



Relations Between CEE Countries and Major Powers

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Preface

Whether like it or not, “geopolitics” has become a key phrase in understanding contemporary European external relations. Policy makers, academic researchers, and media reporters are increasingly viewing relations between countries/regions through the lens of geopolitics. Given the competitiveness connotations inherent in “geopolitics”, the mentality is clearly different from the “cooperation” narrative that was popular after the end of the Cold War.

Geopolitics is a game for great powers, while small countries are often the pawns and the arena of geopolitical competition. Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries are no strangers to geopolitical competition due to historical reasons and their geographical location. More than a hundred years ago, the British geographer Halford John Mackinder pointed out that the CEE region was part of the “heartland” and that control of the heartland was essential to control the world. While the theory can certainly be questioned, we do see a history of geopolitical competition in this region over the last century: Turkey, Germany, Italy, the Soviet Union (Russia), the United States, etc. competed for influence, and turned the region to the battlegrounds of two world wars and the Cold War. The history led to the fragmented map of this region, complex historical and ethnic issues, and an indelible, cruel memory.

Now, the CEE countries seem to be facing a new geopolitical environment. In addition to Russia, the United States, Germany, and Turkey, China, as an emerging economy, has started to increase its presence in the region. For China, its efforts are attracting the cardinal attention, especially through the China-CEEC cooperation mechanism and the “Belt and Road” initiative. China’s influence, as the authors of the

collection have pointed out, is not military or religious, nor even political, but more economic. China is geographically too far away, its history and culture is too different, and its military power is limited (including limited willingness to use it). These factors lead China to exert its influence here more through its rapidly growing economic power. Although it is clear from the authors' contributions that CEE countries do not share the same attitude towards Chinese influence, overall, China's involvement in the economic affairs of this region is constructive and can bring opportunities for peace and development.

Understandably, there are highs and lows in geopolitical competition, and this is the picture that history has shown us. Now we are in a period of intense geopolitical situation, which is exacerbated by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The impact of the conflict on CEE countries should not be underestimated in any case. After the outbreak of the conflict, the CEE public were shock to realize that after the decades of Cold-War tensions and confrontations, the prospect of permanent peace and prosperity was shattered overnight, and history seemed to return to the era of the World War II. The shock was not only psychological, but also seen through the long gas and electricity bills and Ukrainian refugees on the streets. For CEE countries being in such a "heartland", it is hardly evitable to be drawn into geopolitical competition, but they have the chance to mitigate the loss, and to use the great-power competition to their best advantage.

This collection of essays discusses the relationship between the CEE countries and great powers, which include the European Union, Germany, the United States, Russia, China, and Turkey. Some of them are neighbors of the CEE countries and share linguistic and cultural similarities with them, others have been rooted here for a long time, while China is largely a new player in the CEE region. They all seek to maximize their influence in the

region by playing to their strengths and taking advantage of the rapidly changing international political landscape.

This collection of essays invites scholars from CEE countries to analyze the relations between their own countries and these great powers. We believe that this collection has an important academic and practical value in the context of dramatic changes in great-power relations and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. We wish that through this collection of essays, readers may gain a clearer understanding of the current geopolitical picture in which the CEE countries find themselves.

Prof. Dr. LIU Zuokui

Deputy Director General, Institute of European Studies, CASS

Albania and World Powers: Complicated and Volatile

Marsela Musabelliu

Summary

The very existence of the Albanian state is a consequence of a compromise of Great Powers in 1913. While Albanians were trying to make a country their own, their fate was being decided in London and their borders demarked, despite and without Albanians being involved. To say that the relations of Albania with Great Powers is complicated, would be an understatement.

As in the past, so in the present, the weigh and the wishes of major world powers has been crucial in determining Albania's path as a nation. Sometimes beneficial, other times detrimental - one element of powerful foreigners in the country is constant, their influence.

Introduction: *"A country ruled by ambassadors"* – this is expression in Albania is being used with a higher frequency in media and public opinion. No great event has ever been an independent action of Albanians; it has always been caused or aided by the most influential world powers at a given moment. From the proclamation of independence, to the two World Wars, to the alliance with the socialist camp, to the dismantling of Hoxha's regime, Great Powers were never simple bystanders.

It is quite normal for a small country to be amenable to other powerful nations, however, when it comes to Albania, time and again, there has been too much of a susceptible behavior.

Some historical background

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire left Albania with four administrative regions, or vilayet. In 1912 the independence of was declared and the year after in 1913 the Conference of London (a gathering of Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and Italy) decides the borders of the country. In Albanian history books it is stated that it was only Austria-Hungary and Italy that actually supported the

Albanian cause, while the rest were ready to divide Albanian lands into inexistence.

Albania became a battlefield again in the First World War and the new point of reference for the Albanian cause became the United States (US). In the Paris Peace Conference, the US President Woodrow Wilson intervened, vetoed and supported Albanian territorial integrity.

Albania's central government declared the country a republic in 1924 and four years later, on September 1928, President Ahmed Zogu proclaimed himself King of the Albanians until 1939. The Royal Family fled into exile, taking with them a considerable amount of gold from the National Bank of Tirana and Durrës.

In 1939, Italy invades Albania and Mussolini declared the county a protectorate under Italy's King Victor Emmanuel III. After the armistice and the Italian exit from the Axis, German military forces entered Albania creating the client-state. The new government and the Germans had to contend with the increasingly Communist dominated National Liberation Movement (NLM) headed by Enver Hoxha. From that embryonic stage of communist movement in Albania, it expanded also with the Yugoslav emissaries under the direct instructions of Tito.

In 1945 Albania proclaimed her independence and in 1946 the People's Republic of Albania was established. The friendly relations with Tito's Yugoslavia ended in 1948 and immediately after the new powerful ally was the Soviet Union. The soviet connection didn't last, with the start of the so called 'De-Stanilization' process in the former Soviet Union, Enver Hoxha was looking for other powerful allies, and this was found in the People's Republic of China (PRC). This unique alliance was truly beneficial for Albania; while supporting PRC exclusively in terms of morale and ideology, Tirana was having in return aid and support in almost every aspect of the country's need. It is estimated that around 80% of Albania's GDP in the late 1960s was fueled exclusively by China. The Sino-Albanian split left the county in absolute isolation until 1991, when the borders became almost obsolete.

After 1991 – Albania and the world powers

While trying to dismantle all what the previous regime had created and implemented for decades, the new political class was oriented exclusively towards the West. The same happened with the western nations, which could target their interests in the country that for half a century vilified them all. Western embassies started to operate full scale in Tirana, and so did their influences.

While in the first decade of the transition the neighboring nations such as Italy were intrinsically involved, the European Union (EU) was closely monitoring Albania. The social unrests, the collapse of the pyramid schemes, unstoppable mass migration to Western European countries made it almost imperative for the EU to shift their focus in the region. The proximity to EU borders being the fundamental reason for action, made the wealthy nations of Europe not only have an opinion on what Albania should do, but they started to slowly have a say in internal affairs in an increasing rate.

Albania and the current state of affairs

When analyzing Great Powers in current times, the first reasoning would involve the members of two main international bodies, the United Nations (UN) Security Council' five permanent members the Group of Seven (G7). However, for a better understanding of the situation in the last decades we will subdivide this analysis into three parts:

The first decade: corresponding to the immediate aftermath of the system change, Italy was the most important foreign actor in Albania. Italy was present not only economically and politically, but also physically. It is important to remember that some of the most important operations were headed by Italians especially in the turmoil of 1997 as well as immediately after the events of 1991.

Italy and the Italians became an important part of Albanian political and economic life, not only due to the proximity to Italian shores, but also for the intense exchange between the two peoples. Italians and Italy were never perceived with a suspicious mindset in Albania. With regards to the elements of a foreign power Italy was welcomed, appreciated and cherished,

however the start of the new century witness also the decline of the Italian impact in Albania.

The second decade: starting with 2000s, witnessed a certain retreat of the Italian presence in Albania. Western European countries did not intend to deal with Albania separately, another important authority became omnipresent, namely the European Union. In the first decade of this century the United Kingdom and Germany became more and more involved, especially Germany. The advent of Angela Merkel to leadership placed the focus of Germany into the Western Balkans, consecutively Albania. From the "Berlin Process" to frequent visits of high emissaries, Germany becomes an important actor increasingly.

The third decade: starting with 2010-13 to date, there appeared to be a rapprochement with China, especially since the establishment of the China-CEEC cooperation mechanism. Hopes were high from both sides, especially in economic and investment terms, however, the rocky path that the Rama government has laid politically is influencing almost every other aspect. Still, there are those in Albania - multiplying in time and their voices being raised more frequently - who desire a stronger relationship with China.

This decade can be also denominated the "*American momentum*" in Albania. The US has always been present since 1991, first as an ideal, after as a partner, and finally as the Albanian Prime Minister Rama would say: the most important and strategic of friends. On September 16th 2021, the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, presented to the Parliament the program for foreign policy. She stated that the consolidation of Albania will continue as a key factor for peace and stability in the region, while emphasizing that the relationship with the US remains a cornerstone in Albanian foreign policy.¹ The strengthening of relations with the strategic

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania (2021, September 16). Xhaka prezanton programin për politikën e jashtme: Prioritet kryesor, avancimi i Shqipërisë në procesin e integritetit. Available at <https://punetejashtme.gov.al/al/zyra-e-shtypit/lajme/xhaka-prezanton-programin-per-politiken-e-jashtme-prioritet-kryesor-avancimi-i-shqiperise-ne-procesin-e-integritetit&page=1>

partner the United States of America - this was the most highlighted sentence from the Albanian press after the speech of the Minister. Needless to argue that the US presence in Albania is ubiquitous. From the Justice Reform, to every aspect of both major political parties, the US dictates almost every considerable political decision in the country.

Lilliputians' Dilemma: Small States in International Politics

The need of Albania to be under the good graces of a/any great power has been justified by Albanian scholars mainly in terms of the so-called “Lilliputians’ Dilemma”. This theory argues that a great power may provide the small state with much more than access or the right to be consulted: *“It may increase already substantial influence by widening and deepening ties that contribute to the small power's political leverage. In the extreme case the small power may be able to exercise the function of "internalized control" with a vengeance by putting severe restraints on the Great Power's policy options.”*¹

In the latest events, what Kuik calls emergence of the “twin chessboards” of U S-China rivalry has long-term implications for both big-power contestation and small-state (re). The greater the US-China rivalry appears - he argues - the stronger should be the inclination of smaller states to avoid being entrapped by unnecessary, premature, and self-fulfilling polarization.

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Conclusion

In terms of relations with Great Powers, Albanians are conscious that some of the best and some of the worst decisions ever made to seal the nations fate, were made by Great Powers. So, it is normal that in popular culture, this gratitude and acknowledgment sometimes borderlines servility, and

¹ Keohane, R. (1969). Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics. *International Organization*, 23(2), 291-310.
[doi:10.1017/S002081830003160X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830003160X)

² Kuik, C. (2021). The Twin Chessboards of US-China Rivalry: Impact on the Geostrategic Supply and Demand in Post-Pandemic Asia. *Asian Perspective* 45(1), 157-176. [doi:10.1353/apr.2021.0020](https://doi.org/10.1353/apr.2021.0020).

antagonism borderlines fanaticism. But most importantly, it is noted that many times the Albanian political elite takes this reverence or animosity for a Great Power a step too far. Be this for personal interests or doctrinal dogmatism, deep approval or disapproval for a given power is never in a small nation's interest. As mentioned above small states should avoid being entrapped by unnecessary, premature, and self-fulfilling polarization.

Relations Between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Major Powers

Zvonimir Stopić

Summary

This briefing will address Bosnia and Herzegovina's relations with four major powers, the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China.

Introduction

One might argue that the foreign affairs policy of a country stems from its internal circumstances. This is especially true for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which does not have direct or clear policies toward any of the major world's powers. Reason for such circumstances lies within Bosnia and Herzegovina's complicated inner politics which prevents the country to act unified on any international front. Furthermore, Bosnia and Herzegovina's two entities are reaching toward different countries within the region, and global powers outside it, for political and economic support, which helps deepen the already much too deep gaps that exist within the Bosnia and Herzegovina's political discourse. All of this puts Bosnia and Herzegovina in a position in which the country is more reacting than acting on the international scene, more often than not depending on how the policies of countries in the region and the policies of major powers change towards it. Bosnia and Herzegovina is thus a country subjected to foreign influence, which blends well together with its continuous internal political frictions. This briefing presents a general outlook on the nature of interest and involvement of major powers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China.

The United States

Ever since the 1992-1995 war, the United States have been heavily involved in Bosnia and Herzegovina's affairs. The United States played a crucial role not only in ending the hostilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in creating the political framework, defined by the Washington Agreement Dayton Agreement of 1994 and 1995, respectively, under which this country exists today. After the end of the war, the United States continued its presence in Bosnia in Herzegovina: until 2004, the peacekeeping forces were mostly constituted of the United States' troops, while between 1993 and 2013 the United States' investment in Bosnia and Herzegovina surpassed \$ 2 billion.¹ This state of affairs remained until May 2009 when during the his visit to the country the United States Vice President Joseph R. Biden announced certain changes in the United States policy by which the "handling" of Bosnia and Herzegovina was handed over to the European Union. However, although the various other international factors did influence the United States to gradually reduce their involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United States continued to maintain an observant eye on Bosnia and Herzegovina until this very day. The United States House of Representatives decision to directly and without any reservations condemn genocide and other crimes against Bosniaks committed by Serb forces in Srebrenica in July 1995 in 2005 (H.Res.199) and in 2015 (H.Res.310), can be used by example for this.² Today, for the most part, the United States acts together with the European Union as a factor which hopes to preserve the unity of Bosnia and

¹ See the analysis of Boško Picula: <<https://www.idpi.ba/vanjska-politika-sad-a-prema-bosni-i-hercegovini-i-regionalnom-okruzenju-od-1991-do-danas/>>

² See the official website of the US Congress: <<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-resolution/310/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22srebrenica%22%2C%22srebrenica%22%5D%7D&r=6&s=1>> and <<https://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/house-resolution/199/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22srebrenica%22%2C%22srebrenica%22%5D%7D&r=13&s=1>>.

Herzegovina and help Bosnia and Herzegovina to become a part of the European Union.

The European Union

Besides the United States, the European Union is the international power which has invested the most in Bosnia and Herzegovina, both economically and politically. The European Union is by far the largest provider of financial assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina: € 1.19 billion in European Union pre-accession funds (2007-2020), € 2.4 billion in loans from European Investment Bank since 1999, and € 284.3 million in Western Balkans Investment Framework since 2009. The European Union is also Bosnia and Herzegovina's largest trading partner, with volume of trade in goods between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union reaching € 9.6 billion in 2020.¹ Aside from investing in economic development, the European Union invests heavily in the improvement of Bosnia and Herzegovina's socio-political circumstances, i.e. the strengthening of rule of law, creation of a functional public administration system, reducing the level of corruption and nepotism, setting up the basis for the healthy development of business, encouraging the development clean environment awareness. The European Union's endeavor to help Bosnia and Herzegovina transform in a functional country which can become a European Union member state, however, is proving to be more difficult than expected. The last "Resolution on Bosnia and Herzegovina", adopted by the European Parliament in June this year only showed the magnitude of European Union's dissatisfaction with overall progress Bosnia and Herzegovina has made so far.² According to the Resolution, Bosnia and Herzegovina's issues, such as the historical revisionism, secessionist, ethno-nationalistic, anti-constitutional and inflammatory rhetoric and

¹ See the official website of the European Union: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/near_factograph_bosnia_and_herzegovina_0.pdf>.

² For the full text of the Resolution see: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0317_EN.html>.

related acts, continuous denial or glorification of war crimes, obstruction of the functioning of institutions and reforms, lack of progress on judicial reforms, widespread inter-ethnic intolerance, and the deteriorating state of respecting the fundamental rights of its citizens, to name only some, still place this country much too far from the European Union's membership.

The Russian Federation

Ever since the Russo-Turkish wars, fought in the second half of the nineteenth century, the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Balkan in general, belonged to a significant interest zone of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and now the Russian Federation. The crucial link between Bosnia and Herzegovina's territory and Russia was established and maintained through Serbia, forged during the mentioned Russo-Turkish war, the Balkan Wars and the First World War. During that time, Russia played an important role in the development of national sentiment in the Balkans, especially the Serbian one, and has ever since been an important supporter of it. Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to be a point of interest to Russia. Bosnia and Herzegovina's geographical and political positioning continues to make the country an important part of the frontline along which we can observe diplomatic clashes between Russia and the United States / NATO / European Union. In these clashes, Russia's prime partners are Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić and Serb representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina's Presidency and the *de facto* ruler of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik. In recent years, however, building new alliances that have been growing between Serbs and Croats within Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus defying historic traditions, Russia has also been trying to get closer to Dragan Čović, the *de facto* leader of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Croats. The rationale for such an approach is the same as above, undermining the presence of the United States and European Union in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Balkans in general.

People's Republic of China

When compared with other three powers mentioned in this briefing, the People's Republic of China has been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the shortest amount of time. China established diplomatic relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina in April 1995, while the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was still ongoing. Following the end of the war, the two countries reached several agreements, such as the agreement on trade and economic cooperation in 2000, the agreement on investment protection in 2002 and the cluster of agreements on several assistance models for Bosnia and Herzegovina and removals of many administrative barriers in 2010. The "China + 17" framework and the "Belt and Road Initiative", launched in 2012 and 2013, respectively, opened new possibilities for cooperation which resulted in several large infrastructure projects, such as the 300 MW Stanari Thermal Power Plant, the 35 MW Hydroelectric Power Plant Ulog, the 450 MW thermal power generator "Block 7" of Tuzla's thermal power plant, the Dabar Hydroelectric Power Plant project, and the "Banja Luka - Prijedor highway". Although China's involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina tends to stay within the domain of economic cooperation, setting politics on the side as much as possible, the balancing of such type of involvement does come with its own challenges. For example, we can observe that China today has significantly more economic and cultural connections with the entity of Republika Srpska, which indirectly will have effect on the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina's internal politics.

Conclusion

The territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina always seems to find its way into the interest spheres of major powers. Today, this country which due to its low administrative functionality suffers one economic or social defeat after another, once more finds itself in a similar situation. Out of four major powers discussed in this briefing, the United States and the European Union aim to include Bosnia and Herzegovina in its present statehood form into the European Union, while Russia traditionally continues to give more support to Bosnia and Herzegovina's Serbs. China, as the power which arrived the last, is attempting to balance its presence in the country,

focusing more on economic development, which in reality is not without challenges of its own.

Relations Between Bulgaria and Major Powers

Evgeniy Kandilarov

Summary

The current trend of the relations between Bulgaria and the current Major geopolitical powers such as the USA, China and Russia could be briefly described as following:

- Extremely close relations between Bulgaria and the United States, based partly on Bulgaria's membership in NATO;
- Relatively tense and politically as well as ideologically deteriorated relations between Bulgaria and Russia]
- Cautious and quite passive relations with China, which are subject to strong political and ideological influence from the United States, which is the dominant political force in Bulgaria.

There are no significant changes in the current state of relations between Bulgaria and the world Major Powers. There are clear trends that remain unchanged regardless of the dynamics in the country's governance in the last half year (since May 2021 Bulgaria is governed by a caretaker government due to the impossibility of forming a regular cabinet due to the political crisis in the country).

Bulgaria and USA

The country's foreign policy positions are determined primarily by Bulgaria's allied commitments to the European Union and NATO. From this point of view, the USA occupies a priority place in Bulgaria's foreign

policy. The United States has a special interest in cooperating with Bulgaria in the field of defense and security.

