



INTERNATIONAL
ACADEMIC CONFERENCE

Squaring the Circle:
Navigating Changes in Contemporary
International Relations

June 4-5, 2024 | Belgrade, Serbia

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



Dušan Proroković
Nenad Stekić (Eds.)



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Dr. Dušan Proroković
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Conference organisers



Institute of International Politics and Economics
Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade

Supported by



Republic of Serbia
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE,
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P R E F A C E

In an ever-transforming global landscape characterised by rapid technological progress, dynamic power shifts, and multifaceted challenges, the realm of international relations stands as a stage where complexities intertwine, and the course of history is often determined. The conference "**Squaring the Circle: Navigating Changes in Contemporary International Relations**" emerges as a beacon of intellectual exchange, aiming to converge scholars and policymakers onto a platform where they dissect the tapestry of global political dynamics. The metaphorical notion of "squaring the circle" encapsulates the essence of our collective endeavour – confronting what may seem insurmountable challenges with tenacity and ingenuity.

As we gather to explore the complex shifts in international relations, we acknowledge the daunting nature of the task ahead, yet we embrace it with the conviction that through dialogue, collaboration, and scholarly inquiry, we can illuminate pathways toward understanding and resolution. At the heart of this conference lies a commitment to unravelling the complexities that define our contemporary global order. We aim to delve into the intersections of diplomacy, security, and geopolitics, recognising their pivotal roles in shaping the world we inhabit. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and cross-sectoral collaboration, we seek to transcend conventional boundaries and illuminate the nuanced interactions that underpin the global stage. The breadth of topics covered in this conference reflects the diverse array of challenges facing the international community. From the evolving dynamics of European security architecture to the role of non-Western actors in global affairs, and from regional security imperatives in a changing world to the emergence of new economic trends with global implications, each theme offers a window into the intricate fabric of contemporary international relations.

As editors of the Book of Abstracts, we extend our gratitude to the scholars, researchers, and policymakers who have contributed their innovative insights to this discourse.

This Book of Abstracts consists of 29 abstracts, by 40 authors from 12 countries (Bulgaria, France, Italy, North Macedonia, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the USA). The submissions received span the spectrum of empirical research and theoretical inquiry, offering fresh perspectives and illuminating analyses that enrich our understanding of the complex landscape of international relations. We also extend our appreciation to those who have generously volunteered to serve as discussants, facilitating the exchange of ideas and fostering intellectual engagement throughout the conference. It is through such collaborative efforts that we can cultivate a vibrant community of scholars dedicated to advancing knowledge and addressing the pressing challenges of our time. In adherence to our commitment to scholarly rigor, all submissions undergo a rigorous peer review process, ensuring that the contributions selected for inclusion in this volume meet the highest standards of academic excellence.

We are grateful to the reviewers who have generously offered their time and expertise to evaluate the submissions, thereby upholding the integrity and quality of the scholarship presented herein. As we embark on this intellectual journey together, we are reminded of the importance of fostering an inclusive and diverse discourse that embraces a multiplicity of perspectives and voices. It is through such dialogue that we can transcend boundaries, bridge divides, and chart a course toward a more peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable future for generations to come. We invite you to immerse yourself in the pages that follow, to engage with the ideas presented, and to join us in the collective endeavour of “squaring the circle” – navigating the complexities of contemporary international relations with clarity, courage, and conviction.

Editors

Dr. Dušan Proroković

Dr. Nenad Stekić

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ABSTRACTS



SERBIA IN A CHANGING EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract: Today, we are witnessing a change in historical epochs, with significant transformations occurring in European and global architecture. This stage of human development is accompanied by economic, political, and regional crises. The Balkans is no exception. Having gone through wars, division of territories, and economic and political crises, the Serbs are trying to become equal members of Europe, preserving their territorial integrity and national independence. These issues will be discussed in the report.

Keywords: Serbia, Europe, EU, Balkans, security



THE GREAT UNRAVELLING: THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM AND WORLD ORDERS

Richard Sakwa

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Abstract: In 1945, humanity came together to create the Charter international system. It expressed the hope that after the most catastrophic war the world had yet seen, a superior system of international relations could emerge. The result was the United Nations and its foundational Charter, reinforced subsequently by numerous declarations, protocols and conventions. The system worked and delivered many public goods, above all through the system's specialised agencies. The creation of a Security Council with five permanent members sought to remedy the failings of the Versailles system and the League of Nations, created in 1919, by providing a stronger steering committee for international politics. The system remains in operation today, but is facing unprecedented challenges. From the beginning, the practices of international politics were incommensurate with Charter aspirations. The creation of competing blocs (world orders) in Cold War 1 prevented consensus on fundamental matters. When the Soviet bloc disintegrated in 1989-91 the Charter system faced a new challenge – the striving for global hegemony of the remaining world order, the political West led by the US. This bloc claimed certain tutelary privileges, formulated initially in terms of a 'liberal international order' and later in the form of the 'rules-based order' over the Charter international system. This generated conflicts and even wars, with the result that Cold War II today is more challenging and dangerous than the first.

