quization” policy involving insistence on a direct continuity between contemporary citizens of FYROM and ancient Macedonians (Spaskovska, 2012) provoking Greece’s decision, in 2008, to block FYROM’s entry into NATO (Chryssogelos and Stavreska, 2019). Relations between the two countries were mired in a stalemate till Zoran Zaev took office in 2017 and inaugurated a new period of progressive politics, by signing a Friendship Treaty with Sofia and by implementing confidence-building measures that would alleviate relations with Greece (Satanakis, 2018). The old dispute culminated in its final resolution, when Zaev found in the former Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, a willing partner with an analogous political outlook, freed from the conservative ideological baggage of his predecessors.

The Prespa Agreement took effect in February 2019. FYROM renamed itself North Macedonia, which is a compound name with a geographic qualifier, that neutralises irredentist aspirations towards the Greek province of Macedonia and for its part Greece recognized the right of the Slav majority in North Macedonia to use the term ‘Macedonian’ referring to their language and nationality (Barber, 2019). However, the two sides agreed that the terms ‘Macedonia’ and ‘Macedonian’ refer to different and distinct historical heritages, them being classic Greek antiquity and southern Slavic culture. From this perspective, a name can have more than one referent and this helps both sides to find their own space in terms of identity and heritage (Arnakolas and Petkovski, 2019).

The present text, with the incorporated interview that follows, attempts to investigate the impact of Zoran Zaev’s policy on the future of North Macedonia as well as on South-East Europe. In particular, the extended, semi-structured interview below forms part of the methodological foundation of this article, designed to examine - among other things - Zaev’s agency in the resolution of the dispute as well as other unexplored aspects of the negotiation process. Interviewing a leader, whose position has proved critical to the settlement of the issue, will hopefully; enrich our understanding of the significance of agentic power in conflict resolution matters that can sometimes result

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2 Among other important events, in 1994, the confrontational rhetoric grew in severity when Greece imposed a trade embargo on FYROM, which lasted 18 months and caused economic suffocation to the latter (Satanakis, 2018).

in achieving political novelties such as the Prespa Agreement. As for the time frame, it has to be clarified that the discussion took place on the 9th of December 2019, when Zoran Zaev was still the head of government in North Macedonia. The interview touches upon multiple facets of the Prespa Agreement, for instance the actual benefits stemming from it, challenges faced throughout negotiations, the catalytic action taken by both leaderships to resolve the dispute and the role played by the international environment in the signing of the agreement. Special attention is given to the country's expectations towards the EU accession and the path leading to it. In an attempt to further illustrate Zoran Zaev's political profile, the incentives behind his politics are, also, examined.

After the interview section, a discussion follows, which mainly revolves around three points. First, it will be supported that the significance of the agreement principally lies in its defiance of historical determinism in the Balkans by introducing a new vision for peace in the area, aiming to qualitatively alter the relationship between North Macedonia and Greece. Secondly, controverting critical arguments which give prominence to the role played by US and EU actors in the settlement of the dispute with a sole purpose to satisfy their geostrategic interests, it will be argued that agented power of governmental and local stakeholders from both Greece and North Macedonia was the most decisive factor for the termination of the dispute. Most significantly, it will be accentuated that what made the difference in the case of Prespa Agreement is the strong anti-nationalist sentiment shared by key players in both countries, demonstrating that ethical orientation and idealistic positions towards peace can sometimes subvert the status quo in foreign policy decision-making, which is traditionally determined by nationalist agendas. Last, policy recommendations are presented aiming at the further empowerment of the agreement. Conflict resolution theories - characterised by a socio-psychological foundation - as well as other theories that fall under the area of peace studies are being utilised aimed at developing a nuanced comprehension of the symbolic value of the agreement.

## INTERVIEW

**L. Makris:** Since your country gained its independence after seceding from Yugoslavia in 1991, there was an ongoing dispute about its name with your neighbouring country Greece. The Prespa Agreement, which was signed between the two countries in June 2018 and came into

effect in February 2019, ended a long dispute over the use of the term “Macedonia” which was stirring animosity in the region by rousing nationalist emotions in both countries. The basic provisions of the Treaty of Prespa instructed that your country should name itself Republic of North Macedonia, distinguishing it not only culturally but also by denomination from the neighbouring Greek region of Macedonia, and that Greece should as a result support North Macedonia’s efforts to join both the EU and NATO. How do you assess the Prespa Agreement for your country and Greece as well as for the region as a whole? What is the impact of the Prespa Agreement?

**Z. Zaev:** I think it is a historical agreement, not only for the involved parties and the region, but also for Europe and the world as a whole. This is one of the best examples, which demonstrates that it is feasible to achieve resolutions in long-lasting disputes through dialogue and diplomacy. When countries try to resolve differences of this kind between them, involving identity issues, questions of cultural patrimony and alteration of a county’s name, world history shows that final solutions are given only after wars. It is an important agreement resolving a complicated issue which was reached through diplomatic means, and it, thus, sends a powerful message to regions all around the world - because similar disputes are present in different continents - that such peaceful resolutions are possible. We consider it to be the best example of how countries should act in order to overcome frictions and improve their relationships. An example showing that - irrespective of how big the political cost for governments and Prime Ministers is- the most important thing we should take into account is a forward-looking approach in decision-making. Our decisions should be beneficial to next generations. A conciliatory political strategy is an investment for the future and, having that in mind, we all together showed that there are ‘European manners’ here in the Balkans. Even though North Macedonia is an EU candidate country only, while Greece is already a member state, we, in North Macedonia, demonstrated that we believe, too, in European unity and friendship and we are willing to help each other. With our common efforts, the unity that the European Union currently represents will expand and incorporate all of us. Together we will ensure that the next generations will enjoy better living conditions, better than the conditions under which we currently live.

**L. Makris:** Your answer gave me the opportunity to proceed with another question. Would you simply classify your politics as political

realism or is there also an ethical drive behind it? Do you support politics which are simply beneficial for the country, for the economy or are you devoted to a kind of ethical stance, to an ethical opinion about things? What you mentioned about the symbolic value of the agreement to the world as well as the benefits for future generations and people give me the impression that your motives behind decision making go beyond political realism. Is this true?

