

Towards new Foreign Policy Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018-2023

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- March 13, 2018, BiH Presidency adopted the *Foreign Policy Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018-2023*. This analysis will endeavour to provide an overview of the document, bring it to the attention of the public and thereby provoke a broader discussion on the matter. Furthermore, it will assess whether the new Strategy reflects the developments in international relations.
- Under new Strategy, BiH is expected to “follow actively the European Union’s Common Foreign and Security Policy.” In order to achieve this strategic objective, BiH Presidency and Council of Ministers should consider medium-term (five-year) and long-term (ten-year) investments in the network, aiming to have resident missions in all EU Member States by 2028, with sufficient financial and human resources to negotiate, lobby and promote BiH as a future Member State.
- The Strategy should establish clear correlations between available resources and types of measures on the one hand and the goals it is created to achieve on the other. Likewise, the drafters need to be aware of the Strategy’s limitations and bear in mind its potential impact and the related response of other international players. Therefore, one must critically assess potential breaking points in international relations as seen in the context of BiH internal political climate and the country’s required involvement (Iran, Kosovo, Middle East, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine), building on the experience of its two-year term as a non-permanent UNSC Member.
- The Strategy requires further assessments of BiH obligations in each of the strategic areas of its relations with the EU, NATO and WTO, and of the activities pertaining to the *UN 2030 Agenda*. The assessments are best prepared by competent BiH institutions. Additionally, BiH should define its position in case of failure to observe the SAA transitional period.

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Background and objectives

March 13, 2018, the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) adopted the *Foreign Policy Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018-2023*.¹ Given the fact that the entire drafting and consultations process was rather low-key, the document deserves at least to be discussed *ex post*. Its predecessor, *General directions and priorities for implementation of foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina*² enacted in 2003 was the only binding document related to foreign policy priorities for the past fifteen years. In the meantime, the global environment has changed and BiH was involved in serious international politics as a non-permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 2010-2011. There have been two attempts since 2003 to produce a new foreign policy strategy – first in 2008 and the second in 2013, both failing due to lack of political will of the BiH Presidency Member from Republika Srpska (RS).

This analysis will endeavour to provide an overview of the Strategy, bring it to the attention of the public and thereby provoke a broader discussion on the matter. Furthermore, it will assess whether the new Strategy reflects the developments in international relations, geopolitics, regional dynamics, and the fulfilment of obligations accepted under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) related to the European Union (EU) Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Finally, the brief will aim to assess if BiH used its experience in external affairs to produce a politically coherent foreign policy strategy that can meet the challenges of the next five years.

The analysis is expected to familiarise foreign policy experts coming from different ministries, civil society organisations (CSOs) with focus on

foreign policy, international diplomats in BiH, international development community, and political party officials with the new Strategy and its main points. Furthermore, the partners in the analysis would like to use it to prompt broader discussion on the topic.

Therefore, the focus will be on the following guiding questions:

- How the current global, European and regional context changed compared to that in 2003, what was the relevance of the previous set of foreign policy goals and the level of their implementation?
- Comparison between the goals set by the new Strategy and the goals under other documents BiH already has to or will have to implement as it moves towards Euro-Atlantic integration, including analysis of potential impact of the Strategy on internal and external relations, primarily in security but also in economic terms.
- Recommendations on ways to ensure compliance with the new strategic orientation introduced by the Strategy and with other international commitments of the country, where that lacking, an overview of the benefits of that compliance and the modalities for avoiding internal political disputes once a clear strategy has been set.

Introduction

Foreign policy is an instrument of the state used to pursue its interests abroad. As Watson underlines,³ those interests refer to the goals or objectives of the government but also reflect the values of the people. The goals may be publicly proclaimed or unspoken, and sometimes the proclaimed goals may even be different from the actually pursued ones. External relations of a state are also determined by day-to-day relations, immediate needs and requirements, as well as by the responses to pressures and circumstances.

¹ Available in English on the English language version of the BiH Presidency home page: <http://www.predsjednistvobih.ba/vanj/default.aspx?id=79555&langTag=en-US>. [Accessed: 30 April 2018]

² Due to translation differences, the document is referred to also as the *Basic Directions of BiH Foreign Policy or General Guidelines on and Priorities of Conducting the Foreign Policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. It is available in English on the English language version of the BiH MFA home page: http://www.mvp.gov.ba/vanjska_politika_bih/osnovni_pravci_vanjske_politike_bih/default.aspx?id=2 [Accessed: 30 April 2018]

³ Watson, Adam. *Diplomacy, the Dialogue between the States*. Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2005 (first published University paperback, Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1984). p. 21.

In theory, foreign policy is utilised “in so far as the problems which face a government are due to causes outside its boundaries, in so far as what other states do affects its problems [and] in so far as a state’s policies affect other states.”⁴ It is determined by “the needs of the area concerned and of the people who live there.”⁵ However, whilst foreign “choices are possible about some long-term goals [...] more usually they involve decisions about reactions to external events,”⁶ as had been the case with lively international affairs over the past few decades.

At the very beginning, the text adopted by the BiH Presidency rightfully points out that,

“Defining the Foreign Policy Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018-2023 (in further text: the Strategy) is a process which is both comprehensive and demanding. [It] is of the key importance for this process to include all Council of Ministers’ and other relevant institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina in it, as well as to conduct public consultations with the academic community, non-governmental and business sectors respectively.”

The document also reads,

“At its 24th regular session held on 5 May 2016, the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina tasked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina with drafting the Strategy in cooperation with the relevant institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was pursuant to the Presidency’s conclusion that the Working Group was established and tasked with drafting the Strategy and submitting the principles and plan for the drafting process concerned, including modalities on conducting consultations with the representatives of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina external experts, representatives of the academic community

and relevant non-governmental organizations, to the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

Unfortunately, it remains unknown when and where the described consultations took place or who was involved in the process. The announcement of the adoption of new BiH Foreign Policy Strategy came as a surprise to the media, academia, experts and relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs). No record of any public events concerning Foreign Policy Strategy over the period May 2016-March 2018 is available. Moreover, had such events taken place, a relatively small community dealing with these matters in BiH would have heard of them. If public consultations on foreign policy matters were possible fifteen years ago, there is no reason why they should not be in 2017.⁷

General directions and priorities for implementation of foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina were adopted 26 March 2003. In 2001 and 2002, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH (MFA), with the assistance of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) office in BiH, conducted a series of public hearings with the academia, business community and NGOs in four BiH towns, producing a document that served as a foundation for the *General Directions*, as the art of the possible at the time.

