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# **RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN 1992-2019**

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## **RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN 1992-2019**

This article is devoted to analyzing the Kremlin's foreign policy in the post-Yugoslav space by the case of Russia's foreign policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. An analysis of Russia's foreign policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina will help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Russia's foreign policy towards the post-Yugoslav countries. In addition, the author, examining the Russian-Bosnian relations during the last 27 years, tries to show the foreign policy of the superpower towards quasi-confederation and determine the place of Russia in the Western Balkans.

Special attention is paid in the article to relations between Russia and the Republika Srpska which is against the entry of BiH to NATO. The close relations of Republika Srpska with Russia contradict the plans of the USA, which want to see BiH in NATO. Since the 1990s, the US has been trying to oust Russia from the Western Balkans. However, Russia demonstrates an aspiration to prevent the entry of BiH to NATO and supports the policy of Republika Srpska.

JEL Classification: F59.

Key words: BiH, Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, CIS, NATO, Russia, Western Balkans, Yugoslavia.

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## Introduction

Russia and Balkans have a long history of the relationship. Undivided attention was paid to Balkans in Russian foreign policy from the beginning of the XIX century. In that period of time, Russia tried to be a patron of the fraternal people of the Balkans, hence it actively supported the national liberation movements of Slavic. During the last 27 years (1992-2019), Russian foreign policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina had a complex history due to certain domestic and external problems. At the beginning of the 1990s, during the collapse of Yugoslavia, Serbs thought that fraternal Russia would help and defend them. However, in fact, Russia was not able to pay attention to Serbs due to its own problems after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Moreover, Russia has chosen a democratic way of development of the state, preferred to have a deep partnership with the West rather than with Serbs. Nowadays, Western Balkans (especially Bosnia and Herzegovina) are the arena of rivalry between Russia and the USA. The United States want BiH to join NATO, while Russia tries not to allow this process through strengthening cooperation with Republika Srpska. Despite the rivalry of the two superpowers in the Western Balkans, there is still no comprehensive study on the analysis of internal and external factors influence on Russia's foreign policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992-2019. Among the factors that influenced Russia's foreign policy towards BiH in 1992-2019, we can underline the decline and growth of the economy, the threat to the territorial integrity and security of the state, the pro-Western ideology of Yeltsin's administration, the threat of losing Russian influence in the post-Soviet space and increasing of Russian influence in the Middle East. Existing studies do not give us a complete picture of internal and external factors influence Russia's foreign policy towards BiH during the last twenty-seven years. The article is aimed at filling the above-mentioned gaps. The aim of the article is to study Russia's foreign policy towards the post-Yugoslav space by the case of Russian-Bosnian relations in 1992-2019.

**Russian foreign policy towards BiH in 1992-1999.** On January 13, 1992, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a note to the heads of diplomatic missions where was said, «the Ministry requests to consider the Russian Federation as a party to all existing international treaties instead of the USSR» (Nota Ministerstva inostrannyh del Rossijskoj Federacii 1992, p. 34). The minister of foreign affairs of Russian SFSR, Andrey Kozyrev became the first minister of foreign affairs in independent Russia. In that period, Russia's foreign policy was not still fully formed, which led to the recognition of the collapse of Yugoslavia and the passive participation of the Kremlin in resolving the conflict in BiH. Russia tried to prove its loyalty to the West that wanted big concessions from Russia's heads. That is why Russia sometimes acted against the interests of the Serbian population of BiH. Thus, on April 27, 1992, Russia recognized the independence of

