



**Diplomatic Choices of CEE Countries  
under the New Situation**

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# **Diplomatic Choices of Albania in the New Geopolitical Background**

**Marsela Musabelliu**

## **Summary**

As the focus, priorities, and concerns have shifted all around Europe, the headline in geopolitical terms is Ukraine. Seven months into the conflict and the continent is facing crisis after crisis with consequences and ramifications unfolding every day. Be that as it may, at the leadership level, the financial, political, and humanitarian support for Ukraine seems to be consistent. With regards to Albania, the support for Ukraine has been and continues to be unwavering, in official and unofficial declarations, actions, gestures, and narratives.

## **Introduction**

There is rarely any event that unifies the Albanian political scene, but since February 24<sup>th</sup> the entire political establishment of Albania - right, left and center - is united in condemning Russia and standing with Ukraine. The Albanian stance on the matter is fully allied with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United States (US), and the European Union (EU), and several times, it has been louder than many other small countries in Europe. The official position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania concerning Ukraine falls in the line of maintaining a clear and steadfast position in defense of the territorial integrity, and sovereignty of Ukraine, in line with the position of its strategic partners.

## **Official stance**

On March 7<sup>th</sup> The Albanian Parliament voted in a plenary session on the draft resolution in support of Ukraine and the protection of the principles of international law and European security.<sup>1</sup> Publicly it is stated that

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<sup>1</sup> The resolution in support of Ukraine is approved by consensus by the Albanian parliament. <https://www.argumentum.al/rezoluta-ne-mbeshtetje-te-ukraines-miratohet-me-konsensus-nga-parlamenti-shqiptar/>

Albania has joined its partners and allies in support of Ukraine, reiterating unwavering support for the people of the country under attack. The resolution, which was adopted by consensus by all the 140 members of the parliament, “condemns Russian military aggression against Ukraine and the Russian Federation’s grave violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, as an act violating the international order”. In April 2022, the Minister of Foreign Affairs would state that Albania is proud that the strategic partnership with the US, the most important ally - with which there is a very special relationship - is today stronger than ever and more effective than ever. According to her, Albania is seen as the most important and reliable partner of the US in the region and both parties are working together to invest in every aspect of bilateral relations, from security and defense, economy and business, and obviously in the international arena.<sup>1</sup>

### **Interpersonal connections on the leadership level**

On May 3<sup>rd</sup> Ukrainian President Zelensky delivered a speech in the Parliament of Albania which gathered in a special session for the occasion and was greeted with a standing ovation. He thanked Albania for the concrete support, defense assistance, sanctions against Russia, cooperation on the United Nations (UN) platform, and solidarity in hosting of Ukrainian children. Prime Minister (PM) Edi Rama, in his speech at this special session, said that in thirty years of pluralism, the cases where the parties have agreed in the parliament are very rare, and “ *the support of the Ukrainian resistance against the Russian invaders is one of those cases, even rarer, when all, we have agreed without the slightest discussion.*”<sup>2</sup> On May 5<sup>th</sup> PM Edi Rama declared at the Conference of Donors for Ukraine in Warsaw that Albania will contribute one million euros to Ukraine.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Socialist Party Congress 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Albania for the support! The President of Ukraine, Mr. Volodymyr Zelensky addressed the Parliament of Albania directly from Kiev. <https://www.parlament.al/News/Index/15594>

<sup>3</sup> Albania – Ukraine Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania. <https://punetejashtme.gov.al/marredheniet-dypaleshe-shqiperi-ukraine/>



On June 15<sup>th</sup>, Rama arrived in the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv, with a delegation from his cabinet and the PM of Montenegro, Dritan Abazovic. During his visit to Ukraine, Rama went to Irpin, one of the cities hit by the Russian forces, and he further stated that Albania and the countries of the Balkans will contribute to rebuilding the city. From Kyiv, in a press conference with President Zelensky, Rama reiterated Albania's support for Ukraine in its request to receive the status of a candidate country for the EU. "*We are not rivals on the road to the EU,*" he stated.<sup>1</sup>

After some months, it was the turn of the Mayor of Tirana, Erion Veliaj, to visit Ukraine. The news was announced by the Ukrainian President, who received the delegation of the Association of European Cities, which will support the work for the reconstruction of the cities destroyed by the Russian bombings. With this visit, the municipality of Tirana pledged to build a new school in the city of Kharkiv, as a sign of solidarity with the people of Ukraine.<sup>2</sup>

The Ukrainian Ambassador to Albania in August 2022 appreciated the unconditional support that Albania has demonstrated (and continues to demonstrate) for Ukraine, both bilaterally and multilaterally. It is about both political and humanitarian support – the ambassador stated - emphasizing that Albania helped in the field of military ammunition, but also in terms of guaranteeing Ukraine's financial stability. Humanitarian aid, medicines, food, and necessities were also provided.

From his position in Tirana, the Ukrainian ambassador has made it clear that the risk does not confine to Ukraine only, the Balkans should be aware of the danger. There is even a risk that the conflict in Ukraine will expand to other countries. The Balkans are known as a traditionally troubled region ("powder keg") and Russia would be interested in opening some kind of a second front somewhere in this traditionally troubled region. In other words,

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<sup>1</sup> Side by side with Zelensky: We support Ukraine for the EU. <https://abcnews.al/live-rama-dhe-abazovic-mberrijne-ne-zemer-te-ukraines-ne-mesdite-konference-te-perbashket-me-zelenskyn/>

<sup>2</sup> Veliaj in Kiev, hosted by Zelensky! President of Ukraine: Grateful for the help. <https://lajme.rtsh.al/artikull/veliaj-ne-kiev-pritet-nga-zelensky-presidenti-i-ukraines-mirenjohes-per-ndihmen>

there is a corresponding risk – he stated.<sup>1</sup> The same approach comes from the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has stated that the Western Balkans is probably the second most endangered region from Vladimir Putin's machinations, after Ukraine.<sup>2</sup>

### **Symbolism and more**

While Albania's help appears quite modest, compared to other countries, the gestures of inclination and support have not been missing. In March 2022, with a unanimous decision, the City Council of the capital named the street where the Russian embassy has its diplomatic mission “Free Ukraine”. The street was also decorated with Ukrainian flags and yellow and blue colors painted on the sidewalks and turned into a point of protest against Russia from citizens and representatives of different Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

Some weeks later, the Russian embassy removed its offices from the newly named street. Forced to have the street "Free Ukraine" as its official address, the Russian embassy suspended activities on April 20<sup>th</sup>, as stated in the official post on the Facebook page, “for technical reasons”. In June, the embassy announced that work would begin in the new office, meanwhile, the building known as the Russian embassy has been stripped of its symbols.<sup>3</sup>

Since the first days of the conflict, with a special Council of Ministers Legal Act, Albania granted citizens of Ukraine the right to enter and stay without a residence permit in Albania for a period of up to one year.

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<sup>1</sup> Six months since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Ambassador Shkurov: "The war started with Crimea and will end with Crimea, Ukrainians will defend their independence to the end". <https://www.argumentum.al/6-muaj-nga-pushtimi-rus-i-ukraines-ambasadori-shkurov-lufta-filloi-me-krimene-dhe-do-te-perfundoje-me-krimene-ukrainasit-do-ta-mbrojne-pavaresine-e-tyre-deri-ne-fund/>

<sup>2</sup> The Western Balkans - the most endangered region after Ukraine, accelerate the integration process. <https://www.punetejashtme.gov.al/xhacka-ne-tryezen-e-rumbullaket-te-be-bp-rajoni-me-i-rrezikuar-pas-ukraines-te-pershpejtohet-procesi-i-integrimit/>

<sup>3</sup> The Russian Embassy withdraws from the "Free Ukraine" road. <https://www.reporter.al/2022/09/15/ambasada-e-ruse-terhiqet-nga-rruga-ukraina-e-lire/>

Seven months into the conflict and there are over 3,000 Ukrainian citizens currently sheltering in Albania.<sup>1</sup> Most of them are determined to return to Ukraine and rebuild their country after the war. In these months Albanian citizens have collected various aid, in funds, medicines, food, and other basic products to help with what they can Ukrainians in Albania.

### **A dynamic and vocal presence in the UN**

As a non-permanent member of the Security Council for two years (2022-2023) is trying to make the most out of it and fostering robust engagement with multiple UN organs. In February 2022, Albania accepted a US request to be in a relation of “co-penholders” relations with the US at the Security Council. In practice, it demonstrates the inclination of the Albanian government towards Washington and its foreign policy directions. Indeed, since early February 2022, PM Edi Rama spoke about the role that Albania will have in the UN Security Council, regarding the Ukraine issue. Rama portrayed it as a new and great responsibility, but also a confirmation of a different Albania in the international arena, of an Albania that is valued for its character, stability, and ability to play a role as a country that promotes peace and security.<sup>2</sup> It did not take long for the US to acknowledge the role of Rama and his foreign policy inclination noting that Albania's leadership on the UN Security Council on the Ukraine issue is appreciated.<sup>3</sup>

Albania's foreign policy chief takes much pride in this path, claiming the role played by Albania has been highly welcomed by the allies and argues that the good works will continue on all international platforms.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bombings from Russia/Ambassador Shkurov: Over 3,000 Ukrainians sheltered in Albania. <https://www.cna.al/english/aktualitet/bombardimet-nga-rusia-ambasadori-shkurov-mbi-3-mije-ukrainas-te-streh-i324165>

<sup>2</sup> “Ukraine”, USA and Albania co-penholders on the peace and security issues. <https://punetejashtme.gov.al/en/ukraina-shba-bashkepenembajtese-me-shqipëri-per-ceshtje-te-paqes-dhe-sigurise/>

<sup>3</sup> The US appreciates Albania's leadership on UN Security Council. <https://twitter.com/usambalbania/status/1489976975800348679?lang=en>

<sup>4</sup> NATO meeting on Ukraine, Minister Xhaçka: More needs to be done, war endangers peace and security of all Europe. <https://punetejashtme.gov.al/en/takimi-i-nato-s-per-ukrainen-ministrja-xhacka-duhet-bere-me-shume-lufta-rrezikon-paqen-dhe-sigurine-e-gjithe-evropes/>

Furthermore, the Albanian Ambassador to the UN has been extremely active in promoting the government's narrative and actions. From the very first day of the conflict to the latter condemnation of the “*Sham Referenda in Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson*”,<sup>1</sup> the Albanian representatives have often made clear where the country stands in the current state of affairs.

## **Conclusion**

Albania's foreign policy on the background of the new geopolitical landscape of 2022 has found what has been aspiring for, protagonism. Indeed, the conflict in Ukraine has called for all countries to take sides and align, for Albania this was an easy task considering the years-long unwavering support for the Euro-Atlantic inclination. This new geopolitical reality in the European continent is widening even more the paradigm of security over development. While for Albanian citizens, the main concern is the cost of living crisis, for the political establishment this security and development model is not even on the agenda for simple discussion. In the end, the main duty of any government is to achieve both. There might not be much left to secure if the economy of a nation is in shambles and citizens are leaving the country in the count of thousands.

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<sup>1</sup> Remarks by Ambassador Ferit Hoxha at the Security Council meeting on Ukraine. <http://ambasadat.gov.al/united-nations/remarks-by-ambassador-ferit-hoxha-at-the-security-council-meeting-on-ukraine-7/>

# **Bosnia and Herzegovina: Diplomatic Choices under the New Situation**

**Faruk Borić**

## **Summary**

Bosnia and Herzegovina is in a very specific position when it comes to foreign policy directions. Representatives of the Serbian political elite in BiH, which shares power with the other two ethnonational elites, maintains a strong pro-Russian and pro-Putin course even after start of conflict in Ukraine. The Bosniak political elite, as well as leaders of multi-ethnic parties from Sarajevo, is strongly pro-Ukrainian and anti-Russian, and binds itself to the positions of the EU and NATO. Representatives of the Croatian elite in BiH are mostly silent and seem to follow the position of Croatian President Zoran Milanović more than Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković. Different positions are manifested by the fact that each political party pulls to its side, and uses opportunities to promote party or personal goals as state goals.

## **Introduction**

Ten days after the General elections held in Bosnia and Herzegovina, news arrived from Brussels: The European Commission (EC) recommended that BiH be granted the status of candidate to join the European Union (EU). "Wind of change is once again blowing through Europe and we have to capture this momentum," Ursula von der Leyen, president of the EU's

executive arm, said in a speech. "The Western Balkans belong in our family and we have to make this very, very clear!"

In its annual report on EU enlargement, the EC said BiH should bolster democracy, the functionality of state institutions and the rule of law, tackle corruption and organized crime, guarantee media freedom and migration management. Von der Leyen said the EU's opponents look at the Balkans as "a geopolitical chessboard" seeking to "drive a wedge between the region and the rest of Europe"<sup>2</sup>.

This decision is related to the war in Ukraine. BiH did not get the status a few months ago, unlike Ukraine, which caused a lot of reactions in BiH and region, whereas many people wondered how Ukraine made better progress than BiH<sup>3</sup>. Geopolitical reality obviously prevailed both then and now over the strict criteria that Brussels presents to its (sic!) future members, although it is not certain that the EU Council will unanimously support the position of the European Commission<sup>4</sup>. In addition, it is obvious that the EC did not want to influence the outcome of the elections in BiH in any

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<sup>1</sup> EU proposes candidate status for Bosnia.  
<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eus-von-der-leyen-proposed-candidate-status-bosnia-herzegovina-2022-10-12/>

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Nehammer: Nezamislivo da Ukrajina dobije kandidatski status, a ne BiH.  
<https://6yka.com/svijet/nehammer-nezamislivo-da-ukrajina-dobije-kandidatski-status-a-ne-bih>

<sup>4</sup> Nothing about BiH's candidate status in December? The French and the Dutch were the first brakemen.

<https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/nista-od-kandidatskog-statusa-bih-u-decembru-francuzi-i-nizozemci-prvi-kocnicari/221026105>

way, especially in the sense that the ruling parties use candidate status in the pre-election campaign as leverage.

Anyhow, membership in the EU remains, at least declaratively, one of the rare jointly expressed foreign policy interests and goals of all political entities in BiH, both those from the right-wing national and those from the left political spectrum. Therefore, the decision was welcomed by several high-ranking BiH officials, including BiH Presidency members Željko Komšić (Croat) and Šefik Džarefović (Bosniak), as well as Deputy Speaker of the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH and leader of Croatian nationalists in BiH Dragan Čović.

However, just a few days earlier, Milorad Dodik, then a member of the BiH Presidency (Serb) and the likely winner of the elections for the president of the BiH entity Republic of Srpska (RS), paid an official visit to Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia. If the EU did not want to interfere in the election campaign, Putin apparently did. At least that's what the public service, Radio-television of the RS reported: Putin wished Dodik success in the elections, saying that it would strengthen the cooperation between the RS and Russia<sup>1</sup>.

What is really interesting for this report is that Dodik and Putin commented on the recently announced football match between BiH and Russia. Dodik, as reported by RTRS, said that he was "especially proud that this (match) will happen, even though part of the country was not in favor of it." Putin said that sport "should unite people, not divide<sup>2</sup>".

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<sup>1</sup> During the meeting in Moscow, Putin wished Dodik luck in the elections. <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/dodik-putin-sastanak-rusija-/32042799.html>

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

This "soccer" soft-diplomacy has once again shaken the wobbly pillars of BiH's foreign policy. Situation in Ukraine has divided BiH along ethnic and ideological lines. Since the BiH Presidency as the holder of foreign policy during 2022 functioned in a kind of *status quo*, where the other two members of the Presidency, the Bosniak Dževerović and the Croat Komšić, followed the line of Brussels and Washington while Dodik wholeheartedly supported Moscow, the diplomatic games moved to the sports field. A friendly match between the national teams of BiH and Russia was arranged in September, only ten days before the meeting between Dodik and Putin. The Football Association of BiH (FA BiH) is politically instrumentalized by the ruling parties in BiH, and Dodik, as confirmed by the decision to hold the match, controls the "majority package" of the members of the Executive Committee, who managed to push through this, obviously, carefully designed political decision. The media in BiH reminded of the fact that the match is being arranged "at a time when numerous European and world organizations and institutions distanced themselves from Russia<sup>1</sup>". Media wrote this is the example and the best indicator of how the state's foreign policy would be conducted if it is under control of Milorad Dodik (his nephew Vico Zeljković is President of FA BiH)<sup>2</sup>. And to make matters even more grotesque, almost at the same time when it was announced that the EC would grant BiH candidate status for EU membership, the news arrived that the Football Association canceled the match with Russia<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> BiH agreed a friendly match with Russia, fierce reactions are coming. <https://www.hercegovina.info/sport/nogomet/bih-dogovorila-prijateljsku-utakmicu-s-rusijom-stizu-zestoke-reakcije/206148/>

<sup>2</sup>The match against Russia or what BiH's policy would look like if foreign policy was controlled by SNSD and HDZ

<https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/utakmica-protiv-rusije-ili-kako-bi-izgledala-politika-bih-da-vanjska-politiku-kontrolisu-snsd-i-hdz/220913041>

<sup>3</sup> The Football Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina abandons the meeting with Russia, a new rival is agreed upon at the same time.



In the arranging the football match with Russia, Croatian cadres in the NS, otherwise close to the Croatian Democratic Union of BiH (HDZ BiH), sided with Dodik. The position of the biggest Croatian party in BiH in the entire context of Ukraine conflict, remains quite unclear. On the one hand, high officials of this party appear under the label of *bearers of European values*, which ultimately means that Croats are a *little more European than Bosniaks and Serbs*. Croatia in which the HDZ controls government supports Ukraine and the position of the EU *vis-à-vis* Russia, but the president of the Republic of Croatia Zoran Milanović has a different position. He tries to balance but with making a whole series of diplomatic gaffes, questionable moves and, to say the least, colorful vocabulary.<sup>1</sup> HDZ BiH also tries to balance between these two positions of official Zagreb, between the general position of Zagreb which follows the EU mainstream, and narrower, local interests where they develop strategic relations with Dodik and against the politics from Sarajevo represented by, among the others, Džaferović and Komšić. In this political fight, HDZ counts on the support of Dodik (which they have!), but indirectly also of Russia, whose ambassador to BiH has on several occasions supported the political positions from which the HDZ of BiH stands. Therefore, HDZ cadres will not say much about the situation in Ukraine, so their non-participation in the foreign policy of BiH is even suitable for them in this respect<sup>2</sup>.