**Z. Zaev:** I think that many politicians, even before me or Alexis [he refers to the Greek ex-PM Alexis Tsipras], have only good intentions and smart ideas about one's own country but these ideas are not always implemented, probably because a really strong impulse behind them does not exist. There is something that transcends our personal interests and interests of our own countries and this is the future of the whole region and its impact on the whole world. In particular, the idea that by sending a message of cooperation and compromise, we could make politicians more responsible decision-makers and civil organizations more progressive comprised a strong motivation to act the way we did. Of course, there is an ethical dimension behind all these. It requires courage to take this kind of steps, no matter what would happen with my political career or Alexis Tsipras' career at that time; we sent a message that decision-making should be driven by ethical responsibility and vision for the future. This is in the core of the agreement. If this value is followed by more (countries)<sup>3</sup> it will be very helpful. At the same time of course we also achieved other goals. We have friends now; we paved the way for our integration process. All these, for us, mean internal peace, stability, security, more investments, and more cooperation in a variety of ways. Thus, there is a strong ethical dimension in this agreement, thanks to that we are candidates for the Nobel peace prize, thanks to that Alexis and I were given several regional prizes.

**L. Makris:** You mentioned that the incentives behind resolving complex issues - the differences with Bulgaria and Greece - consist of political pragmatism and ethical responsibility. Did any school of thought or any personality that you admire comprise the inspiration behind these political decisions?

**Z. Zaev:** There was an inspiration inside us, personalities that shaped us and contributed to our development as subjects and politicians.

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3 For example Serbia and Kosovo.

Throughout our struggle to find solution to a 27- year old problem, which at the end of the day was a foolish problem, all of us appreciated very much our history and referred to it. We have our heroes but let us adopt a forward looking perspective, because history is important but the importance of history can be more valuable if it contributes to the construction of a better future. So, even if historical debates are present, even if, for example, in one country there are multiple versions of one historical personality, okay leave the debate as it is but let us create conditions - politically speaking - which will enable peaceful co-existence, regardless of antagonistic opinions. Of course, this is a big decision to make but I strongly believe that big changes come with big decisions and I keep saying this lot in my country. On the basis of this principle, in the agreement with Bulgaria we accept that we share a common history with them. Okay, the whole Balkans share a common history and the whole Europe, of course it is not as simple as that, there are a lot of details in it but we accept it as a principle. Additionally, the resolution of the name dispute through the agreement is in the interest of our Greek friends, since it satisfies their wish for a compound name with a geographical determination, which was very important for them. We appreciate Greece, and Macedonia in particular, that is very different from our North Macedonia here, with different traditions, different cultural heritage but in a very friendly way. We recognize each other and we intend to build a friendship, to give space to the people in order next generations not to be stuck in the map like us. We want our citizens to have the opportunity to be more open, more extrovert. We need to stop being held back by frictions and open this region to development! We run a lot of big projects inside the country, we call it “one society for all” as there are multiple communities, besides Macedonians from North Macedonia, we have Albanians, Serbs, Turks, Romas, Vlachs and others. Now, everyone is equal with rights and obligations, which means that people feel more comfortable here in the country than before. Everything we do, we do it for a better economy. We aim to build friendships here in the region, utilizing all our capacities in maximum, with a view to improve economic conditions for our citizens, as security and stability are of primary importance for investments to be made. At the end of the day, we must keep our young people here, avoid letting them emigrate to more developed regions of the world. So, all these are our final goals, what we intend to achieve. Of course, in the future we need to work very hard because the effort for economic prosperity, equal rights and peaceful coexistence within the country can be endless.

**L. Makris:** From what you say, I can discern an altruistic stance towards people. Where does this come from? Is it your political party, your family maybe, or do you personally have these values?

**Z. Zaev:** I think they derive from the family. My political party, of course, also, contributes to the strengthening of this drive, thanks to its leftist values. It doesn't concern me at all whether I will be a politician in the future or not. This is very important. Politicians are mainly devoted to remaining politicians and that is why they sometimes follow false steps in their political careers. There are a lot of possibilities and opportunities -other than pursuing a political career- to contribute to social well-being, to bring happiness to the family, friends, neighbourhood and community. If people embrace this kind of perspective in everyday life, they can make decisions coming out of their hearts. I think much comes from nurture, meaning the values ingrained in someone as a result of her environment.

**L. Makris:** You negotiated with ex Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras about the agreement. Do you think that personalities play an important role even when it comes to Prime Ministers who represent collective interests of their countries? Do you think that personalities can be decisive factors in political outcomes?

**Z. Zaev:** I strongly believe it. Prior to us, there were other Prime Ministers who tried to resolve the issue. I think that our endeavour proved successful because Alexis and I were concomitantly in power. Timing was very favourable for us, not only because both sides were tired after 27 years of futile negotiations but also thanks to the negotiators' personalities who occupied the proper positions at the right time. When I refer to negotiators, of course, I don't only mean Alexis and me but there were, also, Nikos [i.e. ex-Foreign Minister Kotzias] and Nikola [i.e. ex-Foreign Minister Dimitrov], who are very devoted people. There is also one person named Evangelos (..)

**L. Makris:** Kalpadakis.

**Z. Zaev:** Kalpadakis, and Dane Taleski from my cabinet, but also other people who substantially contributed to the process. At the end of the day, leaders with characters shaped negotiations. We experienced, also, dramatic moments during negotiations and how these moments are managed always depends on the personalities of the people involved.

One day, in May, my son finished primary school and we had a kind of celebration with a lot of guests at a restaurant. We had been, also, communicating with Alexis the whole day, messaging and texting and at 19:30 p.m it seemed that we reached a deadlock. My reaction was like “Okay my friend we’ve built a very good friendship, I am very sorry but this is something that we cannot resolve. After fifteen days talking about this issue, it is really not possible to resolve this. I appreciate everything that you’ve done. We have achieved a lot, our friendship will be maintained probably till the end of our lives but I am very sorry to tell you that we cannot reach an agreement”. His response was “Okay Zoran, I am aware of that. We will be in touch.” After three hours, close to the middle of the night, I received a message from Alexis saying “Zoran let us rest during the weekend and then, on Monday, being more cool-headed, let us try again and give a chance to the agreement”. Another example is that during a one-hour negotiation in WhatsApp we prepared ourselves for the meeting in Bulgaria with the European Council, where we were invited to show to the European leaders some results related to the agreement. During a one-hour negotiation with Alexis Tsipras we managed to lighten up a little bit the conversation, helping ourselves to relax. All in all, we tried to create a friendly and humorous ambient in which the agreement could be produced. It was not easy at all and we were finding some ways to relax ourselves. We overcame all these difficult moments because we understood and respected each other. I would be the happiest person if our citizens, from both sides, shared this kind of friendship and I believe that someday it will happen. We are a small region and there are a lot of opportunities for cooperation in the future.(..) So, I disclosed one of the secrets Alexis and I kept but okay it happened in a pleasant way.