BiH and on May 30 of that year, it in the UN Security Council voted to impose sanctions against Yugoslavia. Russia's actions in the UN Security Council dealt a crushing blow to the age-old friendship of two fraternal peoples and led to a loss of Serb confidence. The first president of the FRY, Dobrica Ćosić commented on Russia's support for sanctions against Yugoslavia as follows: "Russians, their help and support are another Serbian delusions" (Ćosić, 1992, p. 89). The Russian Foreign Ministry at that time hinted that Russia would not support the Serbs in the military conflict. This is evidenced by the thesis of Andrey Kozyrev: "neither Pan-Slavic nor Orthodox ideas ... can be the basis of Russia's course in the Yugoslav conflict" (Kozyrev, 1995, p. 120). A weak foreign policy strategy, a pro-Western position, as well as Russia's passivity in protecting its interests in the Balkans contributed to the revitalization of Washington in this region. Washington using favorable conditions started to expand its influence in BiH. In 1993, the USA wanted to create a state of Bosnian Muslims (Fenenko, 2001, p. 62). It should be noted that Russian society was dissatisfied with Russia's policy regarding BiH. According to Russian diplomat Yuli Kvitsinsky, Yugoslav policy of Russia has caused growing criticism from the Russians (Nikiforov, 1999, p. 26). In February 1994, Russia finally sent 400 peacekeepers to Sarajevo to resolve the Sarajevo crisis. According to Elena Guskova, Russian peacekeepers played a positive role during the military conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Guskova, 2016, p. 374). The presence of Russian peacekeepers in BiH reduced the tension between Bosnians and Serbs in Sarajevo.

In 1994, Russia joined Contact Group where were the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy in order to solve the conflict in BiH. In fact, Russia played an insignificant role in the decision-making process in the Contact Group, where the main players were Americans. The activities of the Contact Group introduced to the world community a new type of peacekeeping within the framework of the settlement of the Bosnian conflict, namely, «the transition of international organizations to the rigid doctrine of peace enforcement» (Guskova, 1998, p. 37).

In 1995, after the use of force by the North Atlantic alliance against BiH, Russia seriously thought about the security of their borders. It should be noted that NATO for the entire history of its existence, for the first time in Europe, used military force exactly against BiH. Under the influence of NATO aggression in BiH, the Russian leadership began to realize that the true goal of the United States is not to spread democracy, but the enlargement of the North Atlantic alliance to the borders of Russia. In that very period of time, Boris Yeltsin proposed the creation of a Federation of Serbia with Bosnian Serbs and demanded support from the leaders of the Group of Seven (G7). However, the proposal was not even discussed. The former president of France Jacques Chirac called Yeltsin's suggestion as "only a Russian idea" (Guskova, 2001, p. 545). It should be noticed that in the West, Yeltsin's idea was characterized as an attempt of Russia to

create Greater Serbia, which contradicted the plans of the USA and the EU. Moreover, the West did not take Yeltsin seriously.

Domestic researchers negatively assess NATO's invasion of the Western Balkan states. For example, according to Elena Guskova, "The Balkans have become a polygon for ensuring NATO's independence" (Guskova, 2001, p. 668). In the 1990s, it was important to the USA to prevent an increase in Russia's influence in the Western Balkans. MGIMO professor, Elena Ponomaryova notes that Yugoslavia was a victim of the implementation by the United States, "a strategy to destroy the world socialist system and its main psychohistorical adversary - Russia" (Ponomaryova, 2009, p. 118). Some foreign researchers negatively assessed NATO's invasion of the Western Balkan states too. French specialist in geopolitics, Pierre Marie Gallois in his geopolitical essay on Bosnia and Herzegovina noted that "the crisis in Yugoslavia was intensified by the United States with the hope of extracting maximum benefit from supporting Bosnian Muslims" (Gallois, 119, pp. 174-175). The professor of history at the University of Arizona David Gibbs supported Gallois' point of view in his book named *First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Gibbs, 2009).

On November 21, 1995, in Dayton, at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (Ohio, USA) the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also known as the Dayton Agreement, was developed. The Dayton Agreement put an end to the war in BiH. The city of Dayton was most likely not chosen by chance, because this city was named after Jonathan Dayton, a captain in the American War of Independence. It was the Dayton agreement that forced Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to recognize each other as independent states. The President of Serbia Slobodan Milosevic, the President of Croatia Franjo Tudjman and the leader of the Bosnians Alija Izetbegovic, signed the agreement in Paris on December 14, 1995. The guarantor countries of the agreement are Russia, the USA, Great Britain, France, and Germany.

Russia reacted with restraint to the Dayton agreement, although Viktor Chernomyrdin said that "the signing of the peace agreements on Bosnia was a historic event" (ITAR-TASS 1995, p. 3). Russia understood that the Dayton agreement signing testifies to the victory of the United States. American experts played a key role in the development of the Dayton agreement. According to the former US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, in 1995 the US pushed Russia away and imposed its approach to solving the Yugoslav crisis (Nikiforov, 1999, p. 226). Later Honorary Doctor of the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs V. I. Popov in his monograph "Modern Diplomacy. Theory and Practice" noted that "the Dayton Conference is a prime example of the new "US power diplomacy" (Popov, 2006, p. 451).