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<https://www.klix.ba/sport/nogomet/nogometni-savez-bih-odustaje-od-susreta-s-rusijom-dogovara-se-novi-rival-u-istom-terminu/221014075>

<sup>1</sup> One current article about Milanović's foreign policy wrote a Croatian journalist originally from BiH: Milanović had no time for Pelosi, but he did for Bećarfest in Babina Greda. <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/milanovic-nije-imaovremena-za-sastanak-s-pelosi-ali-uvijek-ima-vremena-za-dodika/2406530.aspx>

<sup>2</sup>More on this topic see here:

After the HDZ refused to condemn Russia yesterday, Čović appeared today with the Ukrainian flag. <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/nakon-sto-je-hdz-jucer-odbio-osuditi-rusiju-covic-se-danas-pojavio-s-ukrajinskom-zastavom/220325078>

This “soccer diplomacy” can be seen as a response to the diplomatic moves made since February by the members of the BiH Presidency Komšić and Džaferović, and part of the diplomatic-consular network appointed by them. Thus, at the General Assembly of the United Nations, BiH condemned Russia's "attempted illegal annexation" of four partially occupied regions in Ukraine and called on all countries not to recognize that move, thereby strengthening Moscow's diplomatic international isolation. BiH was among the countries that voted "for" the resolution demanding that Russia cancel the annexation of four Ukrainian regions<sup>1</sup>.

The war in Ukraine is the most vivid and vivid, but not the only, example of the functioning of foreign policy in BiH<sup>2</sup>. The State Presidency is responsible for the foreign policy of BiH, whose members from among the three constituent nations should make decisions by consensus. This was occasionally the practice in some previous mandates, but not in previous one with Komšić and Džaferović at one side, and Dodik at another. Now

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The Russian ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina supported HDZ's "constituency concept". <https://nova.rs/vesti/svet/ruski-ambasador-u-bih-podrzao-hdz-ov-koncept-konstitutivnosti/>

Komšić told Kalabuhov to declare himself the head of HDZ's election staff. <https://dnevni.ba/politika/komsic-kalabuhovu-porucio-da-se-proglasi-za-sefa-izbornog-stozera-hdz-a/>

<sup>1</sup>Bosnia and Herzegovina also condemned the Russian annexation of Ukraine at the UN General Assembly

<https://ba.n1info.com/svijet/i-bih-na-generalnoj-skupstini-un-a-osudila-rusku-aneksiju-ukrajine/>

<sup>2</sup> We have already written about the key elements of BiH foreign policy here. BiH Foreign Policy: Where are the "friends" and "key allies"? <https://china-cee.eu/2022/03/08/bosnia-herzegovina-external-relations-briefing-bih-foreign-policy-where-are-the-friends-and-key-allies/>

his most loyal associate, Ms. Željka Cvijanović, was elected to the Presidency of BiH, so it is certain that her views on the BiH Presidency will not deviate from the ones of Mr Dodik. The other two members of the Presidency, Denis Bećirović and Komšić again, will follow the policies of the European Union and NATO, so the ratio in the Presidency in many issues, including Ukraine war remains 2:1<sup>1</sup>.

Distinguished professors and former BiH diplomats also spoke about the problems of BiH foreign policy. Professor for international relations in London, Sarajevo-born Neven Anđelić, believes that the problem in general is that the broad coalition, which creates and holds power in BiH, has never tried to find a compromise and consensus on key policy issues, both external and internal<sup>2</sup>. The former BiH ambassador to India, Sabit Subašić, expresses a similar position, considering that BiH, in fact, has ethnic diplomacy linked to certain political structures. "No ethnic group gets anything with these diplomacy, it's just a misfortune for the state of BiH. This has a catastrophic effect on our diplomatic position in the world," he says<sup>3</sup>. His colleague Emir Hadžikadunić, who as ambassador represented BiH in Iran and Malaysia, places BiH in a regional context, in which the states from the immediate environment of BiH are subordinated to the gravitational field of the European or Euro-Atlantic system. This former ambassador notes that the Balkans are not so close to the Russian

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<sup>1</sup>Analysis by DW: What will be the position of the new convocation of the BiH Presidency on the war in Ukraine.

<https://radiosarajevo.ba/vijesti/bosna-i-hercegovina/analiza-dw-kakav-ce-biti-stav-novog-saziva-predsjednistva-bih-o-ratu-u-ukrajini/471527>

<sup>2</sup> Does BiH have a foreign policy? - Read more at: <https://bljesak.info/vijesti/politika/ima-li-bih-vanjsku-politiku/392395>

<sup>3</sup> BiH's diplomacy driven by the interests of political parties. <https://federalna.ba/bh-diplomatija-vodena-interesima-politikih-stranaka-bez-jasne-vanjske-politike-womry>

Federationin as much as it shares the fate of a much larger system of collective security with which it is physically surrounded. "In a practical sense, this means that NATO can bring under control every regional crisis from Macedonia, through Kosovo and Montenegro to BiH. Regional states also affirm the European principles of pluralism, liberal democracy or the rule of law, even if only nominally. They also achieve the largest trade exchange between themselves and with EU members, which strengthens their economic interdependence and restrains the psychology of fear", writes Hadžikadunić in a recent article on this topic<sup>1</sup>.

What do the citizens say? They would go to the EU, where they actually go, without waiting for the state: 77.4 percent of respondents would vote for joining the EU if a referendum were to be held, according to a public opinion survey conducted by the Directorate for European Integration (DEI) of the Council of Ministers (CoM). The DEI announcement specifies that this survey was conducted in August and that it related to support for EU accession, and topics related to European integration that are of interest to the citizens of BiH. Joining the EU would be supported by 90.1 percent of respondents from the Federation of BiH (FBiH), 54.5 percent from RS, and 73.8 percent from Brcko District<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> BiH foreign policy - How to proceed after the general elections (I). <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/opinions/2022/10/10/vanjska-politika-bosne-i-hercegovine-strateska-promisljanja-i-kako-dalje-poslije-opcih-izbora-i>

<sup>2</sup>A Survey showed that almost Eighty Percent of the Respondents would vote for EU Membership

<https://sarajevotimes.com/a-survey-showed-that-almost-eighty-percent-of-the-respondents-would-vote-for-eu-membership/>

## Conclusion

When all of the above is considered, the question arises as to whether BiH essentially had a foreign policy?

In the past period, BiH was bypassed in a wide circle by almost all-important political players and statesmen on the international stage, and apparently only those who had to come. The visit of Pope Francis and German Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2015 are the last visits of significant and influential figures on the international scene<sup>1</sup>.

And with regard to such an important topic as the conflict in Ukraine, BiH can not create a unified position. However, this foreign policy indeterminacy is a consequence of internal political conflicts in which Sarajevo and parties based in the capital (Bosniak and multi-ethnic) Euro-Atlantic integrations (path towards membership in EU and NATO) use to harm the pro-Russian policy of Milorad Dodik, who is proving to be one of Vladimir Putin's most loyal partners outside of Russia, much more than anyone in Belgrade<sup>2</sup>. The third party, the conservative Croats led by Dragan Čović and gathered in the HDZ, try to maintain a pro-EU course of support for Ukraine, but they do so rarely and only in case of extreme emergency, at the same time trying not to resent Putin and their political partner Dodik. All this means that no one seriously counts on BiH for foreign policy support, but that BiH will continue to be a training ground for the confrontation of foreign political powers of other countries.

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<sup>1</sup> BiH (did not) win: Dodik blocked, Turković worked on "her" hand. <https://okanal.oslobodjenje.ba/okanal/vijesti/bih-ni-je-pobijedila-dodik-blokirao-turkovic-radila-na-svoju-ruku-801846>

<sup>2</sup> In some scenarios, this could be a problem for Dodik himself, but that is the subject of a separate text.



# **Bulgaria Strengthens Its Ally Commitments to NATO and the US**

**Evgeniy Kandilarov**

## **Summary**

The geopolitical orientation of Bulgaria is clearly and categorically defined by Bulgaria's membership in the EU and NATO. However, what has happened in the last six months, after the start of Russia's war against Ukraine, is even more categorical support by Bulgaria to the geopolitical positions and actions of the USA and NATO, as well as to the positions of the EU regarding Russia. Moreover, Bulgaria's actions to expel a record number of Russian diplomats from the country a few months ago, as well as the harsh anti-Russian political positions of former Prime Minister Kiril Petkov, as well as most of the country's political parties, clearly show the firm position of Bulgaria against Russia in the existing geopolitical situation. At the same time, the Bulgarian government is taking increasingly confident and decisive steps to highlight its loyal allied position towards NATO and its geopolitical goals in the South East European region.

Bulgaria made its geopolitical choice long time ago by becoming a full member of NATO and the European Union. All the foreign policy actions of the country are largely, if not predetermined, at least strongly influenced by the positions and actions of these two political organizations. Nevertheless, so far all Bulgarian governments have always tried to balance the foreign policy by maintaining good relations with the Russian Federation. The reasons for this are the strong historical and cultural ties between Bulgaria and Russia, as well as Bulgaria's almost complete dependence on the import of Russian energy raw materials. Until a few

months ago, Bulgaria imported nearly 90% of its natural gas from the Russian company Gazprom. Bulgarian only oil refinery, the Russian-controlled company Lukoil, operates exclusively with Russian oil. At the same time, the two 1,000-megawatt nuclear reactors of the Bulgarian Kozloduy NPP, which provide about 40% of the electricity needed in the country, are powered by Russian nuclear fuel.

However, the beginning of Russia's war against Ukraine completely changed the seemingly balanced foreign policy position of Bulgaria vis-à-vis the Russian Federation. In the last few months, Bulgaria has taken a series of steps in the direction of hardening its policy against Russia and, on the other hand, demonstrating loyalty and cooperation with the US, its NATO allies as well as with its EU partners.

### **Strengthening Bulgaria's commitments to NATO**

Only in the months following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, several military exercises were held in Bulgaria, specifically related to the repulsion of sea landings and the defense of the coastal zone. These are public and officially announced events but most probably the actual number of these military exercises is larger but it is military secret information.

Up to that moment, over the years, Bulgaria's membership in NATO consisted mainly of protocol meetings, a small number of military exercises, disputes about the exact amount of the country's military budget as a percentage of GDP, the occasional arrival of up to 250 American soldiers, occasionally some visits by an American or European general.

However, this year - 18 years after its entrance in the Alliance in 2004, Bulgaria demonstrated its full commitment to its NATO membership, with the creation of a battalion battle group on its territory, in which the forces of at least 5 other NATO member states will participate.



In April this battle group conducted its first public exercise with an American company's Stryker armored vehicles. This happened at the Novo Selo training ground in front of the chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Admiral Robert Bauer.<sup>1</sup>

The battle group was approved in March by NATO as a structure of the Eastern Flank of the Alliance. It is one of a total of four new military formations that had to be deployed on this flank.

It gradually became clear that the so-called a Bulgarian group will be practically under the leadership of Italy and it will involve the largest number of Italian military personnel, who are gradually already relocating to Bulgaria.<sup>2</sup>

There are already 150 American military personnel on Bulgarian territory with Stryker armored combat vehicles, which were transferred from Germany. Great Britain sent militaries from the Royal Irish Regiment to the British Army. Greece has joined NATO's multinational battle group in Bulgaria with an anti-tank platoon, Albania and Montenegro are expected to send smaller units, and Turkey is expected to participate in the structure from its territory.

In practice, it is a completely independent unit that will have equipment that will allow it to deploy very quickly and perform various tasks.

Recently, the highest Bulgarian military officer - the head of state defense, Admiral Emil Eftimov, announced that the group will even be supplemented with drones and means of anti-tank and air defense. It will also have an independent intelligence division.

It was the battle group and its structuring that led to a series of important visits to Bulgaria by the US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, the commander of the NATO Land Command, Lt. Gen. Roger Cloutier, the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.segabg.com/node/213094>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.mod.bg/bg/news.php?&fn\\_page=1](https://www.mod.bg/bg/news.php?&fn_page=1)

head of the Alliance's military committee Admiral Robert Bauer, the commander of the NATO Naval Command Vice Admiral Keith Blunt.

Additionally, in the middle of August, the US mission to NATO surprisingly announced that the 101st Airborne Division, known as the Screaming Eagles, was returning to Europe and that nearly 2,400 of its most elite troops would be deployed to Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. According to the US, they are coming "to protect NATO's eastern flank, reassure our allies and deter our adversaries".<sup>1</sup> The announcement came days after the commander of the US Ground Forces in Europe, General Darryl Williams, visited Bulgaria. He discussed issues related to the combat group stationed in the country with the Bulgarian military leadership.<sup>2</sup>

It is more than obvious that the USA and NATO are mainly interested in the eastern part of Bulgaria, using most often the base in Novo Selo, the airport in Bezmer, where Lloyd Austin landed upon his arrival and the Air Force base in Graf Ignatievo, where in the future Bulgarian F-16 fighter jets will be deployed. Also to the east is city of Varna, which is increasingly emerging as a favorite for a maritime coordination center as part of the NATO force structure on the Eastern flank of the Alliance.

Another clear sign of Bulgaria's more serious commitment to the USA and NATO is the announce of the US Embassy in Bulgaria on October 7, 2022 that the Congress of the United States has approved nearly \$40 million in additional Foreign Military Financing for Bulgaria. According to the Embassy information this funding is intended to assist in modernizing Bulgaria's military, bolstering NATO collective defense efforts in the region, and building capabilities and interoperability in Bulgaria to deter

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<sup>1</sup> <https://eurasianimes.com/1st-time-in-80-years-us-army-deploys-its-screaming-eagles-ukraine/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.novinite.com/articles/216284/American+Soldiers+are+coming+to+Bulgaria+to+Defend+NATO%27s+Eastern+Flank>

and defend against the increased threats to the Alliance in a critical region.

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The US Diplomatic Mission in Bulgaria underlined that so far Bulgaria has provided valuable humanitarian support to Ukraine in the face of Russia's full-scale invasion and has contributed greatly to collective defense by hosting a multi-national NATO battlegroup that is an important part of the Alliance's deterrence and defense posture on its eastern flank. Bulgaria has also provided refuge to tens of thousands of displaced Ukrainians.<sup>2</sup>

U.S. Ambassador to Bulgaria Herro Mustafa stated, "The United States and Bulgaria are strategic security partners, and we are stronger together. This new funding will speed key modernization efforts for the Bulgarian military, which are crucial to the NATO Alliance goals of increased interoperability and enhanced collective security."<sup>3</sup>

This Foreign Military Financing for Bulgaria is part of a comprehensive assistance package, announced by Secretary Blinken on September 8, to bolster the security of Ukraine and 17 of its neighbors, including Bulgaria, which are potentially at risk of future Russian aggression.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, this month Bulgaria and 13 other NATO member states, as well as Finland, which is about to join the Alliance, signed a declaration of intent to create a "European Air Shield Initiative".<sup>5</sup>

The German-led initiative envisages the countries participating in the joint acquisition of Arrow 3 and Patriot air defense systems.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://bg.usembassy.gov/us-announces-new-fmf-to-support-bg-military-modernization-10-07-2022/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> <https://bg.usembassy.gov/us-announces-new-fmf-to-support-bg-military-modernization-10-07-2022/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.world-today-news.com/and-bulgaria-enters-the-nato-joint-air-defense-dome/>

The signing ceremony took place at NATO headquarters in Brussels on October 13. In addition to Germany and Bulgaria, Great Britain, Slovakia, Norway, Latvia, Hungary, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Romania and Slovenia participate in the project.

## **Conclusion**

Bulgaria's actions in the direction of strengthening the country's allied commitments to the USA and NATO directed against Russia are more than clear. At the same time, however, at this moment Bulgaria is one of the few countries in the EU, which refrains from directly supporting Ukraine with weapons, due to fears of involving the country in the military conflict.

At the beginning of May, the 47th National Assembly decided that it would not make direct deliveries of armaments and military equipment to Ukraine, but would repair its military machines. In response, Russia revoked the licenses of two Bulgarian aircraft repair plants.

Already in the first days of the current 48th National Assembly, the parties "Democratic Bulgaria" and GERB submitted draft resolutions on the provision of military aid to Ukraine, but they have not yet been voted on, as the constitution of the parliament has been delayed due to the difficult election of the speaker and members of the standing committees.

So far, the political parties GERB, "We continue the change", "Movement for Rights and Freedoms" and "Democratic Bulgaria" have declared support for giving arms to Ukraine, while the nationalist party "Revival", the Bulgarian Socialist Party and the newly formed party "Bulgarian Rise" are against it. President Rumen Radev also disagrees, repeating his position that this means getting involved in the war that Russia is waging against Ukraine.

At the beginning of October, the Bulgarian head of state Rumen Radev did not join the initiative of nine presidents of countries from Central and

Eastern Europe, who stood in a joint declaration in support of Ukraine and its membership in NATO. Radev explained his position with the argument that this could lead to a NATO-Russia war and eventually emphasized that he will work against the involvement of Bulgaria in the war.

# **The Diplomatic Choices of Political Actors in Croatia Amid the War in Ukraine**

**Valentino Petrović**

## **Summary**

This article discusses diplomatic choices of political actors in Croatia in light of the current events on the East, that is, the War in Ukraine. The article touches upon the differences in articulating the main ideas from the position of both heads of the executive, the Prime Minister and the President. While the Government tries to fully harmonize with the position of the European Union (EU), the President has acted much more independent which drew attention from foreign press. In its last part, the article will present how diplomatic choices can be conditioned by other factors, such as energy policy or electoral system.

