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Where is the foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina shaped?

Nowadays, when we talk about strengthening the Russian influence on the upcoming elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the question arises as to whether foreign policy of BiH has been shaped for some time in Belgrade, i.e. whether our foreign policy goals are closer to the Russian and further away from the European we are declaratively supporting? Not long ago, during a visit to Belgrade, a member of the Presidency of BiH, Mr. Izetbegovic, said: "BiH's international policy ... will be led in Sarajevo. Of course, we will also take into account the views of the neighbouring countries, because we live with Serbia and with Croatia, as well as with the EU, where we have assumed obligations in the process of integration. But my position is that the foreign policy is conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina...". Previously, presiding Chairman of the Presidency of BiH, Mr. Čović, expressed the view that BiH will follow Serbia on the policy towards Kosovo.

From an analysis of the recent BiH foreign policy positions emerges that BiH Presidency members are not sufficiently familiar with the policy they should nominally lead. Even worse, it appears that they are not aware of official positions submitted to Brussels by the BiH Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in relation to EU foreign policy declarations. As a reminder, in accordance with the provisions guaranteed by the Constitution of BiH, the Presidency is responsible for conducting the foreign policy of BiH, and the MFA is in charge of its implementation.

Namely, all those countries which aspire to EU membership are obliged to gradually align their positions to the EU ones. EU foreign policy is manifested through foreign policy declarations and eventual application of measures that may arise from them. By aligning the attitudes of candidate or potential candidates countries with EU declarations, a clear message is sent that its foreign policy is based on the same principles and values as the EU's and its member states.



Reviewing the alignment of BiH in the period between 2014-2017, it comes to light that BiH did not support any of the more than 20 EU declarations related to Moscow's actions in Ukraine and cyber attacks directed to EU member states for which the EU accuses Russia. The significant similarity of BiH's and Serbia's foreign policy position in the past four years must be underlined, as far as the fact that the two countries showed the same attitudes in not aligning with EU declarations towards Russia.

Unlike BiH and Serbia, Montenegro has supported all EU declarations, except for one in 2014. Something similar can be said for Albania, whose percentage of compliance with EU Declarations is over 90%. There is no need to emphasize that Croatia being part of the EU since 2013 has participated both in defining and achieving consensus on foreign policy and EU declarations.

Year	Number of declarations issued by the EU	Number of declarations aligned by Bosnia and Herzegovina	Number of declarations aligned by Republic of Serbia	Number of declarations aligned by Montenegro
2014.	35	18	18	34
2015.	34	27	25	34
2016.	33	23	22	33
2017.	43	26	21	43

Table of alignment of BiH, Serbia and Montenegro with EU declarations¹

This review of BiH alignment with the EU declarations, i.e. the coincidence of our foreign policy views with neighbouring Serbia, should be an argument to seriously review the way and the direction in which BiH foreign policy is led. The lack of an agreement on BiH Law on Foreign Affairs is another indicator of the situation in this domain of political action. Nevertheless this should not be subject of conflict between the views of politicians and official data. Regardless of whether the excuse may be the lack of BiH own FP policy or the invisible influence that Russia is achieving through Belgrade concerning our foreign policy, the actors in charge of BiH foreign policy positions need to ask themselves as soon as possible, what policy they are pursuing and whose interests they are protecting. According to the latest Public Opinion Survey of the Directorate for European Integration (April 2017), 69.2% of citizens support BiH's entry into the EU², although this support in 2014 was 85%.

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¹ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases> and <https://www.isac-fund.org/lat/library/politicke-analize-i-studije>

² http://dei.gov.ba/dei/media_servis/istrazivanje/default.aspx?id=18661&langTag=bs-BA