The signatories to the Dayton Accords did not hide their disappointment with the agreements. According to the former vice-president of the Republika Srpska Nikola Koljević, at that moment it was important for the Americans "to show everyone that they are the leading force in the world and can complete what Europe failed" (Ponomaryova, 2011, p. 232). Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Muhamed Šaćirbegović, like Nikola Kolevich, believes that the Americans tried to achieve their personal goals, rather than to establish peace on Bosnian land. He believed that it was important for Richard Holbrooke to achieve positive results for the American administration and for himself, and not for the sake of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Šaćirbegovic, 1996, p. 14).

In January 1996, Andrei Kozyrev was dismissed. One of the reasons for Kozyrev's resignation was the lack of a clear policy towards Yugoslavia (Nikiforov, 2012, p. 163). However, Russia was not able to strengthen its influence in the Western Balkans even after Kozyrev's resignation. Of course, Russia made some attempts to show its power to the USA in the Balkans at that time. This is evidenced by the incident at Pristina airport. On June 12, 1999, Russian peacekeepers ahead of NATO forces occupied the Slatina airport in Pristina. Nevertheless, Russia could not win the struggle for influence on the Western Balkans in the 1990s.

**The internal and external factors that influenced Russian foreign policy towards BiH in the 1990s.** The fail of Russian foreign policy towards BiH in the 1990s can be explained by an analysis of the impact of the following internal and external factors:

**Internal factors:**

1. **The Republic of Tatarstan attempts to secede from the Russian Federation.** On August 6, 1990, the head of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian SFSR Boris Yeltsin uttered the historical phrase: «Take as much sovereignty as you can swallow» (Yeltsin Center, 2015). After this phrase, a "parade of sovereignty" of autonomous republics began in Russia, during which the republics not only proclaimed their state sovereignty, but also tried to secede from Russia. The Tatar Soviet Socialist Republic was among those republics which wanted state independence from Russia.

2. **Ossetian-Ingush conflict.** Ossetian-Ingush war was the first ethnopolitical conflict in independent Russia. The reason for the conflict was a dispute over the Prigorodny district of North Ossetia. During the war, which lasted from October 31 to November 4, 1992, about 480 people died among Ossetians and Ingush (Markedonov, 2017). The conflict was resolved by entering federal troops to the Prigorodny district.

3. **The First Chechen war.** From 1991 to 1994, Chechnya was virtually independent, refusing to sign a federal agreement with the Russian Federation. On the territory of Chechnya, the laws of the Russian Federation were not applied. Russia was forced to start an operation to

restore the constitutional system in Chechnya. This military operation is known as the First Chechen Campaign. The war ended on August 31, 1996, with the signing of the Khasavyurt Accord. It should be noted that the West did not approve Russia's methods of action in Chechnya. So, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Russia and the EU entered into force only after the signing of the Khasavyurt Accord.

4. **The difficult economic situation.** Monopolized market structures, price liberalization, depreciation of savings, an increase of currency debt, and the collapse of the financial system caused a difficult economic situation in Russia. Russia in the 1990s was heavily dependent on Western investment and assistance, therefore, sometimes it was forced to play by their rules in the world political arena. In 1996, Boris Yeltsin asked Clinton for a loan of \$ 2.5 billion to pay pensions and salaries (Abarinov, 2018). However, the United States did not provide a loan to Yeltsin.

5. **Russia's desire to show loyalty to the West.** After the collapse of the USSR, Russia began to focus on the West. Russia thought that the West is its partner, friend and almost the only ally. In fact, the West wanted to Europeanize and democratize Russia, while depriving it of the opportunity to participate in the adoption of critical decisions within the framework of the post-cold system of international security, which was based on unipolarity. Minister of foreign affairs, Andrey Kozyrev played the main role in the process of demonstrating by Russia the loyalty to the West. Once he told Richard Nixon the following words: "if you have any ideas and you can tell us how to determine our national interests, then I will be very grateful to you" (Nikiforov, 2012, p. 158). This means that Kozyrev depended on the opinion of Western politicians.