## **Introduction**

Since the inception of the War in Ukraine, the diplomatic and rhetoric support of the Western allies, in the context of this article, the European Union (EU) and its members states, as well as the NATO, towards Ukraine was safe-to-say unanimous. Taking into account the gravity of situation currently unfolding on the East, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia was first of such kind in many years that generated homogeneity among Western countries, but it was also a situation that, one can argue, brought back glimpses of the pre-1990s rhetoric that was based on the duality between the West and the East, and to some extent even mutual hostility, but this time towards and in-between their political leaders. However, one must be careful when using the terms such as “duality”, “hostility”, and the “West and East” dichotomy because they require precise conceptualization before they are put to use. Hence, the diplomacy is there to alleviate any

misunderstandings and to allow countries and actors to take measures that would shed light on their position without being provoked to use forcible means.

### **Diplomatic Choices Amid the War in Ukraine**

When it comes to Croatia, the country took a firm stance to support Ukraine in the conflict with Russia; however, the diplomatic choices and rhetorical figures of political actors, whether political leaders or representatives of parliament, within the country are differing. Therefore, they could be misunderstood or misinterpreted deliberately or by chance. In February 2022, when the war broke out, the Croatian Government, led by Prime Minister Andrej Plenković, expressed complete solidarity with the Ukrainian people and soldiers defending the country, emphasizing that Croatia knows what it is like to be the victim of military aggression, a line which eventually found its place during every speech or public appearance of either Prime Minister or government officials. Furthermore, following the European-wide campaign to grant Ukraine a special status within the EU, Croatia supported the idea of the so-called accelerated process of Ukrainian accession to the EU even though there were five other countries waiting in line that have been granted the candidate status in the years prior. In chronological order of the year when they became candidates, those countries are: Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania. Out of the five countries, only with two the accession negotiations were opened before the War in Ukraine; with Montenegro in 2012 and Serbia in 2014. Turkey has opened accession negotiations in 2005, but are now considered frozen due to domestic issues related to deterioration of human rights and rule of law.

As for the political leaders, Croatian President Zoran Milanović joined the Government in supporting the Ukrainian membership in the EU or to put it more precise, to award the country with candidate status. However, he introduced the idea of granting the status to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and

opening of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, an ongoing issue that has been debated ever since French President Emmanuel Macron refused to approve the opening of accession negotiations with the two countries back in October 2019. As reported by the President's office, Milanović "stated his position that everything must be done to prevent the spread of the crisis to the Western Balkans, to our neighborhood and to avoid any possible threat not only to our neighboring countries but also to the Republic of Croatia. It is in Croatia's strategic and national interest that the countries of Southeast Europe [...] become members of the EU as soon as possible"<sup>1</sup>. The President further pointed out that he expects the Government to follow him in this endeavor, with Ukrainian candidacy being conditioned on the very same issue regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially taking into consideration the economic, security and social circumstances surrounding the latter country<sup>2</sup>.

## **Euro Atlantic Orientation in Foreign Policy**

The diplomatic choices of the representatives of the Government, on the other hand, were somewhat different compared to those of the President. Apart from underlining continuous support to Ukraine since the beginning of the war, Croatian Government signed a joint Declaration on Ukraine's European perspective during early December 2021 when Prime Minister

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<sup>1</sup> Predsjednik.hr. 2022. Predsjednik Milanović podržava kandidaturu Ukrajine za članstvo u EU, predlaže status kandidata za članstvo za Bosnu i Hercegovinu i Kosovo te početak pregovora s Albanijom i Sjevernom Makedonijom <https://www.predsjudnik.hr/vijesti/predsjudnik-milanovic-podrzava-kandidaturu-ukrajine-za-clanstvo-u-eu-predlaze-status-kandidata-za-clanstvo-za-bosnu-i-hercegovinu-i-kosovo-te-pocetak-pregovora-s-albanijom-i-sjevernom-makedonijom/>.

<sup>2</sup> Pavičić, Milan. 2022. Milanović: 'Očekujem da Plenković uvjetuje davanje statusa kandidata Ukrajini za EU. BiH to mora postati istog dana' Telegram.hr <https://www.telegram.hr/politika-kriminal/milanovic-ocekujem-da-plenkovic-uvjetuje-davanje-statusa-kandidata-ukrajini-za-eu-bih-to-mora-postati-istog-dana/>.



Plenković was in official visit in Ukraine, a document which before Croatia was signed by five other countries, including three Baltic states, Poland and Slovakia. While advocating for Ukrainian membership in the EU, the Government puts a large emphasis on the fact that Ukraine was one of the first countries that recognized Croatia in 1991; therefore, the relations between the countries have been established on the firm grounds, and Croatia aims to use its experience during the EU accession negotiations to assist Ukraine in its European path. Speaking of the European path, much of the choices the Croatian Government has made are reflection of its Euro Atlantic orientation, especially since Andrej Plenković took office in 2016. In 2000s, the country's most important foreign policy objective was the NATO and EU membership. The latter was burdened by hardships in reforming domestic institutions, taking into account that the EU introduced a new chapter that related to judiciary and fundamental rights (Chapter 23). Once it succeeded on both fronts, NATO in 2009 and EU in 2013, the country sought to position itself among Western allies; however, one can argue that only recently the prevailing discourse has become that the country needs to turn its attention to neighborhood, that is, to other Western Balkans countries aiming to join the EU.

### **Diplomacy Toward Western Balkans**

In 2020, Croatia took charge over the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union; thus, achieving additional milestone and adding an important reference in its resume, while 2023 is reserved for EURO introduction and entering the Schengen area. But when it comes to diplomatic choices towards other Western Balkans countries, the situation has been conditioned by numerous other factors, such as energy policy with Serbia or electoral system with Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the former case, the situation between the two countries once again became “edgy” after the European Commission (EC) approved a new sanction package towards Russia which prohibits import of Russian crude oil to the EU by maritime routes; however, there were suggestions that Serbia could be excluded from

this decision, thus, continue using the existing transit passages of Russian crude oil through Omišalj, Croatia, to the city of Pančevo. This decision was made back in June 2022. But in October, at the EU summit, Serbia's exclusion was withdrawn, as Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić claims, on the initiative of Croatia, while Croatian Prime Minister Plenković argues that it was not the position of Croatia; rather, the position of the EU with Serbia being free to use any crude oil through Croatian pipeline system except that from Russia<sup>1</sup>. In the latter case, the issue of electoral representation of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been at the spotlight for some time now. Here, both heads of the executive, Prime Minister Plenković and President Milanović, in principle share their position; however, as Berto Šalaj, the professor of Political Science claims, they use different means to articulate their understanding of the problem<sup>2</sup>.

## Conclusion

All in all, the diplomatic choices of Croatia in the last several years, and especially since the outbreak of the War in Ukraine, was heavily dependent on the position of the EU, which is reasonable to understand, at least from the position of the Government, as Croatia is the youngest member state and still needs to fully integrate with the EU-related organizations. Therefore, not all foreign policy objectives have been realized and the country needs to show its willingness to follow the wider narrative shared between the Western allies. One could understand this as the position of the Government. On the other hand, there are actors who are not completely comfortable with such level of conformity, but their diplomatic range of

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<sup>1</sup> Stojanović, Milica. 2022. Serbia Welcomes EU Delay to Decision on Russian Oil Ban Exemption. [Balkaninsight.com](https://balkaninsight.com/2022/10/07/serbia-welcomes-eu-delay-to-decision-on-russian-oil-ban-exemption/)  
<https://balkaninsight.com/2022/10/07/serbia-welcomes-eu-delay-to-decision-on-russian-oil-ban-exemption/>.

<sup>2</sup> N1info.hr. 2022. Politolog otkrio u čemu se slažu, a u čemu razlikuju Milanović i Plenković <https://n1info.hr/video/newsroom/politolog-otkrio-u-cemu-se-slažu-a-u-cemu-razlikuju-milanovic-i-plenkovic-2/>.

motion is quite narrow; thus, they are not considered relevant enough to represent the interests of the country.

# **Czech Foreign Policy Choices under the New Circumstances**

**Ladislav Zemánek**

## **Summary**

The Czech foreign policy, its character, goals and ideological background, have undergone a substantial revision based on the revival of idealism, moralism and value absolutism. Pragmatic choices are now acceptable only if these are in accordance with the goal of the global expansion of the liberal democratic model and „rules-based“ order. The briefing analyses the practical consequences of this revisionism in the case of policy towards Russia, Ukraine and China. It contrasts with real multilateralism, even though certain positive features and potential can be found in the project of the European Political Community (EPC) whose first summit took place in Prague in October 2022.

## **Introduction**

The foreign policy of the Czech Republic has been affected by three major factors: (1) the outburst of the Second Cold War including the encirclement and containment of China and Russia, and expansion of discourse based on the global clash between “democracies” and “autocracies”; (2) the conflict in Ukraine which has accelerated internal de-Russification and brought about a transition to postliberalism qua liberal authoritarianism; (3) the change of ruling cabinets at the end of 2021 which enabled the implementation of the revisionist policy in relation to both China and Russia. The combination of external and internal circumstances has resulted in a comprehensive restructuring of the Czech foreign policy under the new situation.

## **Russia**

The Czech Republic has belonged to the “hawks” in relation to Russia since the very beginning of the current stage of the conflict over Ukraine. The hardline position coincides with the cabinet’s strategic goal of the revision of relations with Russia as well as China. The Government has been in favour of massive military support for Kiev, the introduction of a strict sanction regime against Moscow and Russian nationals, launching, at the same time, an internal de-Russification policy with the aim to eliminate the role and influence of Russian subjects in the Czech Republic, be they state or private, economic or cultural. The incumbent ruling coalition has seemingly succeeded in carrying out a long-term anti-Russian agenda promoted by a part of political elites, security bodies and NGOs. I summed up the genesis and evolution of the de-Russification programme in the Valdai Discussion Club in April 2022, arriving at a conclusion that the Czech Republic had become a “laboratory” of the de-Russification which made the Czech case relevant for comparative analyses of the analogous processes in other countries.<sup>1</sup>

Embracing the US discourse on a global clash between “democracies” and “autocracies”, hardliners in the Czech Government have made use of the Ukrainian crisis to make the country one of the leaders in the field of global enforcement of the Western paradigm of human rights and liberal democracy. It has replaced Russia in the United Nations Human Rights Council and has started to support opposition forces in Russia, Belarus as well as China. Over the last months, Prague was a place where several gatherings of separatists and liberal democrats from these countries were held. The high political representatives maintain close relations with opposition leaders including the so-called Central Tibetan Administration, the World Uyghur Congress, the Government of the Republic of China and the Coordination Council (Belarus). Moreover, the Czech state authorities cover the military training of the so-called Association of Security Forces of Belarus (BYPOL) whose principal goal is to overthrow President

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<sup>1</sup> Zemanek, L. (2022, April 19). *De-Russification and 'Liberal Authoritarianism': The Czech Choice*. Valdai Discussion Club. <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/de-russification-and-liberal-authoritarianism/>

Alexander Lukashenko.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, national authorities enable the Czech citizens to join the Ukrainian army including the cooperation with and training of the Azov Battalion.<sup>2</sup>

## Ukraine

The radical policy conducted by the Czech political elites corresponds with the position adopted by Poland and the Baltic states. These countries played an essential role in the formulation of the EU policy towards the Ukrainian conflict and Russia, taking the initiative instead of Germany or France. The Czech Republic thus contributed to the escalation of the conflict which plays into the US' hands. Prime Minister Petr Fiala visited Kiev within a pioneering Czech-Polish-Slovenian mission in March which launched a series of similar visits from Western countries. Prague strongly advocates the incorporation of Ukraine into both the EU and NATO. According to the official data of the Ministry of Defence, the Czech side provided Kiev with military equipment worth 4.2 billion CZK (171.5 million EUR) as of the beginning of October.<sup>3</sup> The Czech Republic has voiced its interest to participate in the “post-war recovery of the liberated territories” with a focus on Dnepropetrovsk Oblast, the main industrial region in Ukraine. Prague has announced that a representative office will be opened in Dnepr. According to the plans, the Czech subjects are to be engaged in the field of energy, transport infrastructure, and reconstruction of schools and hospitals. It is not without interest that the energy area includes the Zaporozhskaia

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<sup>1</sup> Zemanek, L. (2022, October 04). *Liberal Revisionism in International Practice: The Czech-Chinese Relations*. Valdai Discussion Club. <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/liberal-revisionism-in-international-practice/>

<sup>2</sup> Klicperová, L., Kutilová, M. (2022, September 22). *Češi cvičí Ukrajince. I ty z pluku Azov*. Novinky.cz. <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-cesi-cvici-ukrajince-i-ty-z-pluku-azov-40409190>

<sup>3</sup> *Česká vláda navštíví na konci října Kyjev, jednat bude o dopadech ruské agrese i obnově Ukrajiny* (2022, October 07). iROZHLAS. [https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/vlada-petra-fialy-ukrajina-ministri-ceske-predsednictvi-eu-2022\\_2210071523\\_ara](https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/vlada-petra-fialy-ukrajina-ministri-ceske-predsednictvi-eu-2022_2210071523_ara)

Nuclear Power Plant, Europe's largest nuclear power facility, which was, however, turned into a property of the Russian Federation in October.<sup>1</sup>

Concurrently, the Czech cabinet approved an updated recovery plan officially in mid-October. Being elaborated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Industry and Trade, it consists of two parts: (1) financial assistance through humanitarian programmes amounting to 1.245 billion CZK (50.1 million EUR); (2) recovery business activities of private Czech enterprises which will be subsidised from the state budget up to 255 million CZK (10.5 million EUR) over the three consecutive years.<sup>2</sup> This financial package, nevertheless, does not include further military support and other alternative financial transfers. Under the Czech presidency, the summit of foreign ministers from the EU countries decided to expand the military supplies to Kiev including the establishment of the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM Ukraine) for at least two years.<sup>3</sup> Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Lipavský has also actively pursued the introduction of sanctions against Iran for the latter's alleged support of the Russian military operation in Ukraine. While pouring fuel on the fire and deepening the conflict in Ukraine, the EU under the Czech presidency together with the US and Britain have sought to make neutral countries take sides, penalising those who favour a peaceful settlement as soon as possible.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Šídlová, T. (2022, September 19). *Česko otevře nový úřad na východě Ukrajiny. Kvůli válečným zakázkám.* Seznam Zprávy. <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/domaci-cesko-otevire-novy-urad-na-vychode-ukrajiny-kvuli-valecnym-zakazkam-214613>

<sup>2</sup> *Vláda schválila nový strategický plán společné zemědělské politiky, projednala i plán pomoci při poválečné obnově Ukrajiny* (2022, October 12). Vláda České republiky. <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/vlada-schvalila-novy-strategicky-plan-spolecne-zemedelske-politiky--projednala-i-plan-pomoci-pri-povalecne-obnove-ukrajiny-199877/>

<sup>3</sup> *European Union Assistance Mission Ukraine (EUMAM)* (2022, October 17). European Union External Action. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-union-assistance-mission-ukraine-eumam\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-union-assistance-mission-ukraine-eumam_en)

<sup>4</sup> *Ukraine: EU sanctions three individuals and one entity in relation to the use of Iranian drones in Russian aggression* (2022, October 20). <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/10/20/ukraine-eu-sanctions-three-individuals-and-one-entity-in-relation-to-the-use-of-iranian-drones-in-russian-aggression/>

## Multilateralism

The Czech Republic formally adheres to the principle of multilateralism in international politics in line with the UN and EU. However, it has adopted the EU discourse in which multilateralism is based on “rules” and “EU interests and values”. The official EU concept is called a “renewed rules-based multilateralism fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. Even though such a multilateralism is presented as inclusive and diverse, the opposite is true for it excludes “autocracies” and the like.<sup>1</sup> Within the framework of multilateralism can the initiative of the European Political Community (EPC) be situated. The idea was proposed by French President Emmanuel Macron in May, being presented at the European Council a month later. It is to serve for more effective coordination among European countries regardless of their relations with the EU, thus promoting political dialogue and cooperation.<sup>2</sup> The platform can play a positive role in developing an autonomous position of Europe within the emerging polycentric order. Such a move is unthinkable without detachment from the US. That is why the decision not to include Washington in the EPC increases its potential and prospective long-term benefits. All the more that the EPC, in contrast, include Türkiye as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan or Georgia. Since it is not meant to create any institutional mechanisms and formalised structures, it need not be perceived as a hostile project *in essence* by Russia, even though under the current circumstances both Russia and Belarus are not invited to participate. It poses the main problem and challenge because Russia as a Eurasian major power is a part of Europe and her national interests and security concerns must be taken into consideration if Europe wants to restore peace on its own territory. Until the EU does not oblige Russia’s

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<sup>1</sup> *A renewed multilateralism fit for the 21st century: the EU's agenda* (2021, February 17). European Commission.

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_21\\_622](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_622)

<sup>2</sup> *Conclusions of European Council, 23 and 24 June 2022* (2022, June 23). French Presidency of the Council of the European Union. <https://presidence-francaise.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/conclusions-of-european-council-23-june/>



rational security demands, the continent will be torn by conflicts and wars. This fact was recognised by the leading European statesmen of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Charles de Gaulle or Willy Brandt.

The first summit of the EPC was held in Prague on October 6–7. Up to 44 political representatives were allowed to address any relevant issues. The leeway was strengthened by the absence of a joint statement and official conclusions, as well as by different formats of discussions. At the sidelines of the summit, an important meeting between the Armenian Prime Minister and Azerbaijani President was held in the presence of the French President and European Council President. Both sides in strife agreed on a deployment of an EU “civilian mission” to assist in the delineation of borders.<sup>1</sup> The Armenian-Azerbaijani provisional settlement reached in Prague thus followed the so-called Prague process, a series of negotiations between 2002 and 2007 over Nagorno-Karabakh.