Keywords: Charter international system, United Nations, international politics, sovereign internationalism, democratic internationalism, political West, political East



PRINCIPLES FOR THE MULTIPOLAR WORLD ORDER

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Abstract: The unipolar world that briefly existed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union is gradually evolving into a multipolar world, a necessary development that, however, entails certain risks for the peace and security of mankind because the transition is encountering resistance from the former hegemon, the United States, and its vassals, the “collective West”. The illusions of Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History* (1992) are not entirely dissipated, as shown by the speeches of Western politicians, the aggressive interventionism of the United States and NATO in the internal affairs of other states, and the efforts to encircle Russia and China. Provocation is not an innocent act, and experience shows that provocations before and after the 2014 *coup d’état* in Kiev led to the current war in Ukraine and may lead to a new war in the Asia-Pacific region. Multipolarity and multilateralism are at the heart of the United Nations Charter, which is akin to a world constitution. Multilateralism is based on fundamental principles of international law and international relations, including respect for the sovereignty of states, the self-determination of peoples, and the prohibition of the use of force. My *25 Principles of International Order*, submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in 2017, are well anchored in the UN Charter, UN treaties, the ICJ rulings, and pertinent resolutions of the UN Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Human Rights Council. A credibility gap has arisen regarding the UN system, its agencies, and associated institutions, including the ICJ and the ICC, particularly because of the non-implementation of UN norms and decisions by its judicial and quasi-judicial bodies. The UN remains a necessary institution, especially when it comes to addressing global challenges. All member states must agree to play by the same rules; otherwise, uncertainty in law and practice will result. This essay explores pragmatic solutions to challenges to peace and international solidarity. The loss of the UN’s authority and credibility calls for redefining and reinvigorating the institutions to serve the interests of humanity and not just those of a privileged minority of states. With the end of the US-hegemonic international order, it is also time to consider whether the seat of the UN Headquarters should be moved from New York and installed in a country more representative of the global majority.

Keywords: World order, multipolar order, international relations, United Nations



RETHINKING TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCE: A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING STATE DYNAMICS

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Abstract: The last several decades has seen a notable rise in the involvement of transnational actors in the international system, sparking ongoing discussions in international relations about their effects on state conduct. This emergence has given rise to the field of 'transnational studies' within international relations, pitting proponents of a state-centric approach against those who view the growing influence of transnational actors as indicative of a declining role of states in the international arena. Fresh scholarly perspectives aimed to move beyond these entrenched debates by correctly pointing out that what both camps had failed to grasp was that because both looked to how transnational actors impact domestic state behavior, they actually shared a common research question (albeit with different approaches). Whilst this fresh perspective was welcome, there has still been limited exploration into the significance of transnational actors and the inherent challenges in measuring their influence, due mainly to overly broad conceptualizations. This article introduces a new theoretical framework to evaluate the ability of transnational actors to shape state behavior that seeks to overcome these limitations.

Keywords: transnational actors, historical institutionalism, socio-legal, legal recursivity, inter-disciplinary



COMPETING VISIONS OF WORLD ORDER: HOW CHINA, THE US, THE EU AND RUSSIA CONCEIVE THE TRANSITION TO MULTIPLICITY

Slobodan Janković and Aleksandar Mitić

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Abstract: Prior and in the wake of the conflict in Ukraine, the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the People's Republic of China launched a series of strategic documents, revealing their conceptions of the current and future world order. While these documents differ in form, they are based on common understanding that the Western-led "rules-based order" (RBO) is undergoing a transition towards multipolarity. For the U.S. and the EU, the logical objective is to keep as much of the RBO intact as possible, and to absorb the changing international context to their advantage. China and Russia, on the other hand, are pursuing visions of change of world order – political, military, economic, ideological, cultural and normative – which would go beyond cosmetic changes reminiscent of a *status quo*. This paper aims to present and analyse these differing visions of world order and their perspectives in the transitioning of global political trends, as all the major powers promote strategic narratives in line with strategic documents. Authors contrast the competing visions of world order and discuss how they relate to the realities of each power's statecraft capabilities.

Keywords: Russia, China, U.S., EU, World Order, multipolarity



NEW BALANCE OF POWER IN THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THE ROLE OF CHINA

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Abstract: Amidst the myriad debates surrounding the structure of the international system of relations, a novel issue emerges: whether China's profound growth warrants recognition as a transformative variable influencing the organization of the system. Through an examination of states' economic, political, and military capacities, it becomes evident that a multipolar order is emerging. Over the past three decades, China's remarkable economic growth has contributed significantly to rebalancing global economic power dynamics. In safeguarding its economic interests, China strategically augmented its military capabilities and spearheaded a plethora of political initiatives to foster diverse multilateral frameworks. Consequently, as the world's second-largest economy and third most potent military force, China has solidified its stature as an indispensable actor on the international stage. However, the persistent augmentation of China's economic, military, and political influence has stirred apprehensions within the United States, which, in its 2022 Defense Strategy, categorizes China as a "primary competitor" while declining to acknowledge its equal status. Consequently, China's contemporary role in international relations can be construed as catalyzing the establishment of a balanced power framework. Present and forthcoming Chinese endeavors aim to foster a multipolar order wherein China assumes the mantle of a major power and a pivotal participant in global affairs.