The Strategy acknowledges that,

“the defining of the present Strategy is comprehensive because, inevitably, it implies additional activities which should both enable and enhance its implementation (i.e. adoption of the *lex specialis* Law on Foreign Policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina, analysis and rationalization of the diplomatic and consular network of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ internal organization scheme, as well as drafting of the Strategy on

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Eight out of the ten interviewed experts and representatives of the academia and relevant NGOs who analyse foreign policy have not heard of the consultations, one civil servant was involved in the Strategy drafting prior to consultations, and one member of the academia knew that there would be consultations but did not take part in them. A search of the Internet and of media reports shows no information of any public events on this issue over the period May 2016-March 2018.

exports promotion and attracting foreign direct investment in Bosnia and Herzegovina). Each of these steps is conditioned by the preceding one, whereas all of them are intertwined in order to enable the very implementation of the Strategy.”

With all the conditions and excuses inserted a priori at the very beginning of the text, a reader cannot help but feel as though reading a disclaimer to a document of high hopes that is predetermined to remain just that. Conversely, this is followed by a statement that comes across as rather pretentious,

“Given that it recognized and anticipated the current global developments and challenges, the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina decided to revise the *General Guidelines on and Priorities of Conducting the Foreign Policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina* adopted in 2003.”

The sentence gives the impression that no one else before recognised the need for a new foreign policy strategy. The 2003 *General Directions* were due for a replacement already in 2008. With a view to the non-permanent membership of BiH in the UNSC 2010-2011, the first revision of the *General Directions* initiated in 2008 would have been made just in time to aid the most important institutional involvement of the country in global politics. Back then, no one could have anticipated the ‘Arab Spring,’ ‘Ukraine,’ ‘Brexit’ or the wave of terrorist attacks across Europe and create a foreign policy strategy to match such events. A foreign policy strategy should be a way to solidify state interests so that they do not get compromised by the state’s response to unexpected external events. Not the other way around. In reality, the only activities the Strategy “anticipates” are the necessary steps towards the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), as well as regional cooperation, all firmly established a long time ago.

The Strategy could be structured better to avoid confusion and the writing style should adhere more to the form of an official document rather than that of a policy analysis.

Introduction, marked as part 1, provides the reasoning behind the adoption of the Strategy and an overview of key international developments, and underscores the obligation of different institutions to implement the document. This is followed by the subtitle *Normative framework*, which comprises only five lines and calls for quality analysis and normative compliance of other legal documents, mostly implying the Law on Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Left hanging between the *Introduction* and *Part 2*, it was likely a concession to the lobbying of professional diplomats in civil service.⁸ *Part 2 – The Principles of the Foreign Policy Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina* has three ‘chapters,’⁹ with the last of them, *the Pillars of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s foreign policy*, further divided into four sub-chapters.¹⁰ The first of those sub-chapters, *Security and Stability*, is probably the most interesting and the most substantial part of the Strategy, dealing with *European Union, NATO, Fight against terrorism and all forms of extremism, Regional cooperation, Bilateral and multilateral cooperation* under the namesake sub-headings. Unfortunately, given the absence of a part 3 that could put the provisions in the context of their implementation, the document lacks a comprehensive conclusion.

Leaving aside quality and structure, compared to the three-page *General Directions*, new Strategy with its eleven pages has more to say. On the other hand, the structure of *General Directions* was closer to traditional format of official documents, with an introduction and three chapters¹¹ flowing logically and giving clear-cut instructions. A more

8 Since 2001, professional diplomats have been lobbying for the adoption of the Law on Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina that would recognise the different aspects of conducting foreign affairs, as well as the tasks and duties, rights and responsibilities of civil servants employed in the foreign office. Still, the long-standing effort deserved merely a few lines in the new Strategy akin to a promise that the issue will be added on the ‘to-do’ lists of the Presidency and the Parliamentary Assembly.

9 Those are: *The principles of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s foreign policy, The institutional framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Foreign Policy and The pillars of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Foreign Policy.*

10 Namely, (a) *Security and Stability*, (b) *Economic prosperity*, (c) *Protecting the interest of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s nationals abroad and international legal cooperation*, and (d) *Promotion of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the world.*

11 A brief preamble serving as an introduction is followed by *Principles of Bosnia and Herzegovina foreign policy, Priorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina foreign policy, and Basic directions and activities of BiH foreign policy.*

in-depth comparison between the two will be provided later on in the analysis.

Winds of change: 2003-2018

This part of the analysis aims to provide a brief answer to the guiding question *how the current global, European and regional context changed compared to that in 2003, what was the relevance of the previous set of foreign policy goals and the level of their implementation?*

Global chessboard

Over the past fifteen years, we have witnessed not merely changes but major shifts in the global, European and regional context. The European politics went from a once dominant idea of an open society and reconnecting Europe via the 'Third Way' wave of social democracy to the most recent momentum of right-wing populism. Institutionally, EU 15 became EU 28 and made a journey from discussions on the EU Constitution resulting in the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (TFEU) in 2009 to 'Brexit.' The US politics made a loop from George W. Bush over Barack Obama to Donald Trump. The interventions and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq sparked by 9/11 metastasised in north Africa and in the Middle East where the 'Arab Spring' crushed four-decades-long regimes, throwing important countries such as Libya and Syria into persistent turmoil and civil war and having Egypt and Tunisia barely survive after a serious struggle. All of those countries were 'part of the solution' for peace in the Middle East and 'the War on Terror' just a few years before the beginning of their collapse. Lebanon also narrowly escaped another civil war, whilst Jordan was crying for humanitarian aid to deal with hundreds of thousands of refugees. Al-Qaeda cells, the Taliban and remnants of former military forces and militias in Iraq became the 'Islamic State of Iraq and Levant' (ISIL), devastating territories and societies of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria and causing multiple terrorist attacks across Europe, ending in hundreds of casualties and a massive inflow of refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan and Syria to the EU.