## **Conclusion**

The Czech Republic is increasingly interested in non-Western regions including Indo-Pacific and Africa. In September, the Government approved strategic documents regarding both regions. It coincides with the proclaimed stress on multilateralism. However, the strategies as well as the concept of multilateralism are significantly affected by confrontational liberal democratic discourse whose aim is to subject international relations to geopolitics-driven security interests, which narrows the possibilities of win-win cooperation throughout the world. Hence, both Indo-Pacific and Africa are considered battlefields where a war between “democracies” and “autocracies” are going on. Whereas the interest in Indo-Pacific is motivated predominantly by concerns about China’s expansion, Africa is

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<sup>1</sup> Brzozowski, A. (2022, October 07). *Prague talks raise hopes for Armenia-Azerbaijan normalisation process*. Euractiv. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/prague-meeting-raises-hopes-for-armenia-azerbaijan-normalisation-process/>

conceptualised in terms of confronting Russia's influence and making African countries support Western liberal democracies.

# **Diplomatic Choices of Greece under the New Geopolitical Situation**

**Evelyn Karakatsani**

## **Summary**

The briefing presents the diplomatic choices of Greece following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Greece has aligned its policies with the EU and NATO. The government has openly agreed with the sanctions taken by the EU against Russia and further sent humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine. In parallel, it has cultivated its relationship with the US and other neighboring countries. However, Greek-Turkish relations are at a low point and channels of communication between the two countries are being inactive.

## **Introduction**

Greek-Turkish relations are a priority in the agenda of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs for decades. Throughout these years Turkish claims against the sovereignty and the sovereign rights of Greece have resulted in the deterioration of the relationship. Also, the Cypriot issue constantly remains a thorn. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the unprecedented violation of the sovereignty of a country in the European continent, the western tolerance towards revisionism has decreased. Greece exposes Turkey's provocative actions in the Aegean Sea and calls on Turkey to find a solution through diplomacy and dialogue under International Law. However, the current low point of the relationship does not permit hopes for Athens and Ankara to reach a modus vivendi. As long as channels of dialogue are not active or at least do not efficiently function the risk for an escalation seems likely.

## **The Greek response**

Greece historically enjoyed good external relations with Russia. Both countries shared strong ties of friendship and shared same religion values. However, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 2022, Greece, as a member of NATO and the EU, took a clear side against the Russian actions with the Greek PM Kyriakos Mitsotaksi stating “We are the West and we belong to freedom...At the borders of Ukraine, international stability and legitimacy are being tested” and added “Equal distances from perpetrators and victims ultimately legitimize crime... And the easy (words) no to war is a wish, but it is not a policy” (1).

Under this backdrop the European Union decided to impose new sanction against Russia. The sanctions included individual restrictive measures, economic sanctions and diplomatic measures. These are further added to the already existing measures imposed on Russia following the annexation of Crimea since 2014 (2). According to a Eurobarometer survey, 40% of Greeks disagreed with the sanctions imposed by the EU to Russia, despite 51% of the responders declaring that Russia is responsible for the crisis. The polls also revealed that 53% of Greeks respondents agreed with the economic sanctions imposed on wealth Russian oligarchs and 66% declared that a distinction between Russian leadership and the Russian people should be made. Nevertheless 95% of the Greek responders stated that are in favor of providing humanitarian support to Ukraine (3).

Further to the EU sanctions, the Greek government proceeded in sending humanitarian aid to Ukraine, consisting of pharmaceutical and medical material, temporary housing items, such as tents, long-lasting food and other basic necessities (4), as well as introducing measures for the support and the protection of the fleeing Ukrainian refugees. In addition, Greece sent military aid to Ukraine. The military aid consisted mainly of rifles and portable rocket launchers. This move of the government triggered strong critic inside the country, since many believed that Greece needed to take its distance and not involve in a foreign conflict. Moreover, the decision of sending military aid, generated a response by Russia. In particular Maria Zakharova, director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation had stated that

“There was a time when Russia helped Greece achieve independence and restore its statehood, and its first governor was previously Russia’s foreign minister, but now this country’s diplomatic relations with Russia have been reduced to almost nothing” (5). It should also be mentioned that in July Russia included Greece in the list of unfriendly countries. Prior to this event Russia has expelled eight Greek diplomats from Russia. Thus, the relations of the two countries reached a new low (6).

### **Greek-Turkish relations following the Ukrainian crisis**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine resulted in the alignment of the policies of the NATO member states towards Russia. Greece is considered by the USA a close partner and key NATO ally. Due to the country’s location at the crossroads of Western Balkans, North Africa and Middle East, as such NATO’s southern flank, makes Greece an important strategic ally. USA and Greece have signed numerous memoranda of cooperation in a variety of sectors, but most importantly concerning security cooperation as for example the Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (MDCA) which was initially signed in 1990 and updated in 2019 and again in 2021 (7).

Following the events in Ukraine, the two countries relations are closer than ever. In May 2022, the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis delivered a historic speech at the at joint session of US Congress. Mitsotakis during his speech referred to the important US role in the region and noted that “it is very important that you (USA) remain engaged and work with partners with whom you share not only common strategic priorities, but also values and a shared history”. Concerning the Russian invasion of Ukraine Mitsotakis stated that “Greece stands by Ukraine against Putin’s aggression”. It should also be mentioned that Mitsotakis stressed that “historical revisionism will not be rewarded and that there is only one way to solve disputes in today’s world and that is adherence to International Law and the ability of civilized states to sit down, discuss and resolve their differences peacefully” and added “I know you probably expect me to speak at length about our current state of relationship with

Turkey...I would only say one word on this topic: Greece is not going to be bullied by our aggressive neighbors and challenges to the sovereignty of Greece are simply unacceptable. And we will do whatever it takes to strengthen our alliances” (8). By these statements the PM indirectly and directly referred to the revisionist agenda of Turkey in the Aegean Sea.

Turkish leadership criticized the speech of the Greek PM to the Joint Session of US Congress. The Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay characterized Mitsotakis speech as “theater that was played out about Turkey” (9). In addition, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared “There’s no longer anyone called Mitsotakis in my book. I will never accept having such a meeting with him because we walk on the same path as politicians who keep their promises, who have character and who are honourable” (10). From this statement onwards, the channels of dialogue between Greece and Turkey are almost non-existent and the relations between the two countries have deteriorated. This was also evident by the Turkish President speech in the United Nations General Assembly where he incorporated numerous and serious accusations against Greece. Furthermore, in a conference held in the beginning of October for the birth of Prophet Muhammad in Ankara, Erdogan stated “The Greek Prime Minister is seeking help from the U.S. Against what? Against Türkiye. Whatever you do, we will continue to and are ready to do whatever is necessary” (11).

Greek-Turkish relations need to be viewed not only in the bilateral level but also through the lens of the geopolitical instability that the Ukrainian crisis has created in the region. In particular, Turkey’s ambiguous position concerning Russia, meaning that on the one hand it condemns the actions of Russia but on the other does not join sanctions against the country and poses conditions for the NATO membership of Sweden and Finland, has created concerns in the West. The US views Turkey as an important NATO ally but trust has certainly decreased during the last years. On the contrary, Greece has openly taken sides since the first day of the invasion and has cultivated deeper ties with the US. Furthermore, escalating provocations of Turkey in the Aegean Sea and its revisionist narrative, in combination with

the position of the county concerning the Ukrainian crisis have caused concern in Athens. Nikos Dendias, the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Kiev and, on the 23 October, Kathimerini newspaper published his article where he characteristically stated “The Turkish side has fully adopted Russian methods. It clearly points this out: “be careful unless you want to become like Ukraine”” and added that Greece in the face of the Turkish aggression towards the country responds by building alliances with its European partners, the US and states of the wider neighborhood always respecting the international law and the European acquis (12).

## **Conclusion**

The Ukrainian crisis has resulted in geopolitical instability. NATO and EU member states have been positioned against Russia. Greece despite the good relations with Russia prior to the invasion of Ukraine has aligned its policies with NATO and the EU. Furthermore, US-Greek relations have been strengthened during the last months. Consequently, Russia-Greek relations are at a new low. Concerning the security and stability of the region, Turkey’s increased provocative actions pose a threat to the sovereignty rights of Greece. Especially under the new geopolitical instability, strengthening of the stability of NATO’s southern flank needs to be prioritized and a solution through diplomacy needs to be reached between Greece and Turkey.

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# **Hungarian Foreign Policy in the Light of war, Energy Crisis in Europe**

**Csaba Moldicz**

When implementing foreign policies, countries typically focus their strategies on medium- and long-term effects, but the global pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the unfolding energy crisis have brought the impact of these decisions closer to the present. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Hungary's foreign policy thinking revolves around such fundamental issues as energy security, sovereignty protection, and secure supply chains. In this situation, it is helpful that the Hungarian foreign policy is not built on ideologies, but pragmatism and economic interests. This briefing therefore takes a closer look at the policy choices of Hungarian diplomacy considering war and the energy crisis.

## **Introduction**

The war in Ukraine challenged the foundations of European and Hungarian foreign policy. This first and most important foundation was the idea that there should never be war in Europe again. In the post-World War II period – even in the darkest hours of the Cold War – the basic assumption was that we would not have war in Europe. The second assumption was that we could rely on Russian resources for our development because these sources were close to Europe and cheap. The war and the developing energy crisis made both assumptions questionable. In the next briefing, we will explore how Hungarian foreign policy is trying to address these challenges.

## **EU negotiations on energy import**

The European Commission took several attempts to adapt and implement sanctions against Russian energy import. The main argument for doing so was that sanctions will stop the war in Ukraine and weaken Russia financially. Since then, several analyses and the reality proofed that

sanctions are not sufficient to achieve these goals. When adapting sanctions, the main goal of the Hungarian foreign policy was to impede the imposition of economic sanctions or at least achieve that they do not apply to Hungary. In these efforts Hungarian diplomacy turned out to be very successful as neither the import ban on Russian oil nor the price cap on natural gas do not apply to Hungary. In the former case, the compromise was not to use sanctions in landlocked country that are not able to import oil by the sea from other countries than Russia. When it comes to price cap on natural gas, the heads of states and governments agreed on October 21, 2022, to introduce a so-called “temporary dynamic price corridor” which is a success for Hungary who was concerned about a rigid system which would immediately “kill” Russian natural gas import to Hungary. On the Hungarian side it was stressed that the price cap can not impact long term contracts, Hungary also excluded the mandatory joint EU gas procurement and a solidarity mechanism.<sup>1</sup> We can take for granted that new waves or ideas of economic sanctions will come from Brussels, as the EU’s foreign policy has not changed. One area where the European Commission might push forward with a new sanction type is nuclear power. The Hungarian foreign minister argued the area must be free from: “overly ideological, emotional debates, and the sector is an intact sliver of East-West cooperation.”<sup>2</sup>

## **Reactions to the war in Ukraine**

In the early weeks and months of the war, Hungary was in the crossfire of criticism for its unwillingness to interfere in the war by supplying arms to Ukraine. At the same time, the country is duly fulfilling the obligations that any country has when war refugees arrive. Moreover, the country was accused of treating Ukrainian refugees differently from illegal migrants from the South. (At this point, we should add that Hungary is the first safe county for Ukrainian war refugees while this was not the case Syrian

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<sup>1</sup> <https://hungarytoday.hu/hungary-rejects-the-eus-crazy-ideas-on-energy/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://hungarytoday.hu/nuclear-energy-has-become-an-issue-of-national-sovereignty-foreign-minister-says/>

migrants. (They had to cross several safe countries.) Hungary has had repeated conflicts with Ukrainian diplomacy over its stance on the war. The Hungarian prime minister recently warned against the possibility of expanding the war through sanctions and arms deliveries to Ukraine. A Ukrainian diplomat, permanent representative to the United Nations, reacted to these words with sharp words. This is not the first time Ukraine has had a conflict with Hungary. When Hungary blocked the total oil import ban from Russia in the spring, Ukraine attacked Hungary in the international media. Ukraine accused Hungary of being friendly to Moscow, but if we look at the moments when Hungary vetoed or threatened to veto or rejected the European Commission's proposal, the country protected its own economic interests. To be clear, the adjustment of the originally proposed measures would have meant the total collapse of the Hungarian economy, which is heavily dependent on Russian oil (at least two-thirds) and natural gas (about 75-80 percent).<sup>1</sup> The fact that the country is landlocked makes things not easier. The oil can come to Hungary through the "Friendship" pipeline, and it is Russian oil. Or it may come through a pipeline from Croatia and then be Middle Eastern oil. The problem with the oil from the Middle East is that the Hungarian oil factories need to be modernized and adapted to this kind of oil. In other words, the oil from the Middle East cannot fully replace the Russian oil at the moment. As for natural gas, it can only come through Southern Stream via Turkey, as this is the only pipeline that still works. The capacity of the Croatian terminal for liquefied gas in Krk needs to be expanded.

### **Disputes with the European Commission**

The debates with the European Commission center on EU funds intended for Hungary but withheld by the European Commission. Although the Hungarian government was ready to change the Hungarian legal framework and establish a new institution to keep track of EU funds and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://g7.hu/vilag/20220323/hogyan-lehet-csokkenteni-magyarorszag-orosz-energiafuggoseget/>

fight corruption, it cannot be ruled out that the European Commission will come with new demands to gain access to EU funds. According to the Minister of Regional Development and Utilization of EU Funds, the government is negotiating with the European Commission on three different issues:

1. Earmarked funds for Hungary from the 2020-2027 EU budget.
2. Funds from the Economic Recovery and Resilience Facility to cushion the economic costs of the global pandemic
3. Favorable credit facilities, but the government has not decided whether or not to draw on these loans.

In this context, the speech of the Hungarian Prime Minister, which he delivered in the Hungarian Parliament on September 26, 2022, deserves our attention. In this speech, the Prime Minister pointed out that Hungary could turn to other sources of funding if access to EU funds is not granted. There are articles in the Hungarian media claiming that Hungary will issue Panda bonds on the Chinese market, however, these statements have not been confirmed by official sources. However, Mr. Orban confirmed that “we negotiate with China”. The Hungarian Prime Minister also said in that interview he gave a German newspaper published in Hungary that “it might happen that we are going to finance our green projects with Chinese financial resources.”<sup>1</sup> What we know for certain, the Hungarian MVM Zrt., the most important energy supplier firm in Hungary agreed with ICBC-Austria to borrow 250 million euros.<sup>2</sup> (ICBC-Austria is the subsidiary of the Chinese Industrial and Commercial Bank of China established on 1 January 1984.)

## **China-EU relations**

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<sup>1</sup>[https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20221024\\_kulfold\\_budapester\\_zeitung\\_orban\\_viktor\\_interju\\_nemetszag\\_magyarorszag\\_kapcsolatok\\_ukrajna\\_haboru\\_eu](https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20221024_kulfold_budapester_zeitung_orban_viktor_interju_nemetszag_magyarorszag_kapcsolatok_ukrajna_haboru_eu)

<sup>2</sup> [https://mvm.hu/hu-HU/Media/MediaTartalmak/Hirek/20221014\\_ICBC](https://mvm.hu/hu-HU/Media/MediaTartalmak/Hirek/20221014_ICBC)

In recent days, political tensions in EU-China relations have increased after an internal memo from the EU diplomatic service described China primarily as a competitor with limited areas of potential engagement. Although relations with China were one of the topics at the October 21, 2022 meeting of EU leaders, the conclusions of the Council meeting merely mentioned “The European Council held a strategic discussion on the European Union’s relations with China.”<sup>1</sup> While one can surmise that the discussion in the Council meeting was heated and divided the participants, Hungarian opinion on relations with China seems to be very clear. Before the meeting, the Hungarian foreign minister said that “Hungary rejects every attempt aiming at the destruction of European and Chinese economic cooperation”.<sup>2</sup>

## Summary

As we saw in the briefing, Hungarian foreign policy focuses on three major issues: (1) how to deal with the developing energy crisis in the European Union and in Hungary, (2) how to keep the country out of the Ukrainian war by not supporting Ukraine militarily but by fulfilling its humanitarian obligations. (One good example is that Hungary did not support the proposal for the European Union (EU) to start a training mission for Ukrainian military personnel – Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) The Hungarian foreign minister said; ““We do not participate in this training mission, obviously we do not send training personnel, and we do not contribute to the costs of the operation with financial resources either”.<sup>3</sup> The third issue is (3) how to manage political disputes with the European Union, while several attacks on Hungary seem to be politically motivated. The leitmotif of Hungary's foreign policy is pragmatism, which tries to stay

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.euractiv.com/section/eu-china/news/eu-leaders-wary-of-dependencies-created-with-china-but-far-from-united/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://magyarhaz.hu/kulfold/2022/10/szijas-peter-nem-roppanhat-meg-az-eukina-gazdasagi-egyuttmukodes-video>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off\\_the\\_Wire/2022-10/18/content\\_78471459.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off_the_Wire/2022-10/18/content_78471459.htm)

away from ideologies and focus only on the country's interests. This pragmatism proved its worth in the months following the outbreak of war, as Hungary was able to manage its relations with key partners.

# **Latvia in the Geopolitical Conditions of 2022: Support for Ukraine**

**Institute of Economics at the Latvian Academy of Sciences**

## **Summary**

The military aggression against Ukraine carried out by the establishment of the Russian Federation is a serious violation of international law, which has radically changed the security situation in the region and more broadly in Europe. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has radically changed the bilateral relations between Latvia and Russia. Most of the bilateral relations have either been suspended or reduced to the minimum necessary level. On the other hand, the support for Ukraine by Latvia is one of the highest, looking at the gross domestic products of countries supplying aid to Ukraine, and it is growing more and more to ensure Ukraine's victory in the war and the defence of a democratic Europe. Latvia's national position in response to Russia's war crimes in Ukraine has been firm, condemning and leading, inspiring Western countries to take similar steps. For a long time, Europe did not listen to Latvia's warnings about Russia, which proved to be true after the invasion of Ukraine. Now Latvia's further steps, experience and leadership will be decisive in future decisions of the European Union.