Keywords: multipolarity, international system, economic power, political power, military power, USA, China, balance of power



U.S. CONCEPT OF A “RULES-BASED ORDER” AND ITS DISCONTENTS: IS THERE A CREDIBLE ALTERNATIVE?

Vladimir Trapara and Ana Jović-Lazić

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Abstract: Recently, there has been significant discourse in political and academic circles surrounding the concept of a “rules-based order” (RBO) in international relations, championed by the Obama and, especially, the Biden U.S. administration. The primary issues revolve around the relationship between this concept and international law, as well as the reactions of other states to it. Various alternative stances towards this concept appear within and outside the U.S.-led bloc of states, ranging from its acceptance in principle, albeit with different interpretations attached, to vociferous resistance. The authors delineate the fundamental assumptions of the U.S. concept of RBO, linking it to its grand strategy of liberal hegemony (rooted in Wilsonian principles), the perceived imperatives of the current international political landscape (including challenges to liberal democracy and a growing confrontation with alleged anti-RBO powers), and a broader Anglo-Saxon legal tradition of the rule of law (in contrast to the continental European *Rechtsstaat*). Then they evaluate the credibility of alternatives to the concept, proposed by U.S.-allied Germany and Australia, rival powers Russia and China, and India as a “third force”. This assessment takes into account the specific national interests and regional imperatives of these states, their positions in the current international situation, and the distinct legal traditions they adhere to. The credibility of international law and institutions is appraised separately, considering the current international power and interest dynamics. The authors conclude by advocating for a reform of international law based on a mutual understanding of diverse national interests and legal traditions, positing it as the optimal foundation for a genuine rules-based order.

Keywords: rules-based order, international law, rule of law, the United States, European Union, Germany, Australia, Russia, China, India



MEDIATOR KNOWLEDGE COMPETENCY: HOW VARIOUS TYPES OF MEDIATOR TRAINING IMPACT THE SUCCESS OF THE PEACE MEDIATION PROCESS

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Abstract: This paper seeks to begin remedying that lack of microlevel research. Borrowing from the fields of human relations and psychology, I argue that individual mediator competency skills can have important effects on the outcome of peace mediation processes. These competency skills are commonly grouped into three forms – knowledge, know-how, and behavior competencies. The focus on this paper zeroes in on the first - knowledge competency skills. Utilizing qualitative research gathered through 28 interviews with mediators, collected from either personal efforts or first-hand written or recorded accounts, I assess the impact of knowledge competency skills gained through formal, religious, or military training. While I initially intended to find support for formal training having positive impacts on mediation in Western states - where one's educational background can play a role in audience acceptance of one's expertise - and religious training having a positive impact on mediation in cultures where social connections are more highly valued, the revelations of this research actually underscored the importance of military training for individual mediators. As interviewees in this study consistently revealed, military training provides individual mediators' with specialized knowledge of the military and armament jargon needed in drafting agreements between combative parties. Those with officer-level backgrounds also often have effective organizational experience with leading multiple initiatives at one time, as has often become part of complex mediation processes today. Finally, mediators with military backgrounds are often regarded by disputing parties as those that can empathize with their experiences and positions, thus building an instant comradery. Still, as this research will reveal, there are other potential merits and needs for future investigation regarding formal training and religious training of individual mediators.

Keywords: mediation, mediator training, peace mediation process, international relations, peace



ILLEGAL ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSED SEIZURE OF RUSSIAN CENTRAL BANK ASSETS

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Abstract: The conflict in Ukraine has brought about destruction and casualties on an immense scale for this state. Its allies in the Western world have identified Russia as the aggressor state and therefore responsible for paying reparations for these damages. The freezing of Russian central bank assets held in Western states offers an opportunity to enforce the obligation to pay reparations. This article is focused on the legal issues related to the possible confiscation of frozen assets. It starts from the hypothesis that although international law does not treat the issue of foreign state property directly, it is nevertheless protected from confiscation by the rules on sovereign immunity, investment protection, and non-interference. The author explores the legal arguments and proposals put forward by Western officials and doctrinal proponents of confiscation and puts them through the test of these three rules to discern if they are legally viable. The hypothesis is developed through the content analysis of official statements and doctrinal works and deduction from established rules of international law to a specific case of seizure of a foreign central bank. The article concludes that no matter which possible model of confiscation is chosen, they are all confronted with the problem of breaching existing rules of international law. Therefore their application will inevitably result in further erosion of relations between the West and Russia, but also might create a legal basis for future litigation to recover seized assets from Russia in international forums.