In Europe, Ukraine almost collapsed due to internal conflicts, with Russia using the opportunity to annex Crimea. A similar scenario happened in 2008 with two provinces in Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, whose secession was supported by Russia even though they did not become a formal part of the Russian Federation. The EU and the U.S. responded with a protest and vague sanctions without any real effect. Saudi Arabian military interventions in Bahrain and Yemen went almost unnoticed by the outside world. Russia decided to play a larger role beyond the borders of the former USSR with military intervention in Syria against the forces supported by the U.S. Turkey, being a NATO member state, also resolved to undertake a more prominent international role in its traditional sphere of dominance. After a failed *coup d'état*, it found a partner in Russia, despite a dangerous incident involving Russian military airplane and the fact that they support contesting political fractions in Syria. Turkey began to oppose the U.S., its former NATO ally, taking US support to Kurdish fighters as political endorsement of the idea of a Kurdish state as a concession in lieu of strong Kurdish opposition to ISIL. The recent opening of a US Embassy in Jerusalem further deteriorated bilateral relations between Turkey and the U.S., while Egypt and Saudi Arabia remained silent, acting only under the umbrella of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). A long-standing economic and political pressure on Iran resulted in an agreement putting Iranian nuclear programme under the control of the UN Integrated Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). On May 8, the US withdrew from the *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran* (JCPOA), whilst the EU wishes to stay a party to it and start balancing its relations with China and Russia. After a great deal of difficulty, negotiations on *The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership* (TTIP) were finally bearing fruit, only to be abandoned by a major partner – the U.S.

Multiple countries took up to five years to recover from the financial crisis that struck the world in 2008. Some of the EU Member States, such as Greece, were on the brink of bankruptcy, whilst others, like Portugal and Spain, struggled with the effects of the crisis until recently. Throughout the period, China continued to increase its economic

and political global influence and came to be a serious business partner to a number of present and aspirant EU Member States through the 16+1 initiative. BRICS,¹² a new political grouping enjoying influence in the UN institutions, emerged. Finally, trade disputes provoked by the US President Trump against China, EU and Turkey could lead to a distortion of the world trade as we know it and of global diplomatic relations, and risk leaving the U.S. without economic and political allies in the near future. A vast number of other significant changes affected Africa and South America but they are less relevant to BiH foreign policy. Summing up the developments with a single sentence, one could say that in the past fifteen years the international relations became akin to schizophrenic. Rana¹³ put it more diplomatically, calling the 21st century “a time of a paradigm change in the way international relations are conducted.”

Regional affairs

Since 2003, the Western Balkans region saw several cycles of progress closely followed by relapses. Serbia faced the assassination of its Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić in 2003, succeeded by a period of unsteady centre-right and left-liberal governments, ending in a stable and majorly supported centre-right-socialist government led by Aleksandar Vučić. In February 2008, Kosovo declared independence from Serbia. Macedonia faced violence and conflicts between Macedonians and Albanians from 2010 to 2015¹⁴ and later on amongst the ethnic Macedonian political elites, which culminated in the storming of the Macedonian Parliament in April 2017. However, it remained a candidate for EU membership and in June 2018 the European Council set out the path towards opening accession negotiations with them in June 2019, contingent on Skopje meeting certain conditions. Recent negotiations with Greece over the country's name might bring to a close this long-lasting dispute and thus facilitate Macedonian membership in NATO. After a major

enlargement in 2004, followed by the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, in 2013, Croatia became the 28th EU Member State. Albania, Montenegro and Serbia were also granted candidate status. After a failed *coup d'état*, Montenegro also joined NATO in 2017. There were two instances of deterioration of bilateral relations between Croatia and Slovenia over the period – the first in the course of negotiations over the disputed Piran Bay border and the second last year following the relevant arbitration decision. Bilateral relations between Croatia and Serbia have been taking a turn for the worse and then improving several times. Whilst, despite many difficulties, the official relations at the highest levels of the state remain largely civil, they tend to be aggravated by the statements or actions of even lesser political figures of the right-wing spectrum.

One certainly has to mention the impact of decisions of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) or today's International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) convicting varied military and political figures of war crimes. Although a must in civilised societies, all decisions of those courts not only inevitably affect the bilateral relations between Croatia, BiH and Serbia, but also create tensions within BiH itself. At times, an uninformed observer might get the impression that the WWII is still ongoing in these countries but some political and economic regional initiatives, such as the Brdo-Brijuni Process, Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECOP), and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), under the umbrella of the Berlin Process, provide essential political glue for the region. The last EU-Western Balkans Summit held in May 2018 in Sofia had the summit leaders reaffirm their support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans. However, unlike the European perspective communicated in 2003 in Thessaloniki, the 2018 one is not a political encouragement to candidate countries as much as a plea for their patience until the EU settles its own internal disputes.

¹² Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

¹³ Rana, Kishan S. *21st Century Diplomacy. A Practitioner's Guide*. Key Studies in Diplomacy. The Continuum International Publishing Group. London, 2011. p. 11.

¹⁴ For more details see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2001_insurgency_in_the_Republic_of_Macedonia. [Accessed: 16 August 2018]

BiH foreign policy road map

Bosnia and Herzegovina entered 2003 as a member of the Council of Europe (CoE) and announced its candidacy for a non-permanent member of the UNSC. Around the same time, in March 2003, it started working on the Feasibility Study. The European Commission (EC) handed over to the BiH Council of Ministers (CoM) a questionnaire with 346 questions on the country's economic and political set-up but also other fields of relevance for concluding the SAA.¹⁵ In 2007, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) issued their judgement in the famous case of *Sejdić and Finci v. BiH* for discrimination related to passive electoral rights. The Office of the High Representative (OHR) went from heavy interventionism to declining significance. The years 2006 and 2008 saw two notable attempts at amending BiH Constitution to meet the human rights requirements and facilitate better functioning of the state. In June 2008, BiH successfully negotiated and signed the SAA with the EU that came into effect 1 June 2015. On 15 February 2016, BiH formally submitted its Application for EU Membership.