## **Introduction**

Since February 24, 2022, the military aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation has radically changed the security situation around the world. Russia has unjustifiably caused the largest military conflict and humanitarian disaster on the European continent since the end of World War II. The range of issues to be discussed in global politics is based on



the ongoing war in Ukraine and the security situation not only on North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) eastern border, but also in the world. To stand for a just world, Latvia has established a firm position to protect the democratic world and support Ukraine with all possible measures, while simultaneously pointing out Russia's war crimes, which resonate in world politics and the actions of other countries.

## **Relations with Russia**

In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Latvia has taken a series of decisions at the national level to narrow bilateral cooperation with Russia to the minimum necessary level. At the time of the escalation of hostilities, in the spring of 2022, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament of Latvia evaluated the bilateral agreements concluded by the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation. The Commission decided to suspend 12 bilateral agreements or their individual articles and denounce one agreement.

The government also decided to terminate or denounce agreements in areas such as economic cooperation, culture and cross-border travel. The regular political consultation mechanism of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was frozen, as well as cooperation within the framework of the Intergovernmental Commission was suspended. The Russian Consulates General in Daugavpils and Liepaja were closed, as well as the Consulate General of Latvia in St. Petersburg, the Consulate in Pskov and the Chancellery of the Consular Department of the Latvian Embassy in Moscow in Kaliningrad. On the other hand, the Latvian Embassy in Russia and the Russian Embassy in Latvia continue their work.

In Latvia, the list of unwanted persons has been expanded, as well as the rebroadcast of all Russian TV channels in Latvia and propaganda websites have been closed. In addition, on August 11, 2022, in a statement, the Parliament recognized Russia's violence against the civilians of Ukraine

and other countries as terrorism and Russia as a state supporting terrorism. Since February 24, when Russia's aggression against Ukraine began, Latvia has had one of the strictest approaches among European Union (EU) countries, even limiting the issuance of visas to Russian citizens. The adapted approach has resonated in global politics and has led other countries to adapt similar measures to strengthen national security and support Ukraine.

### **Support to Ukraine**

Since the first days of the conflict, the Latvian government and society have pledged to support Ukraine and its people in wartime conditions. In Latvia, on March 3, 2022, the Law on the support of Ukrainian civilians was adopted at a matter of urgency, which has been fundamental to provide support to Ukrainian citizens and their family members as quickly as possible and without unnecessary bureaucracy, who leave Ukraine or who cannot return to Ukraine due to the war. In October 2022, the number of Ukrainian refugees in Latvia reached 41,000.

Latvian delegations also visit war-affected Ukraine. In May 2022, the Speaker of the Latvian Parliament, Inara Murniece, visited Ukraine and expressed solidarity with the Ukrainian people. On October 26, 2022, Inara Murniece received the state award of Ukraine - the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise - for significant personal merits in strengthening international cooperation, supporting state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, significant contribution to the popularization of the Ukrainian state in the world.

Latvian President Egils Levits, who has visited Ukraine twice during the war, has also shown solidarity with Ukraine. The Latvian president visited Ukraine for the first time on April 13, becoming one of the first Western leaders to visit the capital of Ukraine during the war. In September 2022,

President Levits became the first Western statesman to spend the night in Kyiv during the war.

During the visit in September, Latvian President Levits, after talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, issued a call to start negotiations on Ukraine's admission to the European Union. Also, the President of Latvia took part in the unveiling ceremony of plaques dedicated to several Western leaders, including himself, in Kyiv. The names of political leaders and other representatives of Ukraine's partner countries, who provide Ukraine with important support in the fight against Russia, are immortalized in the alley.

In general, in 2022, Latvia has been in first place in the world in terms of the government's support to Ukraine, as a percentage of the country's GDP (gross domestic product). Until October 3, 2022, Latvia had directed 0.9% of bilateral aid from GDP to Ukraine, ahead of Poland and Estonia, whose support was 0.5% and 0.4%, respectively. Similarly, Latvian society and the non-governmental sector have donated a total of around 9 million euros to the defence needs of Ukraine. Politicians and government leaders have stated a clear position - Latvia will support Ukraine in this war until its end and after that with all the capabilities it has.

### **Latvia's Stance Resonates Globally**

For too long, Europe did not listen to Latvia's warnings about Russia, that relations with it may turn out to be "a huge challenge that will lead to a collapse at one point" - this was acknowledged by the President of the European Parliament (EP), Roberta Metsola, during her visit to Latvia in October 2022, expressing her gratitude to Latvia for its leadership in the new geopolitical situation. The centre of gravity in understanding of Russia's war in Ukraine is on the side of Latvia and its neighbouring countries, therefore Latvia sets prime examples to Europe.

When Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24 of this year, Europe had to admit that Latvia was right about Russia. The President of the EP claimed that Latvia is a leading country in holding Russia accountable and had gone a step further by recognizing Russia as a country that supports terrorism.

The president of the EP expressed that Latvia is a symbol of hope, change and resilience for her; proof that people can overcome difficulties, resist and break out of the shackles of history by joining the European Union (EU) and building a common future with European values which reside in Latvian residents.

## **Conclusions**

Since February 2022, Latvia's position has been firm and pragmatic, and it has also influenced other Western countries to follow the example set by Latvia. By making the decision to include Russia in the list of countries that support terrorism, by introducing sanctions and closing the borders to Russian citizens, Latvia undertakes to influence the bilateral cooperation agreements with Russia and creates the "Iron Curtain" of the 21st century. As a NATO border country with Russia, Latvia protects democracy in Europe by providing maximum support to Ukraine, which is also a priority for the entire European Union, choosing the path of development - life in democracy. Only the complete and final victory of Ukraine and the complete defeat of Russia is the guarantee of lasting peace in Europe. Moreover, Latvia is very aware of what Ukraine is dealing with and what Europe will be dealing with to overcome threats to democratic values, prosperity, peace and justice. In the new geopolitical era, countries must think about how to further support Ukraine - promoting its reconstruction and punishing Russia for its war crimes. Latvia's experience and leadership will be decisive in the next steps that the EU will have to take to overcome the threats posed by Russia and Vladimir Putin. With its strong stance and the impact, it has made on the politics of Western countries, Latvia will continue to strengthen its democratic and justice-based position in global

politics, becoming an increasingly important ally of democracies in the world and a greater opponent of authoritarianism.

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# **German Brigade in Lithuania: Mission Possible?**

**Justas Karčiauskas**

## **Summary**

After Lithuania became a NATO member, Lithuanian diplomats and politicians have slowly but steadily worked their way towards securing a permanent NATO forces presence on its territory. As the war rages on in Ukraine, this objective now is especially important. The article briefly overviews how Lithuania has progressed towards its objective of having a Germany-led brigade-sized NATO force on its territory, and why it has taken such a long time to achieve it. The article focuses on a recent meeting between a German and Lithuanian Defence Ministers, and how their comments about the brigade scared many in Lithuania that this long-term objective and the agreement with Germany may not come true yet. The article outlines what homework Lithuania must do first so that plans for the NATO brigade in Lithuania would finally materialize.

## **Introduction**

Since becoming a NATO member back in 2004, Lithuania has sought to acquire as much military deterrence against a potential Russian attack as possible. Lithuania's diplomatic efforts has had some success. Since 2004 Lithuania's skies have been protected by rotating countries' military jets as part of NATO's Baltic Air Policing Mission, and since 2017 NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battalion Battle Group ("eFPBG"), led by Germany and initially consisting of roughly 1,400 NATO soldiers plus military equipment, again on rotational basis, has been established. But Lithuania has always wanted for more NATO presence, so-called "boots on the ground", which would be stationed on a more permanent basis on its territory, for example, like in a NATO military base. Russia's invasion of

Ukraine seems to have opened an opportunity for Lithuania to finally achieve this long-term goal. However, recent comments from German and Lithuanian officials made some experts question how real are the prospects of a full-sized permanent brigade-level NATO presence in Lithuania.

### **High hopes for the Brigade**

Before Russia's aggression in Ukraine, NATO members were not willing to deploy any forces on territories of the so-called "new" NATO members, i.e. countries which got admitted into the bloc after 1990 – the end of the Cold War. The main reason for this reluctance is Russia, which claims, without referring to any treaties or other evidence, that NATO had promised not to expand to the East.<sup>1</sup> After 2004, the year when seven new members, including Lithuania, were formally invited to join NATO, Russia keeps protesting against any sort of permanent NATO presence in these countries. NATO did not want to escalate the tensions with Russia, and carefully avoided anything that could be deemed as "permanent". Hence, rotational basis for NATO's Baltic Air Policing Mission and for eFPBGs was chosen.

Everything changed in the beginning of 2022, when Russia started amassing its troops at its border with Ukraine and eventually invaded its neighbour. All this helped Lithuania and other NATO members in its Eastern flank to convince their NATO allies about the necessity to expand the eFPBG size and ditch the policy of "rotational only" presence of NATO forces. There have been renewed talks about Brigade size of around 4,000

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<sup>1</sup> LRT: Has NATO ever promised Russia not to expand east?, in: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1577192/lrt-facts-has-nato-ever-promised-russia-not-to-expand-east>

– 5,000 soldiers for Lithuania’s eFPBG. Media started reporting on negotiations and planning of the creation of such Germany-led brigade.<sup>1</sup>

### **Change in Lithuania’s objectives?**

However, in October German Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht came to Lithuania with the official visit inspecting German troops stationed here. She was accompanied by her counterpart in Lithuania, Arvydas Anušauskas. The officials from both Lithuania and Germany started talking about “command element” of the brigade and that only “part of the unit will be deployed in Lithuania and part in Germany”. Specifically, now it seems that only brigade’s “command element” would be stationed in Lithuania.<sup>2</sup>

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, German Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht told a news conference in Lithuania that Germany “will ensure that the brigade can be moved to Lithuania in a short period of time, within 10 days. It is therefore very important that we do exercises on a regular basis.”<sup>3</sup>

The comments about the “command element”, only part of the brigade being stationed in Lithuania, and a 10-day reaction time in case of the emergency came as a surprise to Lithuanian media and politicians.

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<sup>1</sup> LRT: Germany considers sending more troops to Lithuania, in: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1608619/germany-considers-sending-more-troops-to-lithuania-media>

<sup>2</sup> LRT: NATO leaders approve brigades for Lithuania and eastern flank, in: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1729743/nato-leaders-approve-brigades-for-lithuania-and-eastern-flank>

<sup>3</sup> LRT: German brigade would be moved to Lithuania within 10 days in crisis, in: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1796654/german-brigade-would-be-moved-to-lithuania-within-10-days-in-crisis-ministers>



## **Alarm in Lithuania over the comments**

The comments by both German and Lithuanian defence ministers about “command element” being located in Lithuania have prompted outcry in Lithuanian media and politicians, as they suspected that Lithuania has silently given up its objective to have a fully functional NATO brigade on its territory.

Furthermore, the 10 days – a duration of time during which German troops would come to Lithuania in case of emergency – are seen as too long. In case of a full-scale invasion to Lithuania, similar to the one we see in Ukraine, Lithuanian army could hardly resist for 10 days on their own before they receive any meaningful help. The time of response is an especially sensitive issue after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine when it became apparent how quickly things could escalate.

Lithuanian Defence Minister A. Anušauskas was criticised for not pressing German counterpart enough to commit to a more specific timeframe when the brigade could be stationed.<sup>1</sup> Critics were not only from opposition, but also from within ruling Conservative party. Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Ministers Gabrielius Landsbergis said it was necessary to „send clear communication both from the [Defence] Minister and [other officials from] Lithuania to Germans and a very clear request to Germans to confirm whether Lithuania’s announced timeframe [for the deployment of the brigade] is acceptable and consistent to that planned by Germany. This was not done.“<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 15MIN: Politikams kibirkščiuojant dėl Vokietijos brigados, buvęs kariuomenės vadas ragina imtis darbų, in: <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/politikams-kibirksciuojant-del-vokietijos-brigados-buves-kariuomenes-vadas-ragina-imtis-darbu-56-1945794>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Germany's Ambassador to Lithuania immediately responded to the above comments and urged Lithuanian politicians to acknowledge that the agreement about the brigade was being honored consistently.<sup>1</sup>

### **Explanations regarding the brigade**

After initial confusion, there were attempts to amend the communication about the current status of preparation for the brigade, and clarify it to the media and interested parties, limiting the damage.

Lambrecht said that Germany will deploy more ammunition and weapons to Lithuania, which will make it easier to move troops between the countries. "It is important to take these steps as we prepare to move the entire brigade here," she said.<sup>2</sup>

Lithuanian and German Defence ministers exchanged some diplomatic assurances to demonstrated that the alliance between the two countries is strong. Anušauskas said that "Germany's leadership following the decision to reinforce the forward presence in Lithuania [...] shows its commitment to security in the entire Baltic region," and Lambrecht added that "Lithuania can count on us [Germany]. We are ready to defend each other and stand by each other's side, as allied partners should"

Lieutenant General Jonas Vytautas Žukas – former Lithuania's Chief of Defence – said he didn't see any signs from Lithuania's Defence Minister or Lithuania in general retreats from its stated objective to have full NATO brigade stationed on its territory. He said he believed everything was done according to plan and that the pace of its implementation will depend on Lithuania's preparations to accommodate thousands of German soldiers. V.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> LRT: German brigade would be moved to Lithuania within 10 days in crisis, in: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1796654/german-brigade-would-be-moved-to-lithuania-within-10-days-in-crisis-ministers>

Žukas claimed that Germany delivered on its promises and had already stationed the command center of the brigade and a part of the soldiers.<sup>1</sup>

Other experts said that Lithuanian always were reiterating their longer-term aims of “eventually hosting a full brigade on its territory, which could be possible by around 2027 after building the necessary infrastructure.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Military infrastructure is key**

It seems that weak and inadequate existing military infrastructure could really be the main reason for the delay of deploying full brigade in the territory of Lithuania. Experts say that Lithuania needs to do a lot of homework and wide-ranging investment is needed before brigade could be fully stationed in Lithuania. Lithuanian Defence Minister said that “Lithuania is developing its military infrastructure and training areas to ensure the necessary conditions for allied troops’ presence in the country.”<sup>3</sup>

V. Žukas said that now Lithuania needed to focus on preparing the right conditions for the brigade, which would include building new military barracks, ammunition warehouses, enlarging military training areas. He added that all agreements were made, and all plans and details were agreed. V. Žukas remained convinced that brigade would be allocated to Lithuania. He said that now Lithuania was not ready to receive all these soldiers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> LRT: NATO leaders approve brigades for Lithuania and eastern flank, in: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1729743/nato-leaders-approve-brigades-for-lithuania-and-eastern-flank>

<sup>3</sup> LRT: German brigade would be moved to Lithuania within 10 days in crisis, in: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1796654/german-brigade-would-be-moved-to-lithuania-within-10-days-in-crisis-ministers>

<sup>4</sup> 15MIN: Politikams kibirkščiuojant dėl Vokietijos brigados, buvęs kariuomenės vadas ragina imtis darbų, in: <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/politikams-kibirksciujant-del-vokietijos-brigados-buves-kariuomenes-vadas-ragina-imitis-darbu-56-1945794>

## **Conclusion**

It is seen as a major diplomatic victory of Lithuania (as well as other NATO members in the Eastern flank) to have established its agenda about the need for a brigade-level permanent NATO presence on the territory of Lithuania as well as in other countries. During recent unpredictable geopolitical situation, the news that NATO agrees to increase its eFPBG to brigade-level and make it permanent was like music to Lithuanian politicians' ears. A sudden outcry in Lithuanian media and a blame-game among Lithuanian officials, which followed the not-so-careful Lambrecht's and Anušauskas's comments, further demonstrates how important and sensitive this topic is in Lithuania. Quick assurances from both sides regarding the brigade have somewhat calmed the situation down, but it remains to be seen if this ambitious project will be implemented in the way that Lithuania wants it.

# **Diplomatic Choices of Montenegro under the New Situation**

**Milika Mirkovic**

## **Summary**

The new situation in security policy has brought numerous challenges. Taking these new trends into account, Montenegro has directed its external policy as well. In relation to the war in Ukraine, Montenegro harmonized its foreign policy with EU policy. First of all, it condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine and introduced sanctions against Russia that are in line with EU decisions. Also, due to membership in NATO, Montenegro harmonized its security policy with the Alliance policy. Taking into account the Russian influence in the Western Balkan region, the acceleration of the reform process and EU integration is of key importance, which would reduce Russia's presence and interference in political processes in the region. Integration into the EU and NATO of all the countries of the region would ensure the stability and security of the entire region.

## **Introduction**

The new geopolitical situation somehow threw the countries out of balance, so that after a relatively peaceful period during the previous decade, they actively discussed the course of external and security policy. Montenegro, although a small country and without the power to determine the course of international policy, has also taken a position on the issue of external policy, taking into account the previously determined path of development.

## **In accordance with the EU external policy**

As a candidate country for membership in the EU, which has been implementing the reform process for a decade and is working to fulfil the criteria for joining the EU, but also as a member of NATO, Montenegro has fully harmonized its external policy with EU policy. Montenegro showed its orientation in the implementation of foreign policy in the new geopolitical conditions when it condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

In March Montenegro adopted a package of sanctions against Russia, which was previously adopted by the Council of the European Union. Making such a decision shows Montenegro's solidarity with Ukraine. The adoption of sanctions was accepted differently among the political parties that were in power in Montenegro during that period, given that some political parties that supported Russia in the attack on Ukraine were in power. The division within the Government made the process of imposing sanctions longer than expected. Sanctions against Russia were introduced after two failed attempts.

Sanctions that have been introduced against Russia are aimed at different areas, such as finance, transport, trade, travel and others. The airspace for Russian planes was closed, the assets of a number of companies and individuals and others were frozen. In this way, Montenegro joined the countries that condemned Russia's attack on Ukraine and that introduced sanctions against Russia. In response to the imposed sanctions, Russia put Montenegro on the list of "enemy countries" and imposed sanctions on Montenegro and other European countries. This further worsened relations with Russia, which had been strained at the diplomatic level during the previous period<sup>1</sup>.