Keywords: Central Bank of Russia, Ukraine, foreign assets, sovereign immunity, non-interference, countermeasures, investment protection



CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN UNITED STATES STRATEGIC VISION

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Abstract: Central and Eastern Europe is relatively one of the youngest regions in the world in the foreign policy strategic planning of the United States. Despite having established formal diplomatic relations with countries of this region many decades or in some cases a century ago, the nature of the relations between the U.S. and them was largely defined in the new post-Cold war era. Over the last thirty-five years the international relations in this region went from a highly structured logic of bipolar confrontation between the United States-led Western block and the Soviet-led Eastern block to a more complex set of relations within the framework of the European Union, NATO, and outside these organizations. Such qualitative transformation of relations in the region – from the Cold war, to a period of peaceful cooperation, and then again to a new confrontation between the U.S., China and Russia raises a serious research question – how the United States has been defining and building up their relations with the vast number of very different countries in the new international relations contexts. The paper will try to formulate the functional value of the relations with regional counties for the strategic imperatives of the United States. In order to determine that the author will analyze the evolution of diplomatic and political relations, investments and trade dynamics, military cooperation and strategic significance of those relations for American regional security interests. This research of the U.S. foreign policy practices towards the Central and Eastern Europe will try to formulate what are the main factors that served as a driving force of the development of those relations, and to understand the scale of how those policies are dependent on the U.S. strategic imperatives towards Russia, China, or major European allies.

Keywords: United States, US foreign policy, liberal world order, Central and Eastern Europe, Balkans, Russia, European Union, NATO



THE CHANGE OF SECURITY STRATEGIES OF CENTRAL EUROPE IN CONTEMPORARY CRISIS: BETWEEN COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES

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Abstract: In our contribution, we would like to discuss the impact of contemporary risks and threats on the change and development of strategic security culture. Geopolitical impacts, the policy of powers, and the national interests of small states modify the structural quality of the balance of power in contemporary international relations. In our analysis, we would like to present a view of the future development of relations between powers in Europe, regions, and states from the perspectives of cooperation and confrontation. Security is a mutual value of European states, and the redefinition of the importance of soft power, negotiations, conflict prevention, and transformation processes could be an opportunity for small states to strengthen their own position in diplomacy and inspire each other. The key question we would like to answer is: What is the future role of a small state in diplomacy? Based on historical accounts, it is argued that within the transition of the world order from a unipolar to a multipolar system, the European continent will assume a more decisive balancing position for the US. Focusing on Central Europe, this paper concludes that the US may need to exercise a theory of containment, dwarfing other great powers advancing their interests on the European continent. The aim of this article is to analyse the significance of the European continent in the foreign policy of the United States of America (US). The emphasis is put on the developments that have taken place in the close partnership between the US and the European continent since the end of the Second World War. Furthermore, historical accounts summarise that the European continent is internally inconsistent and destined to succumb to the objectives of other great powers regardless of its geostrategic potential. The conclusions of the review point out that, if the US decides to disengage from the European continent, it will also have to disengage from other parts of the world. Under such circumstances, the US's standing as a great power may deteriorate to the point that it cannot be restored, at least not in the near future.

Keywords: power, world order, geostrategic region, Cold War, Europe



BETWEEN EUROPEAN UNION AND THE THREE SEAS INITIATIVE: A NEW GEOPOLITICAL ROLE OF POLAND?

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Abstract: This paper's aim is to provide a retrospective of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI). The Initiative is made up of countries, with a leading role of Poland, that joined the European Union and NATO relatively late (EU - 2004, 2007, 2013; NATO - 1999, 2004, 2009), (does not apply to Austria and Greece) but have participated in these integration projects for several years, especially in the European Union and have sufficiently developed economically to want to throw off the corset of (semi)peripheral countries, which only adapt to the political and economic solutions generated by the countries belonging to the "core" of the EU. The will to participate more actively in this European project seems to be an important factor integrating the Three Seas countries, especially since for several years this organization has been experiencing a deep structural crisis. The paper's aim is to explain the multilevel tasks of the 3SI including its economic and geopolitical dimensions. It also includes a brief analysis of various theoretical approaches (classical realism, neorealism and constructivism) in understanding the 3SI throughout the comparative method.

Keywords: Three Seas Initiative, European Union, Poland, Economy, Security, Realism, Constructivism



THE MEDITERRANEAN BETWEEN CENTRALITY AND RESILIENCE

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Abstract: The relevance of the Mediterranean in the panorama of global flows of goods is a consolidated historical-economic constant. The opening of Suez has transformed it from a formidable interface between culturally, economically, and politically different shores to a global crossroads of maritime routes and geo-economic and geopolitical interests, which have reshaped its roles and vocations. One of these, the “mid-oceanic” label, is (perhaps too) frequently attached to the Mediterranean, almost as if to imply that the fortunes of “our sea” are inexorably linked to those of the other seas (i.e., oceans) and that, after all, any success of southern Europe and northern Africa is governed by external actors. It seems the centrality of the Mediterranean and its peninsulas, first and foremost the Italian one, only makes sense as points of passage.