Boris Yeltsin viewed the West as supporting his power in Russia. Even after the signing of the Dayton Accords, Yeltsin continued to ask for US support in order to keep his power.

#### **External factors:**

1. **Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.** Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was an ethno-political conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1992-1994. Russia tried to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict peacefully. That is why from the first days of the conflict Russia was the mediator between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The main result of Russia's mediation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was the signing of the Bishkek Protocol in 1994, which contributed to the conclusion of a ceasefire agreement between Armenia and the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic from one side and Azerbaijan from another side.

2. **Transnistria War.** The Transnistria conflict was between Moldovan troops and armed groups of the unrecognized Transnistrian Moldavian Republic that did not recognize the collapse of the USSR. This conflict, which lasted from March 2 to August 1, 1992, was resolved by Russia mediation. During the conflict, Russia decided to help the unrecognized Transnistrian Moldavian

Republic because of two reasons: first, in that period Russia played the role of peacekeeper in the Commonwealth of Independent States, second, in 1992 Russians were the second largest population in the unrecognized Transnistrian Moldavian Republic. The Transnistria conflict was resolved due to Alexander Lebed – the commander of the 14th Guards Army of Armed Forces of the Russian Federation who deployed in the Transnistrian Moldavian Republic. Alexander Lebed is known for his quotation: «If it is necessary, we will do in such a way, that we will have breakfast in Tiraspol, lunch in Chisinau, and dinner in Bucharest ». In such a way, Alexander Lebed warned Moldova that Russia will defend its interests in Transnistria.

**3. First South Ossetian War (1991-1992).** In 1991, an armed conflict began between the government forces of Georgia and the troops of South Ossetia. South Ossetia wanted to secede from Georgia. Russia played the main role in resolving the Ossetian conflict. In 1992, the vice-president of Russian Federation Alexander Rutskoi gave an order to launch airstrikes against the Georgian group, which fired on Tskhinvali, and threatened to bombard Tbilisi (Olishevskiy, 2018). After that event hostilities ceased in South Ossetia. On June 24, 1992, the Chairman of the State Council of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze and the President of Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin signed the Sochi agreement, which put an end to the war in South Ossetia. After signing this agreement, Russian peacekeepers began to serve in South Ossetia.

**4. War in Abkhazia (1992–1993).** After the USSR collapse, the Georgian government sought to destroy the autonomy of Abkhazia, which wanted to be an independent state. These contradictions became the cause of the armed conflict in Abkhazia in 1992. Russia played the role of a mediator in resolving this conflict. On May 14, 1994, with the mediation of Russia, the Georgian and Abkhazian sides signed Agreement on a Cease-fire and Separation of Forces. According to this agreement, the CIS Collective Peacekeeping Forces were stationed in Abkhazia. It should be noted that the CIS Collective Forces in Abkhazia consisted entirely of Russian military personnel.

**5. The civil war in Tajikistan.** At the beginning of the 1990s, a political vacuum formed in Tajikistan for a time, which was filled with radical Islamists. Russia was forced to act as a mediator, by helping government forces of Tajikistan to ensure peace and stability in the state. In other words, Russia tried to prevent the conflict from spreading to neighboring countries. In that period, Tajikistan security was of great importance for the stability of the Central Asian region. A prolonged war in Tajikistan could destabilize all Central Asian countries since Tajikistan is a buffer zone for drug trafficking and terrorism from Afghanistan.

**6. Soviet nuclear weapons in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.** After the collapse of the USSR, the question arose about the future fate of Soviet nuclear weapons, some of which were still in the already independent republics - Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. It was important for



Russia to remove nuclear weapons from the territories of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, thereby ensuring the right of the sole successor to the USSR. In 1992, Russia, the USA, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan signed the Lisbon Protocol. By signing the Lisbon Protocol, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan transferred all of their strategic nuclear warheads on their territory to Russia and entered the group of countries without nuclear weapons.

Internal and external factors negatively influenced Russian foreign policy towards BiH in the 1990s. The weak, new independent Russia stood on the verge of destruction in the 1990s. The West knew that the new Russia was not able to fight for influence in the Western Balkans. Therefore, the West, feeling and using Russia's slack, dealt a blow to Yugoslavia.