With the establishment of the Bulgaria-US Strategic Dialogue, whose first session was on January 8, 2020, bilateral cooperation was raised to a qualitatively new level, both bilaterally and through multilateral cooperation. Just a few months ago, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Svetlan Stoev and Economy Minister Kiril Petkov discussed with US Ambassador Hero Mustafa current topics on the shared agenda of the Bulgaria-US Strategic Dialogue, as well as the Bulgarian chairmanship of the “Three Seas Initiative”.

Minister Stoev stressed the continuity in the foreign policy of the caretaker government, as well as the desire of the Bulgarian side to further deepen the strategic partnership with the US both bilaterally and in the context of transatlantic relations.

He focused on key priorities for Bulgaria in relations with the United States, including Bulgaria's accession to the US Visa Waiver Program, the start of negotiations on a bilateral social security agreement, support for Bulgaria's accession to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

From August 23-25, 2021, a delegation from the U.S. Congress visited Bulgaria to meet with government officials, U.S. business representatives, and others for talks on defense and security in the region, the economic environment, and the broader bilateral relationship. Members of the delegation also explored cultural sites that have been restored in part with U.S. funding.

This visit, the second large delegation of Congress people from the United States to Bulgaria this summer, underscores the importance of the U.S.-Bulgaria strategic partnership to the U.S. government and to the security and prosperity of the region. The delegation's trip to Bulgaria was part of a wider European tour.

In the early September the Prime Minister Stefan Yanev held another meeting with the US Ambassador to Bulgaria. During their talks, the emphasis was put on the strategic partnership between Bulgaria and the United States and the aspirations of the two countries. Both sides discussed the bilateral partnership in the fight against corruption and in the field of defense and security, as well as the potential of trade and economic relations between the two countries. The successful Bulgarian household of the "Three Seas" Initiative in June, which has the consistent support of the United States, was also noted.

Just a few days ago at a conference dedicated to artificial intelligence and cybersecurity organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Foreign minister pointed out that *"The adoption of a NATO Comprehensive Cyber Defense Policy was one of the Alliance's priorities. Bulgaria actively participates in the discussions and supported at the highest level the initiative of NATO to create an Accelerator for Innovation in the Defense Sector, as well as an Innovation Fund "*.

Bulgaria and Russia

During the last few years the Russian-Bulgarian dialogue is not easy. This can be traced to the dynamics of the meetings of the leaders of the two countries. The obvious stage of rise was in 2018-2019. At that time, Russia was visited by the President Rumen Radev (twice), Prime Minister Borissov, National Assembly Speaker Tsveta Karayancheva, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ekaterina Zaharieva. Respectively Bulgaria was visited by the Prime Minister Dimitry Medvedev and Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill.

However, the favorable period didn't last long. Since October 2019 up to now relations between Bulgaria and Russia remain relatively cool after a series of spy scandals which led to the expulsion of number of Russian diplomats from the country. For the last two years, a total of 9 of Russian diplomats have been announced "persona non grata". The reasons for the cooling of relations between Bulgaria and Russia are more complex. For a

long time, the Bulgarian political elite has been trying to achieve a balance between Bulgaria being economically and culturally connected to Russia, and militarily and politically - to be loyal to the West. This worked until the annexation of Crimea. Then Russia began to become more aggressive in the Black Sea, and the United States realized that it could not tolerate this type of policy. The sanctions were the first step by which the United States showed that when it comes to the Black Sea region, it will rely on its allies in the Balkans. Bulgaria is NATO's external border and cannot afford to maintain balanced relations with Russia.

The Russian Ambassador to Bulgaria Eleonora Mitrofanova announced that the problems in the relations between Sofia and Moscow in recent years are mainly due to Bulgaria's ties with the EU and NATO.

Indicative of the negative trend in Bulgaria's political position towards Russia is that in all publications on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria for one year (from June 2020 to June 2021) Russia is mentioned only in a negative context.

In addition, the establishment of a NATO naval coordination center in Varna and the holding of large-scale joint military exercises with participants from outside the region and the use of Russia's image as an "enemy" also contributed to the rise of tensions between Bulgaria and Russia.

However, it must be said that Bulgaria still has a strong economic interest in maintaining good relations with Russia. Extremely important is the fact that Bulgaria is almost entirely energy dependent on Russia, which is a major supplier of crude oil and natural gas. From the beginning of 2021, Bulgaria had to break its dependence on Russian gas supplies and open its market to various other suppliers. This process has been prepared for over 10 years - with the announcement of projects for gas interconnections with neighboring countries, with the signing of agreements with Azerbaijan for Caspian gas, with the creation of a gas exchange and the possibility of the so-called virtual transactions that do not require physical pipes. However,

this will not happen. Bulgarian dependence on Russia will not only continue, but will even increase, albeit indirectly. Russian gas in domestic consumption may decline in volume, but control of gas transit and entry-exit transit routes has already been taken over by the “Gazprom” company for years to come. And there is no place for free competition.

Bulgaria and China

At first glance, relations between Bulgaria and China are good and relatively stable. Bulgaria participates in the Chinese regional initiative 17/16+1 and in recent years, at least on an official, verbal, level, the Bulgarian government has expressed a desire and readiness for more intensive economic relations between the two countries. At the same time, however only less than 1% of foreign direct investment in Bulgaria comes from China. Bulgaria ranks almost last in terms of Chinese investments in the region of Central and Eastern Europe within the Belt and Road Initiative. This level corresponds to the weak political commitment of the Bulgarian state towards China, which corresponds to the strong ideological and political pressure in this direction exerted on the Bulgarian government by Bulgaria's priority ally and China's main strategic rival - the United States.

However, in recent months, the governments of the two countries have discussed the possibilities and prospects for a more fruitful and pragmatic development of relations and bringing the strategic partnership between the two countries to a higher level.

Emphasis was placed on expanding access to the Chinese market for high-quality Bulgarian products and services and on obtaining the necessary permits from the Chinese side to import more Bulgarian agricultural products to China.

However, relations between Bulgaria and China remain concentrated mainly in the fields of education and culture.

Last but not least, Bulgaria is more or less obliged to follow the common EU policy towards China, which is becoming more and more rigid, and a

clear example of this was the new EU strategy called “Global Gateway”, announced on September 15, by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, as a scheme to compete with China’s Belt and Road Initiative.

Conclusion

It is quite obvious that in its relations with the three major world political powers, namely the United States, China and Russia, Bulgaria is part of the emerging geopolitical opposition between East and West. As a member of the EU and especially NATO, Bulgaria is obliged to observe the basic political line of these organizations towards Russia and China. This automatically makes the United States a priority foreign policy partner that dominates Bulgarian foreign policy and directly influences the maintenance of cold and tense (the case of Russia) or cautious and passive (the case of China) relations with Russia and China, which turned out to be a geopolitical rivals of the USA within the present global confrontation.

Croatia: Relationships with Major Foreign Powers

Morgane Rumeau, Msc

Summary

This paper focuses on Croatia relationships with major non-EU powers, namely the United States, Russia, Turkey and China. As Croatia became independent in 1991, it had to navigate the water of international politics amongst great powers. According to its political context, Croatia adapted its foreign policy goals from a predominantly foreign policy towards membership in the EU and western sphere, then shifting to an “open door policy” towards non-EU powers whilst still aligning its foreign policy with NATO and the EU.

Introduction

The first twenty years following Croatia’s independence in 1991 was a time of great political transformation. On the ground, the political landscape mobilized around the idea of Croatian statehood and territorial sovereignty, thrust into focus by war. More broadly, the idea of joining the ‘western club’ began to drive changes in Croatian politics. From 1991 to 2013, the country’s three major foreign policy goals were as follows: international recognition as an independent state; territorial unification, and membership in both NATO and the EU. Accession to NATO and to the EU had a paramount importance for Croatia, allowing it to integrate into the most powerful political and economic alliance and to turn to the West in both policy and identity. With the accession to NATO in 2009 and to the EU in 2013, the Croatian foreign policy objective switched to successfully operating within the EU and fostering stronger bilateral relations with non-EU countries. Thus, Croatian foreign policy actors demonstrated an open-door policy towards great powers such as the US, Russia, China and Turkey. Depending on the country, these ties may be more of a diplomatic, cultural, historical and economic nature.

Relationships with the USA

Bilateral relations between the United States and Croatia date back to 1992 as the United States recognized and supported the independence of Croatia from the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. After the Dayton Accords in 1995, US foreign policy shifted to maintaining the new states and borders of the status-quo, alongside a transformation towards democracy, market economics, and the NATO security sphere. The US believes Croatia to be an active player in the stabilization of the Balkan region in all of those fields. Additionally, the US envisions Croatia – today led by a pro-European government — as an advocate of EU enlargement and of a strong Europe, both elements that will prevent China and Russia from strengthening their influence in the region. From an economic point of view, a strong Croatia must have a diversified supply of energy to reduce Russian influence, thus the US supports the creation of the LNG terminal on Krk island where non-Russian natural gas will be stored and exported into Europe. While the US does not have strong strategic economic ties with Croatia and its neighborhood, it views Croatia as a positive force for strengthening market economies in the region. From a military point of view, Croatia has participated with the United States in addressing regional and global challenges. Through its NATO membership, Croatia took part in operations in Afghanistan and in Libya, as well as participating in the Kosovo force and in NATO's Partnership for Peace. It is also a member of the Adriatic Charter along with the US and other Balkan states. Similar to EU enlargement, the US views Croatia as a positive force for NATO enlargement in the region.

Relationships with Russia

Russia has stepped back as Europe enters, but it has not stepped out. Since Croatia's accession to NATO in 2009 and to the EU in 2013, it has had to align its foreign policy objectives towards Russia with those of the aforementioned organizations — instituting sanctions, applying visas, altering trade agreements, and so forth. However, Croatia was always willing to leave room for further economic and political relations with

Russia due to a traditionally positive relationship. Whilst ties between the two countries might not appear to be significant at first, it remains that Croatia is economically well connected with Russia through credit financing, investment in the tourism industry and especially the supply of gas. One example is 10 year deal signed in 2017 by Croatia's Prvo Plinarsko Društvo (PPD) with the Russian gas giant Gazprom¹. Another example is the 2017 Agrokor scandal. As a financial crisis broke out in Agrokor, the bankruptcy settlement allowed the Russian Sberbank to come into possession of 32.839 hectares of agricultural land in eastern parts of Croatia, which is 12,8% of all state rented agricultural land in Croatia. Additionally, Russia is suspected of bribing politicians and businessmen in Croatia. [Miroslav Škoro's political movement Domovinski pokret Miroslava Škore \(DPMŠ\)](#) which emerged at the end of 2010s was reported to be financed by and have strong personal connections with the gas trading company (PPD).² Unable to steer away many Southeast European states like Croatia, Slovenia, and Montenegro from EU and NATO membership, Russia builds relations through soft power initiatives — financing various cultural, academic and research projects, building monuments dedicated to great Russian artists and scientists, etc...

Relationship with Turkey

Turkey has made overtures into the Western Balkans and Croatia, these are often overblown into Turkey wooing the region away from their Russian and the EU partners. In reality, the relationship is more formal and limited. Diplomatic relations between Turkey and Croatia started in 1992, with the recognition of independent Croatia by Turkey. A NATO member itself, Turkey has always been very supportive of Croatia's accession to NATO, one of Croatia's major foreign policy goals until 2009. Conversely, Croatia

¹ Iva Blažević, November 2018. "Croatia External Relations briefing: Croatian-Russian Relations". Retrieved from: https://china-cee.eu/2018/11/19/croatia-external-relations-briefing-croatian-russian-relations/#_ftn1

² Robert Mihaljević, February 2020. "Je li Miroslav Škoro eksponent ruskih i mađarskih interesa u Hrvatskoj". Retrieved from : <https://danica.hr/je-li-miroslav-skoro-eksponent-ruskih-i-madarskih-interesa-u-hrvatskoj/>

gave its full support to Turkey for its EU membership journey. Turkish influence in the Balkans and in Croatia gained momentum in the early 2000's, as initiatives aiming to increase Turkish soft power were implemented. As a result, bilateral ties spiked alongside economic, diplomatic and cultural ties. From an economic point of view, Turkey's investments in the country are focused on tourism, banking, transportation, and energy industries. However, the migration crisis, broader EU-Turkey relation shifts, and political changes in Turkey jeopardized all of these plans. Although high officials from both countries repeatedly stated that relations between Croatia and Turkey bear great meaning and displayed willingness to further develop ties, there are today no signs suggesting that the momentum will be soon revived.

Relationship with China

Since diplomatic relations between Croatia and China were established in 1992 with Chinese recognition of Croatia, both countries pledged support for more intensive cooperation. Croatia is part of the Chinese "17+1" Initiative. It aims at promoting investment opportunities and strengthening economic cooperation with seventeen countries from Central and Eastern Europe. It is only since late 2016 that Croatia is seriously starting to take advantage of this initiative to deepen its collaboration with China. The best example is the selection in January 2018 of China's state-owned China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) to build the long awaited and EU funded Pelješac bridge in southern Croatia. This is the largest infrastructure project in the country. Another example is the purchase by the Chinese Norinco company of 76% of the Croatian Energija Projekt company for EUR 32 million, allowing it to construct and operate for 23 years the Senj Wind Farm, presenting China as an actor of the green transition.

Beyond the economic interests, the two countries are willing to further expand the existing cooperation in the education and academic sectors. In October 2004, a Sinology major was officially established at the University

of Zagreb. In 2006, Beijing Foreign Studies University included a major in the Croatian language in its curriculum. In May 2012, the Confucius Institute was unveiled at the University of Zagreb, aiming at promoting the Chinese language, culture and a way of life. Finally, in May 2021 a high-level official of the Chinese Communist Party was received by high rank Croatian officials, concluding that both countries are interested to expand their cooperation in infrastructure, SMEs, technological innovations fields as well as in the fight against the pandemic and the intensification of tourism.

Conclusion

Since its independence in 1991, Croatia has had to navigate foreign politics whilst having a rather limited influence on the international scene. At first, Croatia sought international recognition from other powers, then almost solely focused on being part of the Western club which would guarantee to some extent its peace and prosperity. Since its accession to NATO (2009) and to the EU (2013), Croatia expanded its objectives and is now more open to developing economic and diplomatic partnerships with non-EU powers such as the US, Turkey, China and Russia. Nevertheless, Croatia, as a member of NATO and of the EU, must align with their political and institutional orientation. As such, the growing concern from the EU and the US about an increasingly influential China in the Balkan region including Croatia might force Croatia into reconsidering its economic and diplomatic ties with China.

Relations with Major Powers: In Need of Sovereignism

Ladislav Zemánek

Summary

The Czech Republic's relations with the major powers (the United States, China and Russia) are analysed from the perspective of the Foreign Policy Concept, the basic normative document in the field. The article shows that the official national strategy is innerly contradictory, considering global transformation processes but not overcoming the tenets of Euro-Atlanticism and Western-centrism at the same time. It affects the policies towards China and Russia inevitably. The Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy thus needs to be revised and updated in order to adapt to changing external conditions.

Introduction

The external relations and orientation are defined by the Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy.¹ The current version was approved in 2015 and since then has remained unchanged. Even though the strategic document reflects certain tendencies and global transformative processes, it is not able to overcome obsolete tenets and concepts of the post-socialist period. At the same time, it is attentive to global megatrends such as (1) restructuralisation of the international order from the US-dominated unipolar model towards a multipolar one; (2) increasing influence of non-state or supranational actors that undermine the position of the modern Westphalian state based on the principle of sovereignty; (3) increasing level of interdependence, yielded by globalisation, development of progressive technologies and practices.

¹ *Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy* (2015, July 13), mzv.cz. Retrieved September 26, 2021, from https://www.mzv.cz/file/1574645/Concept_of_the_Czech_Republic_s_Foreign_Policy.pdf.

Value-based foreign policy

The Foreign Policy Concept is right when speaks out in favour of multilateralism as an appropriate answer to these tendencies. Notwithstanding these observations, it does not draw the right conclusions. In fact, the present Western interpretation of multilateralism is limited and biased since it is a „rules-based“ multilateralism. It is exclusive and permeated with pseudo-universalist assumptions, moralism and superiority. The point is that Western multilateralism is conditioned by adherence to the Western, allegedly universal values and rules, to the liberal democracy and its ideology.¹ The rules-based order introduces a division between liberal democracies and „autocracies“, between allies and systemic rivals, friends and enemies. Inevitably, it leads to confrontation, conflicts and instability of the international system. The Western concept is opposite to pragmatism, openness and pluralism. Moreover, it is utterly moralistic, introducing the ethical categories of good and bad into international politics, making it very ideologised. The US President Joe Biden is trying to establish an „alliance of democracies“ to confront „autocracies“. ² Unfortunately, the official Czech foreign policy is vulnerable to such narratives for historical reasons.

The Concept itself refers to the legacy of humanism of the first Czechoslovak President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, democratism of the Prague Spring (typical of liberalisation and opposition to the Soviet-style communist system implemented in Czechoslovakia after 1948) and the Charter 77, a dissident grouping that emerged in the 1970s, one of the leaders of which was Václav Havel. The latter influenced significantly a hegemonic paradigm of the Czech Republic, contributing to the

¹ *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism* (2021, February 17), [eeas.europa.eu](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/en_strategy_on_strengthening_the_eus_contribution_to_rules-based_multilateralism.pdf). Retrieved July 30, 2021, from https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/en_strategy_on_strengthening_the_eus_contribution_to_rules-based_multilateralism.pdf.

² *President Biden to Convene Leaders' Summit for Democracy* (2021, August 11), [whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov). Retrieved August 25, 2021, from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/08/11/president-biden-to-convene-leaders-summit-for-democracy/>.

establishment of a strongly value-based foreign policy, orientated towards the US and NATO as pillars of the Euro-Atlantic community. Since then, there has been a clash between „moralists“ and pragmatists in Czech politics, between those who advocate either a strict pro-Western orientation or multivector, open and pragmatic policy. This division can also be described in terms of Atlanticism and sovereigntism. Excessive moral emphasis and value orientation of the foreign policy result in a secondary position of the Czech Republic within the Western community. The Czech foreign policy is open to real multilateralism in principle but this possibility has been undermined by the liberal democratic framework in general and rules-based multilateralism in particular.

The major obstacle to making the foreign policy multivector and as independent as possible is Euro-Atlanticism. This dogma leads to dependence on the US interests (it applies not only to our country but the EU as a whole). Adherence to the liberal democratic credo and the Euro-Atlantic community is still declared by a majority of relevant Czech political subjects with the exception of the Eurosceptic Freedom and Direct Democracy (a member of the European Identity and Democracy Party together with – among others – Herbert Kickl’s Freedom Party of Austria, Marine Le Pen’s National Rally or Matteo Salvini’s League) and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia. The inseparable part of Atlanticism is support for NATO as an alleged pillar of national security and stability. However, membership in the North Atlantic Alliance deepens the Czech Republic’s dependence on Washington. It is therefore crucial for the critics of NATO to change the dominant discourse, demonstrating that national security should be guaranteed through different means, especially the OSCE or new security mechanisms. Euro-Atlantic area with the NATO and EU as its core has the leading position within the national foreign policy strategy. The community is based on „shared values“, which is true but partially. Interpretations of basic concepts increasingly vary – Hungary, Poland or Turkey develop an illiberal democracy or democracy with national characteristics. The Concept of the Czech Republic’s Foreign Policy defines the US to be the „frontline guarantor of Euro-Atlantic

security“. Such a position is somewhat embarrassing if we take into account the experience with Donald Trump’s nationalist policies, development of the EU’s strategic autonomy or withdrawal from Afghanistan under Joe Biden’s leadership. These facts should lead the Czech political elites to revise the older tenets and adapt to new conditions.