This course of Montenegro's foreign policy represents an additional deflection from Russian influence on Montenegro and the general presence of Russia in the Western Balkan region. The presence of Russia in this

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<sup>1</sup> Mirkovic Milika (2022) Montenegro imposes sanctions on Russia, March External Briefing for Montenegro, China-CEE Institute, 2022

region has existed for a long period of time, and that is why there are political parties that represent and support the politics of Russia. Relations with Russia were not only strong in the diplomatic sense, but also in the economic sense, especially after the restoration of independence sixteen years ago. A significant number of Russians invested in real estate on the Montenegrin coast, resulting in large numbers of Russian tourists, as well as a significant inflow of investment from Russia in Montenegro. Tourists from Russia are still one of the most important for the tourism industry of Montenegro. Also, during previous period FDI from Russia are significant. Relations with Russia began to deteriorate as Montenegro adjusted its foreign policy and brought it closer to EU policy, which contributed to the reduction of Russian influence. Montenegro introduced sanctions against Russia as early as 2014 (due to the annexation of Crimea), where Montenegro showed its foreign policy orientation, following EU policy. Also, Russia was against Montenegro joining NATO, because it would lose its influence on Montenegro. In order to prevent such a decision, during the parliamentary elections in 2016, Russian citizens were involved in a coup attempt. Therefore, with the membership of Montenegro in the NATO Alliance in 2017, the relationship between the two countries has been further deepened. Change of government in 2020, Russian presence increased again, since the government was made up of political parties and individuals that propagate Russian politics<sup>1</sup>. However, as Montenegro leads the policy of EU integration, it has harmonized its policy with the external policy of the EU. In the last report of the European Commission for Montenegro, external relations and foreign, security and defence policy were rated the best, considering the fact that Montenegro has fully harmonized its foreign policy with the EU's policy in relation to Russia.

Considering that Russia's presence in the Western Balkan region is pronounced, and the fact that there are strong traditional relations between

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<sup>1</sup> Mirkovic Milika (2022) Montenegro 's international relations in the context of the war in Ukraine, February External Briefing for Montenegro, China-CEE Institute, 2022

countries, such as Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, the war in Ukraine can further strengthen Russia's influence. Therefore, the conduct of EU integration policy is of great importance. However, even though EU integration is one of the main policies and directions of Montenegro's external policy, during the last period Montenegro has achieved only limited progress on this path. This was also assessed in the latest European Commission Report on the progress of the integration process of Montenegro.

### **Security policy**

As a member of NATO, Montenegro has a security policy that is in line with NATO policy. In the new security conditions and risks brought by the war in Ukraine, membership in NATO represents one of the important decisions made in the previous period. Taking into account the new security risks, the New Strategic Concept was adopted at the last NATO Summit held in Madrid. One of the focuses of the new Strategic Concept is the Western Balkans, i.e. the need to maintain security and stability in this region. Accordingly, in the coming period, NATO Alliance will pay attention on the region, taking into account the risks that exist in the case of security due to the presence of Russia in this region and it was decided to support all countries that intend to join the NATO Alliance<sup>1</sup>. In addition, Montenegro is involved in various initiatives aimed at promoting regional cooperation in the field of security policy. These mechanisms can contribute to the greater security and safety which further leads to a more stable and prosperous region. In October, the twelfth 2BS Forum 2022 was organized, where issues related to the future and security of the Western Balkans were discussed in the context of new trends. This Forum is actually

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<sup>1</sup> NATO (2022) NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, available on: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf)



one of the most significant events in Southeast Europe dedicated to security policy.

In the context of new geopolitical events, US senators from the Democratic and Republican parties proposed a draft of the Western Balkans Democracy and Prosperity Act. The goal of this act is to increase and strengthen relations between the US and Western Balkan countries, help in the fight against corruption, improve the rule of law, democratic and economic reforms, contribute to the development of civil societies, independent media, transparent, accountable, citizen-responsive governance, and political stability, work on expanding NATO membership, strengthening security cooperation with Montenegro and other NATO country members, continue to support Montenegro in the EU accession negotiation process, reducing Russia's influence in the region and more<sup>1</sup>.

New geopolitical conditions, the war in Ukraine have also brought new security risks. Montenegro has fully harmonized its external policy with the EU. Montenegro joined the EU countries in imposing sanctions on Russia. Also, as a member of NATO, it runs a security policy that is in line with NATO policy. First of all, Montenegro condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine and imposed sanctions on Russia following EU decisions. For a small country that is part of the Western Balkan region, where Russia's influence and presence existed from before, the implementation of the EU integration policy is of great importance. Strengthening and encouragement of the European and Euro-Atlantic orientation is not only important for Montenegro, but also of the entire Western Balkans region, due to the provision of stability in the entire region, given that the war in Ukraine can also bring security risks for the Western Balkans region.

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<sup>1</sup> Western Balkans Democracy and Prosperity Act, available on: <https://www.cardin.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Balkans.pdf>

# **Macedonian Foreign Policy in Convergence with the EU and Divergence With Its People**

**Gjorgjioska M. Adela**

## **Summary**

Throughout 2022, the foreign policy decisions, statements and actions taken by Macedonian officials and government representatives, have been a replica of the positions taken by NATO and the EU on a variety of important geopolitical developments. The situation remained unchanged in the early autumn months. This state of affairs represented a continuation of the foreign policy from previous years, when the Euro-Atlantic narrative on regional and global events was uncritically adopted and supported by the country's establishment. In response to the conflict in Ukraine several actions were taken which not only demonstrated the subservience of the political elites, but also undermined the country's economic and security interests, and increased its dependency especially in the energy sector. This foreign policy line in turn contributed to the widening of the large rift between the government and the population, which increasingly saw itself as a victim of the policies it doesn't support.

Throughout the early autumn period, Macedonian officials continued to replicate the Euro-Atlantic narrative on global and regional affairs and to take corresponding actions. This was evident in the foreign policy decisions, statements and actions espoused by the President, the Prime Minister, as well as the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Defence Minister. It was also visible on the multilateral level, most notably in the country's voting records on several UN Resolutions.

On September 9th, President Pendarovski met with General Wesley Clark, former commander of NATO's Supreme Allied Command for Europe. During the meeting, Pendarovski reaffirmed his support for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. He also pointed out that "North Macedonia, as a member of NATO, will continue to provide military, humanitarian and diplomatic assistance within the limits of its possibilities, with the ultimate goal of putting an end to the military aggression."<sup>1</sup> On the following day, advisers to President Pendarovski met with the Ukrainian MP Kira Rudik. The advisers "reaffirmed the position that the Republic of North Macedonia fully and unequivocally supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine within its borders until 2014."<sup>2</sup> Several weeks later Pendarovski signed a joint statement by the Presidents of Central and Eastern European NATO Member States, which condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine, and reiterated their support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. In the statement, the Presidents also supported Ukraine's NATO accession and called for all Allies to substantially increase their military aid to Ukraine.<sup>3</sup> The actions taken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its diplomatic representatives followed the President's line in relation to the developments in Ukraine. On November 5th, the Ambassador to NATO, Dane Taleski, paid a working visit to Ukraine, as part of a group of ten Ambassadors from member states of the Alliance. As reported by the

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting with General Wesley Clark, former commander of NATO's Supreme Allied Command for Europe, published on 09.09.2022, available at

<https://pretsedatel.mk/en/meeting-with-general-wesley-clark-former-commander-of-natos-supreme-allied-command-for-europe/> accessed on 30.10.2022

<sup>2</sup> Advisers to President Pendarovski meet with the Ukrainian MP Kira Rudik, published on 10.09.2022, available at

<https://pretsedatel.mk/en/advisers-to-president-pendarovski-meet-with-the-ukrainian-mp-kira-rudik/> accessed on 30.10.2022

<sup>3</sup> Joint statement of Presidents of Central and Eastern European NATO Member States on Russian attempts to illegally annex Ukrainian territories, published on 02.10.2022, available at

[https://pretsedatel.mk/en/izjava\\_02102022-2/](https://pretsedatel.mk/en/izjava_02102022-2/) accessed on 30.10.2022

Ministry “the purpose of the visit was to demonstrate staunch support to Ukraine in dealing with the challenges that the Russian military aggression has brought on the country.”<sup>1</sup> The staunch support towards Ukraine was also demonstrated in the several donations of military equipment to the country by the Ministry of Defence. In July an unspecified number of Soviet-era tanks were donated to Ukraine.<sup>2</sup> In August, it was reported that the country has donated its four Sukhoi Su-25 ground attack jets to Ukraine.<sup>3</sup> Prime Minister Kovacevski reiterated his Government’s support for Ukraine in his address at the UN General Assembly Speech on the 24th of September. He said that his country has joined global efforts responding to the war in Ukraine. He called on the Russian Federation to put an immediate end to the aggression and withdraw its troops from Ukraine. The developments in Ukraine pushed numerous other global conflicts to the background, he continued, noting that terrorism, hybrid threat and fake news continue to constitute a serious threat to humanity.<sup>4</sup> On the multilateral level, the same position was upheld. Macedonia voted against a draft resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism proposed by the Russian Federation at the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. Only two countries voted against this resolution in 2021 (USA

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<sup>1</sup> North Macedonia Ambassador to NATO, Dane Taleski, Pays Working Visit to Ukraine,

<https://mfa.gov.mk/en/page/13/post/3156/press-release>, published on 05.11.2022, accessed on 07.11.2022

<sup>2</sup> North Macedonia donates tanks to Ukraine as it modernizes own military, published on 29.07.2022, available at

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/nmacedonia-donates-tanks-ukraine-it-modernises-own-military-2022-07-29/> accessed on 30.10.2022

<sup>3</sup> North Macedonia Maintains Silence Over Jet Donation to Ukraine, published on 04.08.2022, available at

<https://balkaninsight.com/2022/08/04/north-macedonia-maintains-silence-over-jet-donation-to-ukraine/> accessed on 01.09.2022

<sup>4</sup> Republic of North Macedonia, H.E. Mr. Dimitar Kovachevski, Prime Minister, 24 September 2022, speech at the UN General Assembly, available at <https://gadebate.un.org/en/77/republic-north-macedonia> accessed on 25.09.2022

and Ukraine), however that number increased to 52 in the November 2022 vote. The Macedonian vote changed from abstaining in 2021 to a vote against in 2022, and in doing so followed the vote of the members of the EU and the other candidates for EU membership from the Balkan region, with the exception of Serbia, which voted abstained.<sup>1</sup>

This alignment of the country's external policy with the EU bloc was lauded in the 2022 progress report for North Macedonia published by the European Commission. The report notes that "North Macedonia has made very good progress by fully aligning with the EU common foreign and security policy, following Russia's aggression against Ukraine. By doing so, North Macedonia has shown it can be a reliable partner."<sup>2</sup>

Although the majority of political actors from the country's establishment demonstrate an alignment with the EU's and NATO positions on foreign relations, this is not a unanimously supported view. In particular, the political party "Levica" demonstrates a consistent divergence with the official foreign policy actions adopted on the state level. They have criticized the support provided for Ukraine, and urged for a neutral position in relation to the war in Ukraine, noting geopolitical, economic and security concerns as the reason for their opposition. They also condemned the UN vote against the resolution on the glorification of Nazism. "The current Governing elite, in the spirit of its vassal status, abandoning its national interests, has obediently solidarized with its superiors and has voted against the UN resolution that calls for a fight against the contemporary forms of

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<sup>1</sup> Third Committee Approves Eight Draft Resolutions, including Texts on Indigenous Peoples' Rights, Privacy in Digital Age, Condemning Glorification Of Nazism, published on 04.11.2022, available at

<https://press.un.org/en/2022/gashc4365.doc.htm> accessed on 07.11.2022

<sup>2</sup>EC Enlargement Progress Report for 2022, published on 13.10.2022, available at [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2022\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2022_en) accessed on 31.10.2022

fascism and Nazism”.<sup>1</sup> Several days earlier the political party sent an Open Letter to the European Commission, urging the representatives of its highest institutions to express their position on the opening of Bulgarian cultural clubs on the territory of Macedonia that carry the names of fascist and Nazi collaborators from the Second World War. “Two citizen associations orchestrated by the Bulgarian state have been registered and began to operate in Macedonia. Both of them use symbols and hold activities that glorify Nazism and fascism and make an attempt to grossly revise history by denying the anti-fascist history of the Republic of Macedonia,” the letter informs. It further adds: “Your silence as well as the statements of representatives of the institutions of the Union, who in the past period actively participate, observe and evaluate the relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia, leave the impression that the European Union encourages this trend of promotion and glorification of Nazi-fascist ideologies and their modern derivatives.”<sup>2</sup> Finally it calls on the EU officials to publicly condemn Bulgaria’s actions of promoting and supporting associations that glorify Nazism, anti-Semitism, fascism and anti-Macedonian ideology. This however is unlikely to happen. What is more likely to ensue is that the EU will continue endorsing Bulgaria’s use of the EU enlargement process as an instrument of its assimilationist policies towards Macedonia. Based on the French proposal, the EU has endorsed the importing of a bilateral historical dispute into the EU accession negotiating framework for Macedonia, thereby giving Bulgaria a free hand in dictating the terms of the country’s progress towards the EU, conditioning any progress on their demands, which deny its history, language and right to self-determination.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=696917808457953&id=100044192211463](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=696917808457953&id=100044192211463)

<sup>2</sup> The Left: The EU should condemn the promotion of associations that glorify Nazi collaborators, published on 02.11.2022, available at

<https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/en/levica-eu-da-go-osudi-promoviranjeto-zdruzenija-koi-glorificiraaat-nacistichki-sorabotnici/> accessed on 07.11.2022

Besides the fading promise of EU membership there is hardly anything which the country has gained from blindly following the EU's foreign policy in relation to Ukraine and Bulgaria. The actions taken in relation to the conflict in Ukraine have not only demonstrated the subservience of the political elites, but have also undermined the country's economic and security interests, and increased its energy vulnerability and dependency. Macedonia, a country completely dependent on Russian gas for its supply, now faces an uncertain winter. The country is yet to start with the construction of the interconnection gas pipeline with Greece in order to diversify its sources of gas. The interconnection with Greece however will only provide access to the far more expensive liquified natural gas, increasing the country's dependency on both Greece and the United States, thus cementing its status of a vassal state.

# **Poland's Foreign Policy in a Time of Geopolitical Tensions**

**Konrad Rajca**

## **Summary**

Polish foreign policy since the outbreak of war in Ukraine and the rise in geopolitical tensions has meant that Poland has been more active on the international stage, especially in the security area. Poland is among the countries most strongly supporting Ukraine and calling for the isolation of Russia and tighter sanctions on the country. The outbreak of the war has brought Poland closer to the United States, especially in the area of military cooperation, but also in the area of energy, after a period of initial cool relations from the Polish government with the new Joe Biden administration. Poland's relations with the European Commission over the non-payment to Poland of funds from the EU Reconstruction Fund remain tense. The Polish government has also decided to raise the issue of reparations from Germany for losses suffered by Poland during World War II, which many commentators believe is related to strained relations with Brussels. In the context of the war in Ukraine, it is also worth noting the changes in Poland's relations with its former strategic ally Hungary and the emergence of a new - significant Polish partner in the military and energy areas - South Korea.

## **Introduction**

From Poland's point of view, in the area of security, relations with the United States are strategic, while in economic matters with Germany, which is Poland's main economic partner. Russia is considered the biggest threat in security matters. The war in Ukraine and the increase in geopolitical tensions in the world have caused Poland to consistently strengthen its strategic relations with the United States, Ukraine and the countries of the Central and Eastern European region, being a NATO front



country. It is also trying to emphasize its subjectivity in the European Union, mainly vis-à-vis Germany, which, however, involves tensions with the European Commission and Germany. Poland is also reevaluating relations with Hungary and developing them with South Korea. It also invariably maintains friendly relations with China.

## **Support for Ukraine**

Poland's attitude to the escalation of the situation in Ukraine is expressed by Pawel Soloch, head of the Polish National Security Bureau (BBN). Russia must lose the war and recognize Ukraine within its pre-2014 borders, he said at the Warsaw Security Forum. He called for further aid to Ukraine and the imposition of more sanctions on Russia. - Russia must lose the war and agree to return Ukraine to its pre-2014 constitutional borders. Comprehensive support for Ukraine on its path to victory should be a priority for us," said Pawel Soloch. – Only after the full victory of Ukraine should we reflect on Russia's place in the security architecture," he noted.

In an exaltation of Russia's actions in Ukraine, the Polish Senate (the upper house of parliament) passed a resolution declaring the authorities of the Russian Federation a terrorist regime. The resolution also calls on the international community to support the International Criminal Court investigating those responsible for crimes in Ukraine

Also President Andrzej Duda spoke of support for Ukraine during the UN General Assembly in New York, where he met with US President Joe Biden, among others. Concluding his visit to the U.S., the Polish President expressed hope that the American military presence in Poland will strengthen, and that support for Ukraine will continue. - Stopping Russia's recurring imperial tendency, maintaining Ukraine's internationally recognized borders, and therefore Ukraine's recapture of lands occupied by Russia, this is the foundation of the future architecture of peace; if this succeeds, and we are doing everything to succeed, our security will

certainly increase, the security of all of central Europe will increase, he stressed.

Andrzej Duda also visited three African countries in September - Nigeria, Ivory Coast and Senegal - where he said Kremlin disinformation should be "combated" in the context of the war in Ukraine. Andrzej Duda with the presidents of African countries discussed Ukraine, raw materials and food issues.

### **Expanding military and energy cooperation with the US**

The outbreak of war in Ukraine has intensified Poland's cooperation with the United States. As early as April 5, Poland signed an agreement to supply Poland with 250 Abrams tanks of the latest version for about \$4.75 billion. The head of the Ministry of National Defense, Mariusz Blaszczak, also announced that later this year the US military will transfer 28 tanks to Poland for training purposes. Deliveries of all tanks are scheduled for 2025-26. In previous years, Poland has bought more than a billion euros from the Americans for F-35 aircraft, more than 200 million euros for the Patriot anti-missile system and nearly 100 million euros for Himars artillery.