In terms of NATO membership, after the *Partnership for Peace* and the *Individual Partnership Program*, in April 2010, BiH has been invited to join the *Membership Action Plan* (MAP), pending the resolution of an issue concerning immovable military assets.¹⁶ Since 2009, the country has made valued contributions to the NATO-led missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as to a number of UN police missions.

The most significant political challenge for BiH was its non-permanent membership in the UNSC 2010-2011, which was successfully completed despite public scepticism as reported by the media that the country will not be up to the task of such international prominence. BiH Presidency, with the support of MFA, produced more than 600 foreign policy positions and statements on varied global political issues during the two-year tenure

¹⁵ For more information see: http://www.dei.gov.ba/dei/bih_eu/default.aspx?id=9808&langTag=en-US [Accessed: 7 May 2018]

¹⁶ For more information see: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49127.htm#. [Accessed: 8 May 2018]

and only a dozen decisions were politically but not legally contested.¹⁷ Finally, 28 February 2018, BiH submitted its replies to the EC questionnaire, with all key political issues still open. At the time of writing this analysis, BiH institutions are preparing replies to the second round of questions and clarifications sought by the EC.

The Strategy briefly identifies most of the above points on pages 2 and 3.¹⁸

2003 *General Directions* and its achievements

If we were to assess the relevance of the foreign policy goals adopted in 2003 from today's perspective, we would find them appropriate for that stage of institutional development of BiH. Back then, they were defined as foreign policy priorities:

“Bosnia and Herzegovina foreign policy has been aimed at promoting and preserving the lasting peace, security and stable democratic and the entire development in the country, in other words, at the

¹⁷ Every member of BiH Presidency has the right to question Presidency decisions when overvoted by asking the RS National Assembly or the House of Peoples of the Parliament of the Federation of BiH to grant him/her the power to veto the decision at hand. None of the Presidency Members used this mechanism during BiH membership in the UNSC. For more information see the document *Non-permanent membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the United Nations Security Council 2010 - 2011: Challenges of the January 2011 Presidency* available at: http://vpi.ba/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Non-permanent_Membership_of_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina_in_the_UN_Security_Council.pdf. [Accessed: 20 September 2018]

¹⁸ “The global, regional, and internal changes which the foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to take into account include the following:

- Economic instability;
- The consequences of the so-called “Arab Spring” led to some new conflict spots in the Middle East and beyond; [...]
- Refugee crisis;
- Cooling of the Western forces – Russian Federation relations;
- Deteriorated relations in the Persian Gulf region;
- Economic and political growth of the People's Republic of China, as well as strengthening of other developing countries, too;
- The challenges faced by the European Union;
- Departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union;
- Croatia became a member of the European Union, and the neighbouring countries were granted the candidate status;
- Montenegro became a full NATO member;
- Progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the European integration path and an enhanced structural cooperation with NATO.”

accession into contemporary European, political, economic and security integration flows. For the purpose of promoting its strategic interests, Bosnia and Herzegovina will conduct transparent foreign policy, in line with the following priorities:

- Preservation and protection of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina within its internationally recognized borders;
- Full and consistent implementation of the General Peace Agreement (GPA);
- BiH inclusion into European integration processes;
- Participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in multilateral activities, in particular, as part of the system of the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), etc. and
- Promotion of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a partner in international economic relations, and promotion of the activities aiming at the admission of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the World Trade Organization (WTO)."

Given the fact that the *General Directions* lasted for fifteen years, the document's performance surpassed the expectations but had it been assessed in March 2008, the assessment would likely show different findings.¹⁹ In spite of enormous difficulties the "lasting peace, security and stable democratic [...] development in the country" according to international standards was secured for the past decade and a half. BiH continued paving its way towards "the accession into contemporary European, political, economic and security integration flows." The "independence, sovereignty

and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina within its internationally recognized borders" have been preserved through "full and consistent implementation of the General Peace Agreement (GPA)", although one might argue the extent to which the implementation had been "full and consistent." From a foreign-policy perspective, the "participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in multilateral activities, in particular, as part of the system of the United Nations (UN)" having been achieved is paramount. The ultimate example of that participation was the country's 2010-2011 term in the UNSC. Finally, the priority concerning "promotion of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a partner in international economic relations" had been realised in form of many bilateral trade and taxation agreements but also through successfully negotiation and conclusion of SAA and CEFTA. Intensifying "the activities leading to the admission of BiH to the World Trade Organization (WTO)" has been an ongoing process since but, burdened by the WTO procedures and BiH obligations to the EU, the goal is still to be crossed off the country's foreign policy to-do list.

A quick perusal of the actual directions and activities of BiH foreign policy over the past fifteen years shows a high level of compliance with the basic directions and activities set by the BiH Presidency in 2003. On the bilateral side, BiH collaborated with neighbouring countries and improved cooperation with members of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) and permanent members of the UNSC, EU Member States, and OIC member states. It also made efforts to establish at least limited diplomatic relations with countries in Africa, Asia and South America, especially over the period 2008-2012, i.e. before and during its non-permanent membership in the UNSC. BiH also worked on regulating bilateral relations through inter-country agreements in the fields of economy, education, foreign investments, science, sports and technology. In the multilateral sector, the focus was on the "European and Trans-Atlantic integration," with one line of activities focusing on the "institutionalization of the relations with the European Union, in accordance with the Stabilization and Accession Process" and the other having the "outmost aim of institutionalizing the

¹⁹ For assesment of BiH foreign policy in that period see: Vuletić, Davor. *How far west can Bosnia and Herzegovina go from the Balkans in Foreign Policy Review no 3*. FPI BH / FES. Sarajevo, March 2009. Available at: http://vpi.ba/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Vanjskopoliticki_pregled_3.pdf. [Accessed: 20 September 2018]

relations with the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)" but being primarily "directed to BiH inclusion into the programme of Partnership for Peace." As instructed in 2003, BiH increased its participation in the SEECP, Central European Initiative (CEI), Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII) and the OIC. As with regard to "protection of interests of BiH citizens in foreign countries," BiH concluded a vast number of bilateral agreements providing consular and the assistance related to labour law and property rights abroad. It signed three dual citizenship agreements – with Croatia, Serbia and Sweden. Unfortunately, the agreement with Montenegro has been in 'its final stages' for a couple of years now. BiH signed agreements on mutual consular representation and services in third countries with Serbia in 2012 and with Montenegro in 2014. Finally, the last provision of the *General Directions* – "liberalization of visa regime for BiH citizens" has been executed as well by the end of 2010. Therefore, one could say that the priorities and activities set forth by the 2003 *General Directions* have been fully realised thanks to the unexpectedly long implementation period allowing such outstanding results.