Keywords: The Mediterranean, maritime traffic, Europe, shipping, resilience



THE WIDER MEDITERRANEAN AS A GEOPOLITICAL REGION: THE CASE OF THE EASTERN BASIN

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Abstract: The geopolitical rediscovery of a Mediterranean reaching as far as the Persian Gulf and the Ukrainian coasts during the 1980s and at the hands of the Italian Navy is certainly not accidental. The slow deterioration and finally the sudden collapse of the bipolar order imposed a reshaping of the doctrines and strategic concepts developed during the Cold War, which were unsuited to the new international context. Although the end of bipolarity coincided with the end of the clash between antithetical cultural, social, moral, and economic conceptions, the global hegemony of the Western development model did not automatically translate into the political dominance that most proponents of the “End of History” (Fukuyama, 1992) expected. Rather, the front that emerged victorious from the Cold War showed numerous cracks, maintaining unity of purpose more out of a lack of real alternatives than conviction. The new Global Order turned out to be a hybrid system, dominated by a widely shared rhetoric but formed by a complex web of regional and transnational balances. Although the United States and NATO have formally retained their role as the ultimate guarantors of stability and international law, giving rise to what has been (erroneously) termed a unipolar order, international governance is ensured by a complex and interconnected jigsaw puzzle of areas of influence, overlapping and intersecting centralised and hierarchical religious beliefs, international alliances of varying intensity and structure, financial markets, industrial clusters, and trade leagues, resulting in a multi-dimensional multipolar order (Redaelli, 2021). In this process, the oceanic order is still highly resilient, as shown by political practice, which completes our picture after the analysis of the geopolitical landscape. The framework of political relations in the area does not yet seem adequate for the fundamental change taking place and, thus, for creating an autonomous region. Evidence of this is the long series of failures in stabilisation attempts.

Keywords: Mediterranean, geopolitics, oceanic order, regionalisation, Turkey



Á LA CARTE GLOBAL ORDER AND REGIONAL ACTORS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TURKISH AND SERBIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE RUSSIAN WAR IN UKRAINE

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Abstract: There is an increasing body of literature on the changes in the global order in the 21st century. There is almost a consensus in the International Relations (IR) literature that the Western-dominated global system has been changing in recent years. Some scholars argue that a multiplex international system is emerging, while others claim that emerging powers are becoming more influential in world affairs. In this shifting international system, it is argued that a more *à la carte* kind of foreign relations is being preferred, meaning that instead of stable alliances, a more flexible type of partnership is emerging. Turkey and Serbia are important regional powers in their respective neighbourhoods. Both of them have material capabilities, historical roots, and normative power in their regions. As important regional actors, both countries have been pursuing an *à la carte* kind of foreign policy in their attitude towards the Putin regime's war in Ukraine. On the one hand, they criticise the Russian invasion and state that it was against international law; on the other hand, they kept their dialogue with the Moscow administration and did not join the European Union (EU) sanctions on Russia. This paper aims to understand the foreign policy of both countries towards the Russian war. It will make a comparative analysis and explain the differences and similarities in their approaches. It will also shed light on how the shifting global order and internal dynamics have been influencing the foreign policies of both countries and why both states pursue flexible types of partnerships instead of stable alliances.

Keywords: Turkey, Serbia, Russia, Ukraine, Regional Actors, Global Order, *Á la Carte* Foreign Policy



RUSSIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS

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Abstract: The history of Russian-Turkish relations extends far into the past and is marked by numerous striking moments and unexpected turns. The nature of their relations, far beyond mere trade connections, has been shaped by mutual conflicts, as evidenced by the fact that Turks, more frequently than other nations, have been adversaries of Russia on the battlefield. The relations between Russia and Turkey are characterised by complexity and cooperative competition: on the one hand, there is an increase in economic collaboration and exchanges, coupled with the intensification of military-technical cooperation, and on the other hand, support for mutually confronted forces in conflict zones in North Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Russia and Turkey endorse opposing belligerents in Syria, Libya, and Nagorno-Karabakh, but their interests do not necessarily clash. As revisionist powers aspiring to restore regional and global influence, they do not view favourably the expansion of influence by the other party. In contrast to past times, when geopolitical disputes were settled through direct military confrontation, these two powers now engage indirectly, employing intermediaries. Despite geopolitical rivalry, the challenges of the regional and global strategic environment are increasingly aligning the foreign policy positions and actions of Russia and Turkey. The pragmatic partnership between the two countries rests on two key pillars. The first is mutual distrust towards the West, and the second is benefit, primarily from the economic cooperation between the two nations. Such a relationship between the two countries is also discernible in the Ukrainian crisis. The implications for the Balkans and Serbia, in terms of the results of mutual relations between Russia and Turkey, are currently relatively favourable, as the current mutual relations between these countries are good and relatively stable, with certain oscillations on specific crisis issues.

Keywords: Russia, Turkey, relations, Ukraine crisis, Western Balkan



COLORED REVOLUTIONS AS A MEAN TO CAUSE CHANGES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Abstract: Colored revolutions are a complex political and security phenomenon, which in the last two decades reflected different geopolitical nuances in the kaleidoscope of contemporary international relations. Today's theorists believe that the first colored revolution took place on October 5, 2000, in Belgrade, after which the series continued in the post-Soviet space, North Africa and the Middle East, where such a form of revolution was romantically called the "Arab Spring", and essentially were extremely unfavorable and destructive, above all for the people and states in that area. The scientific goal of the work is primarily determined in the direction of the theoretical clarification of all important aspects of this complex political-security phenomenon, bearing in mind that it also penetrates deeply into other vital spheres of modern society, which are of economic, sociological, cultural, religious and other important importance. The social goal of the work is, for example, focused on the analysis of the scope and effects that resulted from the realization or attempts to carry out such forms of political coups, as well as on the research ambition to shed light on the perspectives of the further development of colored revolutions.