In September, \$288.6 million was allocated by the U.S. Congress for Poland as part of Foreign Military Assistance. As explained by the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw, the aim is to strengthen Poland's ability to "deter and defend" against the increased threat from Russia. The USD 288.6 million, according to the United States, will "speed up the process of replenishing the (military) equipment that Poland has managed to transfer from its own stockpile" to Kiev. This includes tanks. Poland is the 2nd supplier of military equipment to Ukraine after the US.

The Americans are also likely to build Poland's first nuclear power plant. According to Polish politicians, there is a "very good chance" that it will be the American company Westinghouse, and the contract is expected to be signed in November. The Polish plan is to begin construction of the

first of two nuclear power plants in 2026 and commission the first of the plant's three reactors in 2033, enough to power 4 million households.

### **Relations with the Union still strained**

The Polish government's long-running conflict with the European Commission over the disbursement of billions of euros from the EU Reconstruction Fund (24 billion euros in grants and euro billion euros in loans from the EU's post-pandemic economic recovery fund) continues, despite the fact that the Commission has approved Poland's National Reconstruction Plan, which formally allows the disbursement. However, the European Commission points out that the Polish government has not fulfilled all the conditions for unblocking the funds related to restoring the independence of the Polish judiciary from power. The Polish government has a different opinion. There are also media reports saying that the Polish government's failure to take further action in the context of the changes in the Polish judiciary, expected by Brussels, could lead to the blocking of the disbursement from standard, EU budget funds from current programs of up to 75 billion euros, which would be a huge blow to the Polish budget and finances. The Polish government describes the information as untrue

The situation of worsening conflict with the European Commission is leading Polish leaders to sharpen their rhetoric toward Germany. They regard Germany as a country that dominates EU institutions. The chairman of Poland's ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party, Jaroslaw Kaczyński, said at the Economic Forum in Karpacz that "in the European Union there is a principle: whoever is stronger is better." - And since Germany is the strongest, the old German concept, a concept that today can be called neo-imperial, is functioning," he assessed. According to the Law and Justice chairman, like Germany's historical approach to Central and Eastern Europe, it assumed that "there would be an independent Poland, only it would be a Poland completely subordinated to Germany, and on top of that, a Poland that would be guarded so that it would not accidentally develop

to the German level, so that it would not catch up with Germany." - And this, one can say, is being implemented at the moment," he added. Jaroslaw Kaczynski also spoke of the "cultural foreignness of Western Europe" compared to Poland in moral matters.

## **Reparations from Germany for losses in World War II**

On September 1st, the 83rd anniversary of Germany's aggression against Poland, which marked the beginning of World War II in Europe, Polish authorities announced a report on war losses caused by Germany in occupied Poland in 1939-1945. They also presented a special diplomatic note to Germany on the payment of compensation. The report values Polish war losses at about 1.3 trillion euros. This is the first such report in Poland's post-war history. However, Germany considers the reparations issue closed. Most lawyers and experts believe that there is no longer any legal basis for demanding reparations from Germany, but according to some, the decisions of the authorities of the Communist People's Republic of Poland (the PRL) to renounce reparations were non-sovereign, taken under pressure from the Soviet Union, and taken defectively, even according to the law of the time.

## **Development of cooperation with South Korea**

South Korea, along with the United States, is becoming an important Polish partner in matters of military and energy cooperation. In the context of the war in Ukraine, Poland is significantly increasing its defense spending. Minister of National Defense Mariusz Blaszczak has signed agreements for the purchase of armaments from South Korea. These include FA-50 light fighters, (48 units) K2 tanks (about 1,000) and K9 self-propelled howitzers (600). The order is to be implemented in stages in phases. The cost of the deal may amount to 14 billion euros . Media reports also indicate that Poland will soon sign a letter of intent for the construction of nuclear

reactors by the South Korean consortium KHNP. The Koreans promise Poland, among other things, nuclear technology transfer and a low price.

### **Reevaluating the strategic partnership with Hungary**

The war in Ukraine has also reevaluated Polish-Hungarian relations. Until the conflict broke out, the two countries were strategic allies on policy issues within the European Union, supporting each other. However, a different approach to the war in Ukraine has shattered this solidarity. Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki assessed in September that the "attitude to the war" in Ukraine had severely divided the Visegrad Group (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia). However, he announced that he wants to work out a formula in which "we can return both to cooperation within the V4 and to joint actions with Hungary in those areas where we share values and interests." As recently as late July, the Head of the Polish government said that "the paths of Poland and Hungary have diverged." Morawiecki answered yes when asked if he confirmed the words of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who said on July that the war in Ukraine had shaken up Polish-Hungarian cooperation, the axis of the Visegrad Group. Orban also assessed that the goals of the two countries are the same, but "the problem is on the side of the heart," because while Hungarians look at the conflict as a war between two Slavic nations, Poles "feel that they themselves are also fighting in it." However, it seems that despite their differences in eastern politics, Poland and Hungary will continue to be united in their approach to EU policy.

### **Conclusion**

The war in Ukraine has posed many new challenges for Poland, particularly in the security and energy sectors. Since then, there has been a significant involvement of the country in supporting Ukraine in military action against Russia and increasing cooperation with the United States in the areas of

security and energy. On the other hand, Poland's strained relations with the European Union persist, which has projected a tightening of Polish-German relations. However, they do not seem to translate into mutual economic relations, but are rather an expression of German politics, rekindled historical pasts and "political gamesmanship."

# **Romania's Diplomatic Choices in the New Geopolitical Framework**

**Oana Popovici**

## **Summary**

Romania's external policy actions were directed towards supporting Ukraine, starting with urgent measures for providing food and shelter for refugees and continuing with facilitating Ukrainian exports. Faced with the situation in Ukraine, Romania's aim was to act for sanctioning the Russian Federation and isolate it at the international level and to support the political-diplomatic measures and assistance provided by the European Union (EU) and NATO. Romania acted as a promoter of neighbouring countries that intend to join NATO or the EU and focused more on regional forms of cooperation. The external actions in the future aim at remaining congruent with those of the three major partners: EU, NATO and the United States of America (US).

Romania celebrated, at the beginning of September, 160 years since the establishment of a Minister in charge with foreign affairs. It was an opportunity for summarizing the external policy actions in the last year and shaping Romania's external answer to the new geostrategic framework. Romania's external policy path remained congruent with the three directions indicated as essential by both the heads of the state and of the Foreign Affairs Ministry. In a recent speech, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bogdan Aurescu, restated that "Romania's diplomatic response had at its centre, without exception, our lasting membership in the European and Euro-Atlantic space of values and security."<sup>1</sup> For the future, the vision and objectives are built on the following three essential pillars of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mae.ro/node/59501>, accessed October 21<sup>st</sup>

the foreign and security policy: a responsible member state of the EU, a reliable ally within NATO, a determined Strategic Partner of the US.

Faced with the situation in Ukraine, Romania placed itself in the group of countries accusing Russia of the flagrant violation of international law, of the United Nations (UN) Charter and of the principles on which the rules-based international order is founded<sup>1</sup>, and supported the idea that the war was not conducted only against Ukraine, but also against democratic values and the pillars of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture. Following this reasoning, several external policy actions were conducted.

Romania highlighted its **commitment to promote the respect for international law** <sup>2</sup> on various occasions. Romania submitted, on September 13, the Declaration of Intervention in the proceedings initiated by Ukraine against the Russian Federation at the International Court of Justice, on the dispute relating to Accusations of Genocide. In addition, on September 16, Romania submitted the request for intervention in favour of Ukraine to the Registry of the European Court of Human Rights. The case deals with the serious violations of human rights, committed in the context of the military aggression carried out on the territory of Ukraine<sup>3</sup>.

Romania also voted, in the UN, for the adoption of the resolution<sup>4</sup> condemning Russia's illegal annexation of some Ukrainian territories. The resolution asks the UN member states not to recognize any change in the status of Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions and asks the Russian Federation to revoke the decision of the illegal annexation of some Ukrainian territories, as well as the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of military forces from the territory of Ukraine. This shows that Romania is among the countries supporting sovereignty,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.digi24.ro/opinii/agora-digi/opt-luni-de-diplomatie-de-razboi-pentru-securitatea-romaniei-opt-luni-de-sprijin-al-romaniei-pentru-ucraina-si-poporul-ucrainean-2127679>, accessed October 24<sup>th</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mae.ro/node/59948>, accessed October 24<sup>th</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Idem 2*

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mae.ro/node/59935>, accessed October 21<sup>st</sup>



unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within internationally recognized borders, including its territorial waters.

Romanian Government initiated the Bucharest Forum<sup>1</sup> at the beginning of September, a meeting gathering representatives from 23 EU countries, the Republic of Moldova, Norway, United Kingdom and European Commissions with the aim of **ensuring the integration of refugees**. Through this initiative, Romania showed that it is the moment in which emergency support should transform into long term support for the refugees in Ukraine, and the emergency intervention measures such as food, shelter at border crossing points or minimal support services are no longer sufficient. The role of the dialogue group that the Government of Romania initiated is to inform and convince the European governments to adopt quick and effective measures, in the view of the difficult winter ahead. Long-term housing, integration of the labour market, access to education were identified as challenges which should be quickly addressed. Romania has already launched, at the end of July, the National Plan of Measures for the Integration of Ukrainian Refugees in Romania. In addition, once with the start of the war in Ukraine, Romania was the first country to apply the temporary protection directive granted by the EU to displaced persons<sup>2</sup>.

From a diplomatic point of view, Romania's aim was two folded<sup>3</sup>: to act for sanctioning the Russian Federation and isolate it at the international level; and to grant political-diplomatic support to Ukraine through the organizations Romania is part of, primarily the EU and NATO. In this respect, Romania was part of the EU countries which supported the adoption of the eight package of sanctions against Russia. Recently, such measures are also targeted towards Russia's partners, Belarus and Iran. Romania also endorsed UN's actions for condemning the Russian aggression. In addition, Romania supported Ukraine's and Republic of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://gov.ro/ro/stiri/conferinta-de-presa-sustinuta-de-doamna-madalina-turza-consilier-de-stat-in-cancelaria-prim-ministrului> accessed October 21<sup>st</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mae.ro/node/59551>, accessed October 24<sup>th</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Idem 2

Moldova in obtaining the status of a candidate state for the EU and it frequently declared a similar support for other neighbouring countries.

Other forms of the **multidimensional support** towards Ukraine targeted measures for facilitating the transport and transit of Ukrainian products to international markets, although this meant complex measures for expanding the transit and logistics capacities of the ports of Constanța and Galați. So far, such actions allowed the export of over 5.2 million tons of Ukrainian grain and 5.5 million tons of other goods from Ukraine<sup>1</sup>. Another recent cooperation initiative reunited foreign ministers from Romania, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, and targeted the topic of energy security. Also, Minister Bogdan Aurescu expressed support for strengthening the EU's military support for Ukraine, by adopting the sixth tranche of the financial contribution through the European Peace Facility and by launching an EU military assistance mission<sup>2</sup>.

The regional dimension of the external policy form of cooperation received greater importance. Romania, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova launched a trilateral format of cooperation in September, with the aim of enhancing collaboration in different sectors<sup>3</sup>. The annual forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube region<sup>4</sup> also led to the adoption of a Joint Declaration condemning Russia's aggression in Ukraine, reiterating the importance of solidarity at the EU level and between the 14 countries, members of the Danube Strategy. Strengthening the cooperation between the states of the Danube region for the benefit of the citizens and for overcoming the current crisis was also one of the topics in discussion.

Romania's representatives also showed a **clear intention on supporting NATO's actions**, highlighting in several meetings and reunions "the essential importance of cooperation with other international partners who share the same values, and advocating for the strengthening the EU-NATO

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<sup>1</sup> [Idem 2](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mae.ro/node/59972>, accessed October 24<sup>th</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mae.ro/node/59617>, accessed October 20<sup>th</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mae.ro/node/59999>, accessed October 24<sup>th</sup>

cooperation and for a solid Transatlantic Partnership as a cornerstone of European security”<sup>1</sup>. Romania managed to obtain the reconfirmation of the importance of the Black Sea region for the Euro-Atlantic security and to benefit of an enhanced Allied presence on the Eastern Flank, following the NATO Summit in Madrid during the Summer<sup>2</sup>. Romania’s intention is to increase its contribution within NATO on multiple dimensions, acting as a factor of security and stability<sup>3</sup>.

Romania also has an **active role in promoting NATO’s partnership policy**<sup>4</sup>, by supporting partners from the Eastern Neighbourhood, and also strengthening the Alliance’s ties with the Southern Neighbourhood. In this regard, Romania provided support for other countries in the neighbourhood, under the form of voluntary contributions on the NATO line to strengthen the resilience and capabilities of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Jordan. According to a statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the decision is in line with the Romania’s foreign policy and security priorities, as it contribute to the fulfilment of the objectives of strengthening security and stability in the proximity of the Eastern Flank, especially in the Black Sea region.

To conclude, Romania’s remains constant in the support provided to Ukraine, but in a way meant not to escalate the already existing conflict between NATO and Ukraine. Romania opted for supporting the decisions regarding the respect for the international law, promoting diplomatic measures and providing multilateral support especially in what regards the integration of refugees and the facilitation of Ukrainian cereals and goods, supporting EU decisions and acting as a promoter for the countries that intend to further join the NATO or the EU. In addition, regional forms of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.presidency.ro/ro/media/comunicate-de-presa/participarea-presedintelui-romaniei-klaus-ihannis-la-prima-reuniune-a-comunitatii-politice-europene-de-la-praga-republica-ceha>, accessed October 20<sup>th</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For more details, check the July external briefing: <https://china-cee.eu/2022/08/31/romania-external-relations-briefing-romantias-achievements-after-the-nato-summit-in-madrid-and-the-black-sea-security-summit/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mae.ro/node/59297>, accessed October 20<sup>th</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mae.ro/node/59958>, accessed October 21<sup>st</sup>

cooperation received more attention and have the potential of enhancing long term collaboration in different sectors. In brief, Romania decided to follow the path announced a couple of years ago, that of conducting the foreign policy actions in congruence with those of the three major partners, EU, NATO and US.

# **Diplomatic Choices of Serbia under the New Situation**

**Ivona Ladjevac**

## **Summary**

The war in Ukraine and its consequences put Serbia in an extremely difficult situation, in which it has to choose between following its own national interest and principles, and jeopardizing national security, but also, among other things, the quality of life of its citizens. The course taken at the moment - condemnation of Russian aggression and support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine, but without imposing sanctions on Russia and positioning in a different way in the geopolitical confrontation between the West and Russia - gives results, in the sense that the EU still does not deny Serbia the prospect of membership, and Russia does not cancel its support to the issues of national interest and a privileged gas price. The question is for how long such course will be sustainable.

## **Introduction**

For a long time, Serbia has been considered belonging somewhere between the East and the West, not only in geopolitical, but dominantly in civilizational sense. In the global crisis and the conflict in Eastern Europe, such a position is more and more difficult to sustain, and the pressure to make a choice is getting stronger.

Although there is no formal national foreign policy strategy, Serbia's foreign policy priorities were determined in 2009-2010 as: protection of the constitutional order, European integration, regional cooperation and economic development. These priorities should be achieved by relying on

the four “pillars” of foreign policy: the EU, the Russian Federation, the USA and the People's Republic of China.<sup>1</sup>

The defining foreign political goal of the Republic of Serbia is full legal membership in the European Union. Besides other, that means that during the accession period, Serbia should try to align all own external political activities with the EU values and goals as much as possible. Considering huge differences in standing point over status of Serbian southern province, Kosovo and Metohija, this question is not likely to be resolved in a manner that EU desires to be.

Developing and deepening relations with major powers such as the United States, Russia, and China, also is Serbian external political goal. Bearing in mind position of the United States of America in world politics, it is the vital interest of the Serbia to have good relations with this country. At the same time, the traditional good relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Serbia should be improved, oriented towards the development of all forms of cooperation, with special emphasis on economic cooperation, including the field of energy. Based on the increasingly important role of the People's Republic of China in contemporary international relations, the strengthening of economic, political and cultural relations between the Republic of Serbia and this country also is one of the priorities of foreign policy activities, primarily in order to use numerous potentials for the improvement of bilateral cooperation.

What is common for relations which Serbia has both with China and Russia is their full support in its efforts to preserve full territorial integrity and sovereignty, i.e., to secure full implementation of the Resolution 1244<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mladen Lišanin, „Spoljnopolitički prioriteti Srbije“, *Politička revija*, 1/2012, <https://doi.org/10.22182/pr.3112012>.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution 1244 (1999) adopted by the Security Council at its 4011th meeting, on 10 June 1999, UN Security Council, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/274488?ln=en>, accessed on: 25/10/2022. Out of 13 acts on aggression against Ukraine adopted on this session, Serbia voted for four, but could not support nine because they were imposing sanctions on Russia.

adopted within the United Nations Security Council. That precious support gives an extra quality to the relation with these two countries.

### **Pressures and choices**

Sanctions that they imposed were meant to stop Russia to behave aggressively and to stop breaching the international law. Since Serbia always insists on respect and implementation of the international law, meaning that it strongly condemns any act of aggression, Serbian voting in favor of Resolution calling for stopping intervention in Ukraine never came into question. Nevertheless, likewise on that session, on all others that followed, convened with similar agenda, Serbian representatives keep reminding international community on double standards politics that apply to Ukraine and Serbia. Because, just as Russia violated the territorial integrity of Ukraine, so the Western powers attacked Serbia, which did not attack anyone, violated its territorial integrity and then, despite the UN resolution, recognized the self-proclaimed independence of, so-called, Kosovo<sup>1</sup>. Such attitude shows deep and rooted hypocrisy of the West, allegedly devoted to justice and fairness.