New Strategy – goals and other business

Unlike the *General Directions*, which list the *Priorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina foreign policy*, new Strategy does not offer any explicit goals but rather those can be inferred from the subtitles *the Principles of the Foreign Policy Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina* and *the Pillars of Bosnia and Herzegovina's foreign policy*. Therefore, any comparison between the goals set by the Strategy and the goals under other documents BiH already has to or will have to implement as it moves towards Euro-Atlantic integration will derive from the analysis of the given subtitles, focusing on their potential impacts on internal and external relations in terms of security and economy.

The Strategy stipulates that "to ensure credibility of foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its legitimate implementation, any public appearance of foreign policy character on behalf of

Bosnia and Herzegovina should be based on the principle of consensus, in accordance with the constitutional arrangements of Bosnia and Herzegovina." Furthermore, it specifies that BiH "should act in accordance with the obligations envisaged by the concluded and accepted agreements and other international instruments, as well as by its membership in the international organizations and associations." Finally, the Strategy refers to the principles of reciprocity, peaceful cooperation and non-interference in internal affairs of other countries. In terms of policy implementation, it underscores "efficiency, responsibility for the results achieved, and transparency, in accordance with the universally endorsed principles of international law and the general principles of diplomatic practice alike."

The Strategy introduces "the pillars" of foreign policy as "strategic directions of Bosnia and Herzegovina's foreign policy operation" that should be viewed "not as static descriptions" but rather "as dynamic trajectories". The pillars include:

- Security and stability,
- Economic prosperity,
- Protection of the interest of Bosnia and Herzegovina's nationals abroad, and international legal cooperation,
- Promotion of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the world.

A more in-depth analysis of the text reveals a few priority goals and potential challenges.

Continuing the course towards full EU membership vs. internal politics

The first pillar – *Security and stability* pays significant attention to the EU. The future focus of BiH foreign policy will be several initiatives set out in the EC document *A Credible Enlargement Perspective and Enhanced European Union's Engagement with the Western Balkans*.²⁰ The initiatives are:

20 COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS: A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western

- Enhanced support to the rule of law;
- Enhanced engagement in the field of security and migration;
- Support to social and economic development;
- Enhanced transport and energy connectedness;
- Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans;
- Support to reconciliation and good neighbourly relations.

The Strategy stipulates that BiH should follow actively the EU CFSP. To that end, it needs to develop bilateral relations with the EU Member States and its diplomatic and consular network should intensify public diplomacy activities to promote positive developments in the country. EU financial assistance is perceived as a valuable input for development of economy and infrastructure in BiH. Here, the drafters probably had in mind the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and other Community assistance programmes.

Key document with regard to relations between BiH and the EU at the moment is the SAA.²¹ The main foreign-policy obligations of BiH under the SAA are defined in its first four titles. *Title I – General principles* obliges BiH to adhere its policies to international and regional peace and stability,²²

Balkans. COM(2018) 65 final, Strasbourg, 6.2.2018. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf. [Accessed: 15 May 2018]

21 STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, of the other part. Official Journal of the European Union, L 164/2 of 30.6.2015. Available at: http://www.dei.gov.ba/dei/direkcija/sektor_strategija/sporazum/glavni_text/default.aspx?id=19711&langTag=en-US. [Accessed: 15 May 2018]

22 Article 5

International and regional peace and stability, the development of good neighbourly relations, human rights and the respect and protection of minorities are central to the Stabilisation and Association process. The conclusion and the implementation of this Agreement will remain subject to the conditions of the Stabilisation and Association process and are based on the individual merits of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

development of good neighbourly relations, human rights and respect of minorities, the four types of freedoms of movement in the EU,²³ and to combating organised crime, corruption and terrorism.²⁴ Article 8 foresees that “the association shall be progressively and fully realised over a transitional period of a maximum of six years.”

The issues that concern good neighbourly relations, human rights, respect of minorities, and fight against organised crime, corruption and terrorism could affect internal and external relations of the country, in terms of both security and economy. Although all of them enjoy declarative support of BiH political circles and in the Strategy itself, for example, good neighbourly relations are constantly challenged by the statements of high political officials from BiH and its neighbours. The country’s neighbours keep reiterating their respect for the sovereignty of BiH but, in reality, still treat it as a territory where they can pursue their own foreign policy strategies.²⁵ This creates tensions that undermine what was once ‘a single society.’ Internal political players count on artificially created differences to secure political support by spreading fear, ignorance or even hatred towards the ‘other constituent peoples.’ In consequence, BiH does not set the best example with its treatment of human rights and minority groups according to international standards. Moreover, organised crime and corruption are still the core structural illness that prevents the state from functioning properly. Given the circumstances, fulfilment of the obligations under *Title I* will continue to face significant challenges with regard to internal security but also economy that depends on safe and secure envi-

23 Article 6

Bosnia and Herzegovina commits itself to continue and foster cooperation and good neighbourly relations with the other countries of the region including an appropriate level of mutual concessions concerning the movement of persons, goods, capital and services as well as the development of projects of common interest, notably those related to combating organised crime, corruption, money laundering, illegal migration and trafficking, including in particular in human beings, small arms and light weapons as well as illicit drugs. This commitment constitutes a key factor in the development of the relations and cooperation between the Community and Bosnia and Herzegovina and thus contributes to regional stability.

24 Article 7

The Parties reaffirm the importance that they attach to the fight against terrorism and the implementation of international obligations in this area.

25 The only exception to this is Montenegro.

ronment for doing business. Ultimately, this leads to an increasing depopulation trend, with more and more BiH citizens, irrespective of their ethnic and political background, leaving the country in search of better prospects and stability.