**L. Makris:** It must be amazing to realize that during certain moments your actions can have a profound impact on millions of people. I wonder if it is possible for a politician to perceive this fact during negotiations. How did you manage to maintain your composure during the moments the agreement was about to collapse and others during which you were about to conclude it? It’s very difficult to grasp that a man or two men can decide about an issue which can affect entire future generations. It’s fascinating!

**Z. Zaev:** For the first time I met Alexis in Davos on the 24th of January in 2018<sup>4</sup>. When we met, our advisors decided to leave us alone for

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4 The meeting took place in January 2018, within the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

about two hours. He approached me - I remember I was not wearing a tie - we introduced ourselves to each other and he commented “you are not wearing a tie” and my reaction was “Okay, now is your turn!” (laugh). So, during these two hours he explained to me that he was determined to reach an agreement and I also explained to him that I was equally determined. Then he started to present minimum requirements needed, from his side, to be met, a moment which was very difficult for me. In particular, there were several necessary conditions in order to agree in a new appellation, the most important of them being a geographical determination within a compound name. I highlighted how important it was for us to protect our identity and pride, explaining that there were emotions at stake. We understood each other and we became aware of what kind of decision we needed to make. In the end, we concluded that we were absolutely ready to resolve the issue. I decided to accept his minimum requirements, Alexis, also, said he was ready to accept our minimum requirements and we were finally led to the conclusion that we would probably become politically dead but we didn’t care. We were there to reach a mutually satisfying agreement, durable in time and history as well as beneficial to our citizens. Our wish was to preserve a better future for young people, which goes beyond any political career. So, having this kind of motivation, even in the first meeting, it was made obvious that we shared the same feeling and we were ready to cooperate. Why? Because we didn’t prioritize our political careers. Therefore, I am pretty certain that Alexis and I will never regret for the compromises we made because citizens from both sides know that not only an annoying dispute found a final resolution but also the road opened for a strategic partnership between two countries. The agreement provides a whole framework which enables future cooperation.

**L. Makris:** Yes I agree, but allow me to comment that citizens may not realize this now - eventually they will- because they don’t have the information that you and Alexis Tsipras have regarding the future potential of this agreement.

**Z. Zaev:** Yes. Nobody loses from this agreement, nobody! There is a nationalist and populist rhetoric produced by politicians accusing us of undermining our country with this agreement but eventually nobody loses. We all win.

**L. Makris:** I suppose you agree that the hegemony of a nationalist ardour has been the main challenge for the final resolution of the “Macedonian” issue. What do you think, what’s your opinion about nationalism?

**Z. Zaev:** I am very much afraid of nationalism, maybe because I am from the western Balkans. I am aware of what happened in other parts of the world because of nationalism. When it is radicalized, accompanied by populism, it can definitely become disastrous. There are a lot of poisons in the world but one of the worst is nationalism. Those who exploit it in order to satisfy self-serving political interests, sometimes forget to clean their own hands and they poison everything by spreading animosity in societies. Temporarily, it can bring some benefits to politicians who produce this kind of feelings, such as a rise in popularity, maintenance of power, shift of attention from domestic policies to an external other, but eventually it deeply harms societies. Having that in mind, I know that nationalism is different from patriotism, with the latter being a strong incentive for people to work towards a better future. Of course, as I have already mentioned, all of us are proud of our history but what matters the most is the future. The future is something we need to guarantee and improve. So, I am very careful with nationalism and one of the reasons that I decided to call an election<sup>5</sup> after the disappointment the decision of the European Council generated, was to avoid giving an advantage to nationalism. Nationalism can destroy my country from the inside but it can also harm the relations of North Macedonia with Greece and Bulgaria because the provocations of nationalistic rhetoric can provide the Prime Ministers of Greece and Bulgaria, for example, with enough reasons to take measures against us to protect their dignity and pride. So, nationalism doesn’t contribute to the construction of friendships, it doesn’t foster connections, it doesn’t deliver a prosperous future.

**L. Makris:** Please allow me to add that maybe we should make an effort to be a little bit less proud of our history and build a common history as well, for example the European project is about that, though it hasn’t fully succeeded up to now to build a common history. Sometimes these ideological conceptions are constructed myths, are stories and maybe we can construct new common ones to believe in. I agree perfectly with what you said but sometimes patriotism - some kinds of patriotism - presage nationalism. Do you know what I mean?

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5 Zoran Zaev refers here to the election held in July 2020.

**Z. Zaev:** Yes, different kinds of patriotism (...) one kind of patriotism can immediately bring nationalism and even radicalism. There is another kind of patriotism which I consider it to be, more progressive and more civic. So it's good to be a patriot, but you're a patriot when you don't cause damage to your country and others, instead you attempt to build bridges with others, allowing your country to economically and politically thrive within a secure and stable regional context.

**L. Makris:** What was the role played by the US in the signing of the agreement? Do you think the Americans facilitated what you've done and achieved with Alexis Tsipras?

**Z. Zaev:** They facilitated the agreement just as Boyko Borissov, just as Federica Mogherini, just as Matthew Nimetz did. We, both sides, reached the agreement, understanding each other. I always considered Alexis' needs and commitments because he had to respect Greek society and its institutions. He considered my needs, also, for the same reasons. This is an indication that we honestly wished to reach a mutually satisfying agreement. However, we are humans, sometimes we need motivation, thus Aaron Wess Mitchell encouraged us by saying "You are very close, don't give up! You need to continue, you need some ideas. Give me some information of what is inside so we can play with words!". You know, playing with words is a very good solution sometimes, you can create different combinations and voila the solution! They were very helpful in terms of motivation and encouragement but it was mainly our determination that terminated the dispute.

**L. Makris:** Concerning the role of NATO in the region, how important do you think it is for the region and for your country in particular?

**Z. Zaev:** I think it is very important especially for our region. Probably it is helpful all around the world but our region is a multi-ethnic one, full of conflicts which have been generated throughout history. Eighteen years ago my country experienced a conflict, a lot of people died, young people, not to mention Kosovo and Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, every single country. So today the victims' children grew up having lost their parents, it is extremely easy for enmity to arouse. Obviously, there are many sensitive issues open within this region. Thus, more safety, security is needed here. Being a member of NATO does not only mean safety and security for our country but there will be also a big positive impact on the region. Additionally, the-

re are different religious groups, in all these countries, and religious radicalism is still lurking. In addition, the Western Balkans consists of developing countries and there is a lot of poverty. All these factors can easily provoke conflicts. So, for me NATO means internal peace, stability, security, safety, conditions which immediately favour economic development. Why? Because this is the basis for every investment, stability enhances our financial credibility; it makes new jobs available et cetera. So, the membership of North Macedonia in NATO surely means stability for the whole region. For my country this means that one of its biggest strategic goals has already been achieved.