Keywords: Colored revolution, coup, political power, opposition action, foreign factor, conspiracy



THE WESTERN BALKANS: BETWEEN BREAKUP AND REGIONAL RESTRUCTURING

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Abstract: The Western Balkans region is undergoing a significant transition marked by both fragmentation and efforts toward regional reorganization. Political, economic, and social dynamics are shaping this complex landscape, with historical legacies and contemporary challenges playing crucial roles. The region's trajectory reflects a delicate balance between fragmentation stemming from historical conflicts and aspirations for regional integration and stability. The Balkans has historically been a focal point of geopolitical competition, characterized by diverse cultural influences, unresolved conflicts, and strategic interests of global powers, making it crucial for regional stability and international relations. Western firms are increasingly drawn to the Balkans due to the region's abundant natural resources and more important strategic location. This growing interest reflects a trend of economic expansion and investment opportunities, shaping the Balkans as a significant area for international business and resource development. Kosovo has become an American protectorate formed by force, outside of international law. The European Union, as the second geopolitical player in the Balkans, acts as a destabilizing factor in the Southeastern Europe region, despite advocating for integration in theory. The main question addressed in this work is whether the European order can endure and if there will be restructuring in the positions of Balkan states.

Keywords: Balkans, geopolitics, geostrategy, Serbia, Kosovo, energy, EU, international order



THE BALKANS AS A TRANSITIONAL REGION BETWEEN INTERNAL CIRCLES AND GLOBAL SQUARINGS IN THE PARADIGM OF HYBRID POWER

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Abstract: The Balkan geopolitical conundrum lends itself well to being represented by the vain effort of squaring a circle. The article responds to this challenge by proposing a theory of the Balkans as a *transitional region*. Conflict dynamics within its western flank are analysed, highlighting their substantial circularity. It also considers attempts by global geopolitical actors to square the Balkan circle. In order to get out of the so-called *sovereignty labyrinth*, which shackles both internal and external actors to the absoluteness of a legal principle, the peculiarities of the transitional region point the way to the *governance function*. The amphibious image with which this form of power can be represented reveals its essentially hybrid nature, which is an alternative to both the terrestrial character of the *Juridical* and the maritime character of the *Economic*. This makes governance a paradigm of the *Political* that proves to be more suited than ever to the precisely hybrid modes of conflict in contemporary geopolitics.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Balkans, Squaring Circles, Transitional Region, Hybrid Power



POLITICAL ANTAGONISMS, MISALIGNED SECURITY
POLICIES, AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION EFFORTS
IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: PRESENT CHALLENGES
AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: Incoherence is an expression that could be used to describe the political, economic and security developments in the Western Balkans. Armed conflicts during the 1990s, attempts at reconciliation during the 2000s and regional cooperation under “external” mentorship represent three focal points that characterize the contemporary history of the Western Balkans. Meanwhile, numerous regional models, frameworks and initiatives for economic integrations followed the formula - economic integration as a prerequisite for lasting peace. All of these have contributed to the fact that actors in the Western Balkans have only one common denominator - membership in the European Union, as a key and strategic foreign policy goal. However, the achievement of that common denominator was without a clear strategy on how to do it and whether such a foreign policy goal, in real international circumstances, is still achievable. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to establish how regional circumstances determine the realization of the foreign policy goals of the Western Balkan actors. How and whether potential economic integration, as a basis, has contributed to essential reconciliation and cooperation? From the academic perspective, in a theoretical sense, the goal is to establish how much economic integration is a realistic basis for reconciliation on the political level in ongoing international circumstances, which would probably be best described today by neoclassical realists.

Keywords: Western Balkans, economic integration, European Union, foreign policy goals



WESTERN BALKANS AND UKRAINIAN CRISIS 2014-2024

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Abstract: The paper explores the changes that have occurred in the foreign, security, and defense policies and capabilities of Croatia and Serbia, as the two most important states for the Western Balkans stability in the context of the ten-year Ukrainian crisis and changing international relations and order toward the more conflictual one. These changes were significantly expressed at the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014, with Crimea joining the Russian Federation, strengthened in 2022 with the Russian military intervention, and still ongoing with the greater polarization between the EU and NATO on the one side, Russia on the other, and with the significant role of rising powers like China and India on the third. The authors claim that the Ukrainian crisis reflected the global trends on the regional level thus bringing more polarization, prospect for conflictual relations, and militarisation instead of immersion of the whole region into the Western structures on the geopolitical grounds. The analysis of the policies and comparison of the cases of Croatia and Serbia are conducted according to three variables: 1. narratives on the Crimean crisis in 2014 and Russian intervention in Ukraine in 2022, 2. measures taken regarding Russia and Ukraine, 3. changes of their capabilities. The authors conclude that with the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the potential for new crises in the Balkans rises. Countries' narratives, especially that of Croatia which constantly victimizes itself, create new mistrust and distance between the two countries and peoples, Croatian EU membership which is constantly highlighted against the Serbian lack of harmonization with the EU foreign and security policy further distances Serbia from the EU, and improvements in defense capabilities, conducted on the various grounds and with opposing actors triggers the arms race, thus complicating the mutual relations of the Western Balkan countries and slowing down the prospects for European integration instead of fostering them on geopolitical grounds.