Ties with Russia and China

It is telling that the fundamental foreign policy document puts the non-Western regions after such countries as Albania, Kosovo, Ukraine, Georgia or Turkey. Obviously, it underestimates the objective shifts on the global arena and the rise of the non-Western world, be it the Asia-Pacific with China as its most important actor, Russia or Africa. As far as Russia is concerned, relations with this Eurasian major power reached the bottom in 2021.¹ In response to the anti-Russian actions adopted by the Czech side, Moscow declared the Czech Republic together with the US „unfriendly states“. ² It corresponds with a broader West’s confrontational policy instigated by Washington and its closest allies in Europe, first and foremost Poland and the Baltic states (while others have adopted a more pragmatic attitude as demonstrated by the German-Russian project of Nord Stream 2). It is worth noting that the economic relations (or even interdependence) are strong irrespective of the „political war“. This discrepancy is typical both for the Czech Republic and the EU as a whole.

While cooperation with Russia is minimal, the Chinese vector remains more constructive. The Foreign Policy Concept expects the development of cooperation in a wide array of fields within the framework of the

¹ See Zemánek, L. *Chastening Experience: Cooperation with Russia Fatal* (2021, June 03), china-cee.eu. Retrieved September 30, 2021, from <https://china-cee.eu/2021/06/03/czech-republic-external-relations-briefing-chastening-experience-cooperation-with-russia-fatal/>. Zemánek, L. *Czech RussiaGate: Contemporary McCarthyism in Practice* (2021, June 15), china-cee.eu. Retrieved September 30, 2021, from <https://china-cee.eu/2021/06/15/czech-republic-political-briefing-czech-russiagate-contemporary-mccarthyism-in-practice/>.

² *Распоряжение Правительства Российской Федерации от 13 мая 2021 года № 1230-п* (2021, May 14), rg.ru. Retrieved September 26, 2021, from <https://rg.ru/2021/05/14/pravitelstvo-rasp1230-reg-dok.html>.

bilateral strategic partnership, mentioning the potential of the China-EU investment agreement. Despite the positive normative basis of the Czech-Chinese relationship, some political and non-political forces have attempted to undermine the partnership as demonstrated by support for Taipei and other examples of meddling into the PRC's internal affairs. The recent exclusion of both Chinese and Russian subjects from the strategic tender for new nuclear units have also damaged mutual relations.¹ Nevertheless, an increasing number of politicians are aware of the importance of the normalisation of relations with Moscow and deepening interactions with Beijing. Last but not least, further development with major powers could be influenced by the Parliamentary election held in October.

The Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy needs to be revised and updated. And far not only from the abovementioned reasons. The focus on the EU and the US need not be controversial if supplemented by equal cooperation with other partners, including China and Russia as well as supranational initiatives or institutions such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the Eurasian Economic Union or Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Taking into consideration these actors would reflect the objective transfer of power to Asia. Similarly, the national strategies do not adapt to rapidly changing conditions provoked by partial deglobalisation or focus on „strategic autonomy“ (if use the European term) on the one hand, and by the global pandemic on the other. The international order is not the same as was in times when the present Foreign Policy Concept was elaborated. There was no Trumpism, no America First policy, no dual circulation and the EU's strategic autonomy limited itself to security issues. The world has remained highly interdependent but the tendency of regionalisation and multipolarisation has become stronger, entailing frictions, new sources of instability, risks of conflicts and reformulation of the globalisation process. It is not linear anymore. And the international scene is increasingly typical

¹ *Prezident Zeman podepsal zákon, který vyloučil ruské a čínské firmy z dostavby Dukovan* (2021, September 27), irozhlas.cz. Retrieved September 28, 2021, from https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/zeman-zakon-podpis-dukovany-cina-rusko_2109271228_svi.

of „cooptition“, a new version of mutual cooperation and competition within the new strategic limits.

Conclusion

The official foreign policy continues to be conforming to one-sided and outmoded patterns that formed after the end of the Cold War. While mentioning the transformation towards a multipolar system, the Concept reaffirms the older orientation to the West, thereby accepting the confrontational, manichaeian, dualist narrative dividing the world between liberal democracies (or „free world“) and „autocracies“ (or „new tyranny“). The Trump-Biden’s discourse yields conflicts and creates new dividing lines. It does damage multilateralism. Criticism of NATO or the European Union does not necessarily mean a negative attitude towards Europe, US or the West as such. Sovereignist policies are to enable pragmatic multivector cooperation without regard to differences in political, economic, social or cultural models. Sovereignist policies are to contribute to making Europe independent on Washington’s interests, to making the „old continent“ one of the poles of the multipolar global order. Sovereignist policies are aimed to make Europe stronger but they do not identify the EU with Europe necessarily. National normative documents as well as a substantial part of the Czech political representation has not accepted this form of sovereigntism as a vital interest and need yet.

Major Powers and Estonian Foreign Policy

E-MAP Foundation MTÜ

In the 1970s, when Dr. Tõnu Parming wrote about the interwar period, he noted about his native Estonia's geo-strategic position of being "between two powers"¹ then. Of course, the Pärnu-born scholar of Princeton, Yale, Maryland, and Toronto, by specifying about "powers", meant the former **Soviet Union** and the former Weimar-turned-Nazi **Germany**. In the context of Estonia's existence as a sovereign country, those two major powers' combined involvement was instrumental – the 1939 Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (better known in society of history-readers as the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact) as well as the agreement's secret protocol made a crucial difference for Estonia. The 'parade' of occupations in 1940-1944 had eventually and ruthlessly pushed the country into the 'brotherly' arms of the Kremlin until 1991, when the USSR 'played' its final 'overture' to end the Soviet empires clumsily directed 'oratorio'.

From then on, for Estonia to exist in and strategise about, an era of new major powers evidently appeared to be as one of the most inevitable factors. The Soviet Union's dramatic collapse, the (semi- and quasi-consequential with the latter) establishment of the EU, the ground-breaking success of Deng Xiaoping's reformation of the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation's first experiences of actorness in the international system, and, finally, the globalisation-driven continuation of the United States' geo-strategic domination in international affairs – all these moderators became important for Estonia's foreign policy-makers to visualise the country international *silhouette* in years to come. From 2004,

¹ Tõnu Parming, 'Estonia between two powers' in *Journal of Baltic Studies* (Taylor and Francis), vol. 5, no. 2, 1974, pp. 136-140. Available from [<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43210564>].

one of the aforementioned moderators became an internal issue for Estonia, since the republic joined the EU (in plain words, the EU is undisputedly a major power, but Estonia **is** the EU now, in spite of the intergovernmental nature of the entity's Common Foreign and Security Policy/CFSP). As for the non-EU world, the United States, Russia, and China – together or separately – represent the exclusive range of major powers, whose geo-strategic stances directly affect Estonia's vision about the international arena. Intriguingly, in 2020-2021, being a non-permanent member of the disastrously ineffective UN Security Council, Estonia has had plenty of chances to see it from the 'first row' how these powerful states have been exhibiting the diplomatic skills and abilities they possess. For a smaller representative of the international community of nations, as declared, Estonia understood its temporary 'presence' in the UN's main executive body as "a chance to make sure that international law and common agreements are respected, that national borders are not arbitrarily shifted and commonly agreed norms are also valid in the cyber realm"¹. However, it is a completely different story.

To commence with the country's foreign policy in regards of **the United States**, it is, perhaps, one of the most straight-forward analytical exercises, because official Washington can be considered Estonia's loyal historic supporter as well as ally in a high number of major frameworks, including NATO, OSCE, and OECD². Even the Trump presidency's period of turbulence, with its misunderstandings, misinterpretations and simply mistakes made, did not damage the solid foundation of Estonia-USA interrelations, proving the expression of the late Estonian President Lennart Meri, which he stated in 1998, to be reflecting actuality: "With its

¹ 'Estonia in the UN Security Council' in *Välisministeerium*. Available from [<https://vm.ee/en/activities-objectives/estonia-united-nations/estonia-un-security-council>].

² 'A historic supporter and a present-day ally' in *China-CEE Institute*, 18 March 2021. Available from [<https://china-cee.eu/2021/03/18/estonia-external-relations-briefing-a-historic-supporter-and-a-present-day-ally/>].

bipartisan support for the non-recognition policy, America was a true friend of the Baltics in a time of need, acting as a beacon of hope throughout the long, dark, and cold years of the Soviet occupation”¹.

As one of the most pro-NATO European nations (a 2020 poll on the country’s defence showed that the “main security guarantees for Estonia are considered to be membership in NATO, at 53 per cent, the defensive will of the people, at 41 per cent, and the independent defensive capability of Estonia, at 31 per cent”²), Estonia understands NATO’s collective defence as something, “on which the security of Europe has relied”³. In a very direct way, it is reinforcing and solidifying the country’s cooperation with the United States, since the latter is, by far, the most valuable element of both the North Atlantic and Euro-Atlantic interrelations in the context of making the European continent more secure. In principle, for Estonia and the United States, the partnership is not only about the obvious aspects of general security policy, but the issues of “cyber security and internet freedom, [and] joint projects to support developing democracies”⁴ are also continuously in the agenda. In the pre-pandemic period (as of 31 December 2019), the *Eesti Pank* reported that “the total of US direct investments in Estonia was EUR 344 million [then], which mean[t] 1.4 per cent of all

¹Lennart Meri, Speech on Signing of the U.S.-Baltic Charter, *The White House*, Washington, DC, 16 January 1998. As cited in Freedom Through Democracy, Security, and Unity in Diversity, p. 21. Available from [https://cisssm.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2019-07/Freedom%20through%20Democracy%2C%20Security%2C%20and%20Unity%20in%20Diversity%20-%200011418.pdf].

² ‘Survey: Estonia’s security is ensured by NATO membership and its defensive will’ in *Kaitseministeerium*, 21 February 2020. Available from [https://kaitseministeerium.ee/en/news/survey-estonias-security-ensured-nato-membership-and-its-defensive-will].

³ ‘Estonian Foreign Policy Strategy 2030’ in *Välisministeerium*, 2020, p.9. Available from [https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/Estonia_for_UN/Rasmus/estonian_foreign_policy_strategy_2030_final.pdf].

⁴ ‘Bilateral Relations’ in *The Embassy of Estonia in the United States*. Available from [https://washington.mfa.ee/bilateral-relations/].

investments come from the USA”¹. Giving an overall conclusion on this particular case, it is worth quoting the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that credits “the international weight of the United States of America” and “the common values of Estonia and the United States”, underlining that “without the United States’ participation it is not possible to manage the most serious threats to Estonia and Europe”².

Since February 1918, when Estonian declared its independence, there has been no topic in the country and for the local policy-makers, which would be greater in scope, more multi-dimensional, and less irrelevant than the topic of **Russia**-Estonia relations. In accordance with the *Treaty of Tartu*, Estonia was the first to recognise the Bolshevik Russia back in 1920, and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic “unreservedly recognize[d] the independence and sovereignty of the State of Estonia”³. However, when the USSR was collapsing, and Estonia (as well as Boris Yeltsin-led Russia, in fact) were breaking away from the Soviet empire, the Baltic/Nordic state was “not within the borders in which it was born in February 1920 as a subject of international law [...], and in which it was occupied and unlawfully annexed by the Soviet Union in June 1940”⁴. Despite the ‘on paper’ constitutional understanding that every titular republic of the USSR was a state, Moscow *de facto* treated the border between the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and Estonia as “an administrative line that the Kremlin ‘adjusted’, assigning 75 per cent of the Pechory area (1,251 km²) to the territory of the Pskov Oblast in

¹‘Business Relations’ in *The Embassy of Estonia in the United States*. Available from [<https://washington.mfa.ee/business-relations/>].

²‘Estonian Foreign Policy Strategy 2030’, p.11.

³‘Tartu Peace Treaty 2 February 1920’ in *Välisministeerium*. Available from [<https://vm.ee/en/tartu-peace-treaty-2-february-1920>].

⁴Kalev Stoicescu, ‘Analysis: The Tartu Peace Treaty and Estonia’s Eastern Border’ in *ERR*, 19 February 2021. Available from [<https://news.err.ee/1608115612/analysis-the-tartu-peace-treaty-and-estonia-s-eastern-border>].

August 1944, and the municipalities east of Narva (375 km²) to the Leningrad Oblast in January 1945”¹.

The post-Soviet times started framing some new realities up, and, in May 2005, the Russian Federation and Estonia (then, already a Member State of the EU) signed the border treaty, which was ratified by the *Riigikogu* on 20 June and then promulgated by the then country’s President Arnold Rüütel two days later. The Estonian side’s move proved to be too expeditious, because, as reported, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs “refused to forward the treaty to the Duma for ratification, [...] critici[sing] the Estonian ratification law’s preamble, which makes references to the Estonian state’s uninterrupted legal continuity during the Soviet occupation”². Overnight, the 10-years work of diplomats from both sides was literally thrown into an imaginary ‘rubbish bin’. It took nearly another decade to get around the table in February 2014 and sign the latest variation of the same border treaty, which now has an additional “small paragraph that affirms Estonia has no territorial claims”³. The unlucky it was once again – Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and the EU’s sanctions against the aggressor simply pushed the process of the border treaty’s ratification forward, leaving its destiny to be unknown to date.

The current *status quo* on interlinkages between Estonia and Russia does not look too pleasant for the two neighbours. As argued, the situation in its longevity simply represents some kind of an evolution of “Russia’s use of

¹ Stoicescu, ‘Analysis: The Tartu Peace Treaty and Estonia’s Eastern Border’.

² Vladimir Socor, ‘Russia cancels border treaty, assails Estonia’ in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 2, no. 127, 30 June 2005. Available from [<https://jamestown.org/program/russia-cancels-border-treaty-assails-estonia/>].

³ Stoicescu, ‘Analysis: The Tartu Peace Treaty and Estonia’s Eastern Border’.

hybrid war against Estonia”¹. The fact that Estonia is not a failed state but a stable liberal democracy, which cannot be easily destabilised, makes it difficult for Russia to get Estonia-wide society being shaken. Some of Russia’s latest smear campaigns against Western corona vaccines² did not make a dramatic difference in Estonia – out of the country’s 1.3 million population, as of the end of October, 793,961 people have been vaccinated with at least one dose against COVID-19, and 759,462 have completed their vaccination cycle³. In general, against Estonia, one can detect that Russia is using a different range of ‘hybrid’ instrumentarium than, for example, against Ukraine – firstly, the “Kremlin’s efforts [...] are focused primarily on the country’s less-integrated Russian speakers and Estonia’s highly digitalised society”, secondly, “Russia backs these up with a steady military build-up and show of force in its Western Military District, which includes the Kaliningrad exclave to the west and borders Estonia to the east”, and, thirdly, there have been a few cases of “massive money laundering through Nordic banks based in Estonia”⁴.

If the previously described cases are predominantly one-sided in their geo-strategic connotations, the story of Estonia-**China** interrelations has plenty of vague moments, representing a classic work-in-progress. From 1949 until 1991, the People’s Republic of China, arguably, had no (and, even if it ever wanted, it would have not been able to establish any) direct contacts with Estonia, historically treating it as a territory within the Soviet Union’s monolithic realm. Objectively speaking, it was not China’s fault – for many nations around the world, the former USSR was a somewhat reincarnation

¹ Kalev Stoicescu, ‘Russia’s non-conventional hybrid warfare against Estonia’ in *CEPA*, 29 January 2021. Available from [<https://cepa.org/the-evolution-of-russian-hybrid-warfare-estonia/>].

² ‘Annual report: Russia trying to take advantage of coronavirus pandemic’ in *ERR*, 17 February 2021. Available from [<https://news.err.ee/1608113302/annual-report-russia-trying-to-take-advantage-of-coronavirus-pandemic>].

³ ‘Coronavirus in Estonia: All you need to know’ in *ERR*. Available from [<https://news.err.ee/1061575/coronavirus-in-estonia-all-you-need-to-know>].

⁴ Stoicescu, ‘Russia’s non-conventional hybrid warfare against Estonia’.

of the dismantled Russian Empire, and its titular republics (except Russia, of course) were politically ‘invisible’ and their statehoods were never genuinely ‘promoted’ by the Kremlin. In a significant addition, if/when studied, the multiple facts of Soviet occupations (including the ones of Estonia) as well as the WWI/WWII-associated events were predominantly treated by Chinese scholars through the prism of Soviet historiography, while keeping in mind a certainly ideological ‘flavour’ as well. In this sense, during the Soviet era, Estonians knew about China much more than the other way around, but the reforms of Deng Xiaoping started presenting a couple of new dimensions of the world’s most populous state – as one of the main engines of the global economy and an upcoming super-power with nearly unlimited capacities.

Therefore, after August 1991, both sides had some ‘homework’ to do in terms of arranging proper self-introductions of each other. Chinese President Yang Shangkun lost no time in dispatching the country’s Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Tian Zengpei to Tallinn in September 1991, so he could front the process of establishing diplomatic relations with Estonia. Since then, as reported, “Estonia has always supported a ‘One-China Policy’ [...] [,] consider[ing] Taiwan an inseparable part of China’s territory [,] [...] [while] Chinese officials and diplomats have repeatedly expressed respect for Estonia’s political choices”¹. Intriguingly, one could note, Estonia’s membership in the EU only increased the country’s leverage in regards of interacting with China – for the Asian giant, Estonia’s geo-strategic relevance becomes an obvious fact of the historic period when the Soviet Union no longer exists. In 20 years since 2001, Chinese officials of the highest ranks visited Estonia (President Jiang Zemin in June 2002, Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing in August 2005, and Secretary-General of the State Council Yang Jing in May 2016) and the same can be stated regarding Estonian political elites who visited China (President Lennart Meri in

¹ ‘China’ in *Välisministeerium*. Available from [\[https://vm.ee/en/countries/china?display=relations\]](https://vm.ee/en/countries/china?display=relations).

March 2001, President Arnold Rüütel in August 2005, Prime Minister Andrus Ansip in August 2008, *Riigikogu* Speaker Ene Ergma in January 2011, Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas in November 2015, *Riigikogu* Speaker Eiki Nestor in January 2018, President Kersti Kaljulaid in September 2018)¹.

Objectively as well as gradually, the relative normality of the cooperational framework between the two sides started being challenged by the appearance of the 16+1 platform, which was announced in 2012. For the first time in modern history, an Asian major power designated a European region for itself to cooperate with. The context was brought up to upper-level of complexity when, in 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was announced by President Xi Jinping in Astana and Jakarta to be visualised as a “driving element of both Chinese political economy and foreign relations”². Since the BRI was/is a project-proposal that directly affects the EU-China interactions, it was something extraordinary for the EU to immediately react on. The obvious fact was that the EU dramatically failed to express its timely common reaction on the BRI (and a number of its integral elements like the 16+1/17+1, for example), thus Estonia, “in the absence of the EU’s common vision on the issue” had to utilise the only option that was left – “to try to comprehend the situation from its own, security-focused, perspective, considering its full membership in both NATO and the EU”³.

¹ ‘China’.

² Vlad Vernygora, ‘The Framework of China’s Cooperation with Central-Eastern Europe: A View from the Baltics’ in *The Market for Ideas*. Available from [<http://www.themarketforideas.com/the-framework-of-chinas-cooperation-with-central-eastern-europe-a-view-from-the-baltics-a228/>].