**L. Makris:** What do you anticipate from the EU accession?

**Z. Zaev:** Values, Values! We need to cultivate a “European” culture here; starting from me, as a leader, to the last person in our country. We want to become a member-state of the European Union not only because we would like to be part of that family, but because we need to get ‘Europeanized’. Why? Because we believe in democracy, rule of law, egalitarianism, transparency and we want to fight corruption. Personally, I know that I will safeguard the unity of my country - territorial unity - with the hope that one day we will be part of the European Union. This is my hope.

**L. Makris:** Is there resistance to such an evolution?

**Z. Zaev:** Yes. We have been successful but we need to work more. We need to work on the judicial system, the fight against corruption, freedom of speech, freedom of media. All these comprise the quality of life we hope to achieve. The ‘Europeanization’ of North Macedonia means better life quality for our citizens. We expect from the European Union to stimulate our motivation to help us complete our political reform. There should be a goal to be achieved; there should be a motivation to achieve this goal. For the time being, for us, the European Union has turned off those shining stars on its flag, now it’s all dark. Those shining stars should be turned on again, because there is no other light for us. Membership in the European Union is of high importance, for the ‘Europeanization’ of our country, for the values that we expect. When we are ready for that, following the necessary reforms, then hopefully, we will be full members of the European Union. Following the transitional period, we will be a member state, which will entail many advantages i.e. favourable loan terms and many other

benefits as well as obligations. Non-European countries cannot help us to strengthen our rule of law, egalitarianism, democracy or freedoms. Instead, we believe that the European Union can give us this kind of values in order to improve the quality of our life.

**L. Makris:** What can your country offer to the EU as a prospective member state?

**Z. Zaev:** First of all, I consider the Prespa Agreement to be a real success since it gave us the opportunity to demonstrate our capability of resolving foreign policy issues peacefully, with the exercise of soft power. We manifested our strong commitment to the values of democracy, dialogue and compromise. Therefore, I think that we can only add value to the European Union. Specifically, there is a condition according to which the accession of a country cannot be accomplished as long as there are bilateral problems with member states. Evidently, the Union wishes to avoid importing bilateral problems. Thus, by normalizing our relations with Greece, we managed to remove a significant obstacle blocking the way to our integration. The incorporation of European values in North Macedonia can only contribute to the democratic unification of the continent, adding value to the European Union. Economically speaking, also, European companies are already established here. They are quite profitable, benefiting from our economic rules, while bringing expertise to us. This cooperation can deepen and widen thanks to the future EU accession of North Macedonia.

**L. Makris:** What is your opinion about the penetration of Russia and Turkey in the region of the Western Balkans and your country in particular? What is your modus operandi in the interaction with them?

**Z. Zaev:** They are present all around the region; they are, also, present in my country. They are very much against NATO enlargement. They definitely maintain their own political, economic and energy interests but there is nothing new in that. The crucial question is where we decide to go, with whom to increase cooperation with. We are a small country and it is good for us to cooperate with everybody. However, Russia, China and the Middle East need to know that we have made our decision, deriving from our sovereign right, to be part of NATO and the European Union. Why? Because this will give us a better life. They will accept that completely - hopefully - and this will

give us the opportunity to cooperate with everybody but of course without jeopardizing our participation in NATO and the European Union.

**L. Makris:** Thank you very much. It was a pleasure to discuss with you.

## DISCUSSION

Prespa Agreement comprises a diplomatic breakthrough and an exemplary case, as Zoran Zaev frequently describes it across the discussion, for it resisted historical determinism. Specifically, the region of the Balkans is most often identified with its inaptitude to redetermine itself with conscious human action either individual or collective in order to change the course of its history. The region is often perceived as predestined to repeat the same mistakes, namely the incapacity of harmonious coexistence between different ethnic and religious groups and inclination towards nationalism (Paschalidis, 2013). On the contrary, it has been proven that agented power in history can instigate unpredictable and positive developments such as an agreement which constitutes an example of what John W. Burton - a pioneer in the area of peace studies - describes as *conflict resolution* (1969).

Burton highlights that what renders an agreement successful and durable in time is its ability to accommodate both parties' basic human needs; these can be identity, recognition and security (1969). Moreover, conflict resolution refers to an agreement which is reached interactively, not imposed by external powers, it entails trust-building and most significantly, it establishes a new relationship between the involved parties, a partnership in which both sides collaborate and address each other's needs, being convinced that the sustenance of peace is beneficial for all. As opposed to conflict resolution, *conflict settlement* refers to a process that generates an agreement which rests on a power dynamic that determines the bargaining ability of each party and does not necessarily aim to influence the quality of the relationship between the parties (Kelman, 2008).

Even though in the empirical world no agreement can be a pure example of one or the other type of accord, the presence of confidence-building atmosphere in the case of Prespa agreement, the compromises, the development of a friendship between the two former Prime

Ministers<sup>6</sup> and of course the provision of an institutional framework which enables the construction of a future partnership and multi-level connectivity (Armakolas et al, 2020) bring the agreement closer to the ideal of conflict resolution. Most importantly, though, the resolution addresses the basic need for identity recognition, by accepting the multiple heritages related to the geographic region of Macedonia and allowing each side to be identified with ‘Macedonia’ in a non-exclusive way. This, of course, required deep compromises and courage to confront the nationalist hardliners positions in both countries, them being the Greeks’ strong disapproval of the neighbouring country using the term ‘Macedonia’ even within a compound appellation (Armakolas and Siakas, 2021; Chryssogelos, Stavreska, 2019) and North Macedonians’ insistence on an uninterrupted link to ancient Macedonia (Chryssogelos, Stavreska, 2019).

Despite the unparalleled determination manifested by both former Prime Ministers to lead the dispute to its definite resolution, there is a quite refutable argument according to which the Prespa Agreement is nothing more than a ‘liberal narrative’ over a success story of reaching a peaceful solution in a persistent dispute, while in reality the Realpolitik foundation of the matter, namely the desire of EU and NATO elites to minimize the influence of Russia in the region has been concealed (Vankovska, 2020, p.344). This view reduces the governments of the two countries to marionettes enmeshed in a power game with little or no agency at all and also, limits the essence of politics to the mere pursuing of material interests and to actors’ struggle for survival within harsh international antagonisms, while idealistic and emotional incentives, which could be the reason for profound political change, are excluded from politics. Even though, no one can underestimate the determining factor of power dynamics in international relations, a more multi-dimensional and intricate approach would be appropriate in order to unravel the decisive elements behind the settlement of the dispute.