Keywords: Western Balkans, EU, Serbia, Croatia, foreign and security policies, Ukrainian crisis



THE PRESPA AGREEMENT: MACEDONIAN DIPLOMATIC GAMBIT OR GEOPOLITICAL GAME CHANGER

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Abstract: The analysis, conducted over five years following the signing of the Prespa Agreement, aims to comprehensively evaluate its impact on the resolution of the longstanding name dispute between Macedonia and Greece and to forecast its implications amidst evolving geopolitical trends. By using a critical geopolitical lens and discourse analysis, the study will examine whether Macedonia made a wise diplomatic move by signing the agreement or whether it was a strategic tool to help the government achieve its aims of joining NATO and the EU. Concurrently, it will scrutinize the agreement's transformative role in reshaping the Western Balkans' geopolitical landscape and its consequential influence on wider regional dynamics. This perspective will illuminate potential cascading effects, encompassing the sway of other regional influences and power shifts. It is discernible that, despite being a significant milestone towards Euro-Atlantic integration, the Prespa Agreement's success remains partial. Despite Macedonia's accession to NATO in 2020, the agreement did not facilitate, let alone ensure, a seamless path towards EU membership. Moreover, as an example of an asymmetric agreement, Bulgaria has exploited the Prespa Agreement, using the situation to impose conditions and introduce new "unresolved" issues that challenge the Macedonian people's identity, language, and historical narrative. With this development, the Prespa Agreement has temporarily or finally lost its potential for Macedonia to move towards the EU. Macedonia's prolonged integration process may encounter fresh and formidable challenges in a turbulent and uncertain multipolar geopolitical world.

Keywords: Prespa Agreement, critical geopolitics, Macedonia, NATO, EU



THE COLOUR OF CHANGE: TO THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BULGARIAN COLOUR REVOLUTION

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Abstract: The year 2024 marks the 35th anniversary of the landmark 1989—the year in which Todor Zhivkov was removed from the highest positions of power in the Communist Party and state and the Bulgarian Velvet Revolution began. There are political analysts who share the opinion that the Velvet revolutions in Eastern Europe in the 1990s should be classified as early manifestations of the later post-Socialist colour revolutions, taking into account the apparently common Maidan model for undermining the statutory state authority as well as the applied strategy of the managed chaos. In this article, it is my intention to provide academic arguments not only in support of this claim but also to prove that it was Bulgaria where the first *colour revolution* in modern Eastern European history actually took place.

Keywords: Bulgaria, 1990s, transition, velvet revolution, colour revolution



MONTENEGRO, SERBIAN IDENTITY AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

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Abstract: The work shows the resistance and stabilization of the Serbian identity in Montenegro, in the context of international relations: from Trump's coming to power in the United States of America (2017) through the Orthodox Christian Litiyá movement in Montenegro (2020) and the census in Montenegro (2023). In this regard, it can be seen that key foreign factors did not pose visible obstacles to this process in previous years.

Keywords: Montenegro, Serbs, Serbia, identity, West, Russia



THE GREEN TRANSITION AND ENERGY SECURITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES

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Abstract: The global energy markets are destabilized as the result of the crisis in Ukraine and sanctions against Russia. Such adversely developments has additionally undermined the energy security of the Western Balkans countries that are faced with consequences of the global surge in energy prices. Due to the range of the current economic and security challenges in the context of the ongoing energy crisis, the burning question that arises is how to coordinate the goals of environmental protection with energy security. The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans as a regional strategy for the sustainable energy transition was launched in October 2020 by signing the Sofia Declaration, which relies on five crucial pillars: decarbonisation and climate resilience, depollution, circular economy, sustainable food system and rural areas, biodiversity. This Declaration foresees the commitment of these countries to the target of making the continent carbon-neutral by 2050 by phasing out coal subsidies, introducing carbon pricing instrument and renewables support schemes. The problem for Western Balkan countries relies in the fact that their energy mix is dominated by coal, while only Albania mainly relies on hydropower to meet its energy needs. The coal-fired power plants are denoted as the main cause of environmental degradation in this region, hence these countries committed themselves to decarbonize the energy sector. However, due to the possible deterioration of energy crisis, the plans to phase out coal-fired power plants has been postponed over the next few years. Using a comparative analysis method, we will explore the structural developments of electricity generation and the possible capacities for use of renewables. We will also highlight the challenges for given countries to meet energy security goals.