**Russian foreign policy towards BiH in 2000-2009.** Putin became president when the terrorism and the enlargement of NATO to the East posed a threat to Russia's national security. In 2000-2009 Russia changed significantly its foreign policy towards the Western Balkan countries. During this period of time, Russia began to regain its position in the international arena as a superpower. However, in the early 2000s, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans as a whole did not play an important role in Russia's foreign policy. According to Konstantin Nikiforov, after the bombing of Serbia, Russia, having been virtually ousted from the Balkans, almost defiantly did not intervene in the Balkan affairs (Nikiforov, 2012, p. 164). In the summer of 2003, Russian peacekeepers left Bosnia and Herzegovina. It should be noted that until June 2003, more than 1 thousand Russian peacekeepers were in Bosnia and Herzegovina. (Engelhardt, 2015 p. 134). In the concept of national security of the Russian Federation from 2000, special attention was paid to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This concept spoke of "the formation of a single economic space with the CIS member states", as well as the development of integration processes within the CIS (The national security concept of the Russian Federation, 2010). Thus, in the early 2000s, Russia was busy by strengthening its position in the CIS and therefore did not pay due attention to BiH and other Western Balkan countries.

Despite internal (terrorism, the second Chechen war) and external threats (NATO expansion to the East), cooperation between Russia and the Western Balkans developed, but at a very slow pace. On July 25, 2003, the Cooperation Agreement was signed between the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation and the Foreign Trade Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina (RF CCI, 2003). This agreement played an important role in the development of economic relations between Russia and BiH.

Economic growth in Russia in the early 2000s opened up new opportunities for the Kremlin's foreign policy. Thanks to economic growth, Russia has begun to regain its influence in BiH through investments. In 2007 the Russian company „NeftegazInKor" became a majority owner of Modrica Motor Oil Plant by purchasing 75,65% of shares from Bosnia and Herzegovina

in during privatization (Oil refinery Modrica, 2017). Simultaneously „NeftegazInKor" bought Brod Oil Refinery. The new owner spent €260 million to upgrade the Brod Oil Refinery (Oil refinery Brod, 2017). It should be noted that „NeftegazInKor" is a subsidiary of Zarubezhneft, which is a Russian state oil company.

During this period of time particular relations were between Russia and the Republika Srpska, which opposed the joining of BiH into NATO. From 2008, West started to accuse Russia of supporting Milorad Dodik who was the Prime minister of Republika Srpska at that time. In October 2008, one of the authors of the Dayton Accords, Richard Holbrook and former High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Paddy Ashdown, stated that "Milorad Dodik's (who was the Prime minister of Republika Srpska at that time) actions have been fuelled by Russian encouragement and petrodollars" (Ashdown & Holbrooke, 2008).

### **The internal and external factors that influenced Russian foreign policy towards BiH in 2000-2009.**

#### **Internal factors:**

**1. Growth of the Russian economy.** The rise in oil prices, foreign investment and the implementation of economic reforms have had a positive impact on the Russian economy. Foreign direct investment in the Russian economy grew from \$14.3 billion in 2001 to \$121.1 billion in 2007 (Bazanova, 2019). Economic growth has allowed Russia to use the investment to increase its influence in the Western Balkans.

**2. The Second Chechen war and terrorism.** The fight against terrorism and the second Chechen war distracted Russia's attention from more active cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina. At that time, the Kremlin was busy defending the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation and ensuring security. The consequences of Chechnya's withdrawal from Russia could be disastrous for Russian statehood.

#### **External factors:**

**1. The enlargement of NATO to the East.** In the early 2000s, Russia seriously feared the enlargement of NATO to the East. The concept of the Russian Federation from 2000 noted that threats in the international sphere are due to the enlargement of NATO to the East (The national security concept of the Russian Federation, 2000). Russia tried to prevent the joining of post-Soviet countries to NATO. However, contrary to Russia's wishes, in 2004, the former Soviet republics of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia joined NATO, which allowed the North Atlantic Alliance to move closer to the Russian border. In 2008, NATO member countries reacted positively to the aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia to become members of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO, 2018). Thanks to the efforts of Russia, the process of Georgia and Ukraine joining NATO was frozen.