The “Macedonian” question has been simmering for decades in spite of the US high officials’ intense efforts to terminate the issue. The intractability of the matter and its final solution led Matthew Nimetz - the foreign official mostly associated with the 27-year long negotiati-

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6 A testament of this is what ZaeV states in the above interview (see p.10): “I always considered Alexis’ needs and commitments because he had to respect institutions and society in Greece. He considered my needs, also, for the same reasons”.

ons, serving as the US presidential envoy and later as the UN mediator for 2 decades - to query in his article “Why did it take us so long?” (2020, p.205). Undoubtedly, officials from the USA and the EU strongly encouraged resolution during the nearly 3-decade long diplomatic struggle for settlement of the dispute (Nimetz, 2020). However, their efforts did not come to fruition till 2018 and this can be attributed to the unwillingness of the countries’ ruling powers to take such a huge responsibility which would entail political cost, enflaming the uncompromising popular sentiment and public disapproval (Armakolas and Siakas, 2021). Besides, governments’ conservative orientation as well as the exploitation of nationalist rhetoric for maintenance of power and displacement of public attention from real domestic problems to external threats (Vankovska, 2020) played a significant role in the perpetuation of the dispute.

In the discussion presented, it becomes obvious that leadership determination of both sides was a precondition of massive importance in the resolution of the issue. In moments when negotiations seemed to be in a deadlock, it was the leaders’ dedication, willingness and communication charisma that normalized negotiations. Apart from the favourable circumstance of two ideologically analogous governments, with similar agendas, being concurrently in power, the two leaders demonstrated incomparable determination to lead the countries in the path of resolution, especially the former Prime Minister of North Macedonia, on the grounds that he had to initiate radical modifications, them being constitutional changes and alteration of the country’s name *erga omnes* (Chryssogelos and Stavreska, 2019) in a period of peace, which is unprecedented in European history. Not to mention the ratification processes in parliaments, this comprised an odyssey on its own, since the two leaders had to deploy various manoeuvring tactics, indicative of their political intelligence and determination to find a solution (Armakolas and Petkovski, 2019). Besides, as it becomes evident across the discussion, Zaev can be described as a political subject with an intense ethical stance over politics, which inevitably has contributed to his decision to embark on a pacifist course of action. Thus, the agentic power of both governments cannot be easily depreciated, for leaders’ qualities shaped negotiations. On the other hand, it would be simplistic to ascribe the resolution of the issue exclusively to the voluntarism of both leaderships. Instead, it seems more appropriate to argue that a combination of external encouragement and domestic agency was the recipe for the success of Prespa Agreement (Armakolas and Petkovski, 2019).

Apart from governmental action, the contribution of local agents in the normalization of relations between the two countries has been valuable. In particular, I am referring to the former mayor of Thessaloniki Yiannis Boutaris, who is best known for his embarking on progressive city diplomacy of extroversion, utilizing the multi-cultural heritage of Thessaloniki (Makris, 2019). Freed from nationalist complexes and misconceptions, mayor Boutaris ventured to pacify relations with neighbourly countries, such as North Macedonia, that were traditionally conceived as enemies of Greece. As a mayor of a city that is considered to be the capital of Greek Macedonia, Boutaris' assistance in the rapprochement between North Macedonia and Greece has been recognized as determinant (Deutsche Welle, 2017), on the grounds that he contributed to the creation of an amicable atmosphere with high officials like the former Prime Minister Zaev and former Foreign Minister Dimitrov (Makris, 2019). Particularly, towards the end of 2017, at a moment when the new circle of negotiations had hardly started, Mayor Boutaris invited Zoran Zaev to dinner at a restaurant in Thessaloniki which, even though unofficial, constituted the very first step towards rapprochement between the two parties (Deutsche Welle, 2017).

Besides, Yiannis Boutaris manifested actively his support for Prespa Agreement (Hope, 2018) in a period when public opinion was intensely negative towards any resolution, with rallies taking place in Greece, especially in Thessaloniki. As a result, except for the Greek government led by Tsipras, Yiannis Boutaris became, also, a recipient of public discontent (Makris, 2019). Possibly, the Prespa Agreement could have never come to fruition without the unflinching political will of the aforementioned governmental and local agents. Favoured by the convenient occasion of all those actors - from both sides - being concomitantly in power, they took concerted action and managed to overturn the course of history, by thwarting the hegemony of nationalist strategies in foreign policy decision-making. The decisive element in that remarkable occasion was the fact that all those agents were legitimate political actors who shared a common anti nationalist sentiment. Thus, being driven by values of peace, compromise and recognition, they managed to release their politics from the shackles of national myths and navigate new modes of international coexistence, which comprises a kind of pacifism. Most significantly, those political figures demonstrated that sometimes ethical and idealistic positions towards peace and cooperation can make the difference, defying historical determinism.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

In order to make the Prespa agreement durable in time, the transformation of relations between the two countries should not be limited to the macro-level of leadership, instead initiatives aiming at trust-building have to be planned for the entire societies so that consensus regarding the agreement can be progressively developed. The objective of those initiatives can be the facilitation of inter-group communication and the experience of the everyday benefits that stem from the agreement, something that requires further political action.

In identity conflicts there are usually deeply instilled socio-psychological representations, shaping our image of the other, preventing us from truly familiarising with the unfamiliar (Moscovici, 2001). In order for those psychological obstacles to be removed, people should be in contact so as to start feeling and thinking differently of each other, discovering commonalities, in an attempt to approach the opponent. In other words, the existing *ethos of conflict* should be disempowered. Ethos of conflict consists of rigid societal beliefs which are configured historically within contexts of persistent conflicts, being resistant to any attempt to explore peaceful solutions (Bar-Tal, 2000). Perceptions of positive collective self-image and demonization of the other, self-victimisation and delegitimization of the enemy as well as monolithic, though coherent, rationales concerning a group's justness to pursue its goals are usually dominant in ethos of conflict (Bar - Tal, 1998, 2007). Aiming to weaken the rigidity of those societal beliefs, socio-psychological mechanisms, designed to challenge the dominant image of the enemy are required.

Kelman - a social psychologist deeply influenced by Burton's work - introduced *interactive problem-solving* as a methodology formed to breed changes in public opinion through interpersonal interaction among people coming from conflicting ethnic or religious groups, organised within small settings (1996). In particular, this micro-process aims at the facilitation of inter-group communication, giving individuals the opportunity to discover each group's needs and fears, in an attempt to humanise the other. The main goal of the process is to enable each participant to take the other's perspective and gain an understanding of the other's human needs and agonies, making participants, in this way, more amenable to compromises and attitude modifications. Thus, it is considered to be a deeply empathic process,

dialectical in nature, with dialogue functioning as the key methodological instrument.