³ ‘A possible critical juncture: a continuation’ in *China-CEE Institute*, 10 June 2021. Available from [<https://china-cee.eu/2021/06/10/estonia-external-relations-briefing-a-possible-critical-juncture-a-continuation/>].

Soon, it became clear that “the most recent revision of the super-holistic concept of ‘Tianxia’ – ‘all-under-heaven’”, which was evidently interlinked with the idea on the Chinese Dream (for Chinese people), began to be resonating and balancing up “with the BRI-related activities that are certainly ‘all-on-the-ground’”¹ and affecting other nations. At the moment, as it was stated by the country’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Eva-Maria Liimets (*Center*), Estonia is yet to decide “on its future participation in [the] 17+1”, also noting that the two sides are cooperating “in various fields”, but [Estonia has] really reduced [its] participation in the 17+1 format”².

On the top of everything, the pandemic times irreversibly changed the world’s economic and socio-political trends, damaging the EU-China interrelations because of questionable moves detected at both sides. As underlined in one of the reports, “the two sides, while treating each other as strategic partners because of enormous trade, have never had a sincere conversation on each other’s geo-strategic intentions”³. In this context, for Estonia’s benefit, the next developments on the platforms of the USA-China and the EU-China cooperation will assist the country to craft its vision on China’s European ‘saunter’. Dealing with major powers requires plenty of skill, patience, and precise knowledge on the options in hand.

¹ Vernygora.

² Eva-Maria Liimets as cited in ‘Liimets: No decision made on Estonia's future 17+1 participation’, *ERR*, 24 May 2021. Available from [<https://news.err.ee/1608222910/liimets-no-decision-made-on-estonia-s-future-17-1-participation>].

³ ‘A possible critical juncture: a continuation’.

Greece's External Relations and the Major Powers

Evelyn Karakatsani

Summary

Greece is a country of high geopolitical interest. Major powers are increasingly interested in the Eastern-Mediterranean. Greece, as a member of the EU, NATO and UN serves as a stability factor in the wider region. The foreign policy of the country is shaped by its membership to international organizations and multilateral partnerships with countries of the Southeastern Europe and the Eastern-Mediterranean. The tensions in the Aegean Sea and the Eastern-Mediterranean between Greece and Turkey lie at the center of the country's external policy, as well, as immigration, and energy security.

Introduction

Greece, during the last decade, had to overcome many crises. From the economic crisis of 2009 to the migration crisis, climate change and COVID-19 pandemic, Greece needed strong allies in order to manage and overcome the negative consequences of a wide spectrum of sudden and ongoing issues. The increasing tensions between Greece and Turkey are an additional factor of instability and concern for the country and the international community. In the framework of its external policy Greece has established avenues of dialogue and cooperation with all the major powers. Following lengthy high level talks Greek PM K. Mitsotakis and French President E. Macron announced on 28 September the deepening of the strategic partnership between the two countries and sealed the deal for the supply of the Hellenic Navy with three frigates from France. Moreover, despite some technical and political obstacles it is expected that the Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (MDCA) with the US will be renewed.

Background

Greece's foreign policy, throughout the last decades, is characterised by the cultivation of bilateral relations and the participation of the country to the

European Union and other international organisations. Greece became a member of the European Union in 1981 and is a founding member of the UN. Greece entered the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952 and is a member of OSCE, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (U.N.E.S.C.O.), International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and many others. The presence of the country in international fora highlights its respect for international law and human rights, which is a fundamental component of the country's foreign policy. Greece has formed channels of dialogue and cooperation with all the major powers, namely China, France, United States, the United Kingdom and Russia and has built strategic alliances with Israel, Egypt, Italy and others. The agenda of Greek foreign policy includes issues of geopolitical and political interest, such as the Greek-Turkish relations, the Cyprus issue, the EU accession perspective of the Western Balkans and the Greek National Minority in Albania. Greece is considered as a stability factor in the Eastern Mediterranean region and a country of high geopolitical interest (1).

Furthermore, Energy Diplomacy has become a top priority sector for the Greek MFA and has been shaping the foreign policy and external relations of the country. Specifically, emphasis has been given on energy developments in the sectors of pipelines and natural gas exploration, liquefied natural gas storage stations, electricity grids and renewable energy sources. Greece's energy policy has as a main goal the maximization of energy security, the diversification of sources and the competitiveness of prices. In this context, Greece has formed numerous bilateral, trilateral or quadrilateral cooperation schemes with countries of the wider region. Greece promotes energy cooperation with the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Southeastern Europe, the Western Balkans and is engaged to schemes, like the Energy Union, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum-EMGF, the International Energy Agency-IEA etc. One of the most important and well-known energy projects is the TAP pipeline, which is an EU PCI project (Project of Common Interest) and the last part of the

Southern Gas Corridor. Through “vertical” interconnectors Greece is evolving to an energy transport hub from the Caspian fields to Europe's markets (2). This context shapes the strategic chessboard of the major powers in the area.

Greece’s current external relations and the Major Powers

On the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly held in September 2021, PM K. Mitsotakis set the tone of Greece’s current external relations and the position of the country in today’s global map. He stressed that Greece believes in a multilateral approach to the complex global challenges and simultaneously in the absolute necessity of Europe’s strategic autonomy, without undermine the country’s transatlantic bonds. Concerning the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean the PM pointed out that Greece has been facing regular and unacceptable threats of the use of force by Turkey, what is known as the *casus belli*. He stressed that Greece’s priority is to solve disputes in peaceful way. He brought as examples the recent maritime zones agreements with Italy and Egypt and to the agreement to refer delimitation to the International Court of Justice with Albania. He added that Turkey needs to establish avenues of cooperation for the common good of the Eastern Mediterranean. Both countries have new crises to face, such as the climate change and immigration (3).

A few days earlier, on 17 of September 2021, the EUMED Summit was held in Athens. Leaders from 9 countries, namely Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Malta, Greece, Cyprus, Slovenia and Croatia, as well as the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, met in order to discuss issues, such as Greek-Turkey relations, migration, Afghanistan, climate change, terrorism, cyberthreats and new alliances, vital issues for all the countries participating at the meeting. Among others the Greek PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis stated that Turkey needs to abandon its aggressive behavior towards Greece, Cyprus and the region as a whole and declared that the EU member states are on the same page concerning the issue. He added that Europe needs to develop a strategic autonomy and follow its own path in the fields of defense, security, energy etc. The 9 participating leaders signed a communique stating that there is a demanding need for stronger and

closer cooperation to address the common challenges (4). It should be mentioned that the EUMED summit took place in the shadow of the AUKUS alliance, which will enable Australia to build nuclear-powered submarines with US technology. This has been seen as an effort to counter China and a “stab in the back” for France, which lost a deal \$66 billion worth (5).

Greece and France, throughout their history as modern nations, have close relations and strong cooperation. Currently the relations of the two countries have been strengthened even more. PM K. Mitsotakis, following an official invitation of the French President Emmanuel Macron, participated at the IUCN World Conservation Congress held in Marseille at the beginning of September. During his visit, the Greek PM had a lunch with the French President (6). On 27 September 2021 K. Mitsotakis had a dinner with E. Macron at the Elysee presidential palace where they agreed to deepen their strategic partnership. On 28 September 2021 to a common press conference PM K. Mitsotakis and President E. Macron announced that France will supply the Hellenic Navy with three frigates. Moreover, according to article 2 of the agreement the two parties shall provide each other with assistance, with all appropriate means – if necessary by the use of armed force - if they jointly agreed that an armed attack is taking place against the territory of one of the two countries, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations (7). The two leaders also announced that their strategic partnership will be over and above their EU and NATO membership. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that Greece had agreed to the purchase of 18 Rafale from France in January 2021, which have been increased to 24 in total (8).

Along with the deepening of the strategic relations with France, Greece is steadily enjoy warm ties with the US. On the 26 August 2021 Senator Bob Menendez, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, visited Greece to attend events organized by the government of Greece in celebration of the bicentennial anniversary of the Greek Revolution of 1821. He was honored with the “Grand Cross and the Star of the Order of Honor” by the Greek President K. Sakellariopoulou, for his long efforts to

strengthen the partnership of the two countries. His trip indicates the increasing strategic value of Greece to the US policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and the possibility of the two countries to increase their strategic cooperation (9). At the beginning of September Geoffrey R. Pyatt, US Ambassador to the Hellenic Republic, at a panel organized by the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) in Washington, stated that Greece has emerged as a critical US ally on the Eastern Mediterranean front, an area that is part of a new global rivalry between the major powers. The US strongly supports Greece's new dynamic foreign policy, and this is reflected in the US participation in the 3 + 1 cooperation scheme with Greece, Cyprus and Israel and in the cooperation of the two countries to energy projects. He also stressed that from the diplomatic point of view, during the tensions between Greece and Turkey and the collision between the Turkish frigate "Kemal Reyes" and the frigate "Lemnos", American diplomacy played a very important role, by working together with key European partners, such as Germany and France, to reduce tensions (10). The Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (MDCA) established in the 1990 was updated in January 2020 and as it is meant to improve access rights for American forces in Greece, expand bilateral military activities and support Greece's ability to contribute to regional stability. The talks to renew the MDCA, until its expiration in November, have been hobbled, due to different approaches to technical and political issues. The agreement itself is not at risk but the differences will determine whether the new agreement will be for one or five years (11). PM K. Mitsotakis is optimistic for the continuation of the cooperation with the US.

Furthermore, Greece continues forge good cooperation with China. Greek Tourism Minister Vassilis Kikilias on the 16 September 2021, at an event for the to mark the opening of the Year of Culture and Tourism stated that this year will serve as an opportunity for the deepening of the ties between the two countries (12). On the basis of the close cooperation of the two countries, on 22 September the amendment agreements were signed between the State, HRADF and PPA for the return of 16% in Cosco of the share capital held by the Fund (13). As far as Greek Russian relations are

concerned the two countries are continuing their efforts to practically normalise ties after the summer 2018 setback. Although this theme is currently not in the forefront, the contribution of Russian firefighting aircrafts against Greek wildfires in August was a positive development.

Conclusion

Greece, a country at the Southeast corner of Europe, has open channels of dialogue and cooperation with all the major powers. In a globalised world allies and partnerships are key for the future stability, security and growth of the country. The ongoing tensions with Turkey create obstacles to the flourishing of the area of the Eastern Mediterranean and lead Greece to pursue the maximum from its relations with other European countries, mainly France and the US. The major powers play a key role to the progress of Greece and the area as well. Greece, on the framework of respecting the Law of the Sea and under this precondition, is ready to set aside the disputes and cooperate with Turkey, as well as the neighboring countries for facing common enemies, such as climate crisis, and promote stability and peace for the greater good of the area and its people. The cooperation of the country with the major powers needs to work on the basis of the national interest and simultaneously to contribute to the stability of the wider region.

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Foreign Relations between Hungary and Major Powers

Csaba Moldicz

The global pandemic in 2020 and 2021 has just added to the pre-existing geopolitical tensions in countries. However, there is a new element too, since in the wake of the pandemic, the United States has sought to strengthen Atlantic Alliance and pressure these countries to take sides in the debate between the United States and China or the debate between the United States and Russia. This foreign policy tries to rebuild the bloc thinking and behavior of countries in foreign policy and trade, investment questions. However, these efforts coincide with the Hungarian political campaigns leading up to the next elections, therefore the observer might get the impression that the U.S. might interfere in Hungarian election.

Introduction

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the resilience of the Chinese economy was astonishing by international standards, seeing as China's GDP – the only one among major economies – could rise in 2020. Not only last year, but for the last decades, China's relevance in Hungarian trade and investment has been increasing while the American economic influence has been dwindling for many years, which means that now there is no going back to the Obama-era for Hungary's economic relations. As for Germany and Russia, their economic and geopolitical relevance for Hungary is unquestionable, and the countries still remain Hungary's important partners. This briefing looks at Hungary's relations to the U.S., Russia, and China.

Need for diversification

This rapid growth of China coincides with Hungary's need for trade and investment diversification. For this reason, Hungary has been pursuing a hedging strategy between China and the US, Russia, and the United States, and in some cases the European Commission since 2010.

Due to the Biden administration's altered foreign policy course, it is necessary for Hungary to rethink its US strategy. Not only had the

Hungarian Prime Minister much better relations with Donald Trump, but because the Biden administration is putting emphasis on so called shared democratic values, Biden is more likely to confront Hungary in the debate of the "rule of law"¹ between Hungary and the European Commission and choose the European Commission's side. But this debate per se could be resolved, however there are – in our opinion – two core questions where Hungary and the United States disagree, and solutions are difficult to find: (1) energy supplies from Russia; (2) intensifying cooperation with China.

Energy supplies for Hungary

In September 2021, Hungary reached a political deal with Russia on a new 15-year period gas supply contract, the agreement is to be signed until the end of September and the details are still to be hammered out. The only thing which is public about the agreement is that the volume of the gas supplies can be renegotiated after 10 years. It is common knowledge that Hungary has been traditionally reliant on Russian energy import for decades, yet at the same time the United States has been pushing Hungary in recent years to decrease its traditional energy dependence on Russia due to geopolitical reasons.

Following this foreign policy 'wish' of the United States simply goes against the Hungarian economic interests as we cannot replace cheap energy from Russia with other energy sources at the moment. We must add that this dilemma is not only about price but the country's energy security. There is another element at play, which is that Russia has made a pivot to Asia too and in recent years they have built the infrastructure needed to supply China with gas and oil. The European business partners are getting slowly replaced by Asian partners, between whom political tensions are less typical. In other words, the Russian need to find buyers for gas and oil in Europe gets weaker and weaker and this is also a point where Russia can

¹ The 'rule of law' debate became very intense when the European Commission wanted to link EU funds to the adherence to the rule of law. The Hungarian government argues that until a clear definition of the rule of law is adopted at an EU level, this link would make countries more receptive to external pressures, which is in sharp contradiction to their sovereignty.

raise the prizes. A long-term contract for Hungary can avert this problem. Moreover, this policy combined with the Hungarian state subsidizes prices for private households strengthens the support of the government too.

What we understand in a broader context is that American efforts to marginalize Russia have not yielded results since the occupation of Crimea (2014). First, Russia used a classic import-substituting policy, but it soon began reorganizing its trade and investment relations. In our view, this Russian pivot to Asia has the potential to boost the Russian economy. Hungary's foreign and trade policy makers seem to have grasped this long-term potential of benefiting from the Russian pivot.

Due to this reason, it does not come as a surprise that Hungary often plays a mitigating role in European and Russian relations. The most recent example, where Hungary supported the condemnation of Russia in the case of the Czech ammunition depot, which was blown up by Russians in 2014, but Hungary did not expel Russian diplomat unlike the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Intensifying cooperation with China

This cooperation has several elements: business, infrastructural, educational investment and pandemic cooperation. Last year, China was the largest foreign direct investor in Hungary. The result shows the adequacy of the Eastern Opening Policy. One of the main fault lines in the region is their China policy. In the group of the Visegrad four countries Hungary seems to be the outlier as the country strictly keeps to the one-China policy while the Czech Republic and Slovakia welcome a large Taiwanese delegation this month. The main reason for Hungary's foreign policy is the effort to diversify our trade and investments and shortly review the data we can see that the policy has brought significant achievements.

Looking at Chinese FDI, Hungary is much more successful than other Visegrad countries. The table shows the actual size of Chinese FDI and its importance in terms of GDP. Hungary's share is 3.8 percent while in the case of the Czech Republic and Poland these percentages are below 1 percent.

Table 1. Chinese FDI as % of GDP, ranking based on the relative size of Chinese FDI to GDP			
	Chinese FDI stock between 2005 and 2020 (Billion \$)	GDP (Billion \$, 2020)	Chinese FDI as of GDP (%)
Hungary	5.88	155	3.79
Czech Republic	0.96	241	0.40
Poland	2.28	594	0.38
Source: own calculation based on World Bank data and American Enterprise Institute's dataset "The China Global Investment Tracker" The data set was updated in early 2020.			

Hungary is the only country in the Visegrad group that has not signed the joint declaration with the US on cybersecurity, ruling out cooperation with China in this area. Moreover, Huawei is one of the main Chinese investors in Hungary, and the company established its European logistics and production centre in Hungary in 2005. Special relations with China also helped Hungary when speeding up the vaccination program. The main reason why Hungary was able to surpass EU members in the vaccination of the population is that in this case the country was pursuing its closest strategic goal and not paying attention to the growing international tensions between the US/EU bloc and China-Russia.

The most critical point at which Chinese and Hungarian relations might have been harmed was the political debate around the planned Budapest campus of the Chinese Fudan university. Because both the Hungarian and Chinese government showed very moderate responses to the Hungarian opposition camp's allegations and provocations, the political scandal did

not harm the bilateral relations, at the same time, based on the events we can predict the worsening of these relations in case of an opposition victory in next year's elections, as the opposition camp promised the shutdown of the Fudan university project and Budapest-Belgrad railway constructions. We should add that the irony of the story is that the MSZP between 2002 and 2010, supported the establishment of strong and stable political and economic ties to China.

Summary

In these cases, we could see that the U.S. does not support the intensification of the Chinese cooperation, even though it does not offer alternatives, therefore even risking being booged down in Hungarian domestic politics, however unwillingly or unwittingly. As the Hungarian government seems to have delayed the Fudan projects, it would make sense to come back to these discussions after the elections.

In summary, Hungary is “dancing” between the United States, Russia and China, and it is continuously switching between them as shifts in power take place and as Hungary's narrow economic interests dictate. At the same time, anti-China and anti-Russia voices will be more frequent in the coming months as the elections will be held in a few months. In many countries the principles of the foreign policy are not debated continuously but accepted by the main political players. This is not the case in Hungary where relations to main powers are topics of the election campaigns.

Relations between Latvia and the Major Powers

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Summary

Latvia's economic and political sustainability is closely linked to the relations between the world's major powers - EU, USA, Russia and PRC - and Latvia's membership in one or more regions. Latvia benefits from an open economy and cooperation in the export of goods and services and investments not only with the nearest countries in the European family, but also more widely in the world. Therefore, the coexistence scenario with the world's "Big Four" for Latvia as a small country is the most desirable in order to strengthen stability, solidarity and multilateral cooperation. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged the world's most powerful economic and political powers, once again raised the importance of mutual trust between partnering countries, as well as confirmed the necessity of well-developed foreign policy.

Introduction

In the 21st century, the world's political, military and economic powers are the EU, the USA, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. The main trends in international politics are influenced by the relationship between these dominant powers and the inner relations of grouping countries. The possibilities of small countries, including Latvia, are largely subordinated to the views, behaviour and interaction between the Major powers. Latvia presents a great case of why maintaining a developed foreign policy is so important as Latvia is one of the Member States of the EU, is in close military and political partnership with the

United States (USA), is a neighbouring country of Russia and in recent years has had China's interest.

I. Latvia's foreign policy in the international environment.

Taking into account the inevitable geo-political sanctity between the Major Powers - the EU, the USA, Russia and China -where each is trying to strengthen its superiority, it is observed that the international activities of other countries, including Latvia, will become more complicated and unclear. With the forecast that international order based on the rule of law will no longer be taken for granted, and multilateral cooperation in the world politics will no longer be an approach supported by all countries in the world, it is to appoint security grants, in Latvia's case it will continue to be the EU and NATO, which will provide international security, geo-political partnerships, the means to sustain development and access to financial resources and technology.