Title II – Political Dialogue is more specific in its requirements. Article 10 (2) (b) refers to “an increasing convergence of positions of the Parties on international issues, including CFSP issues, also through the exchange of information as appropriate, and, in particular, on those issues likely to have substantial effects on the Parties.”²⁶ The same Article is even more explicit in demanding efforts to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.²⁷

Foreign policy wise “an increasing convergence of positions of the Parties on international issues, including CFSP issues” is a potential breaking point

26 Article 10

1. Political dialogue between the Parties shall be further developed within the context of this Agreement. It shall accompany and consolidate the rapprochement between the European Union and Bosnia and Herzegovina and contribute to the establishment of close links of solidarity and new forms of cooperation between the Parties.

2. The political dialogue is intended to promote in particular:

- (a) Bosnia and Herzegovina’s full integration into the community of democratic nations and gradual rapprochement with the European Union;
- (b) an increasing convergence of positions of the Parties on international issues, including CFSP issues, also through the exchange of information as appropriate, and, in particular, on those issues likely to have substantial effects on the Parties;
- (c) regional cooperation and the development of good neighbourly relations;
- (d) common views on security and stability in Europe, including cooperation in the areas covered by the CFSP of the European Union.

27 3. The Parties consider that the proliferation of WMD and their means of delivery, both to state and non-state actors, represents one of the most serious threats to international stability and security. The Parties therefore agree to cooperate and to contribute to countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery through full compliance with and national implementation of their existing obligations under international disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements and other relevant international obligations. The Parties agree that this provision constitutes an essential element of this Agreement and will be part of the political dialogue that will accompany and consolidate these elements.

The Parties furthermore agree to cooperate and to contribute to countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery by:

- (a) taking steps to sign, ratify, or accede to, as appropriate, and fully implement all other relevant international instruments;
- (b) establishing an effective system of national export controls, controlling the export as well as the transit of WMD-related goods, including a WMD end-use control on dual use technologies and containing effective sanctions for breaches of export controls.

Political dialogue on this matter may take place on a regional basis.

due to differing internal political preferences. The CFSP standpoints on Iran, Israel, Palestine, Russia, Syria, Turkey or Ukraine could all spark foreign policy controversies and inconsistencies as result of mirroring historically divergent positions of ‘ethnic’ political groups within the country. Ultimately, it will come down to the existence of the necessary political will to find the ‘lowest common denominator,’ such as security and stability, in addressing the issues.

Title III – Regional Cooperation introduces the cross-border dimension and obligation to implement fully the existing bilateral free trade agreements and CEFTA.²⁸ It also establishes a framework for BiH relations with other countries having signed an SAA with the EU.²⁹ Moreover, BiH needs

28 Article 14

In conformity with its commitment to international and regional peace and stability, and to the development of good neighbourly relations, Bosnia and Herzegovina shall actively promote regional cooperation. The Community assistance programmes may support projects having a regional or cross-border dimension.

Whenever Bosnia and Herzegovina foresees to reinforce its cooperation with one of the countries mentioned in Articles 15, 16 and 17, it shall inform and consult the Community and its Member States according to the provisions laid down in Title X.

Bosnia and Herzegovina shall implement fully the existing bilateral Free Trade Agreements negotiated pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding on Trade Facilitation and Liberalisation signed in Brussels on 27 June 2001 by Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Central European Free Trade Agreement signed in Bucharest on 19 December 2006.

29 Article 15, Cooperation with other countries having signed a Stabilisation and Association Agreement

After the signature of this Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina shall start negotiations with the countries which have already signed a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with a view to concluding bilateral conventions on regional cooperation, the aim of which shall be to enhance the scope of cooperation between the countries concerned.

The main elements of these conventions shall be:

- (a) political dialogue;
- (b) the establishment of free trade areas, consistent with relevant WTO provisions;
- (c) mutual concessions concerning the movement of workers, establishment, supply of services, current payments and movement of capital as well as other policies related to movement of persons at an equivalent level to that of this Agreement;
- (d) provisions on cooperation in other fields whether or not covered by this Agreement, and notably the field of Justice and Home Affairs. These conventions shall contain provisions for the creation of the necessary institutional mechanisms, as appropriate.

These conventions shall be concluded within two years after the entry into force of this Agreement. Readiness by Bosnia and Herzegovina to conclude such conventions will be a condition for the further development of the relations between the European Union and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina shall initiate similar negotiations with the remaining countries of the region once these countries have signed a Stabilisation and Association Agreement.

to cooperate with other countries concerned by the Stabilisation and Association process (SAP),³⁰ as well as with those not concerned by the process and with the countries that have established a customs union with the Community, such as Turkey.³¹

The requirements under *Title III* could affect both internal and external policy decisions related to economy but also the fulfilment of the *Title II* obligations. For example, sanctions against Russia or the ability of BiH to cope with the CEFTA arrangements given its earlier described political issues with the neighbours could prove problematic.

Finally, *Title IV – Free movement of goods* exposes the potential impact of relations between BiH and EU on the prospective BiH membership in WTO.³²

Activation and implementation of NATO MAP vs. military neutrality

According to the Strategy, another key aspect of security and stability in BiH is its relation to NATO that “remains a priority of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.” However, “activities will be

30 Article 16, Cooperation with other countries concerned by the Stabilisation and Association process

Bosnia and Herzegovina shall pursue regional cooperation with the other countries concerned by the Stabilisation and Association process in some or all the fields of cooperation covered by this Agreement, and notably those of common interest. Such cooperation should always be compatible with the principles and objectives of this Agreement.

31 Article 17, Cooperation with other countries candidate for EU accession not concerned by the Stabilisation and Association process

1. Bosnia and Herzegovina should foster its cooperation and conclude a convention on regional cooperation with any other country candidate for EU accession not concerned by the Stabilisation and Association process in any of the fields of cooperation covered by this Agreement. Such convention should aim to gradually align bilateral relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and that country with the relevant part of the relations between the Community and its Member States and that country.