The biggest success of the process is to help both sides realise that whatever people do, they do it to satisfy basic needs and that fulfilment of one party's needs does not necessarily pose a threat to the other's existence (Kelman, 1996). Providing that this kind of micro-level atypical diplomacy is incorporated into programmes initiated by government or civil society organisations in terms of multi-level connectivity between North Macedonia and Greece, it could be highly conducive to the deconstruction of stereotypes and the construction of new more humane images of the other, based on the understanding that agony for recognition lies in the heart of this dispute. Also, throughout this exploratory interaction Greeks and citizens of North Macedonia could discover cultural commonalities - for instance culinary traditions and folk music - deriving from the common Ottoman past. In that way groups could start to reconfigure their collective identities in ways which would be more constructive and less mutually exclusive. Arguably, national identities should not be conceived as natural, static and archaic entities, untouchable by historical rearrangements but instead, as Kedourie cogently highlights, they are quite malleable, products of historical volatility and self determination (1993).

Citizens of both countries need to experience the benefits of the agreement, also, within their everyday lives in order to positively evaluate it. This requires the acceleration of implementation of the memoranda such as the ones concerning the facilitation of transport connectivity and the reduction of roaming charges (Armakolas et al, 2020) Also, the agreements on trademarks and on the content of school books concerning the history of the region which are now characterised by stasis (Armakolas, Petkovski, Voudouri, 2020), should develop and fructify. Furthermore, it is advisable that the Greek government should not further protract the ratification of the three bilateral agreements which make provisions for economic and military synergy between the two countries as well as (make provisions for) Greece's support towards North Macedonia's EU integration, objectives which are vital for the agreement as a whole (Trkanjec, 2021). Last, in Greece, the erection of new road signs including the name of North Macedonia should be expedited, in order for the agreement to be part of citizens' everyday experience and thus, be gradually solidified.

## CONCLUSION

The importance of the Prespa Agreement cannot be reduced to the mere settlement of a name dispute. Apart from the undeniable symbolic value emanating from the agreement, the benefits are multiple for both parts and South-East Europe in general. Concerning North Macedonia, the settlement unlocked the country's entry into NATO, enhanced citizens' feeling of belonging in an international community and paved the way for the commencement of negotiations aiming at the EU accession, which was ultimately achieved. Even though there are still obstacles to be removed<sup>7</sup>, the strong desire for EU integration provides the country with impetus for profound economic and political reform, a unique impulse towards implementing the rule of law in practice and an important drive to achieve future prosperity. Furthermore, the protection of the country's integrity - secured by the agreement which enabled NATO membership - has a broader strategic importance that lies in safeguarding stability and security in the region, which otherwise could be threatened by irredentist aspirations of neighbouring countries towards North Macedonia, for instance the secessionism of the Albanian minority could be a menace. A possible dissolution of the small country would radically change the landscape in Western Balkans, leading to new territorial expansions, new conflicts and rise of nationalist ardour. Greece, on the other side, will not consume any more diplomatic capital on an intractable issue, while facing more serious challenges with Turkey. Instead, the agreement opens the way for a new friendship to thrive, enabling political, economic and societal cooperation between the two countries.

Moreover, with regards to the implications of the agreement on the region as a whole, Zoran Zaev's determination to lead his country towards EU accession by overcoming all possible shortcomings can potentially boost the effort to complete the democratic unification of the continent by incorporating the Western Balkans. The recent opening of accession talks with North Macedonia and of course its final integration will do more than merely assisting the country's internal stabilization and prosperity. It will encourage moderate politics to spread in a traditionally turbulent region and it will additionally

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<sup>7</sup> According to the deal aimed at settling the dispute with Bulgaria and allowing the commencement of EU accession, North Macedonia's constitution is expected to be amended to recognise the Bulgarian minority, which does not come without political complications and objections from the side of North Macedonia.

strengthen the European Union's overall capacity to influence the region vis-à-vis the role of non-European countries which aspire to claim geopolitical and economic gains of their own in this tormented part of the world.

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**Državnost Bosne i Hercegovine u XX i XXI  
stoljeću (Statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina  
in XX and XXI century)**

Mirko Pejanović

*Eva Jerman*

**Political Geography**

Igor Okunev

*Tadej Uršič*



**Eva Jerman**

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**Mirko Pejanović**  
**STATEHOOD OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN**  
**XX AND XXI CENTURY**

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**I**n 2021, the Balkan region commemorated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). This year, Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter BiH) has marked three decades since the historical 1992 referendum, where the majority of its population expressed support intension to become a sovereign and independent state. Following the declaration of independence, on 6 April 1992, and wide recognition by the international community, BiH soon became member of the United Nations.

Thirty years later, Pejanović highlights the failures of BiH to transition from socialism, to restore the consequences of the war, and implement structural reforms in social-economic sphere.

The author of this book, Mirko Pejanović, is professor of political sciences, a Vice President of the Bosnia and Herzegovina's Academy of Sciences and Arts, and director of its Research Centre on Development of the Local and Regional Self-Government.



Moreover, between 1992 and 1996, Pejanović was a member of the BiH Presidency, which adopted the fundamental document for the work of the Presidency during the wartime conditions, including its goals for the future of BiH. Furthermore, he is the founder, and was the President, of the Serbian City Council, which

fought against the ethnical hatred.

In his book, *Statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina in XX. and XXI. Century*, Pejanović gives an elaborate and structured overview of the formation and development of BiH, and analyses the process of state's accession to the EU. Eight chapters chronologically demonstrate the transition from a unit within the former SFRY into an independent, internationally recognised sovereign state. The milestones which shaped the state's modern history from the beginnings of the 1990s, start with the dissolution of the SFRY, the transition into a state with a 'multi-party' political system, followed by the referendum about its independence, the armed conflict, Dayton Peace Agreement and the post-Dayton agreement period to this day.

The first chapter opens with a brief historical overview of the political systems of BiH. After the Second World War, with the formation of the SFRY, BiH finally gained a form of a federal unit. The creation of statehood and the governance structure of BiH have been at the core of the sessions of the State Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ZAVNO-BiH), where eventually was formed the first national government of BiH.

Before the break-up of the SFRY, the society of BiH lived in harmony, despite its diversity. However, with the dissolution of the SFRY, the single-party political system got

replaced by a plural political system. This change of political system in 1990, led to emergence of some political parties that were mainly founded on the elements of ethnicity: Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), Party of Democratic Action (SDA), and Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ BiH). The political pluralism in BiH transformed into ethnical pluralism with the political identities blended into nationalistic, so the author.