Latvia's foreign policy is in many ways based on the same values as the foreign policies of the Major powers. The aim of Latvia's foreign policy is to guarantee national security and increasing prosperity, ensuring Latvia's full participation in the international environment as a member of the European Union and NATO, and achieving a positive solution to Latvia's current international challenges. To ensure the foreign policies successful implementation the Latvian Institute of Foreign Policy and its researchers participate and coordinate a number of different international research projects, review and evaluate various areas of Latvia's foreign and security policy and the achievements of them in the past years, as well as to see development scenarios for future years, informing the public and offering recommendations to Latvian policy decision-maker power.

II. COVID-19 pandemic's influence on the relations between Latvia and the Major Powers.

COVID-19 pandemic spread all over the world and the destruction for it hit all over. The major issue was the healthcare system. While some countries had healthcare systems that could for the start endure the force that the pandemic produced, others could not. Europe had the second highest COVID-19 cases and deaths right after the USA - at the end of 2020 ES, EEZ and the UK had registered 16,25 million COVID-19 cases and 403 990 deaths. A crucial part of the solution for Latvia was and currently is cooperation at European level. In order to maintain their capacity to provide effective healthcare, Latvia needs to be able to work effectively with other Member States, both within the EU institutional framework and through other mechanisms to establish regional cooperation.

Interdependence during the COVID-19 pandemic also showed in the economy. While national sovereignty was pushed to the forefront, it proved in more than one way that only by cooperation it will be possible to coexist. During the geo economic crisis in order to limit the spread of the virus and prevent possible collapse of the healthcare system the world's major economies have been forced to shut down. This also resulted in halts between the economic relations with disruptions in global supply chains due to plant and business constraints, unemployment and availability to workers, volatile stock markets and more. In the case of Latvia, the EU is its largest trading partner, providing about 75% of Latvia's foreign trade. The EU countries are also the main investors in Latvia and the target countries for Latvia's entrepreneurs. With that in mind, the Intra-EU trade falling by 12,2% in comparison to 2019 and the decrease in % for export goods in Latvia is concerning. Regarding the USA, although it is not the most important economic partner for Latvia, it is the largest trading partner for the EU and vice versa. US import duties and their development in relation to the EU may directly or indirectly affect the export of Latvian goods as the decrease of foreign trade to the same period in 2019 - EU exports of goods to the rest of the world have fallen by 12,4% and imports by 13,4%-, show that the dependence on the EU trade market is the main issue for Latvia's economy.

III. Latvia's cooperation with major powers and its development.

Latvia - the EU

Support for the EU is high at both political elite and societal levels. The SKDS survey shows that the majority of Latvian citizens support Latvia's membership in the EU (76%) and evaluate it positively (75%). Being a member of the EU has benefited Latvia, especially in the recent year, in the field of health care, migration between the EU countries and Latvia, close ties with the economy, which in a sense ensure an always-in-place trade chain as well as taking into consideration the significant financial investments it has made to Latvia since 2004 and continues to make thus providing evidence that Latvia should have no motivation to distance itself from the EU.

Latvia - the USA

In a world where competition between the major powers is intensifying to ensure the essential preconditions for Latvia's future it is important that between the two countries are good relations and close co-operation politically, militarily and also economically. Currently the USA is Latvia's strategic partner militarily and politically, thus proving that Latvia should continue to actively support the USA in the political and military spheres, with an emphasis on key climate change issues. It is also important to remember and find a balance between the positions and views of the USA and the EU, where Latvia must be an example of a country with ethical and legitimate international economic and financial practices and well thought out domestic governance.

Latvia - the Russian Federation

The Russian Federation provides more challenges than opportunities. Given the history between Russia and Latvia, Latvia should have a clear view about Russia and its policies both internationally and domestically.

In the conditions of competition and resistance, Latvia for political reasons must take a similar position with its USA and EU partners. With that, Latvia should also not hope to break into the Russian market, with which trade currently is around 10%, but to reorient to more politically friendly countries.

Latvia - China

China's global economic influence will increase and it would consider the EU as its first economic partner. Under the connectivity and coexistence scenario, it is expected that China will continue cooperate with the Baltic States in the "17+1" format, maintaining political dialogue. Thus, Latvia must be ready for economic cooperation, taking into account that there are many instruments in China's common economic policy.

Conclusion.

Latvia's economic and political sustainability is closely linked to the relations between the major powers and Latvia's partnership with them. Taking into account Latvia's gradual expansion of economics and co-operation to one at a global level, not only in the regions of the nearest countries, it is clear that good economic co-operation with major powers can promote not only the growth of Latvia's economy but also open doors to other markets. With that, a well thought out and relevant in the current world foreign policy is necessary. The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on different fields of life did not exclude international relations, especially in the context of healthcare and economic development. Latvia's relations with the EU and USA should be up-kept to their current state where all

parties have similar views and positions thus ensuring a good partnership with economic, political and social benefits. Relations with China and Russia should be kept under analysis and consideration with the possibilities for their further development.

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Lithuania's Foreign Relations According to the World System Theory

Linas Eriksonas

Since about a year ago, global politics entered a turbulent period where the dormant animosities between the major powers have resurfaced with a new force, heralding a period of intense international rivalry for the world's political and economic world order. The resolute conclusions of the Munich Security Conference last October attest to that. Lithuania has not been left aside from these tensions – on the contrary, willingly brought into their epicentre. Being an active member of the Western defence and political alliances, Lithuania has followed the lead of its main members. It has readily realigned its foreign policies vis-a-vis major powers and has reoriented the foreign policy to reflect the changing balance within the international state system.

The country has firmly rallied behind the United States and its transatlantic allies in support of the US-led leadership in global affairs in contrast to the multi-polar world as perceived and pursued by the contenders to the US dominance since the end of the Cold War. Further, Lithuania took an unprecedented step to formulate, manifest and put into practice the value-based foreign policy principles applying them concerning the hotspots across Eurasia and the adjacent territories: from Belarus and Western Balkans to the Caucasus and even the South China Sea.

Below is a brief outline of Lithuania's current foreign policy relations from the perspective of the world state system theory. Using this theory, it tries to explain the main drivers that influenced the country's foreign policy reorientation according to the global tectonic shifts in international affairs that have been taking place.

Lithuania's robust approach and even assertiveness in foreign policy on the issues hitherto rather secondary to the national interests (such as those

related to Belarus, the Caucasus or the China South Sea region) came as a surprise to many observers. Some even questioned the rationale (puzzled by the tone and the style of new diplomacy), let alone the end-goals of such interests of a small state covering extensive jurisdictions worldwide. The analysts even considered whether the new foreign policy with a global outlook represents a break from the previous, less regionally-defined or more locally-informed foreign policy or whether it is a continuation of the previous foreign policy precepts only with a newfound focus – new wine in the old bottles.

Lithuania's foreign policy as is the case of any other contemporary state is a function of the role of the nation-state within the international state system. As conceptualized by Immanuel Wallerstein, the world system theory (firmly embedded in the field of International Relations) defines the world state system as consisting of the core states, the peripheral states, and the semi-peripheral states. Belonging to each type of the sub-system sets the operational limits and opens the possibilities for the projection of the state power concerning other state actors. The recent research has refined Wallerstein's theory, suggesting that the key role within the global state system is played by the semi-peripheral states, which are defined in two subcategories – the strong semi-periphery states (also referred to as the regional powers) and the weak semi-periphery states (referred to as secondary regional states).

A number of typologies have been produced and validated using the econometrical and socio-political data. They show that, for example, the Soviet Union was a strong semi-periphery with a superpower status and the unfulfilled aspirations for the global world order. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Lithuania re-emerged as a peripheral state which sought to politically and economically align and subsequently catch up with the advanced economies, represented by the core states. After the realisation of the double aim to join the EU and NATO in 2004, Lithuania started a decade-long process of deeper integration into the Western political, economic and defence alliances, thus effectively turning from a peripheral

state to a semi-peripheral state. The latter was accomplished by 2015, when the country's application for membership in OECD was finally granted and the country joined the club of the most developed countries. Already prior to that, in 2013, the World Bank reclassified Lithuania along with Latvia and Estonia raising their status from the "upper middle income" states to that of "high-income countries" in terms of GDP per capita (over 12616 USD). In 2020 the GDP per capita in Lithuania stood at 19998 USD, clearly showing that the country has been firmly on the path of development of high-income countries with an ambition to join the most prosperous ones.

The rapid economic growth of the country during the years prior and even during the COVID period, at the time of the global recession, has contributed to a new quest of Lithuania of embarking on the way to overcome the so-called trap of middle income countries by transitioning from a semi-periphery into a semi-core country to be even more closely integrated into the advanced economies as is the case for the Visegrad countries (Poland, Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary) or Slovenia.

Over the recent years, Lithuania's foreign policy, including its focused economic diplomacy, has aligned with the country's changing position and ambition within the international state system. According to the latest research, Lithuania stands out within a group of weak semi-periphery state which includes Romania, Cyprus, Iceland, the Persian Gulf states (Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman), Malaysia, Brunei, Uruguay, Chile, the Bahamas. Those states (except for Chile and Malaysia) comprise relatively small national territories. The difference between this group of countries and the strong semi-peripheral countries (regional powers) lies in material capacities. The weak semi-peripheral states lack the military-economic power of the strong semi-peripheral countries. However, in terms of socio-economic advancement, these militarily weaker countries have more developed socio-institutional powers, providing better quality of life and social welfare.

However, structurally, the smaller semi-peripheral countries, though lacking robustness in material and immaterial capacities compared to the

states closer to the core of the world state system, have more scope for operation semi-independently. To quote one of the authors, “they have a fairly broad margin of self-determination in the conduct of their internal business and an appreciable capacity for independent international action”. Hence, the smaller active states in the semi-periphery (such as Lithuania, Iceland) derive their mandate for conducting international affairs from the idea of national unity and its international projection. Lithuania’s foreign policy is built upon two concepts – the idea of global Lithuania (“Globali Lietuva” in Lithuanian) and the idea of “the might of Lithuania” (“Lietuvos galia” in Lithuanian); the latter is based on civil society and the promotion of the values as enshrined in the Constitution.

The diaspora diplomacy has pursued the idea of global Lithuania with no efforts spared for closer integration of Lithuanian diaspora with the nation-state through activities aiming to sustain educating the diaspora and involving in the political processes, for example, by having a specially designated mandate for a seat in the parliament allocated in single-mandate constituency for citizens residing and voting abroad. Concomitantly, the promotion of value-based diplomacy has pursued the idea of the might of Lithuania by supporting democracies around the world. The pursuit of this idea is done primarily through maintaining direct contacts between Lithuania's parliamentary groups and their counterparts in other countries.

Since the foreign policy is based on the projection of national unity and democratic values it depends on the parliament's political representation. It is increasingly informed by partisan opinions, even if the foreign policy principles are agreed upon on a by-partisan principle. Thus, it makes it easy for the Executive branch of power to refocus the foreign policy scope ad hoc, unless there is a direct conflict between the governing majority and the President’s office. However, according to the current political alignment, both the President (whose emphasis on the national unity has become a signature of his presidency) and the governing majority (emphasizing the projection of national unity globally through value-based foreign policy actions) in the Parliament are aligned on foreign policy. Thus,

the idea of the national unity fully reinforces its international projection and vice versa.

Thus, Lithuania's foreign relation with the core states within the Western political and defence alliance are aligned according, but not exclusively, to the current security arrangements within NATO for protecting the country. Their scope is further aligned with the national threat assessment done by the security services and made public to the public annually. Within the EU Lithuania's foreign policy focused on deepening the contacts with the governments of the countries that extend the military capabilities of Lithuania, namely, Belgium, the Czech Republic and Germany, the Netherlands, Norway as part of the NATO enhanced Forward Presence and the US that provide additional mechanised infantry support on a rotational basis. The foreign policy then acts as an instrument to operationalize the national threats assessment at an international level.

Additional emphasis is based on becoming an international donor to the peripheral countries, first of all, the EU Eastern Partnership quartet (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia) and the Western Balkan countries aspiring to join the EU with the next wave of enlargement, namely, North Macedonia and Albania. Here, Lithuania aims to support the integration of those countries into the European Community and bringing the most prominent ones (Ukraine and Georgia are at the top of the list) into a closer arrangement with NATO.

These activities contribute to immaterial capacities of Lithuania, including raising political, communicative and cultural attraction of the country to these countries that are on the periphery in between weak and strong semi-peripheral states. This type of power, which Lithuania's foreign policy has been exerting with a maximum effort, is defined in literature as the soft power. Yet, the soft power depends to a large extent on the material capacities, including the military-economical capacities, and the immaterial capacities such as the socio-economic level of attainment and the role model. By focusing on putting the defence and security concerns and the promotion of the democratic values Lithuania follows a behaviour

of the semi-peripheral state which is determined and influenced by core processes within the advanced economies in the same way that it is affected and intervened by the processes in the peripheral state through EU neighbourhood policy.

The efforts to upgrade Lithuania's position to the semi-core of the Western world would unmistakably bring a number of challenges of aligning the core and peripheral processes to keep the foreign policy on a steady course. Hence, Lithuania's foreign relations may fluctuate due the circumstances that are beyond its reach.

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Relations between Montenegro and Major Powers

Milika Mirkovic

Summary

As a small country, lacking political and economic power globally, Montenegro pursues a policy of good relations with major powers. Montenegro is a candidate country for EU membership. At the same time, it has good relations with China and the USA, while diplomatic, but not economic relations with Russia have deteriorated in recent years. With all major powers, Montenegro has more or less economic cooperation.

Introduction

Montenegro is a small country that has no influence in political, diplomatic or economic terms on global trends. Therefore, Montenegro is adapting to global trends and conditions. It pursues a policy of EU accession, while maintaining good relations with non-EU countries, which today represent the most important powers, such as China, USA and Russia. Good relations with major powers were also demonstrated during the pandemic, where Montenegro received various forms of assistance from foreign countries.

Montenegro and EU

Montenegro's foreign policy and strategic orientation is a European path. Reform processes and strategic planning within the country, as well as the course of external relations are in line with EU integration. Eleven years ago, Montenegro became a candidate country, while in 2012 it began the negotiations on accession. All negotiation chapters have been opened, while three chapters were temporarily closed. Compared to other candidate countries, Montenegro is the most successful in negotiation process. In general, Montenegro has very good cooperation with the European Commission, but also individual relations with all member states. During the previous period, as a candidate country, Montenegro used financial

assistance from the EU. Through two instruments for pre-accession support (IPA) during the period 2007-2020 had financial assistance of EUR 505.7 million (EUR 235.2 million under the IPA I and EUR 270.5 million under IPA II).

However, the negotiation process has slowed down in recent years. Different attitudes of EU member states on enlargement have slowed down the EU enlargement process, not only in Montenegro but also in other countries in the region. This disagreement between EU officials has resulted in the adoption of new rules for EU accession. Namely, in order to improve the negotiation process in 2020, the European Commission adopted a New Revised Methodology of the EU enlargement. Although Montenegro is in an advanced stage of negotiations, the accession process continues under new rules that should yield better results. However, the question of the European perspective of Western Balkan countries remains unclear. Despite EU officials pointing out the importance of Western Balkans' EU integration, there is still no clear picture about Montenegro and other Balkan countries joining the EU. Uncertainties are even more pronounced following the recent elections in Germany and the possible postponement of the enlargement process.

From the point of view of economic cooperation, Montenegro has a very intensive cooperation with the EU. Nearly 50% of total imports of goods are from the EU, while exports to the EU account for close to 40% of the total Montenegrin export of goods. Also, a third of the total number of tourists come from the EU.

Strengthening cooperation between Montenegro and China

Montenegro has very good relations with China both when it comes to diplomatic relations and when it comes to economic cooperation. This friendship between the two countries has been shown many times during the previous period. Although diplomatic relations were established in

2006, when Montenegro regained its independence, good relations with China have existed before. Through its participation in various initiatives and events, Montenegro has shown its orientation and commitment to improving existing relations and cooperation with China. Also, China showed readiness and openness for cooperation and proved to be a reliable partner in the realization of many activities and projects. Montenegro is included in the initiatives initiated by China, such as the "17 + 1 initiative" and through which cooperation has been achieved in various fields.

Economic cooperation between Montenegro and China has been intensified in recent years. Namely, Chinese companies realize significant infrastructure projects in Montenegro in various fields, among which are transport infrastructure, energy and tourism. Certainly, the most important infrastructural project that is being realized in cooperation with the Chinese company is the construction of the highway, for the construction of which Montenegro was indebted to a Chinese bank.

Improving cooperation can only have positive effects on both sides. Stronger connections will contribute to increased economic exchange, greater flow of both people and capital. In recent years, the number of tourists from China has increased. Compared to 2015, the number of tourists from China in Montenegro in 2019 was 5.6 times higher. Tourists from China accounted for 3% of the total number of foreign tourists in 2019, which is 2.1 percentage points more than in 2015¹. Also, foreign trade has intensified in previous years. The increase in cooperation has affected the availability of Montenegro to the Chinese market, so through various initiatives, cooperation has been established with Chinese companies, which has also contributed to the increase in exports of Montenegrin products to China. The Chinese market can be a significant generator of growth in exports of goods from Montenegro, given the size of the market in which significant amounts of production can be placed. Also, although its volume is significantly lower than from other major powers, the FDI inflow from China has increased in recent years (the largest inflow was

¹ Source of data: MONSTAT

recorded in 2020, when it accounted for 10.7% of total FDI inflows)¹. This may also indicate favourable relations between the two countries and a willingness to intensify and enhance co-operation.

Good relations with USA

Although formal diplomatic relations between Montenegro and the USA began in 2006, the relationship between the two countries dates back to earlier times, with the role of the USA during the 1990s in maintaining peace and multi-ethnic harmony in the country. During overall previous period, Montenegro had good relations with the USA. With the membership of Montenegro to NATO Alliance, this relationship has been improved and strengthened. After a reduced USA presence in the Western Balkans over the past decade, in 2019 it was appointed a special envoy from the State Department for the Western Balkans. These developments can contribute to the improvement of the process of European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Montenegro and the entire region as well. Certainly, a greater USA presence in the entire region would contribute to the stability of the entire region.

One of the important fields in cooperation between Montenegro and the USA is security policy and cooperation within the NATO Alliance. In this segment, many programs related to the modernization and improvement of the capacity of the Montenegrin army have been implemented.

FDI inflows have increased in recent years, especially during 2020 and 2021, where FDI inflows from USA accounted for 4.4% and 3.5% of the total FDI inflow, respectively². In addition, foreign trade between Montenegro and the USA is not at a significant level in terms of volume. Total exports of goods to the USA presented 0.4% of total exports of Montenegro, while imports from the USA makes 1% of total imports of

¹ Source of data: Central Bank of Montenegro

² Source of data: Central Bank of Montenegro

goods (2019). The total number of tourist arrivals from the USA represents 1.4% of the total number of tourist arrivals (2019)¹.

Complicated political relations between Montenegro and Russia

Throughout history, Montenegro has had strong relations with Russia and Russia has had a strong influence on Montenegrin politics. After regaining independence in 2006, a significant number of Russians invested in real estate on the Montenegrin coast, resulting in large numbers of Russian tourists.

Unlike Montenegro's relations with other major powers, diplomatic relations with Russia are more complicated. Complications and deterioration of relations have occurred in previous years. By turning to the EU and Western countries, Montenegro has moved away from a policy that is close to Russia. Therefore, Montenegro, following the European path, in 2014 imposed sanctions on Russia, which are still valid today. Although a number of members of the current Montenegrin ruling coalition are proponents of Russian policy, sanctions against Russia remained in place after the change of government in 2020. An additional separation between these two countries occurred with the accession of Montenegro to NATO, for which Russia expressed great opposition. However, Russia's influence on Montenegrin politics can still be seen in some segments and accusations by Russia against the Montenegrin government for pursuing a Euro-Atlantic policy are still present today.