Keywords: Western Balkan countries, energy security, energy dependence, green transition, renewables



PROFILING SERBIAN POPULATION: EXPLORING THE RISE OF PRO-RUSSIAN LEANINGS

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Abstract: Since the onset of the conflict in Ukraine in 2022, there has been an undeniable upsurge in Russian influence across various regions and developing nations. Among the Serbian population Russia enjoys an unprecedented level of support. Pro-Russian sentiments have never been so widespread in post-war history, as evidenced by numerous polls. The objective of this research is to understand spreading of these public sentiments. The data is collected through a survey involving 1,200 respondents from the territory of Serbia, but the statistical description of the obtained data is only the first scientific goal. A deeper analysis requires assessment of the impact of each independent variable on the formation of the Serbian population's stance towards Russia, which demands to employ an empirical model. Given the categorical nature of all variables, Logistic Regression was applied. Within this model, the survey questions treated as independent variables, while the focal point of analysis is the dependent variable, namely, respondents' commitment to establishing closer ties with Russia. Independent variables (and survey questions) divided into four categories: 1. the perception of the Kosovo and Metohija issue; 2. attitudes and opinions held by the Serbian population regarding the EU; 3. the value system of the respondents (embodied in LGBT movement and traditional family); and 4. socio-demographic characteristics of the population, such as the age and gender of respondents. The findings have unveiled that the most influential factor, characterized by the highest coefficient and utmost statistical significance, is the commitment of Serbs to maintain south province Kosovo and Metohija within Serbia. Subsequently, the variables representing disappointed expectations from the EU, negative attitude towards non-traditional values, as well as the age of the respondent, exhibit statistically significant albeit less pronounced impacts on pro-Russian attitudes.

Keywords: Pro-Russian attitudes, Serbia, Kosovo, Euroscepticism, survey, Logistic regression, multiple regression



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERBIA AND BRICS WITHIN THE CREATION OF A MULTIPOLAR WORLD AND REFORMS OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: From 2024, in addition to Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, the expanded BRICS will include five more countries: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Argentina has withdrawn after the elections). Hence, this group will cover 32% of the world's GDP per purchasing power parity, surpassing G7, 46% of the world population, 31.5% of the world's surface, 40% of the world oil production, 25% of trade, 15% of global services and 45% of the world's foreign exchange reserves. Furthermore, 16 countries have applied for membership, and more than 20 countries have expressed readiness for full BRICS membership. Seeing how this is currently the most dynamic economic integration in the world, announcing the creation of a multipolar economic and political order and a gradual dedollarisation of the world economy, we have set three tasks for this paper: 1) research the economic and resource potential of BRICS and compare it to their competitors (G7, EU); 2) analyze possible reform directions of international economic institutions with the aim to strengthen and expand BRICS, including the efforts to create a new world reserve currency and the abandonment of the dollar as a key geopolitical and geoeconomic weapon of the USA and countries of the West; 3) point out the importance and possible paths of cooperation between the expanding BRICS and Serbia, from the BRICS+ form to a possible full membership. The object of this paper is to show that BRICS will inevitably lead to a reform in the international economic and political relationships, with the idea of greater equity, equality and an accelerated development of countries of the Global South. Serbia, as a developing country, (in addition to its cooperation with EU), must pursue its chance to connect with BRICS, for this will greatly impact Serbia's accelerated economic growth and development in the near future.

Keywords: BRICS, multipolar world, international economic relationships, economic integration, dedollarsation of the world economy



COGNITIVE CAPITALISM VERSUS REAL CAPITALISM: FROM PERMANENT WAR TO PERMANENT REVOLUTION

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Abstract: The current crisis of the capitalist World-system has a bearing on a series of elements unprecedented since its beginning in Early Modernity to the present day; the novelty of this phenomenon lies in that, for the first time now, the crisis of the capital is narrowly connected to the crisis of the capitalist system, which allows us to note that the main effects of that crisis are of a structural, omni-encompassing nature. This crisis is: universal (its influence is not limited to a particular sphere, being it financial or commercial, for instance); with an authentically global display (not restricted to specific places or regional groups) and over a large timescale where continuity prevails over the cyclic and limited forms of previous crises. The most visible outcomes of this irreversible process are two phenomena that act as absolute limits: a war economy whose commercialization of extreme violence threatens the world and an ecological collapse that threatens the planet. In the decades to come, we'll be witnessing a big confrontation on a global level between two capitalisms: on one side, the cognitive capitalism of corporative platforms and webs headquartered in Silicon Valley and its dream of a world as a Digital Gulag and, on the other side, a real capitalism, the ecological predator that manufactures wars and maintains its pathological dependence on extractive economy. Today's current wars are wars within and against populations that combine the structure of neoliberal capitalism with global hegemony, whose purpose is: a) to preserve the global hegemony of the central power; b) preserve the hegemony of the central countries over the world periphery; c) ensure the control of the transnational elites of the center and the semi-periphery over their own societies.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Capitalist World-Systems, War, Hegemony, Revolution



NON-WESTERN DIMENSION OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF THE SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN STATES

Ekaterina Entina

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Abstract: Within the framework of two decades of European integration, there has been an illusion of the absence of an alternative to it. Its foundation was the monopoly position of the Euro-Atlantic world in the creation and functioning of global value chains and market formation. However, the situation has changed fundamentally over the past period. The formation of new value chains and markets is taking place in a macro-regional context. The main tone is set by non-Western players: Southeast Asia, the countries of the Arab East, and partly Africa. All the countries of South-Eastern Europe have a volume of contacts with non-Western countries. This is also typical for EU and NATO member states in the Balkans. In recent years, it has been growing and gradually changing the balance of power and influence in the region. This will inevitably affect the geopolitical configuration of Southeastern Europe in the near future.

Keywords: new global value chains, regional markets, non-western players in the Balkans

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