In its relations towards Serbia, western countries used current crisis caused by the conflict in Ukraine to make additional pressure to Serbia. Namely, very soon after the outbreak of conflict in Ukraine, Serbia came under “cease-fire” immediately to “choose a side” and to align together with the United States of America and the European Union in imposing sanctions on Russian Federation.

As some experts put it, Serbia's position is between a rock and a hard place: between the principle of the inviolability of the territorial integrity of states and pragmatism, which dictates the preservation of good relations with

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<sup>1</sup> “Aleksandar Vučić u UN: Jednako su povređeni i suverenitet Ukrajine i Srbije”, 22/09/2022, *Vreme*, <https://www.vreme.com/vesti/aleksandar-vucic-u-un-jednako-su-povredjeni-i-suverenitet-ukrajine-i-srbije/>, accessed on: 25/10/2022.

Russia, primarily in the context of energy and the representation of Serbian interests in the UN Security Council.<sup>1</sup>

There are two obvious points between which Serbia and its president should draw a line. The first is pro-Russian sentiment in Serbia, cultural and historical closeness, additionally cemented by propaganda in recent decades. The second one is that Serbia cannot support Russian actions in Ukraine without jumping into its own mouth on the issue of Kosovo and Metohija. What is especially important is the fact that the official Kyiv did not recognize that unilateral secession.

To conclude, a neutral position will be increasingly difficult to sustain as the crisis escalates. Demands from the west to impose sanctions on Russia became daily mantra, while Serbian hands are additionally tied given the gas agreements with Moscow, the presence of Russian companies in the energy sector, their participation in critical infrastructure projects and reliance on Russian support regarding the Kosovo and Metohija issue.

In spite of being aware that preserving relations with Russian Federation is the matter of Serbian national interest, out of many facts primarily due to its energy dependence, the European Union works hard to persuade Serbia to follow the main pro-Western course. Still, there are notable differences between the EU members how this action of persuasion should be carried on.

Unlike Germany, whose chancellor Olaf Scholz conditioned Serbia's membership in the Union with the recognition of the so-called Kosovo state<sup>2</sup>, at the same time openly requested that Serbia immediately should join restrictive measures against Russia, French President Emmanuel

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<sup>1</sup> "Ukrajinska kriza: Srbija između čekića i nakovnja", Deutsche Welle, 23/02/2022, <https://www.dw.com/sr/ukrajinska-kriza-srbija-izme%C4%91u-%C4%8Deki%C4%87a-i-nakovnja/a-60881676>, accessed on: 25/10/2022.

<sup>2</sup> "Olaf Šolc u Beogradu: Priznanje Kosova nemački uslov za ulazak Srbije u EU, predsednik Vučić tvrdi da to „čuje prvi put"", *BBC News*, 10. Jun 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-61750503>, accessed on: 25/10/2022.



Macron advocates a "middle way" when it comes to the Union's policy towards Belgrade. Macron proposes the creation of a European geopolitical community, in order to give the candidate countries a certain European perspective, but also to reward progress in reforms by opening Brussels treasury<sup>1</sup> .

A similar course was taken by the official Vienna, from where, after Macron's proposal, a "non-paper" on the gradual integration of the candidate countries arrived, which also implies significant financial assistance from Brussels.

On the side of Germany, which has strongly tightened its grip around Serbia, for now their traditional allies are the Netherlands and Belgium, as well as countries with strong anti-Russian sentiment, such as Poland and the Baltic countries, but also some of our neighbors, more precisely Croatia.

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama also warned that the policy of pressuring Serbia could return to Brussels like a boomerang. Rama called on the EU not to pressure Belgrade to impose sanctions on Russia, emphasizing that there should be more understanding for Serbia's position in this regard, and warned that Western pressure could be harmful to the entire region.

When comes to the European Parliament, its leading MP's even in March expressed their regret with Serbia's non-alignment with European sanctions against Russia: "We expect Serbia to align fully with the Common Foreign and Security Policy of European Union, including the sanctions adopted against the regime in Russia... there is no room for appeasement of the aggressor."<sup>2</sup> In July, MEP's asked newly elected

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<sup>1</sup> "The European (geo)political community and enlargement reform: Two important but separate discussions", European Policy Center, 14/07/2022, <https://www.epc.eu/en/Publications/The-European-geopolitical-community-and-enlargement-reform~49e404>, accessed on: 25/10/2022.

<sup>2</sup> "Serbia: Leading MEPs regret Serbia's non-alignment with EU sanctions against Russia", European Parliament, March 1,

government of Serbia “immediately to align” with the EU in its stance towards Russia. Vladimir Bilcik openly criticized Serbia for its diverse foreign policy, saying that it is time to “decide where it stands”.<sup>1</sup> After Serbia and Russia signed a Plan of consultations<sup>2</sup>, MEP’s became even more harsh in their demands. “The EU cannot continue accession talks with Serbia if they don’t align with EU sanctions against Russia. That’s what we will say in the Parliament’s upcoming enlargement report.”<sup>3</sup>

In spite of such reactions, Serbia is keeping steady its balancing course following its national interests as guiding star.

## Conclusion

As Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ivica Dačić, recently said, Serbian government is doing in best interest of its citizens. He reminded that the issue of sanctions against Russia came first on a table in 2014, when the West imposed first sanctions on Russia. Since then, Serbia holds firm position not to introduce sanctions on Russia, apart from other reasons, due to its own experience to be on sanctions during 90-ies.

To tell the truth, pressures are getting stronger, but Serbia keeps position to make own decision in accordance with its interest.

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2022. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/serbia-leading-meps-regret-serbia-s-non-product-details/20220301DPU32283>, accessed on: 25/10/2022.

<sup>1</sup> “‘Time to decide’: MEPs call for Serbia to change its stance on Russia”, *Euro news*, 07/07/2022, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/07/06/eu-parliament-calls-for-serbia-to-change-its-stance-on-russia>, accessed on: 25/10/2022.

<sup>2</sup> “Selaković i Lavrov potpisali Plan konsultacija za 2023-2024”, *Politika*, 24/09/2022, <https://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/518269/Selakovic-i-Lavrov-potpisali-Plan-konsultacija-za-2023-2024>, accessed on: 25/10/2022.

<sup>3</sup> “MEPs: No accession talks if Serbia doesn’t align with sanctions on Russia”, *NI*, 26/09/2022, <https://rs.n1info.com/english/news/meps-no-accession-talks-if-serbia-doesnt-align-with-sanctions-on-russia/>, accessed on: 25/10/2022.



# **Diplomatic Choices of the Republic of Slovenia under the New Situation**

**Gašper Pirc**

## **Summary**

Even as a federal member of socialist Yugoslavia, Slovenia has maintained a relatively moderate approach to external affairs. Yugoslavia was a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement, which was created to transpose the bipolar logic of the Cold War Period. After gaining its independence in 1991, Slovenia fully diplomatically leaned towards the Western sphere of influence, and quickly gained recognition from the USA and the member states of the European Union.

Slovenia became a member of the EU and NATO in 2004, and since then, its external politics have mostly been in accord with the common goals of those organizations, even if Slovenia has concurrently developed a specific agenda in regard to the Western Balkans.

While there have been some changes regarding its international conduct in recent years, Slovenia has joined most of the European Union in its condemnation of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and supported the sanctions against Russia while providing economic, military, and humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

## **Background: the goals of Yugoslavian (and by extension, Slovenian) diplomacy before the Slovenian independence**

Between 1945 and 1991, Slovenia was one of the constituent states of the (Socialist) Federal Republic of Yugoslavia which in most respects succeeded the Interwar Period Kingdom of Yugoslavia. While initially allied with the Soviet Union and oriented towards the Eastern Block

political and cultural sphere, Yugoslavia soon engaged in a diplomatic and ideological dispute with the Soviet Union, leading to the political split and eventually towards a specific geopolitical model of non-alignment. [1] In 1956, Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito along with India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser signed the Declaration of Brijuni by which the Non-Aligned Movement was founded. [2] While the movement never went much beyond being a structural axis of coordination for the states outside of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, its general principles conditioned Yugoslavia's (and by extension, Slovenia's) political and diplomatic choices for a large part of its existence. Among the main principles of the Non-Aligned Movement were the nurturing of the mutual co-existence, respect, and non-interference in domestic affairs as well as cooperative effort for the mutual benefit that went beyond the bipolar logics of the Cold War period. [3]

While Yugoslavia retained the socialist political and economic doctrine and the movement to the countries in Western Europe was difficult, there were several tensions with the communist countries of the Eastern Bloc and other states in the Non-Aligned Movement such as Cuba. [4] Nevertheless, for a greater part of its existence, despite the criticism of the Soviet Union's hegemony, frequent diplomatic clashes, and ideological differences socialist Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union remained in a productive relationship and were strong trading partners.

The relationship between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union was not only under stress due to the above-mentioned issues but also due to Yugoslavia's diplomatic assent with China [5] and cooperation with USA. [6]

In the late 1980s, Yugoslavia was in political and economic turmoil. In that period, it steered toward the Western economic model of capitalism, while some elements (Slovenia in particular) also vied for diplomatic support from the Western countries.

However, the relationship between Slovenia (while still a part of Yugoslavia) and the USA was also tense. The US government generally opposed the independence of Slovenia and supported the continued unity of Yugoslavia. [7] After independence was achieved in 1991, the relationship between Slovenia and the USA quickly improved and has been steadily positive since then. [8]

### **The Slovenian external relations since independence in 1991**

After gaining independence in 1991, Slovenia primarily sought to establish productive diplomatic relations with the countries in the European Union and the European Economic Area. While the first three countries which acknowledged the statehood of independent Slovenia and started diplomatic relations with it were the three Baltic countries that were in a similar historic position (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) and did so already in 1991, the next countries to open diplomatic channels were already the ones that would have critical importance for the Slovenian political, economic, and diplomatic orientation in the next decades: Austria and Germany, both of which recognized Slovenia on January 15, 1992. In the following days, two other neighboring countries started diplomatic relations with Slovenia – Hungary, and Italy. Concurrently with Slovenia, the final neighboring state Croatia vied for independence from Yugoslavia in 1991; its bid was internationally recognized in the first months of 1992. Slovenia and Croatia mutually recognized their bid for independence in June 1991 and started diplomatic relations as independent countries in February 1992.

Already in 1992, most of the countries belonging to the Western cultural and political sphere recognized Slovenia and opened mutual diplomatic channels. The United States of America was the 49th state to recognize Slovenia in August 1992. On January 7, 1993, Canada started diplomatic relations with Slovenia as one of the last NATO countries to do so. [9]

Since its independence was internationally recognized Slovenia heavily cooperated with the United States of America and the member states of the European Union in order to resolve the issues stemming from the breakup of Yugoslavia and to achieve economic and political development into a modern Western democracy. Even today, around 75% of Slovenia's foreign trade is made within European Union. [\[10\]](#) During the 1990s and 2000s Slovenia was often considered an exemplary case of successful transformation from a socialist country into a modern (capitalist) democracy and was among the first of the former socialist republic of Central and Eastern Europe to enter relevant international organizations. It became a member of both the European Union and NATO in 2004 after several years of preparations. Memberships in these organizations were one of the main strategic goals of Slovenia since its independence in 1991. [\[11\]](#)

Slovenia held the presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2008 and 2021; in both cases, one of its main strategic goals was to work toward the inclusion of Western Balkans states into the European diplomatic, economic, and political sphere. [\[12\]](#)

Since the 1990s, Slovenia's diplomatic strategy tends to veer toward mediation, cooperation, and moderation between entities with different, sometimes even clashing ideological views. For example, in 2001 Slovenia hosted a historical meeting between American President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin. [\[13\]](#)

Generally, Slovenia leaned towards moderation in foreign relations and has nurtured mostly positive relations with most of the world states, including the United States, China, and Russia; Slovenia was also among the EU countries with the most reserved response to the Russian aggression in the first months of the crisis in Ukraine in 2014. [\[14\]](#) On the other hand, since

its gaining of membership in the EU, Slovenia's foreign policy was dominated by the common policy of the European Union which affected its foreign relations in 2022.

### **The changes in international conduct and the Slovenian diplomatic choices in 2022**

During the term of the 14th Slovenian government (2020-2022), there have been some visible changes in the Slovenian approach to foreign relations and its international identity, especially regarding the representation in media. For example, the Slovenian government was often criticized for its alleged attempts to silence independent media and to impede the rule of law; in that regard, Slovenia was often compared with Hungary and Poland. [\[15\]](#) While less immediately visible, there appear to have been some changes in regard to international partnerships and diplomatic allegiances. In 2022, many of the media which are politically affiliated with the political right wing were found to be financed by Hungarian investors. [\[16\]](#) There was also a surge of interest on behalf of the Hungarian companies in Slovenian infrastructure.

Nevertheless, Slovenia did not follow Hungarian PM Viktor Orban in his criticism of the sanctions against Russia after its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Both the 14th and its successor, the 15th Slovenian government, have been fully in concord with the EU's sanctions that were imposed on Russia and have so far aided Ukraine in an economic, political, and humanitarian sense. In 2022, Slovenia-Russia relations appear to be at a historical low point and Slovenia was added to Russia's list of "unfriendly nations". [\[17\]](#)

Slovenia continues to nurture friendly relations with other states of the European Union which were mostly uniform in their response to the Russian aggression toward Ukraine. In October 2022, the Slovenian president Borut Pahor met with the German president Frank-Walter



Steinmeier and awarded him the highest state award for personal merit for deepening all-around relations between Slovenia and Germany. As the Office of the President of Slovenia communicated, Germany is Slovenia's critical foreign partner and the meeting was a recognition of the high level of partnership relations and continuation of the productive political dialogue between Slovenia and Germany. In times of crisis and global geopolitical changes, Germany has been steadily considered Slovenia's critical political ally. [\[18\]](#)

Likewise, Slovenia continues to vouch for support for the Western Balkans countries to join the European Union. This has been one of Slovenia's main strategic orientations in international affairs, and even in 2022 when Ukraine and similar countries bordering Russia may gain more visibility in regard to the joining of the EU, Slovenia repeatedly organizes meetings and works on the agenda which would allow the countries of the Western Balkans transition into the zone of EU's political and economic influence. [\[19\]](#)

## **Conclusion**

Ever since it started to gain international recognition, Slovenia was influenced by the Western political, economic, and diplomatic models, and has faithfully followed most of the common strategic goals and foreign relations orientations of the European Union since becoming a member of the EU in 2004. With that being said, Slovenia generally appeared relatively moderate in its stances on some important issues in external affairs and led a specific agenda under the auspices of the EU which has been oriented towards the countries of the Western Balkans and the aim of the facilitation of the Western Balkans economic development and the enlargement of the European Union with the countries of the Western Balkans.

During the 14th government of Slovenia, there have been some changes in regard to Slovenia's handling of external affairs, but the government nevertheless retained its orientation towards the Western sphere of influence, which was confirmed by the introductory acts of the current (15th) government of Slovenia. In spite of Slovenia's dependency upon the EU's geopolitical tendencies, there are however indications that Slovenia might in the future conduct unique diplomatic approaches towards the countries such as China or Brazil. The relations with these countries may have been diplomatically underdeveloped in recent times due to the EU's preoccupation with the war in Russia.

[1] See Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-building and Legitimation, 1918–2005*, Indiana University Press, 2006.

[2] <https://united-archives.de/id/02175765>.

[3] Among other sources, see <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Non-Aligned-Movement>.

[4] See e.g. <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/09/02/archives/the-nonaligned-cannot-agree-on-whom-not-to-align-with.html>.

[5] See <https://www.csmonitor.com/1980/0507/050747.html>.

[6] For example, with the agreement of the US government the American company Westinghouse built a power plant in Slovenia's Krško in 1981: <http://www.nas-stik.si/novice/podrobnosti-novice/westinghouse-ze-vec-kot-40-let-zanesljiv-partner-nek>.

[7] See <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-07-09-wr-2223-story.html>.

[8] <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-slovenia/>.

[9] Source: [https://fotogalerija.dz-rs.si/datoteke/Publikacije/Zborniki\\_RN/2016/Priznanja\\_samostojne\\_Slovenije\\_.pdf](https://fotogalerija.dz-rs.si/datoteke/Publikacije/Zborniki_RN/2016/Priznanja_samostojne_Slovenije_.pdf).

[10] Source: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-slovenia/>.

[11] Sources: <https://www.gov.si/en/topics/slovenias-nato-membership/> ; <https://www.investslovenia.org/business-environment/slovenia-in-the-eu/>.

[12] See e.g. <https://www.gov.si/en/news/a-european-perspective-for-the-western-balkans-among-the-priorities-of-slovenias-presidency-of-the-eu-council/> ; <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/slovenia-wants-magic-formula-on-western-balkans-as-eu-leaders-likely-to-fall-short-of-solution/>.

[13] See <https://www.24ur.com/novice/slovenija/pred-20-let-ja-sta-se-v-sloveniji-srecala-bush-mlajsi-in-putin.html>.

[14] See e.g. <https://sloveniatimes.com/slovenia-expects-diplomatic-solution-of-crimea-crisis/>.

[15] See e.g. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/agenda/briefing/2021-03-08/6/media-freedom-under-attack-in-poland-hungary-and-slovenia> ; <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/slovenia-poland-sided-with-hungary-eu-summit-luxembourg-says-2021-06-25/>.

[16] <https://podcrto.si/napovedujemo-virtualni-pogovor-ali-v-sloveniji-uvazamo-madzarski-medijski-model/>.

[17] Sources: <https://www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/na-svetu-za-nacionalno-varnost-enotno-z-obsodbo-agresije-v-ukrajini/613788> ; <https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/here-are-the-nations-on-russia-s-unfriendly-countries-list-1.5810483>.

[18] Source: <https://www.rtv slo.si/evropska-unija/pahor-odlikoval-nemskega-kolega-prijateljstvo-med-slovenijo-in-nemcijo-je-trdno/643585>.

[19] <https://www.rtv slo.si/evropska-unija/na-bledu-izrazi-podpore-siritvi-a-zahodni-balkan-vse-bolj-dvomi-o-pripravljenosti-eu-ja/638828>.