2. Bosnia and Herzegovina shall conclude before the end of the transitional period referred to in Article 18(1) with Turkey, which has established a customs union with the Community, on a mutually advantageous basis, an agreement establishing a free trade area in accordance with Article XXIV of the GATT 1994 as well as liberalising the establishment and supply of services between them at an equivalent level of this Agreement in accordance with Article V of the GATS.

32 Article 18

1. The Community and Bosnia and Herzegovina shall gradually establish a free trade area over a period lasting a maximum of five years starting from the entry into force of this Agreement in accordance with the provisions of this Agreement and in conformity with those of the GATT 1994 and the WTO. In so doing they shall take into account the specific requirements laid down hereinafter.

primarily directed to activating and implementing the MAP” within the country’s constitutional and legal set up and as determined by the BiH Defence Law. The Strategy requires that the current NATO cooperation programmes continue as a way to achieve “the necessary level of readiness, interoperability, compatibility, and capability [of the BiH Armed Forces] to perform joint combined operations with the partners.” This view is supported by the Presidency’s adoption of the *Defence Review* in 2016 and then of the *Bosnia and Herzegovina Armed Forces 2017-2027 Development and Modernization Plan*, which should suffice for the Foreign Policy Strategy purposes until 2023. Nevertheless, the ‘conditional activation’ of the MAP, as key strategic document for further relations between BiH and NATO, is still pending.

RS National Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming the entity’s military neutrality as a segue to a referendum on potential accession of the country to NATO and the RS Government not only politically but also legally contests the state’s property claim over prospective military assets in the RS territory. For the time being, this is merely an internal dispute and its potential external-affairs implications are temporarily tackled by greenlighting the activities related to the MAP, which in and of itself is not problematic, as confirmed by the RS President Milorad Dodik in his interview for daily newspaper *Oslobođenje*,³³ 23 April 2018. However, the matter is a likely future point of contention in BiH foreign policy and should the MAP, as a step towards full membership in NATO, be completed by 2023, that might affect the country’s economy and stability.

Other points under the *Security and stability* subtitle reiterate some of previously expressed general views on fight against terrorism, and regional, bilateral and multilateral cooperation. There are no substantive differences as compared to the *General Directions* from 2003.

33 Available at: <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/dosjei/intervjui/milorad-dodik-tek-ulazim-u-najbolje-godine-za-politiku-357983>. [Accessed: 24 April 2018]

Dedication to UN values

The Strategy touches upon the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in one paragraph on page 10. Regardless of the highly idealistic wording, the SDGs are taken to be “a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.”³⁴ The 17 goals that came into effect in January 2016 replaced the Millennium Development Goals, expanding to include new areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities.

Official position of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) is that the SDGs “will continue [to] guide UNDP policy and funding for the next 15 years. As the lead UN development agency, UNDP is uniquely placed to help implement the Goals through our work in some 170 countries and territories.”³⁵ An SDG Index is created to help measure the country’s baseline on the 17 SDGs and facilitate comparison against future achievements. Kostić notes that³⁶

“According to the index, Bosnia and Herzegovina is ranked 73rd of a total of 149 countries with an index of 59.9. This is the lowest country index not only in the region of the Western Balkans, but in Europe. It means that BiH is on average 59.9 percent of the way to the best possible outcome across the 17 SDGs and that the country will have to do the most work regarding the implementation of the SDGs in the Europe.”

Some activities have started but BiH, in general, is still in the early stages of addressing the SDGs.³⁷

34 Available at: http://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html. [Accessed: 5 May 2018]

35 Ibid.

36 Kosić, Igor. *SDGs in BiH. Reform Processes: Leaving no one behind. FPI BH / FES*. December 2016. Available at: <http://www.fes.ba/files/fes/pdf/publikationen/2017/Finalna%20ENG.pdf>

37 “The UN offices in BiH are currently supporting governments in defining national reporting modalities, including timeline and contributions from stakeholders. The UNDP office in BiH is working on the prioritization of the SDGs through a series of interactive workshops titled *Imagine 2030*. The workshops are held in cities across Bosnia and Herzegovina and include the representatives of the state, entity and local level insti-

In their initial analysis, the UNDP office in BiH concludes, “that weak links are established with 8 out of 17 SDGs (1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 16 and 17) and 19 out of 169 targets.”³⁸

The Strategy underlines that BiH had committed to initiate a systemic monitoring process of the implementation of these obligations. Attending a multi-sector workshop on SDGs 29 May 2018, Dragan Čović, a Member of BiH Presidency, announced that he wants to invite the neighbours from Croatia and Montenegro to the upcoming BiH Presidency session so that they can spend the next thirty days discussing nothing but the *2030 Agenda*.³⁹

Some of the 17 Goals could use the support of the Foreign Policy Strategy, given the fact that many of them deal with environmental issues and, therefore, involve implementation of different international treaties in the sector. *Good Health and well-being* (Goal 3) would be assisted by the conclusion of bilateral agreements on social and health insurance, as well as on access to European organ donor networks. *Quality Education* (Goal 4) can be linked to access to Community programmes, such as Erasmus, bilateral agreements in the area of education or to encouraging better cooperation between universities in the region on academic and scientific research. Goal 6 – *Clean water and sanitation* is connected to the management of cross-border protection of rivers and lakes, quality water supply and environmentally sound management of waste in border local communities. The future of *Affordable and clean energy* (Goal 7) is in international or IPA projects supporting the development of renewables, such as wind farms and solar collectors. *Decent work and economic growth* (8) could be addressed as part of BiH participation in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and through the activities under WTO. *Climate action* (Goal 13) is related to accepting, promoting and implementing relevant international treaties, such as the Kyoto Protocol.

tutions and members of civil and academic society (personal communication, 2016).” According to Kosić in Ibid.

38 Ibid. p. 14.

39 Available at: <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/dragan-covic-na-izbornim-plakatima-svi-trebaju-naznaciti-un-agendu-2030/180529026>. [Accessed: 29 May 2018]

Goals 14 and 15 – *Life below water* and *Life on Land*, respectively, could benefit from support to the implementation of international agreements and conventions on the preservation of marine and terrestrial biodiversity.