**2. Development of integration processes in the post-Soviet space.** In 2000-2009, a special place in Russia's foreign policy was given to the CIS. Russia took active steps in order not to lose its influence in the CIS. This is evidenced by the creation of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) (2000) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) (2002). The EurAsEC was created to promote economic integration in the CIS, and the CSTO's goal was to ensure stability and security in the CIS countries. The activation of Russia in the CIS space also was associated with the creation of GUAM, whose members demanded to review the results of the "frozen conflicts" (First South Ossetian War, the war in Abkhazia, Transnistrian and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts) in the former USSR.

**3. Russo-Georgian War.** On August 8, 2008, Georgian troops began a massive shelling of the capital of South Ossetia, Tskhinvali. In order to protect Russian citizens in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia conducted a peace enforcement operation. As a result, Russia settled the military conflict and recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia.

Russian foreign policy towards BiH in 2000-2009 can be described as a desire to regain Russia's influence in the Western Balkans. Nevertheless, a special place in Russia's foreign policy was given to the post-soviet space. Internal factors played a positive (economic growth) and negative (second Chechen war, terrorism) role in Russia's foreign policy towards BiH in 2000-2009.

**Russian foreign policy towards BiH in 2010-2019.** During that period of time relations between Russia and the Republika Srpska have reached a new level. In 2010, the Representative Office of the Republika Srpska was opened in Moscow, which gave a new impetus to relations between Russians and Bosnian Serbs. In the same year, the President of Russia approved the "Main directions of Russia's policy in the field of international cultural and humanitarian cooperation." In this document, it was noted that "soft power" is capable of working to strengthen the international authority of Russia (Russian MFA, 2010). This meant that Russia would use soft power as a foreign policy instrument in the Western Balkans too. On September 6, 2012, in Republik Srpska center of the Russkiy Mir Foundation was opened. Residents of Republika Srpska reacted positively to the opening of the first Russian center in BiH. According to the head of the Representative Office of the Republika Srpska in Moscow, Dusko Perovic, the opening of the Russkiy Mir center in Banja Luka aroused great interest among ordinary people (Russkiy Mir, 2013).

In 2010-2019, cultural and educational ties between Russia and the Republika Srpska began to develop at a rapid pace. In 2014, a monument to the Russian Emperor Nicholas II was opened in the Republika Srpska. This event brought the Russians and Bosnian Serbs closer together. In 2017, the Representative Office of Rossotrudnichestvo in Serbia and the University of

Banja Luka signed a cooperation agreement. The Russian Federation of Motorcycle Tourism organized a motorcycle race called "Russian Balkans" in 2018. Russian motorcyclists visited Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It should be noted that the head of the Russian Motorcycle Tourism Federation, Alexander Zaldostanov, was banned from entering BiH. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH, Alexander Zaldostanov was a threat to the security of the state (Radio Sarajevo, 2018).

The most important instrument of Russia's "soft power" is the media. To strengthen the authority of Russia in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, since 2015, the Sputnik news agency has begun broadcasting and publishing news in Serbian.

In 2010-2019, Russia continued to strengthen its economic influence in BiH. In 2011, Neftegazinkor and the Serbian oil company NIS have established a joint venture to explore oil fields in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A year later, on February 15, 2012, Sberbank of Russia acquired 100% of the shares of Volksbank International AG, which had subsidiary banks in BiH (Sberbank, 2019). On November 1, 2012, Volksbank International AG was renamed Sberbank Europe AG and began to function actively in BiH. Strengthening of Russia's positions was carried out thanks to the close cooperation of Milorad Dodik with Moscow and the Kremlin's support for the initiatives and position of the Republika Srpska. In 2013, the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Embassy of BiH organized a business forum, which gave impetus to the development of economic relations between the two countries. It was the first business forum in the history of relations between Russia and BiH.

The accession of Crimea to Russia was a test for relations between Russia and BiH. BiH did not join the sanctions against Russia. Of course, BiH sanctions could not harm Russia. Nevertheless, the behavior of BiH was an appropriate sign of support for Russia.

In 2014 before the presidential elections in Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik met Vladimir Putin in Moscow. During the meeting, Milorad Dodik underlined that support of Russia has great importance for the people of Republika Srpska (The Russian President's official website, 2014).