On the other hand, economic relations with Russia follow different trend. Namely, tourists from Russia make up a very large percentage of the total number of tourists in Montenegro (15% of the total number of arrivals). In relation to the total number of overnight stays of foreign tourists, tourists from Russia have the largest share (25%)². Also, Russia is one of the countries from which the largest FDI inflow was realized. In fact, the share

¹ Source of data: MONSTAT

² Source of data: MONSTAT

in the total FDI inflow recorded a constant growth and ranged from 7.7% (2016) to 15.2% (2021)¹.

In the coming period, Montenegro will continue with the process of Euro-Atlantic integration, while at the same time one can expect intensification of cooperation with other countries. There is a wide field for improving and intensifying cooperation with major powers, which can contribute to greater utilization of Montenegrin capacities and resources, and consequently contributed to the higher economic growth.

¹ Source of data: Central Bank of Montenegro

N. Macedonia's Relations with Major World Powers

Gjorgjioska M. Adela

Summary

Due to its location in the midst of the Balkan peninsula, Macedonia has been at the cross-roads of various civilizations, religions and cultures. Its geography and history have shaped its internal social configurations, resulting in a complex mix of ethnicities, religions and identities. Their political organisation has in turn affected the country's internal politics as well as its relations with both neighbouring states and major world powers, with the most powerful countries from the EU and NATO acting as the most influential actors in the Macedonian socio-political and economic context.

In its 30 years of post-socialist history, Macedonian internal and international relations have been greatly circumscribed by its focus on building close relations with the EU and NATO. As the country's political elites became socialised within the ideology of the neoliberal western order, they played a role in establishing the membership in NATO and the EU as the country's inseparable strategic goals. This has meant that the most powerful countries within these two blocks have also been the most influential actors in the macedonian socio-political and economic context.

Relations with the USA and UK

The question of Macedonian-US relations does not rest only within the realm of external relations, as it is deeply consequential for the country's internal socio-political and economic developments, as well as for its relations with third countries. On a socio-economic level, particularly influential have been organisations such as USAID, NDI, IRI and NED which have played a key role in shaping a (neo)liberal minded civil society

and market economy. Additionally, they have been active in the implementation of the August 2001 Framework Agreement and the entrenchment of ethnic identity politics with geopolitical implications.¹ Although N. Macedonia only became a member of NATO in March 2020, the US influence in the country was prevalent long before that. It participated in NATO missions such as the Resolute Support Mission and the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, the official accession in NATO on 27 March 2020, has further expanded and deepened the military cooperation between the two countries. In November 2020, Minister of Defense Sekerinska announced that the defence budget will reach 1,57% of GDP in 2021 or 11 billion denars.² Moreover, on March 16th 2021, the US Defense Security and Cooperation Agency announced “a Foreign Military Sale to the Government of North Macedonia of Stryker Vehicles and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$210 million.”³ This in turn served to increase the already rising public scepticism towards NATO, with opposition to NATO membership rising from 9% to 24% since 2018.⁴ In contrast to these positions, the current

¹ Gjorgjioska M.A. (2021). Ethnic identity (geo)politics as a zero-sum game. Towards an assessment of the long-term effects of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, Security Dialogues, available at [http://periodica.fzf.ukim.edu.mk/sd/SD%2012.1%20\(2021\)/SD%2012.1%2008%20GJORGJIOSKA,%20A.%20M.%20-%20ETHNIC%20IDENTITY%20\(GEO\)POLITICS%20AS%20A%20ZERO-SUM%20GAME.%20TOWARDS%20AN%20ASSESSMENT%20OF%20THE%20LONG-TERM%20EFFECTS%20OF%20THE%20OHRID%20FRAMEWORK%20AGREEMENT.pdf](http://periodica.fzf.ukim.edu.mk/sd/SD%2012.1%20(2021)/SD%2012.1%2008%20GJORGJIOSKA,%20A.%20M.%20-%20ETHNIC%20IDENTITY%20(GEO)POLITICS%20AS%20A%20ZERO-SUM%20GAME.%20TOWARDS%20AN%20ASSESSMENT%20OF%20THE%20LONG-TERM%20EFFECTS%20OF%20THE%20OHRID%20FRAMEWORK%20AGREEMENT.pdf)

² Government Press Release: “Shekerinska: The budget for defence for 2021 continues to grow, we have demonstrated that we can be trusted” <https://vlada.mk/node/23356> published on 28.11.2020

³ North Macedonia - Stryker Vehicles, DSCA Press Release available at <https://www.dscamilitary.com/pressmedia/major-arms-sales/north-macedonia-stryker-vehicles>

⁴ Turkey most favorite country among North Macedonians: Survey, published on 16.08.2021, available at

SDSM-DUI Government is an unequivocal partner of the United States and the NATO Alliance. Under this umbrella, the country also maintains its relationship with the UK. On 3 December 2020, N. Macedonia and the UK signed the Partnership, Trade and Cooperation Agreement to continue preferential trade terms after the end of the UK's Brexit transition period.¹ The UK is also one of the 5 most important trading partners of the Republic of N. Macedonia, in addition to Germany, Serbia, Greece and China.²

Relations with the EU

The Republic of Macedonia submitted its membership application to join the EU in 2004 and in 2005, it became an accession candidate. 15 years later, the EU gave its formal approval to begin accession talks with N. Macedonia in March 2020, however on November 17, 2020 Bulgaria blocked the official start of accession talks with the country.³ As a result of these developments, Macedonians' support for the European Union has decreased, with 19% stating that they would oppose the country's membership in the bloc, up from 10% in 2018.⁴ Because of the country's

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkey-most-favorite-country-among-north-macedonians-survey> accessed on 10.10.2021

¹ "North Macedonia and UK sign Partnership, Trade and Cooperation Agreement". GOV.UK. Retrieved 4 December 2020, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/north-macedonia-and-uk-sign-partnership-trade-and-cooperation-agreement>

² External trade, January - September 2021, available at https://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziSoopstienie_en.aspx?rbtxt=78 accessed on 10.10.2021

³ Bulgaria blocks EU membership talks for North Macedonia, Politico, November 17, 2020, available at <https://www.politico.eu/article/bulgaria-blocks-eu-membership-talks-for-north-macedonia/> accessed on 30.09.2021

⁴ Turkey most favorite country among North Macedonians: Survey, available at

geographic location and its strategic objective to join the EU, the most powerful countries from the EU (Germany, France and the Netherlands) also play an important internal role in the country. However, the German influence has been by far the strongest: “A cornerstone of German policy towards North Macedonia is supporting the country’s integration into European structures and the reforms needed to this end, above all in the field of the rule of law.”¹ At the same time, Germany has been the Republic of N. Macedonia's most important trading partner and its main export market, with roughly 50 percent of the country's goods exports going to Germany, while also accounting for the largest share of the country's imports. Additional links are the 100,000 Macedonian nationals who live in Germany. Furthermore there are numerous cooperation programmes and projects being implemented with the country’s Government and civil society, for example through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the German Foundation for International Legal Cooperation (IRZ) and the Civil Peace Service (CPS).²

Relations with the Republic of Turkey

N.Macedonia and Turkey maintain very close and friendly relations mostly due to the close historical, cultural and human bonds between the two countries. Namely, around 80,000 or 4% of Macedonian citizens declare as Turkish and serve as a bridge between the two countries. Turkey is also the most positively viewed country amongst Macedonians, with some 52% of citizens holding positive views, up from 42% in 2018.³ Turkey is active in

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkey-most-favorite-country-among-north-macedonians-survey> accessed on 10.10.2021

¹ Germany and North Macedonia: Bilateral relations, available at <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/bilateral/228106> published on 12.04.2021

² Ibid

³ Turkey most favorite country among North Macedonians: Survey, available at

N. Macedonia through organizations such as Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), Yunus Emre Institute (YEE), Presidency for Turks Abroad And Related Communities, and General Directorate of Foundations.¹ The country is also an important economic player; total investments in N. Macedonia exceeds USD 1.2 billion. Turkish companies such as HALBANK, TAV, SUTAS (dairy), Ramstore (shopping center), Acibadem (hospitals), Cevahir (tourism-shopping centers) are only a few of the large investments in the country. In August 2021, N.Macedonia signed a five-year agreement on military-economic cooperation with Turkey, which will be used to strengthen operational capabilities, supply artillery equipment and modernise its Army.² The deal has been criticised by the Greek Foreign Minister: “Others, in our wider region, are propagandising a hopeless return to yesterday’s empires, to areas of neo-Ottoman influence, violating international law, illegally occupying other countries’ territories, trying to divert the Western Balkans from the European route,”³

Relations with the Russian Federation

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkey-most-favorite-country-among-north-macedonians-survey> accessed on 10.10.2021

¹ Turkey wants welfare and development of North Macedonia, published on 23.12.2020, available at

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-wants-welfare-and-development-of-north-macedonia/2085681> accessed on 10.10.2021

² North Macedonia Signs Military and Economic Agreement with Turkey, August 18, 2021, available at

<https://greekcitytimes.com/2021/08/18/north-macedonia-signs-military-and-economic-agreement-with-turkey/> accessed on 10.10.2021

³ Greek FM warns Skopje to distance from ‘neo-Ottoman’ influence, available at

https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/greek-fm-warns-skopje-to-distance-from-neo-ottoman-influence/ accessed on 10.10.2021

Russia is the second most positively viewed country by Macedonians, with 42% of respondents saying they have a favorable view of the country, up from 32% in 2018.¹ The strongest links come from the predominantly Slavic and Orthodox Christian populations in both countries, as well as the economic ties.² However, since the 1990s, the pro-Western policy of the various Macedonian administrations have severed most of the ties with Russia. Most recently, in August 2021 North Macedonia's Foreign Ministry confirmed that it had expelled a second Russian diplomat in 2021 but gave no explanation for the expulsion apart from citing "national security".³ The Russian Foreign Ministry deemed the move a hostile act by North Macedonia, and in June, it expelled one staffer from Skopje's mission to Moscow. Earlier in 2021, on the 7th of March, the country received 3,000 doses of Sputnik V, the first batch from an order of a total of 200,000 doses from the Russian Federation. Only seven days after the first batch of Russian vaccines arrived, N. Macedonia joined the list of 45 countries signatories of the "Joint Statement on the Deteriorating Situation of Human Rights in Russia"⁴ Only 2 days after the second batch of Sputnik V vaccines arrived on Macedonian territory, the country joined the anti-Russia sanctions imposed by the EU in the wake of the "Navalny case."⁵

¹ Turkey most favorite country among North Macedonians: Survey, available at <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkey-most-favorite-country-among-north-macedonians-survey> accessed on 10.10.2021

² Russia is one of the 5 major trading partners of N.Macedonia.

³ North Macedonia Expels Second Russian Diplomat This Year, available at <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/08/17/north-macedonia-expels-second-russian-diplomat-this-year/> accessed on 10.10.2021

⁴ US Mission in Geneva (2021) Joint Statement on the deteriorating situation of human rights in Russia, available at <https://geneva.usmission.gov/2021/03/12/joint-statement-on-the-deteriorating-situation-of-human-rights-in-russia/> accessed on 03.04.2021

⁵ Russian MFA Statement on "Montenegro and North Macedonia join the EU sanctions against Russia" published on 01.04.2021

Relations with People's Republic of China

Since 2017, when the SDSM-DUI Government has been in power, the relations with China have been largely quiet, and cooperation on the economic front has subsided. Although N. Macedonia supports the BRI through a Memorandum for Cooperation signed in 2014, it does not have any significant activities in the initiative, nor has it participated in its official high-level events.¹ Additionally, although a member of the 17+1 cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC), the last major event within this framework was the 5th China-CEEC High-Level Symposium of Think Tanks held in the Republic of N. Macedonia in October 2018.² The country's predominant focus on relations with the USA, became apparent also on October 23 2020, when Prime Minister Zaev signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States on security issues linked with new telecommunications technologies. The Memorandum is part of a broader offensive by the United States aimed at keeping Chinese companies out of the race for building 5G infrastructure in countries across Europe.³

https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4662908#18

accessed on 04.04.2021

¹ The place of North Macedonia in China's strategy for the Western Balkans, available at

<https://www.kas.de/documents/281657/281706/The+place+of+North+Macedonia+in+China%27s+strategy+for+the+Western+Balkans.pdf/ead21e16-32aa-8c14-07df-3c40696ac851?version=1.0&t=1579528320386> accessed on 10.10.2021

² Full text of the Dubrovnik Guidelines for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries, available at

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/chinaceec/eng/zdogjhz_1/t1654339.htm accessed on 15.10.2021

³ Macedonian Prime Minister signs Washington's declaration aimed at keeping Chinese companies out of 5G infrastructure, available at <https://china-cee.eu/2020/11/16/north-macedonia-external-relations-briefing-macedonian->

In view of the above, several conclusions can be drawn with regards to the Republic of N. Macedonia's relations with major world powers. Whilst the 1990s were marked by an attempt to maintain some continuity with the Yugoslav foreign policy of non-alignment, the period after 2001 has been marked by a close alignment with the Euro-Atlantic Western community. Moreover, in the past 30 years, the rise and prevalence of ethnic identity politics has increasingly become manifested in its impact over the state's relations with major world powers. At the same time the state's relations with major world powers have shaped its socio-political relations. The loss of national sovereignty and independence has appeared as both a cause and an outcome of these processes. Thus, somewhat paradoxically, the independence of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991 has in fact started the process of the country's continuous diminishing of sovereignty and agency.

[prime-minister-signs-washingtons-declaration-aimed-at-keeping-chinese-companies-out-of-5g-infrastructure/](#) accessed on 10.10.2021

Deterioration of relations with the USA and European Union institutions

Konrad Rajca

Summary

For Poland, the key world powers with which the relations are strategic are, in economic terms, the European Union (primarily Germany), and in terms of security guarantees - the United States. Currently, Poland is experiencing a crisis in its relations with EU institutions and with the United States. The EU institutions, as well as the new administration of Joe Biden, accuse the Polish authorities of limiting the independence of the judiciary and the media. The Polish authorities have maintained extremely friendly relations with Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump. However, political tensions do not lead to a reduction in Poland's economic contacts with its partners.

Russia's actions on the international arena regarding its policy towards the integrity of Ukraine, its support for the anti-Western activities of Belarus, and cyber-terrorism (of which it is accused by Poland and the EU) are considered in Poland to be the main threats to national security. In turn, Poland's trade turnover with China has been increasing regularly, which provides a good perspective for economic cooperation.

Introduction

Poland's policy with the major powers is defined by the country's location between Germany and Russia. These two powers have historically been the main threat to Polish statehood and sovereignty. Poland has been a member of the European Union since 2004 and NATO since 1999. Today, the main guarantor of Polish security is the United States, with some 4,500 American troops stationed in Poland. In turn, the presence in the European Union is the key factor of Polish economic security. A special role is played here by

Germany, which is by far Poland's largest economic partner, both in terms of trade and investment.

Polish-American relations - key security and investment

Poland's relationship with the United States, a key NATO ally, has been a strategic partnership since Poland's transformation after 1989. The United States supported Poland's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1999, and Poland subsequently made significant contributions to US and NATO-led military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Another important factor contributing to the development of mutual relations and cooperation is the Polish community in the USA, whose population is estimated 10 million.

The most important element of the political dialogue in the recent period was the visit of Polish President Andrzej Duda to Washington in June 2019. During it, the "Joint Declaration on Defense Cooperation Regarding the Presence of the Armed Forces of the United States of America on the Territory of the Republic of Poland," an intergovernmental agreement on enhancing cooperation in preventing and combating serious crime, an intergovernmental agreement on strategic cooperation in civil nuclear energy, and an LNG supply contract between PGNiG and Venture Global LNG were signed.

Cooperation in the area of security and defence is a cornerstone of Polish - American relations. Polish priorities include: expanding the presence of U.S. forces in our country as part of strengthening NATO's eastern flank, joint security and defense projects, such as the installation of the U.S. missile defense system in Redzików, and cooperation between the air forces of the two countries. In the "Joint Declaration" it was announced that the U.S. permanent (enduring) military presence would be increased by approximately 1,000 additional troops. Currently, there are approximately 4,500 rotating U.S. military personnel in Poland.

According to the Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency (PAIH) the United States is currently the second most important foreign investor in Poland after Germany. The value of capital invested by American companies in our country over the last 30 years amounts to over USD 26 billion. Cooperation in the field of energy is also of great importance. The United States supports Poland in its efforts to diversify sources of energy supplies, mainly gas. In recent years, Poland has concluded several significant contracts for the purchase of U.S. LNG, whose supplies will increase after 2022. Enhanced cooperation in the nuclear energy field is also planned.

The coming to power of President Joe Biden, however, has cooled Polish-American relations, which were exceptionally good during Donald Trump's administration. The current American authorities accuse the Polish government of restricting the independence of the Polish judiciary, as well as actions aimed at limiting the freedom of media and the presence of American capital in Poland, which, according to the U.S., is manifested by the fact that the law limiting the presence of foreign capital in Polish media (the so-called Lex TVN law), whose provisions hit one of the largest television stations in Poland, TVN. Its owner is the American Discovery network.

The Polish government also views the U.S. policy towards Russia as too submissive and ignoring the interests of Central and Eastern European countries, which is reflected in the fact that most U.S. sanctions have been lifted on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline connecting Russia with Germany. The investment is considered by Poland as a threat to the country's energy security.

Tensions in relations with the European Union

Poland's relations with EU institutions have recently been in crisis over allegations by the EU that the independence of the judiciary and media freedom in Poland have been curtailed. Poland has been accused of failing to comply with rulings by the European Court of Justice ordering it to

reverse some of Poland's judicial reforms, as well as a decision by the same court regarding the closure of a coal-fired power plant in Turow, the operation of which is the subject of a dispute with the Czech Republic. The Polish government considers the actions of EU institutions to be unauthorized and violating Polish sovereignty. Tensions in Poland's relations with EU institutions have resulted in delays in the disbursement of funds from the European Reconstruction Fund to Poland.

Relations with Germany - the key economy

Despite a difficult Polish-German history, connected in particular with World War II, today Poland and Germany belong together to Western international structures and share a common system of values, despite many differences of a strategic nature, especially in the context of relations with Russia and related energy policy. Today, however, Germany is Poland's largest trading partner and investor in Poland. The cumulative value of German direct investments in Poland in the last 30 years amounted to over EUR 35 billion, which constitutes 21 percent of the total investments. Poland is still one of the most important investment directions of the German capital in the EU. Much of the German investment is in the automotive industry and business process outsourcing (especially in IT).

Germany's share in Poland's exports of goods amounted to 28.9% in 2020, while in imports of goods to Poland it amounted to 21.8%. Share of France, the second on the list of main recipients of Polish goods, in the value of total exports amounts to 6.1% - or 4 billion euros - almost five times less than Germany. In the case of Polish imports, the disproportion between the first and second on the list is not as big as in the case of exports - the value of imports from Germany is 1.5 times greater than imports from China.

A European power with which relations are crucial for Poland, due to the huge Polish minority living there, is also Great Britain. In 2018, the UK Office for National Statistics estimated the number of Polish people living in the UK to be 905,000 (including 832,000 people born in Poland). The Poles are the largest immigrant nationality group in the UK.