The first multi-party elections took place in November 1990 and resulted in the win of the SDA, followed by the SDS and HDZ BiH respectively. Instead of signing a coalition agreement, they struggled to see eye-to-eye, even on the fundamental question of statehood.

The SDS was not willing to support the sovereignty of BiH and wanted the entire, or at least the Republika Srpska territory, to stay an administrative unit within the remaining territory of Yugoslavia, essentially, part of Serbia. The HDZ BiH was in favour of BiH becoming a sovereign, independent and internationally recognised state, and the SDA was promoting the idea of the transformation of Yugoslavia into a confederation. At heart, the latter two parties, together with the five opposition parties, advocated for BiH to become an independent, sovereign state.

In February/March 1992, the decision was entrusted to the people, who, at the referendum, expressed

their strong support for the independent and sovereign state. A month later, BiH became recognised as such by the EU, USA and many other states. This provoked the rage of the SDS and an unimaginable aggressive response, which escalated from the ideological conflict between the political parties into an armed conflict that spilled over the state's borders and flamed into a horrific battlefield.

The post war, 1996, Constitution divided (and at the same time united) the state of BiH into two entities, Federation of BiH and Republika Srpska. However, the ethnical political parties still received a strong support in 1996 and 1998 elections and with political conflicts far from being settled, despite the signed peace agreement. The winning parties struggled to reach consensus about any crucial issues of the state's social and political development and the adoption of many decisions and laws was left to the United Nations High Commissioner.

Nonetheless, the 2000 parliamentary elections brought along some major turns. The three ethnical parties, for the first time, found their places in the opposition. In the same year, BiH established the state border control service, and became a member state to the Council of Europe. Nonetheless, in the next parliamentary elections in 2002, the ethnical political parties took the lead again and the coalition agreement was again a subject of dispute. The pertaining issue was still present after the parlia-

mentary elections in 2006 and 2010. In 2008, BiH signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU, but the conflicts between the coalition parties caused the delays in the implementation of reforms and consequently slowed down the EU integration process.

Another milestone in the political development of BiH was the 2009 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in the case of *Sejdić and Finci vs BiH*. The Court found the violation of the eligibility of members of ethnical minorities to vote and to be elected. The execution of the judgment has taken over a decade and added to the delay in the EU integration process.

In Chapter IV, Pejanović focuses on the element of the state's multi-ethnic society, with a close look at the unique multi-cultural structure of the capital city Sarajevo and its defensive role. During the war, defence of BiH was, in parallel, taking place by military means and with a search for a peace agreement that would stop the war. The main defence strategy was enshrined in the political programme *Platform for the functioning of the Republic of BiH Presidency during the war period*.

The post-war state composition was created by Washington and Dayton agreements, dividing the state on ethnical grounds into two entities: Federation of BiH and Republika Srpska. According to Pejanović, such division made the state dysfunctio-

nal and created a need for constitutional amendments, which would eliminate the domination of the ethnic elements. Nevertheless, Dayton Peace Agreement has been an important milestone in the BiH's modern history. It ended the war and set the path for the re-construction of BiH and its institutions. Its enforcement was entrusted to the institutions established by the international community.

The main later issues in the political development of BiH are addressed in the sixth chapter of the book. Since 1998, with the establishment of the Consultative Task Force, which facilitated the beginnings of the political dialogue between BiH and the EU, the future has been centred around the state's accession to the EU. In the seventh chapter, Pejanović presents obstacles that have been in the way of the integration process. By 2008, under the authority of the UN High Commissioner, BiH managed to implement many reforms. On 15 February 2016, BiH finally submitted the application for accession to the EU. However, the state institutions have been unsuccessful in taking the necessary steps for the fulfilment of the requirements for the membership eligibility, which were set out in the 2019 opinion issued by the EU Commission.

The book rounds off with Pejanović's views referring to the current social and political reality in BiH, expressed in his several interviews. Pejanović reiterates the necessity of

the fast-track integration of BiH into the EU and at the same time stresses the persistent phenomenon of the government instability.

The author of the book has probably not imagined that this work will see the light of day in such dark times, when Europe witnesses war at its gates. In 2017, the international community has put the closure to the horrific Balkan wars with the official closure of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and handing over the small remainder of the cases to the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals. The criminal cases for the war crimes that occurred on the territory of the former SFRY have mainly concluded, but the evidentiary material and the convictions of the military leaders have become a reminder of how quickly an ideological conflict can trigger an aggression and transform into war.

The book *Statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina in XX and XXI Century* represents a commemoration of the anniversary of the state's independence and an encouragement for the necessary steps towards becoming a developed EU country. At the same time, the illustration of the political events provides an important context to the post-war generations, whose future had been likely affected by them, and a reminder for the European (and global) community of the importance of the dialogue and agreement-seeking in multi-ethnic and -cultural societies.

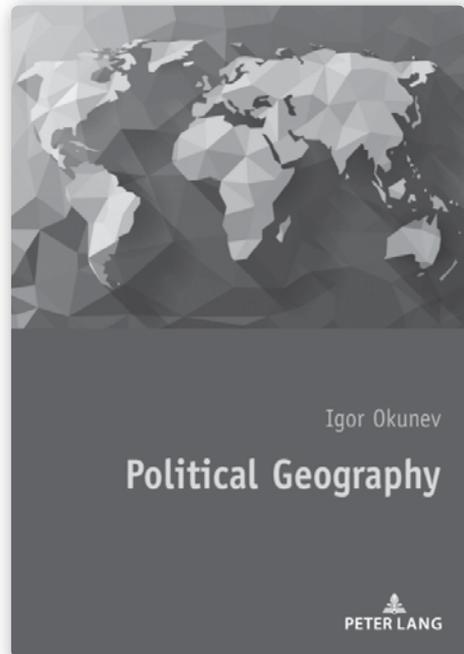
Tadej Uršič

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**Igor Okunev**  
**POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY**

Peter Lang, Brussels, 2021, 473 pages, ISBN 978-2-8076-1621-9

**P**olitical geography is a textbook by Igor Okunev, a professorial research fellow at MSIMO University and Director of its Center for Spatial Analysis in International Relations and Co-Chair of Research Committee on Geopolitics at the International Political Science Association. In the introduction, Okunev defines political geography as a “discipline concerned with the spatial dimensions of politics” which offers us an additional, specific theoretical insights for domestic and foreign policy formulation and analysis (page 19). Through introducing the reader to the numerous topics, from geopolitical systems to internationally administered territories, and their more concrete and specific elements the author, in a very coherent manner, showcases the comprehensiveness of the discipline. The first chapters of the book focus on rather theoretical discussions of the discipline, however gradually the book covers more and more concrete, real-life based phenomena. Simplifying it, one could say that the author starts with the “political” side of the disci-



plines and slowly progresses to the more “geographical” part of it.