Kremlin supports the will of the Bosnian Serbs and the aspirations of Milorad Dodik to preserve the state entity of the Serbs. Therefore, Russia constantly provides diplomatic assistance to the RS. Russia periodically criticizes the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, who has broad powers. According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov the EU High Representative for BiH has dictatorial powers hence he plays a harmful role (Russian MFA, 2014).

Russia supported the referendum on the celebration of Republika Srpska Day on January 9, which was held in the RS on September 25, 2016. Three days before the referendum (September 22), at a meeting of the presidents of the Russian Federation and the RS, Vladimir Putin noted that

"the referendum is the right of the people" and wished the RS "success in the referendum" (RIA novosti, 2016). The referendum, as expected, caused dissatisfaction with the EU, which announced that a referendum was a violation of the Dayton Accords. However, the Russian Foreign Ministry did not agree with the EU position. Already on September 28, 2016, the official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova, made a statement that the referendum in the RS "was in no way aimed at destroying the territorial integrity of BiH and its decentralized constitutional architecture established by the Dayton Agreement" (TASS, 2016). The referendum was not possible without the approval of Moscow. Nevertheless, Bosnian Serbs must pay tribute to Milorad Dodik, who, despite the pressure exerted by the West, was able to hold a referendum. Moscow by supporting the referendum in the RS, took another step towards the rapprochement of fraternal Slavic peoples.

Russia provided great support to Republika Srpska by vetoing a UN Security Council resolution on the genocide of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica. The recognition of the genocide of Bosnian Muslims by Russia could lead to the following consequences:

1. The breakdown of relations between fraternal peoples. The recognition of the Bosnian Muslim genocide would destroy the centuries-old friendship of Russians and Serbs.

2. Loss of Russia's influence in BiH and Serbia. If the genocide of the Bosnian Muslims were recognized, Serbia and Republika Srpska, which took part in the Bosnian conflict, would sever relations with Russia.

3. Aggravation of contradictions between Bosnian Muslims and Serbs. The recognition of the Bosnian Muslim genocide by the UN Security Council would destroy the fragile peace in BiH.

Thus, Russia did not support the resolution on the genocide of Bosnian Muslims in order to prevent the escalation of tension between the peoples of BiH. From the point of view of Russia, the peoples of BiH should find common ground and agree between themselves, for the sake of the prosperity of their homeland, and not search for those responsible for the Bosnian tragedy.

In recent years, relations between the Orthodox from Republika Srpska and Russia have been strengthened. So, in 2014 Milorad Dodik became a laureate of the prize of the International Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations (Anokhin, 2014). In 2017, construction on a Russian-Serbian church was beginning in Republika Srpska.

Russia by strengthening its economic influence in BiH, is trying to prevent this West Balkan country from joining NATO now. In this case, Russia acts through Milorad Dodik, who is not liked in the White House. In April 2019, Milorad Dodik in his interview with "Rossiyskaya Gazeta", commented on the prospects for joining BiH to NATO as follows: "... we do not want that NATO border was with Serbia along the Drina River. We don't want to lose political autonomy

because of this, and also lose our friend Russia" (Borisov, 2019). In January 2017, the United States imposed sanctions on Milorad Dodik because of his position on BiH joining NATO.

Bosnia and Herzegovina wants to take part in major Russian energy projects. So, in January 2019, Milorad Dodik, at a meeting with V. Putin, announced that BiH wants to join the "TurkStream" project (The Russian President's official website, 2019). On June 8, 2019, Gazprom CEO Alexey Miller and Milorad Dodik discussed the possibility of supplying Russian gas to BiH via the "TurkStream" gas pipeline.

### **The external factors that influenced Russian foreign policy towards BiH in 2010-2019.**

**1. The coming to power of Milorad Dodik.** The becoming of Milorad Dodik the President of the Republika Srpska (2010-2018) and Chairman of the Presidency of BiH (2018-2019) had a positive impact on relations between the two countries. In 2011, Milorad Dodik was awarded the Order of Friendship for his contribution to the development of cooperation between the Russian Federation and Bosnia and Herzegovina (The Russian President's official website, 2011).