Polish-Russian relations - a security threat

Throughout Polish history, Poland's relations with Russia have been difficult for civilizational (Poland regarded itself as the "bulwark of the West") and geopolitical reasons - struggles for influence in what is now Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus. Along with Germany, Russia has historically been a constant threat to Polish security and sovereignty. After World War II, Poland fell into the Russian sphere of influence. After the collapse of the communist system in Europe, Poland's relations with Russia remain in constant tension, despite brief periods of warming. The main points of contention are Russian policies, considered by Poland as "imperial" in relation to eastern Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia, which the Poland considers a threat to its own security. Concern in Poland is also aroused by Russian-German cooperation "over the heads of the Poles," e.g., in the context of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline.

A constant element in the Polish-Russian relations are the historical issues connected with the crimes committed by the Soviet Union against Poles during World War II, as well as the events connected with the Smolensk catastrophe in 2010, which resulted in the death of Polish President Lech Kaczynski and about 100 representatives of the Polish elite. To date, Russia has not returned the wreckage of the plane to Poland, nor has it completed its investigation into the crash. Poland points to oversights at Smolensk airport which could have contributed to the crash. Russia, in turn, has constantly accused Poland of blocking cooperation between the European Union and Russia on the forum of this organization.

Polish-Chinese relations – good economic perspectives

China is an important country for Poland in terms of economic cooperation. The Middle Kingdom is currently Poland's largest trading partner in Asia, while Poland is China's largest trading partner in Central and Eastern Europe. China is the world's second largest exporter of goods to Poland,

after Germany, with a share of about 15 percent of Polish imports, but only the 19th largest export destination for Polish goods. In 2020, Poland exported about \$3.3 billion worth of goods to China, which accounted for 1.3 percent of the value of Polish exports. The value of Polish imports of goods from China is 10 times higher than exports in this direction. In 2020, imports from China amounted to \$37 billion, accounting for 14.6 percent of the value of Polish goods imports. Polish - Chinese trade increased by 12 percent in 2020, but Poland recorded its highest-ever bilateral trade deficit with China.

Copper and copper products are the most important goods in the structure of Polish exports to China. Other goods exported by Poland include e.g. machines and mechanical devices and their parts as well as furniture. In the merchandise structure of Chinese import to Poland half of the goods imported from China to Poland belong to the group of highly processed goods (e.g. cell phones, computers, video game consoles). Clothing and textiles as well as toys, games and sports articles also play an important role.

Poland is also an active participant in the "17 plus 1" Initiative. In February 2021, Polish President Andrzej Duda, being one of the most senior representatives of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, took part in the summit of the Initiative. During the meeting, he emphasized the need to increase the opening of the Chinese market to goods from Central and Eastern Europe and to increase the inflow of Chinese greenfield investments. At the end of May Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau, visited China having the invitation from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, Wang Yi, as a first foreign affairs minister from the countries of EU in this year.

Poland was also one of the first European countries to express interest in cooperating with China within the "Belt and Road" initiative. It is also a founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and Prime

Minister Beata Szydło attended the 1st International Belt and Road Forum in Beijing in 2017.

Conclusion:

Poland's political relations with its most important superpowers, i.e., the European Union and the United States, have recently deteriorated due to differences of opinion between the Polish government and the new American administration and EU institutions regarding the independence of the judiciary and freedom of the media in Poland. However, this does not translate into economic cooperation, which remains at a good, growing level, especially with the most important Polish economic partner - Germany. Good prospects lie ahead for the developing Polish-Chinese economic relations. For Poland, Russia remains a country whose actions are regarded as a threat to national security.

Relations between Romania and Major Powers

Oana Popovici

Summary

In relation to major powers, Romania is strongly dedicated to its role inside the European Union (EU) and therefore to developing its ties with the Members States. In addition, a special role is assigned to the United States of America (USA), a strategic partner wherewith the collaboration was consolidated in the last years. Special consideration is dedicated to China and Russia, where economic relations prevail, and, more recently, to the United Kingdom, given its new status once the exit from the EU.

European Union

President Klaus Iohannis has recently emphasized again the idea that, in what concerns foreign policy, Romania acts inside a “golden triangle” which targets the increase of the role in the EU and in NATO, respectively developing and deepening the Strategic Partnership with the USA. Within the EU, Romania aims to strengthen the European project, alongside the cohesion and unity between Member States, and supports and promotes the major objectives agreed through the EU Strategic Agenda for 2019-2024 in the priority areas that will guide the Union’s activity for the next 5 years: protecting citizens and freedoms; developing a solid and vital economic base; building a green, fair, social and climate-neutral Europe; globally promoting European interests and values. Very recently, Romania’s National Recovery and Resilience Plan was approved by the European Commission (EC). This provides, in addition to financing economic recovery actions, the resources to implement essential investments and structural reforms for medium and long-term development. The Plan is the

result of an intense dialogue with the EC and its implementation will mean to continue a close cooperation with the EU representatives.

In addition, there are some delicate issues that continue to be negotiated with the EU, such as Romania's accession to the Schengen area, so that Romanian citizens can benefit from the advantages of fully exercising their right to free movement. In addition, Romania also envisages to join the Euro Area, but the objective was postponed in the last period due to the difficult macroeconomic environment.

EU's Member States are Romania's main trade partners, due to the free market that abolishes legislative, customs or administrative barriers. The share of total trade with EU countries was around 75% in the previous year (78.1% for exports and 72.9% for imports). The main export countries were Germany (22.5% of total exports), Italy (10.8%) and France (7.6%). At import, the main partners were Germany (20.2% of total imports), Italy (8%) and Hungary (6.9%). EU countries are also among the major investors in Romania, the distribution of the foreign direct investment (FDI) stock according to the country of origin of the final investor showing Germany on top, followed by Austria and France in 2020.

United States of America

The relations with the USA are governed by the Strategic partnership established for the first time in 1997 and enforced periodically since then. Under its auspices, in October 2020, Romania and the US established the Intergovernmental Agreement on cooperation in the field of civil nuclear industry, an Agreement which was subsequently notified and endorsed by the EC. The ratification of the Agreement between the two governments represents the general framework for the continuation and realization of strategic nuclear projects, assumed by Romania in the energy strategy in the view of achieving decarbonisation targets, energy security and efficient transition to clean energy. Therefore, in June this year, the Romanian Parliament approved the draft law on the ratification of the Agreement between the two Governments on cooperation in the Cernavoda nuclear

projects, the refurbishment of Unit 1 and the construction of Units 3 and 4. The goal is to have Unit 3 connected to the network in 2030, and Unit 4 in 2031. The two nuclear projects will contribute to the development of the internal supply chain, will generate an additional up to 9,000 jobs, while stimulating research, innovation and development in the nuclear industry, with the retention of highly qualified specialists.

In addition, in September, the two countries celebrated 10 years since the adoption of the Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century and 10 years since the signing of the Romanian-American Agreement on the location of the US ballistic missile defence system in Romania. From an economic perspective, the trade relations were not as developed as expected, at least so far. 1.7% of total Romanian exports went to the US in 2020, while only 0.66% of total imports came from there. However, when looking at the distribution of total FDI in Romania according to the country of origin of the final investor, US is the fifth largest investor, with a share of 6.8% of total stocks.

United Kingdom

Despite Britain's exit from the EU, Romania is determined to strengthen the cooperative relationship with the UK and work to update the existing Strategic Partnership, as one million Romanians are living in the UK. The goal is to modernize and expand bilateral cooperation in other areas, from foreign and security policy, defence and economic ties to cultural and educational ones. The two countries share values and many common goals, in areas of action such as combating climate change, terrorism or intensified security cooperation in the Black Sea, according to Romanian officials. The Ambassador of Great Britain in Romania showed that in the last two years, the quality and size of the bilateral relationship have increased remarkably. In addition, British activities also support non-governmental organization in Romania in dealing with social challenges.

The UK is a very important market for Romania, and the Romanian authorities have every interest for the volume of trade to remain on an upward trend. Following the need to present some authorizations for the import and export of some goods, and aligning to the new customs regulations following Brexit, the officials in the Romanian Government had prepared measures to keep informed the companies having trading relations with the UK on the novelties given by the country's new status. However, a proper assessment of the evolutions in economic relations is to be made in the near future, since starting from October the movement of persons will also be more difficult. Romania's international trade with UK represented 3.43% of total exports and 1.77% of total imports in 2020. In addition, 4.1% of total FDI in Romania had UK as final investor.

People's Republic of China

Romania has a special relation with the People's Republic of China, the political relations between the two countries being established since 1949, therefore for more than 70 years. In 2004, the two countries signed the Joint Declaration on Forming an Extended Partnership Based on Friendship and Cooperation. There are strong economic connections, since China was the most important non-EU import country for Romania in 2020, and on top four countries considering the volume of imports, with a share of 6.22% of total import, while 1% of Romanian exports are allocated to China. However, only 1.2% of total FDI in Romania in 2020 were realized by a final investor having China as a country of origin.

Analysts noticed a cooling of the relations between the two countries starting with 2019, as Romania stated that the central relations on the international stage are those with the EU, NATO and the USA. A memorandum banning operators from non-EU countries that do not have public procurement agreements with the Union to accelerate the construction of large projects, such as highways, has been adopted by the Government, companies from China being also affected by this decision. The reason was not to support companies receiving direct or indirect subsidies from their country of origin and thus having an unfair

comparative advantage, or those lacking adequate regulatory accreditations. In a recent speech, President Iohannis stated that regarding the traditional relationship with China, the national institutions are looking for solutions compatible with national security and economic interest, while considering synchronizing with the EU's strategic approach and the dynamics of transatlantic partners' relations.

Russia

Romania's position regarding Russia is based on clear principles, established at the EU level. According to a recent statement by President Iohannis, Romania's attitude towards Russia remains unchanged: a normal relationship depends on the return to predictable behaviour, based on respect for international law, as blockades in resolving protracted conflicts continue, while the militarization of Crimea and the Black Sea remains worrying. On the other hand, in certain areas, where it is a question of common interests, punctual cooperation with Russia is possible, as it is the case with the goal of climate change. Such an approach has been agreed within the EU, together with the other states, and decided at the level of the European Council, at the level of the Foreign Affairs Council. Russia was the source for 3.55% of total Romanian imports in 2020 and the destination of 1.28% of total exports, while final investors from Russia were responsible for 1.3% of total FDI in Romania.

This year, the message received from Russia indicates the intention to develop a series of mutually beneficial relations with Romania, by working together to intensify political, economic and humanitarian ties. There is good potential for cooperation in the Black Sea region. The dialogue in this regard and an agenda leading to a series of meetings could be enhanced in the following period.

Relations between Serbia and 'Major Powers'

Ivona Ladjevac

Summary

This paper analyzes overall contemporary cooperation between Serbia and the so-called 'great' or 'major' powers. Aware that the definition and understanding the great-power-status is not universally uniform and is prone to changes, the author largely limits the analysis to relations with the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, such as Russia, China and the USA. Instead of solely considering France (another UNSC permanent party), the author rather analyses the EU level, having in mind the strategic importance of that state-like entity for Serbia (and prominent French, as well as German role in navigating European policies and decisions). On the other hand, the UK role will only briefly be addressed, having in mind its diminishing influence in the Western Balkans and perhaps also elsewhere in Europe.

Serbian four pillared foreign policy orientation

During the past years, Serbia's international cooperation has been influenced by the two major determinants: (a) European integration process as a chief strategic goal; (b) territorial and other disputes stemming from the unilaterally declared secession of authorities in Priština.¹ These two aspects have profoundly shaped the country's relations with major actors in the northern hemisphere, whereas the tension between these two priorities has complicated the advancing of national interests to their full extent. Apart from the European integration and disputes over its southern breakaway province, the third determinant which shaped Serbia's

¹ Petrović, Miloš. "EU integration process of Serbia: a vicious circle of high politics?" *The Review of International Affairs*, LXX(1175), 2019, p. 24.

international behavior has been the steady disinclination towards NATO. Unlike other CEE countries, Serbia chose not to pursue the Trans-Atlantic integration in the form of NATO membership. Instead the Serbian National Assembly passed a resolution in 2007 which condemned the 1999 NATO aggression, and proclaimed “military neutrality towards the existing military alliances”, envisaging a possibility of a referendum on that specific aspect.¹ Consequently, Serbia refrained from joining the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance while cooperating with it through the Partnership for Peace and other activities. This aspect influenced both relations with USA – the founder and chief member of NATO – and Russia, a close political ally of Serbia and proponent of the Eurasian military alliance named the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Although Serbian security cooperation with alliances headed by the USA and Russia has been bounded by the country’s military neutral status, it has nevertheless been active; Serbia has been an CSTO observer state since 2013 and part of advanced individual partnership programs with NATO, apart from also individually nurturing military ties with Washington and Moscow.² These and other examples of cooperation paint a picture of Serbian foreign policy, which is nominally and still significantly pro-European, but in practice growingly multi-vector.

Two decades ago, Serbia has declared the EU accession as its chief strategic goal. Its membership perspective was confirmed during the Thessaloniki European Council Summit in 2003, whereas relations continued to deepen through the Stabilization and Association Treaty

¹ Full text of the *National Assembly Resolution on Protection of Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity and Constitutional Order of the Republic of Serbia* (in Serbian): <https://www.srbija.gov.rs/kosovo-metohija/index.php?id=80729>.

² European Parliament, *Serbia’s cooperation with China, the European Union, Russia and the United States of America*, 2017. Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/133504/Serbia%20cooperation%20with%20China,%20the%20EU,%20Russia%20and%20the%20USA.pdf>, p. 40, Accessed: 05.10.2021; NATO, *Relations with Serbia*, 2021. Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50100.htm#:~:text=Cooperation%20has%20deepened%20since%202015,Tailored%20Partnership%20Programme%20\(ITPP\)](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50100.htm#:~:text=Cooperation%20has%20deepened%20since%202015,Tailored%20Partnership%20Programme%20(ITPP)), Accessed: 05.10.2021.

(signed in 2008) and other agreements, as well as formal hierarchical steps: application to join (2009), candidate country status (2012) and entry into the final stage of approximation – the EU accession negotiations (since 2014). However, the lack of progress, chiefly in domain of political criteria (imperfect judicial system, fundamental freedoms, corruption, organized crime, administrative system) during the past few years resulted in the lack of opening any new negotiating domains (chapters/clusters) in the accession negotiations. Meanwhile, the normalization of relations with Kosovo* formally entered the Serbian EU entry talks through chapter 35, while the process itself hasn't brought tangible improvements towards finding a sustainable *modus vivendi*.

On the other hand, the European Union itself has not proven capability to advance ties with any of the Western Balkan actors. French veto at the October 2019 Council for Albania and North Macedonia, followed by the proposed (and adopted) revised methodology for EU accession talks, prompted questions whether the EU member-states were reforming enlargement policy or perhaps putting it on hold.¹ Germany, on the other hand, has been advocating the Berlin Process since 2014, which has shown only limited effects in terms of integrating the Western Balkan region, including Serbia, despite some benefits in terms of regional connectivity.² Still, formally speaking, relations with the EU remain strategically aimed, albeit with disturbances and reluctance on both sides. In addition, close economic and political cooperation with Germany, coupled with strategic partnerships with France and Italy, also have a positive synergistic effect on persevering on the EU membership path.³ Apart from that, Serbia as an associate country has been very tied to the European Union economically – over two-thirds of all FDI during the past decade came from EU-based

¹ Töglhofer, Theresia. "No Time to Lose for the EU: Overcoming the Accession Stalemate in the Western Balkans".

DGAP Policy Brief 8, 2019, p. 4.

² Griessler, Christina. "The Berlin Process. Bringing the Western Balkan Region Closer to the European Union" *Südosteuropa* 68(1), 2020, pp. 1-24.

³ Đukanović, Vladimir, Živojinović, Dragan. "Strateška partnerstva Republike Srbije". *Godišnjak Fakulteta Političkih Nauka* 6, 2011, pp. 299-312.

companies.¹ The fact that EU represents the foremost economic partner and the single most influential political actor derives from both state measures and various proximities – after all, Serbia is a European country surrounded by EU member-states.

While the Union hasn't been successful in accomplishing an overall agreement between Belgrade and Priština, nor drawing Serbia closer to membership, Kosovo dispute remained active. The reduced credibility of EU perspective, combined with stabilocratic logic and unaddressed challenges were not beneficial for EU leadership in the region.² Quite the contrary: it provided favorable circumstances for increased economic and other presence of other actors, namely Russia and China. China has been a strategic partner of Serbia since 2009, while the 'comprehensive strategic partnership' was established in 2016; apart from territorial integrity support, the cooperation has yielded significant economic results through the platforms '17+1' and 'One Belt One Road' initiatives.³ Within the '17+1', Serbia is reported to have attracted the highest amount of Chinese foreign investments in recent years.⁴ Unlike the hierarchical nature of EU accession logic, relations with China have been perceived to be more horizontal, despite the generally large asymmetry between two sides across a variety of areas.⁵ In economic terms, Russia and China rank second and third behind the EU in terms of overall trade (excluding CEFTA).⁶ On the

¹ Delegacija Evropske komisije u Srbiji, Strane direktne investicije, 2020. Available at: <https://europa.rs/strane-direktne-investicije/>, Accessed: 06.10.2021

² Kovačević, Maja. "Ograničenja transformativne moći Evropske unije i Zapadni Balkan". *Međunarodni problemi*, LXXI(1), 2019, pp. 41-42.

³ Ministarstvo spoljnih poslova Republike Srbije, Bilateralni odnosi – Kina. 2021. Available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.rs/lat/spoljna-politika/bilateralna-saradnja/kina>. Accessed: 04.10.2021.

⁴ Government of the Republic of Serbia, Invest in Serbia, 2020. Available at: <https://ras.gov.rs/uploads/2020/10/eng-opportunities-for-investors-from-china-ras-1.pdf>, p. 10. Accessed: 06.10.2021.

⁵ Lađevac, Ivona. *Budućnost saradnje Kine i Srbije*. Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, Beograd, 2018, pp. 54-55.

⁶ EU delegation in Serbia, EU Continues to be Serbia's Largest Trade Partner, 2020. Available at: <https://europa.rs/eu-continues-to-be-serbias-largest-trade-partner/?lang=en>. Accessed: 05.10.2021.

other hand, Russian energy and infrastructural projects, coupled with developed cultural cooperation, and refusal of Serbian Government to align with the EU Common and Security policy regarding the sanctions on Moscow for its role in the Ukrainian crisis, also contribute to continued close ties. Both China and Russia maintain that the unilaterally declared independence of Priština authorities is illegal in terms of international law, and represent Belgrade's chief allies in that regard in the United Nations and other international organisations. In addition, the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the inadequate initial response from the European Union and the joint projects on vaccine production in Serbian pharmaceutical facilities make these partnerships all the more valuable, having in mind the unprecedented health challenge.

As for the UK, its position has so far been supportive to the EU, NATO and Washington approaches in the region, although the Brexit process might easily result in the UK's international marginalization in the years to come.¹ Still, major divergences comparing to the strategies of the aforementioned actors are not expected. Partnership, Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Serbia was signed in 2021, regulating bilateral ties in the post-Brexit context.² USA, on the other hand, has largely been supportive of EU leadership in the region, both regarding the accession process and the ongoing dialogue between Belgrade and Priština. This tendency was interrupted during the Trump administration, when the Washington Agreement (2020) was brokered, thus showing a perhaps increased US interest in the Western Balkans in the absence of EU activities. However, the Biden administration, in the spirit of renewed Trans-Atlantic cooperation, might be more willing to support the leading EU role in

¹ Petrović, Miloš. „Bregzit kao ishod ambivalentne britanske politike prema evropskoj integraciji”. *Međunarodni problemi*, LXXII(3), 2020, str. 535.