Goal 16 – *Peace, justice and strong institutions* relates to the obligations of Member States under the Charter of the UN and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and calls for prevention of conflicts, enhancing stability and protection of human rights. Some of the activities required complement BiH obligations under the SAA, such as strengthening the rule of law and effective governance, promoting human rights, and reducing the flow of illicit arms.⁴⁰

Another very important link to the Strategy is the *Partnership for the goals* (17), reinforcing the importance of genuine partnership in accepting and implementing this worldwide action under the UN as a prerequisite for achieving any of the SDGs.⁴¹

40 "Without peace, stability, human rights and effective governance, based on the rule of law - we cannot hope for sustainable development. We are living in a world that is increasingly divided. Some regions enjoy sustained levels of peace, security and prosperity, while others fall into seemingly endless cycles of conflict and violence. This is by no means inevitable and must be addressed. High levels of armed violence and insecurity have a destructive impact on a country's development, affecting economic growth and often resulting in long standing grievances that can last for generations. Sexual violence, crime, exploitation and torture are also prevalent where there is conflict or no rule of law, and countries must take measures to protect those who are most at risk. The SDGs aim to significantly reduce all forms of violence, and work with governments and communities to find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity. Strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights is key to this process, as is reducing the flow of illicit arms and strengthening the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance." Available at: http://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-16-peace-justice-and-strong-institutions.html. [Accessed: 26 May 2018]

41 "The SDGs can only be realized with a strong commitment to global partnership and cooperation. While official development assistance from developed countries increased by 66 percent between 2000 and 2014, humanitarian crises brought on by conflict or natural disasters continue to demand more financial resources and aid. Many countries also require Official Development Assistance to encourage growth and trade. The world today is more interconnected than ever before. Improving access to technology and knowledge is an important way to share ideas and foster innovation. Coordinating policies to help developing countries manage their debt, as well as promoting investment for the least developed, is vital to achieve sustainable growth and development. The goals aim to enhance North-South and South-South cooperation by supporting national plans to achieve all the targets. Promoting international trade, and helping developing countries increase their exports, is all part of achieving a universal rules-based and equitable trading system that is fair and open, and benefits all." Available at: http://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-17-partnerships-for-the-goals.htm. [Accessed: 26 May 2018]

Therefore, if BiH wants to continue pursuing UN values, it needs to assess the SDGs more seriously and recognising them in the Foreign Policy Strategy would be a good first step.

Some of the mentioned SDGs could affect internal and external relations in terms of security and economy. Specifically, the goals related to environment, clean water, life below water and life on land could cause foreign-policy issues. One example is the decision of the Croatian Government to dispose of nuclear waste at the border with BiH, just opposite National Park *Una*. Similarly, *Upper horizons*, a joint BiH-Montenegro energy project, could cause river diversion and risk the extinction of biodiversity in the area. There are ongoing disputes over financial compensations owed to BiH by Croatia and Serbia for using the hydro potential of BiH lakes for their hydroelectric power plants. Goals 16 and 17 in general have the potential to create challenges for BiH due to its complex administrative and government structure, and internal political dynamics. Still, any definitive conclusions at this point would be premature, as the UNDP and other relevant institutions have only begun assessing the SDG status in BiH.

Conclusions and recommendations

It would not be fair to say that BiH did not use its experience in external affairs to produce a new Foreign Policy Strategy that can meet the challenges of the next five years. However, the Strategy is far from coherent, potentially as a result of complex internal relations and, once again, the art of the possible. In general, the document could be structured better and offer clear directions at the end to put the provisions into the context of their implementation.

The Strategy should establish clear correlations between available resources and types of measures on the one hand and the goals it is created to achieve on the other. Moreover, it must rank the goals by priority to facilitate smart use of resources and the selection of most suitable implementation methods. Likewise, the drafters should be aware of the Strategy's limitations and bear in

mind its potential impact and the related response of other international players.

The Strategy requires further assessments of BiH obligations in each of the strategic areas of its relations with the EU, NATO and WTO, and of the activities pertaining to the UN *2030 Agenda*. The assessments are best prepared by competent BiH institutions.

Key recommendations can be divided into general and specific recommendations.

The general recommendations include:

- The incoming government should keep the Strategy to ensure continuity but it needs to involve the professional and academic community more in the assessment of the document's impact on the MFA performance in a year's time and devise ways how to improve that;
- Adapt or revise the Strategy by the end of 2020 to improve the coherence and clarity of the text as an official document;
- Make the Strategy more concrete by providing clear guidance for BiH foreign policy and offering general solutions to identified potential problems, based on BiH priority interests.

The specific recommendations are:

- With regard to the SAA, BiH should define its position in case of failure to observe the transitional period of six years (due in 2021);
- MFA needs to develop a methodology for achieving "an increasing convergence of positions of the Parties [BiH and the EU] on international issues, including CFSP issues" and providing BiH Presidency with viable options.
- Critically assess potential breaking points in international relations as seen in the context of BiH internal political climate and the country's required involvement (Iran, Kosovo, Middle

East, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine), building on the experience of its two-year term as a non-permanent UNSC member;

- BiH Presidency and CoM should consider medium-term (five-year) and long-term (ten-year) investments in the BiH diplomatic and consular network, aiming to have resident missions in all EU Member States by 2028, with sufficient financial and human resources to negotiate, lobby and promote BiH as a future Member State.
- Assess potential conclusion of the MAP implementation and look into constitutional, legal and political modalities for the next stage;
- Focus more on reaching a resolution regarding BiH application for membership in WTO and assign more resources for bilateral negotiations with Brazil and Ukraine over this issue;
- Create an inter-institutional working group to assess the impact of SDGs on future foreign policy formulation and implementation to meet the UN *2030 Agenda*;
- Conclude bilateral agreements with the neighbouring countries bettering the lives of BiH citizens, such as the dual citizenship agreement with Montenegro or border agreements with Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia.

These recommendations are intended to boost forward-looking actions to prevent internal political disputes on the already identified problematic matters. The task is not easy but it would help prepare the Presidency, MFA and other relevant institutions for the challenges that lie ahead. The general course has been known since 2003 – membership in the EU and WTO, continued relations with NATO, good neighbourly relations, and regional cooperation. The wisdom is finding ways to cross the minefield by following the map.

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