**2. The enlargement of NATO to the Western Balkans.** The entry of Albania, Croatia, and Montenegro into NATO had a great influence on Russia's foreign policy towards BiH in 2010-2019. This event has led to the strengthening of cooperation between Russia and Milorad Dodidok, who opposes the entry of BiH into NATO.

**3. Strengthening Russia's influence in the Middle East.** In 2010-2019, Russia actively participated in the fight against terrorism in the Middle East. In 2013, thanks to the mediation of Russia, the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria began. Since September 2015, the armed forces of the Russian Federation began to participate in hostilities against the "Islamic State" (banned in the Russian Federation).

**4. The accession of Crimea, armed conflict in southeastern Ukraine, and the Western sanctions.** After the accession of Crimea, Russia faced many problems. Russia was excluded from the Group of Eight (G8). In addition, since 2014, Russia has been under sanctions that have had an impact on the Russian economy. In 2015, according to Vladimir Putin, the damage from sanctions to the Russian economy amounted to \$160 billion (Interfax, 2015). Another problem for Russia is the armed conflict in southeastern Ukraine, which began on April 14, 2014. Russia, which protects the Russian-speaking population of Donbas, still has not been able to resolve the conflict in southeastern Ukraine.

**5. Development of integration processes in the CIS.** In 2010-2019, Russia continued to increase its influence in the post-Soviet space through integration processes. On January 1, 2015, the EAEU was created for economic integration in the post-Soviet space.

The first two factors have positively influenced the foreign policy of Russia towards BiH. Other factors prevented Russia from paying relevant attention to the Western Balkans.

**Explanation of Russia's foreign policy towards BiH in 2010-2019.** Internal factors played a significant role in Russian foreign policy towards BiH and other post-Yugoslav states in the 1990s. In the 1990s there was a risk of turning Russia into a second Yugoslavia. This is due to the fact that in Russia, as in Yugoslavia, some republics wanted to achieve independence. Moreover, Russia, which was in a difficult economic condition, tried to demonstrate its loyalty to the West. Such behavior of Russia gave the United States an opportunity to play a main role in the Balkans in the 1990s.

External factors also had a great impact on the Russian foreign policy towards BiH in the 1990s. Russia's active policy in the CIS in the 1990s had two reasons: security and hegemony. Russia tried to prevent destabilization in the CIS, because it threatened its security. At the same time, it was important for Russia to preserve its hegemony in the CIS. This is evidenced by the elimination of the nuclear arsenal of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. Without Russia's active policy in the CIS, other state-players would appear in post-Soviet space. To summarize, I want to say that in the 1990s Russia sacrificed Serbia and BiH in order to preserve its territorial integrity and hegemony in the CIS.

In the 2000s Russia gradually began to strengthen its influence in BiH. In the early 2000s the second Chechen war, the fight against terrorism in Russia, the enlargement of NATO to the East, and integration processes in the post-Soviet space diverted the Kremlin's attention from BiH. However, among internal factors, the Kremlin's foreign policy was positively affected by economic growth in Russia. Economic growth allowed Russia to strengthen its influence in BiH through investment.

In the 21st century, the history of relations between Russia and BiH is connected with the name of Milorad Dodik. It was thanks to Milorad Dodik that economic cooperation between Russia and the Republika Srpska began to develop rapidly. After Albania and Croatia joined NATO, Russia began to seriously cooperate with Milorad Dodik. Today namely Dodik who is using the support of Russia prevents the entry of BiH to NATO. Of course, after 2012, external factors such as the fight against radical Islamists in Syria, the integration processes in the post-Soviet space and the war in the south-east of Ukraine constantly distracted the Kremlin's attention from BiH. Nevertheless, Russia shows that it is not going to leave BiH. An external factor that is currently affecting the strengthening of Russia's influence in BiH is the enlargement of NATO to the Western Balkans. Russia has already lost influence in Montenegro, which joined NATO in 2017. Nowadays, Russia has influence only in Serbia and Republika Srpska in the Western Balkans. Russia's influence is stronger in Republika Srpska than in Serbia. Therefore, in recent years Russia

has been strengthening cooperation with the Republika Srpska. This time, Russia needs to make considerable efforts to protect its interests in BiH and support the fraternal Serbian people. Otherwise, Russia will lose not only BiH, but the Western Balkans too.



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