² Gov.uk. UK/Serbia: Partnership, Trade and Cooperation Agreement [CS Serbia No.1/2021]. 2021. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukserbia-partnership-trade-and-cooperation-agreement-cs-serbia-no12021>. Accessed: 05.10.2021.

integrating the Western Balkans, including Serbia. As regards the NATO accession, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina remain the only countries outside the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, which doesn't seem likely to change any time soon. Serbian ties with the USA are additionally strengthened through close cooperation with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, prospective World Trade Organization membership and through increased investments from US companies, which employ over 20,000 people.¹ Still, abovementioned disagreements, especially over the breakaway province, inhibit the two sides from cooperating to their full potential.

Conclusion

Although nominally all sides agree on the necessity to “normalize relations” with the Priština authorities, UNSC members remain divided regarding the status issue, with some supporting Serbian claim (Russia and China), and others opposing it (France, USA, UK). To complicate things further, the European Union, which Belgrade strives to join, doesn't have a unified stance towards the status of the breakaway territory, referring to it as “Kosovo*.”² As a result of this intertwining, the EU approach towards Serbia has frequently been perceived as confusing and even contradictory, which additionally hampered its prolonged accession process. The enlargement policy crisis has been conducive for increased presence of other actors in the region like China and Russia, which the COVID-19 pandemic additionally facilitated. Having in mind the growingly distant EU membership perspective and grim outlook of the Belgrade-Priština dialogue, coupled with the great pandemic challenge, Serbian relations

¹ US Department of State. U.S. relations with Serbia. 2021. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-serbia/>. Accessed: 05.10.2021.

²The EU-designed footnote: *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.

with major actors are likely to remain multi-vector for the time being, at least until the reinvigoration of European Union enlargement agenda.

Relations between Slovakia and Major Powers

Kristína Baculáková

Summary

This briefing captures the trend of development of diplomatic and economic relations between Slovakia and the major powers. Because Slovakia is part of the European Union, we focus primarily on relations with the United States, Russia and China.

Introduction

In 2004, Slovakia became a member of two important groupings. Slovakia joined NATO as well as the European Union. This slowly and gradually began to shape a completely new foreign policy, but also the country's security strategy. Within the Union, Slovakia has become a member of the European Single Market, thus accepting a common EU Trade policy towards third countries. The Union has also begun to provide a platform for shaping common positions in foreign policy. The situation was similar in terms of security - NATO offered Slovakia clear security and defense guarantees, but as a full member of the Alliance it also has responsibilities such as active international involvement but also to build armed forces, fully compatible with NATO. Nevertheless, Slovakia continues to build its relations with the major powers on its own. Russia, as a traditional partner and not only in the field of energy supply, remains a strategic point of interest in Slovak foreign policy, although Slovakia is increasingly declaring its pro-Western orientation. Relations with the United States are developing in a positive direction. However, the vision of cooperation with China is a bit more rigid and unconceptual.

Slovakia and China – economic friendship?

Cooperation between Slovakia and China is still a rather unbalanced one. It can be stated unequivocally that economic cooperation prevails, but in the form of a significant trade deficit in Slovakia. Imports from China in 2019 represented 5.04 billions euro while Slovakia's exports to China reached only 1.69 billion euro.¹ It should be noted that Slovakia is not, and never has been, a strategic partner for China. Experts who deal with Slovak-Chinese relations even point out that Slovakia is the least important country out of the V4 countries.² Slovakia lacks a deeper vision of the development of diplomatic relations and better enforcement of Slovak exporters in the Chinese market. Nevertheless, Slovakia's policy towards China has moved a little forward thanks to the adoption of the Concept of Development of Economic Relations between the Slovak Republic and China.³ The aim of the concept was to identify opportunities for the Slovak Republic in relations with the PRC and to present intentions in areas of cooperation, such as investment, business and trade, transport, tourism, as well as research and innovation.

However, Slovakia is not yet very effective in translating its ambitions (especially business) into practice. Although we have become part of the 16 + 1 initiative, the EU + China concept is more for political dialogue. And as far as political dialogue is concerned, Slovakia is slightly restrained. And there is no domestic political agreement either. On the other hand, relations with China will not be as friction on the domestic political scene as, for example, in the neighboring V4 countries. Uncertain and not entirely

¹ DATAcube.sk 2021. *Zahraničný obchod podľa krajín*. [online]. Available at: <http://datacube.Statistics.sk/#!/view/sk/VBD_SLOVSTAT/zo2006rs/v_zo2006rs_00_00_00_sk>

² Šimalčík, M., Turcsanyi, R. 2017. *Čína na Slovensku: Sme pripravení na budúcnosť?* Policy paper

³ Ministerstvo hospodárstva Slovenskej republiky. 2017. *Vláda schválila Koncepciu rozvoja hospodárskych vzťahov medzi SR a Čínou na roky 2017 až 2020*. Tlačové správy. [online]. Available at: <<https://www.mhsr.sk/press/vlada-schvalila-koncepciu-rozvoja-hospodarskych-vztahov-medzi-sr-a-cinou-na-roky-2017-az-2020>>

substantiated concerns about the political motivation of Chinese investment are also a hindrance to the more effective development of Slovak-Chinese relations. If the perception of these fears turns into opportunities, the door will open to more pragmatic expectations of co-operation. Although the Chinese market offers exceptional opportunities, it cannot be perceived as a salvation for Slovak exports.

Russian standard

Relations between Russia and Slovakia are, at least on the Slovak political scene, much more turbulent than with China. Pew Research Center surveyed 33 countries about their opinion on Russia in 2019 . Of all the countries surveyed, Slovakia was among the countries with the most positive attitude towards Russia. A more positive public perception of Russia can only be found in Bulgaria. Up to 60% of people in Slovakia perceive Russia positively.¹ Despite the positive attitude towards Russia, the government's rhetoric is changing slightly. Relations are currently viewed through the prism of EU membership and especially NATO. Emphasis is placed on the pro-Western orientation of Slovakia. The positive perception of Russia stems from a certain historical proximity, but many experts rather point out that the Slovak view of Russia is idealistic and does not correspond to reality.

Since the establishment of the independent state, Slovakia's policy towards Russia has also been significantly influenced by the attitudes of individual, whether governmental or opposition political parties. Of the latter, it was mainly the Slovak National Party that has an explicitly pro-Russian agenda. In the last parliamentary elections, not only did it join the governing coalition, but the party's chairman also served as Speaker of the Parliament. Russia considers Slovakia a key partner because, as an EU member,

¹ Pew Research Center. 2020. *Russia and Putin receive low ratings globally*. [online]. Available at: <<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/02/07/russia-and-putin-receive-low-ratings-globally/>>

Slovakia, for example, has taken a soft stance on sanctions imposed by the EU. Although Slovakia agreed with the sanctions, it repeatedly expressed a negative opinion on the margin of their effectiveness or their repeated extension.

The last remnant of tense domestic political views on Russia was the case with the purchase of Sputnik V vaccines. The not very successful trip of the Minister of Finance to Moscow and the negotiations on the vaccine, which was supposed to be in the competence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, de facto led to the government crisis. Although it was blessed, Sputnik had problems with registration, which resulted in a situation where Russia requested the return of the supplied vaccines. The last straw was also the fact that there was nothing out of the announced great interest of citizens in this vaccine - Slovakia moved the vaccines to the Balkans or South America.

Apart from differing views on Russia on the domestic political scene, we must not neglect economic cooperation. Although long-term foreign trade ties between Slovakia and Russia have been crucially changed at the turn of the 1990s, Russia dominates Slovakia's foreign trade outside the EU. The development of foreign trade between Slovakia and Russia can be characterized by a long-term passive trade balance by Slovakia. The structure of Slovak exports and imports with Russia was influenced mainly by the high dependence of our country on imports of Russian energy raw materials. Cooperation in the field of energy and fuel complex is the basis of Slovak-Russian economic relations. Supplies of Russian oil, natural gas and nuclear fuels satisfy up to 90% of Slovakia's needs.¹ The question of the geopolitical game remains to what extent Slovakia will be influenced by the operation of NS2 gas pipeline as a transit country through which gas flows from Ukraine to the west.

¹ Kašťáková, E. 2017. Intenzita zahraničného obchodu medzi Slovenskom a Ruskom v súčasnom období. In *Studia commercialia Bratislavensia*. Č.37, Vol. 10, 1/2017.

Last but not least...

The United States of America, a world power, is one of the key partners for Slovakia. The formation of Slovak-American relations dates back several generations. Slovaks, together with Czech emigrants, laid the foundations of a common state of Czechs and Slovaks in the USA through the Cleveland and Pittsburgh agreements. According to Slovak diplomacy, Slovakia must realize that among the allies guaranteeing Slovak defense, it is the United States that plays a key role. During Mike Pompeo's visit as Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2019, it was emphasized that Slovakia had always been a good partner for the United States in multilateral organizations. During the visit, the strengthening of cooperation in the field of defense and thus the reduction of dependence on Soviet technology was also mentioned.¹ The election of President Joe Biden also predicts the strengthening of bilateral relations. As part of the NATO summit, which took place in June this year, the Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová also met and discussed with the American President. President Biden praised the progress that Slovakia has made. The two state officials talked together about the importance of the values that unite Slovakia and the USA. These are the values of democracy and the rule of law.² At the same time, Joe Biden returns to America the position of a guarantor of liberal democracy in the world, from which Slovakia can only benefit.

Slovakia shares some common priorities with the USA, such as the need for critical infrastructure security, including 5G networks, while the two countries signed a Joint Declaration, where Slovakia confirmed its

¹ Regióny.sk. 2019. *Pompeo rokoval s Lajčákom. Potvrdil záväzok USA ostať spojencom Slovenska*. [online]. Available at: <<https://regiony.zoznam.sk/vztah-slovenska-a-usa-stoji-na-spolocnych-hodnotach-chranme-ich-povedal-pompeo/>>

² The Slovak Spectator. 2021. *President Čaputová met with Biden, he appreciated Slovakia's progress*. [online]. Available at: <<https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22682059/president-caputova-met-with-biden-he-appreciated-slovakias-progress.html>>

commitment to the secure construction of communication networks.¹ Of course, there are also areas where the two countries differ to a greater or lesser extent - for example, the attitude to the construction of the Nord Stream 2 oil pipeline was problematic. However, the USA and Germany have currently signed an opinion in support of Ukraine and the energy security of Central and Eastern Europe, which Slovak diplomacy has appreciated. Slovakia also played an integral role in the mission in Afghanistan, and even in the current difficult situation, it provided its assistance in evacuating from this area.

Apart from politics, the United States is a key trading partner of Slovakia. Exports from Slovakia to the USA are dominated by Volkswagen and Audi vehicles manufactured in Slovakia. Unlike China, Slovakia has a trade surplus with the USA. Exports in 2019 represented 2.52 billions euro, while imports only 0.9 billions euro. US share in Slovakia 's total export is 2.65%.²

Conclusion

Slovakia is a small open economy. For its successful existence, integration is necessary not only in the EU and NATO, but also the creation and maintenance of quality relations with key players in the world economy and politics. Our relations are built on historical foundations, a common past, a future, but today especially on democratic and liberal principles. As

¹ Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí Slovenskej republiky. 2021. *Minister zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí SR I. Korčok podpísal vo Washingtone spoločné vyhlásenie SR a USA k bezpečnosti sietí 5G*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/minister-zahranicnych-veci-a-europskych-zalezitosti-sr-i-korcok-podpisal-vo-washingtone-spolocne-vyhlasenie-sr-a-usa-k-bezpecnosti-sieti-5g/10182>

² DATAcube.sk 2021. *Zahraničný obchod podľa krajín*. [online]. Available at: <http://datacube.statistics.sk/#!/view/sk/VBD_SLOVSTAT/zo2006rs/v_zo2006rs_00_00_00_sk>

part of the EU, Slovakia is also part of the political decisions of the Union and its internal market. It is therefore not surprising that from a trade point of view, the EU countries are Slovakia's largest partner. However, relations with China are developing positively. On the other hand, there is a slight change in rhetoric towards Russia, with an emphasis on the country's pro-Western orientation. From a geopolitical point of view, Slovakia does not become neutral, it is an active and full member of NATO.

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What the Prime Minister Alliances Say About Slovenia's Relations with the Superpowers

Tina Čok

Summary

Although there has been a lot of talk recently about cooperation in Slovenian foreign policy, the country that was once considered a Balkan success story is quite isolated internationally thirty years after its independence. The cooperation of its political leadership is limited to a few neighbouring countries, which allow the ruling party to realise its political interests and existence. The strong ties with the sovereignists, especially the ever-closer friendship with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, also led to unexpected decisions when Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša preferred to attend the Demography Summit in Budapest instead of the elite UN General Assembly in New York.

Slovenia's foreign policy is increasingly locally oriented

Slovenia, which until recently was known for its commitment to multilateralism and thus earned a good reputation despite its small size, is increasingly forging political alliances with some leaders, such as the Hungarian Prime Minister or the Serbian President, who do not support multilateralism or democratic values and the rule of law. In the past, Slovenia has distinguished itself in the international community by chairing the UN Commission on Human Rights, and the weakening of its standing was most evident on the issue of Palestinian rights. Last fall, for the first time in its diplomatic history, Slovenia voted against a WHO resolution on the basis of which the international community could provide medicines and vaccines to Palestinians in the occupied territories. Rather than aligning

itself with major players, Slovenia has recently chosen local alliances of political sympathizers.

This political shift has recently manifested itself in at least three events that have received international attention. First, at the beginning of the fall, Slovenia organized, as it does every year, Bled Strategic Forum. While a record number of heads of state and government attended the event, the prime minister's Eastern European allies and leaders from the southeastern region, while invited guests from Western Europe declined to attend. While for fifteen years, the Slovenian government did not know what to do with one of Slovenia's biggest foreign policy events, the current government started using the Bled Forum as a political event entirely dedicated to its interests and foreign policy orientation, which is becoming increasingly narrow and local.

During the Slovenian Presidency to the Council of the European Union one would expect the Forum to be attended by many distinguished and important European guests. It would also be normal for the president of Brussels Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and a large entourage of European Commissioners to pay a short, symbolic visit. The absence of these guests is a clear indication of Slovenia's uncertain status in the EU.

Prime Minister Janez Janša also interrupted Slovenian foreign policy practice when, at the end of September, as holding the presidency of the Council of the EU, he decided not to attend the 76th UN General Assembly. He sent the President of the Republic Borut Pahor to New York in his place. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister preferred to attend the demographic summit in Budapest. Prime Minister Janša's decision to give preference to Budapest over New York was strongly criticized by domestic international relations experts, who believe that the current government is not pursuing foreign policy in order to pursue the national, but primarily its domestic interest. As the head of the EU Council Presidency, his absence from the UN summit has put not only Slovenia in an awkward position, but also the EU, which is also eager to consolidate its identity in the UN corridors.

Lukewarm relations even with the superpowers

Since the last US elections, Slovene-American relations have not really been able to establish themselves. Many things have not been completely forgotten in America. Starting with the Prime Minister premature congratulations to Trump on his election victory, while at the same time President-elect Biden was berated as the weakest president in American history. Nor has the United States forgotten the awarding of the Slovenian President State Medal to US Senator Paul Gosar, a far-right and anti-Semitic politician who actively supported and promoted the overthrow of the constitutional order and democracy in the United States in connection with the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol Building.

However, all these initial debacles had no particular impact on the speed of the appointment of the new U.S. ambassador to Slovenia. Six months after his inauguration, Biden will send his supporter and donor Jamie L. Harpootlian to Slovenia. This would leave the US without an ambassador in Slovenia for about a year. Like her predecessor in the Trump administration, Lynda Blanchard, Harpootlian is a politically appointed ambassador, which can be interpreted as an American message to Slovenia that the United States does not count on Slovenia as a country with which it wants to develop sophisticated diplomatic relations.

During Ambassador Blanchard Slovenian-American relations have occasionally intensified. Last August, when the two countries signed a statement against China on the security of 5G networks, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also visited Slovenia. This was followed by a return visit by Foreign Minister late last year, during the change of power in the US, during which the two countries engaged in a strategic dialogue.

In all likelihood, the new ambassador enjoys the confidence of President Biden and is one of the prominent members of Democratic Party, so some

experts also see a potential political continuity in Slovenian-American relations.

Meanwhile, the strategy towards China still remains rather unclear. After almost a decade of cooperation within the framework of 17+1, Slovenia still does not have clearly formulated positions and priorities in the said cooperation, nor does it know exactly what it wants from China. Although Slovenia does not stand out from most other countries in this regard, some other countries, such as the comparatively large Slovakia, at least have a clearly defined strategy towards China. This indecisiveness was ultimately reflected in the unexplained absence of Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša from the summit of the Chinese 17 + 1 initiative in February 2021. The practice in Slovenian foreign policy so far has been that the summits of Central and Eastern Europe and China, the so-called Forum 17 +1, are attended by Prime Ministers. This year, the government of Janez Janša stopped this practice without explanation. At the virtual summit Slovenia was represented by the Deputy Prime Minister.

Slovenia was not the only country that did not send its prime minister to the meeting. In addition to Slovenian Prime Minister, the Bulgarian, Romanian and Baltic prime ministers were also absent this year. What most of these countries have in common is that they have signed a bilateral statement with the United States on 5G network security, the geopolitical goal of which is to prevent Chinese telecommunications giants from penetrating the European market.

Slovenia has also recently become involved in the diplomatic dispute between Lithuania and China. China protested sharply in August when Lithuania approved the opening of a Taiwan office in Vilnius. It withdrew its ambassador to Vilnius and demanded that Lithuania withdraws its ambassador from Beijing. Janša publicly called China's decision to withdraw its ambassador from Lithuania over the Taiwan dispute unacceptable and announced that the decision would affect EU-China

relations. In response, the Chinese Foreign Ministry criticized Slovenian Prime Minister for calling on European Union leaders to support Lithuania and resist Chinese pressure.

A little more political proximity of Slovenia is seen towards Russian President Vladimir Putin. For example, the Slovenian government endorses the vaccine Russian Sputnik V, and the non-paper on territorial divisions in the Western Balkans, which is associated with Slovenia, was written in line with Russian interests in the region. Over the past year, the prime minister has made no criticism of the Russian president's actions, even when much of the EU was appalled by the Russian authorities' treatment of the first face of the Russian opposition Alexei Navalny.

The Slovenian Prime Minister is increasingly linked to the Kremlin through its ties with European sovereigntists, especially Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Matteo Salvini.

Strengthening the sovereignist movement in the EU is also strongly in Russia's interest, as the sovereignists are causing a rift in European politics and weakening the EU as a whole.

Conclusions

Despite Slovenia's relatively small weight in the world, the current government's foreign policy decisions have shown international policymakers that the country is veering into increasingly autocratic waters, weakening its geopolitical visibility and making it appear as a problem in the region rather than a solution. Since the initial debacle with the new U.S. president, Slovenian-American relations have not fully normalized, but no major upheavals are expected given that Slovenia is a longtime ally of the United States and its foreign policy role is rather weak. The steps made by the Prime Minister in relation to China are a bit more jarring at the moment. From his absence at the 17 + 1 summit to Janša's public criticism of China's

decisions related to the dispute with Lithuania over Taiwan. An interesting paradox also arises here, as neighbouring Hungary, with which Slovenian Prime Minister has a particularly close relationship, is greatly expanding its relations with China. Only with Russia are relations stable, and it seems that Slovenia's membership in the Visegrad Group is bringing the country ever closer to the Kremlin, politically and otherwise.