The textbook is divided into 12 chapters and 188 subchapters, each addressing one of the discipline’s basic elements. Every chapter also offers a list of the key terms and concepts, several questions for dis-

cussion, one or more activities and a number of suggested readings, all for the purpose of the chapter revision. What makes Okunev's textbook an essential reading for students and researchers in the fields of political science, international relations and area studies, is his example-based way of presenting and addressing specific phenomena. He does not only provide an example for each element he introduces, as this often leads to misinterpretation and simplification, but offers wide array of different examples, often even all the currently existing examples relevant to the particular phenomena. With that he successfully provides us with a very useful collection of basic definitions, explanations and examples of individual elements the political geography deals with.

In order to get a sense of what is actually the content of the book and how does the previously mentioned example-based writing look like, we will focus on 8 (out of 12) chapters, more precisely subchapters which offer an example related to Slovenia.

In the second chapter - Global Geopolitical Systems, the author, among other things, dives deeper into several types of the respective phenomenon - we know antagonistic, concentric, polar, civilization-centered and regional geopolitical systems. The latter are on supranational level usually referred as macroregions and mesoregions. Okunev defines mesoregions as "stable historical and geographical groups of countries

within a continent" (page 63). He gets us acquainted with the mesoregions of Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Australia and Oceania. His classification of the individual countries to specific mesoregion originates in the United Nations Statistic Division geoscheme, however, he also points out there are other possible classifications and taxonomies one could use. Besides that, he also introduces us to the so-called dual countries phenomenon, which have troubles with deciding where they actually belong. There are four mesoregions in Europe - Northern, Western, Southern and Eastern. Southern Europe mesoregion includes Iberian, Apennine countries and most of the countries of the Southeastern Europe, part of which is also Slovenia.

Political geography also deals with vexillology, the study of the national flags, about which we can read in the fourth chapter. Okunev familiarizes us with the very specific terminology related to the (number of) colors, parts, patterns and other flag attributes and, of course, their display. Slovenian national flag can be described as tricolor with equally sized horizontal stripes and a very detailed coat of arms. Author also provides us with a table showing common flag elements, in which Slovenian flag is interestingly in the same group as Burundian, Croatian, Equatorial Guinean and Israeli flag - all of them contain a six-pointed star.

In the fifth chapter Okunev addresses Properties of State's Territory. A

very specific subchapter is dedicated to the landlocked states, which describes states with complete absence of the seacoast. There are even two so-called double-landlocked states, Liechtenstein and Uzbekistan, which not only do not have their own access to the sea, but also all of their immediate neighbors are a landlocked state. However, some countries, Slovenia is here again used as an example, can be described or categorized as only nominally landlocked, as they have a very small strip of land along the sea, which is, however, of immense geopolitical importance to it.

Another political geography element the textbook addresses is the disintegration. In the sixth chapter – Composition of State Territory, the author points out that “the world political map is subject to constant changes” (page 230). When the internal territorial change signifies territorial separation into parts, we are speaking of disintegration. At this point, we need to establish a difference between disintegration, which is a consequence of primarily internal pressures and partition, which is enforced from the outside. Okunev explains the disintegration phenomenon with two main examples, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the breakup of the Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, as the author rightfully points out, the disintegration often also leads to escalation of an armed conflict.

The seventh chapter covers the international territories where com-

mon heritage of all humankind is under the jurisdiction of international law and internationalized territories, which are tied to a specific state sovereignty, but have their legal status defined by an international authority. There is also an exception in this distinction, often called nobody’s land or *terrae nullis*, which is territory where no state enjoys sovereignty while also not having a status of an international territory. Two of the internalized territories’ elements the author carefully examines are the international rivers and lakes. Okunev introduces the reader to the international regulation and governance system of the transboundary watercourses. The *Central Commission for Navigation of the Rhine*, founded in 1815 and considered the first international body in the modern sense of the word, is one of the examples the author gives us to get a sense of the subjects which are part of the special legal regime regulating the sphere of the international rivers. Slovenia is a part of the *International Sava River Basin Commission*, which was established in 2001.

A very specific phenomena Okunev also examines are the free territories, which he defines as “separate political entity in the form of a sovereign state or its parts under international administration” (page 264). While not being fully sovereign, especially when it comes to the security and foreign policy, their self-government is intact and not controlled by an international organization. The reasoning behind their creation is usu-

ally to freeze the territorial claims and tensions. Slovenian territory was historically connected to two examples of the free territories – the *Free State of Fiume* (Rijeka) which existed between 1920 and 1924 and the *Free Territory of Trieste* existing from 1947 to 1954.

In the tenth chapter, Okunev focuses on borders, one of the elemental structures of the state and cleavages, which are usually the reason for the border creation. A very specific phenomenon in the context of the state border and cleavages are the twin cities – “formed by amalgamation of two cities or urban centers and separated by the international border” and divided cities – “former single entities, with the state border running through it” (page 387). Beside the well-known examples, such as West and East Berlin and Jerusalem, Okunev also mentions Gorizia-Nova Gorica one of the three present examples of a divided city.

The eleventh chapter studies the regions and municipalities as the most common forms of the internal political and territorial structure of the state and the local government. The literature usually refers to the *political and territorial organization*, which comprises of administrative divisions (regional and subregional level) and municipalities (local level). To understand the differences between the state administrative di-

visions Okunev provides the reader with the calculation, which found that an average state has 18 first-order administrative divisions with average territory of 40 000 km and average population of 1.8 million. Slovenia is in this regard mentioned as a one of the examples of a country with the highest rate of fractionalization. However, Okunev points out that fractionalization is a very debatable issue as reducing it often gives, especially in the case of a small state, impetus to centralization. As the author correctly concludes: “Fractionalization is a compromise between the need to make some aspects congruent and consider territorial heterogeneity, which is unique in every state” (page 397).

Because of its comprehensiveness and clarity, Okunev’s textbook is a necessary reading for every student, researcher and lecturer active in the field of political geography, however, it is an essential study and research accessory for members of academia in other related disciplines as well. While the experts of the discipline will definitely find interest in the very specific elements and their real-life examples the author offers, it should be, nevertheless, an intriguing and useful tool for beginners and non-experts too as he also presents numerous concise and precise explanations necessary for understanding the large number of the phenomena covered.

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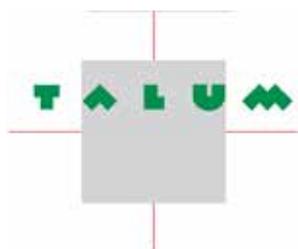




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