

Review Article

Accepted: 3 June 2025

<https://doi.org/10.20901/pm.62.2.04>

---

## **Diplomacy, Sovereignty, and Realism: Serbia's Geopolitical Balancing Act in Vučić's 2023 UN Speech**

---

SRĐAN M. JOVANOVIĆ

Nankai University, Faculty of History, Tianjin, China

### *Summary*

This article explores the application of Realist theory in International Relations to Serbia's foreign policy, with a focus on President Aleksandar Vučić's 2023 speech at the United Nations General Assembly. The speech, which emphasizes state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national interest, is analyzed through a Realist lens, highlighting Serbia's diplomatic balancing act between the European Union, Russia, and China. The study examines how Serbia navigates competing global interests while defending its territorial claims, particularly in Kosovo. By employing diplomacy as a tool for survival, Vučić's approach demonstrates core Realist principles such as power politics, the limits of international law, and the pursuit of national interests in a multipolar world. The article also discusses the challenges Serbia faces in maintaining this strategic balance amidst evolving global power dynamics.

*Keywords:* Realism, Diplomacy, Serbia, Kosovo, Sovereignty, International Relations, Aleksandar Vučić

### **I. Introduction**

Diplomacy, sovereignty, and Realism in International Relations (IR) are central to understanding the foreign policies of nations, particularly those that find themselves at geopolitical crossroads – like Serbia. As the country navigates its position within a complex and shifting global order, these concepts shape its interactions with both regional and global powers. Realism, which underscores the anarchic nature of the international system and the importance of state sovereignty and national interest, provides a useful lens through which to assess Serbia's foreign policy. This is particularly relevant in the context of Serbia's ongoing struggle over Kosovo, a region whose independence remains a point of contention for the Serbian government

and its people (Caratan, 1999; Vulović, 2023; Jovanović and Cook, 2019; Vučetić, 2021).

Aleksandar Vučić's 2023 address at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly reflects the key themes of diplomacy and sovereignty within a Realist framework. Delivered at a time of heightened global instability (marked by conflicts such as the war in Ukraine), Vučić's speech underscores Serbia's determination to maintain its territorial integrity, particularly in relation to Kosovo, and to protect its national interests in an increasingly multipolar world (Vučić, 2023). In his speech, Vučić accused powerful Western nations of selectively applying international law, particularly in relation to Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008, while ignoring the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity that they claim to uphold in other contexts, such as Ukraine.

This article aims to explore Vučić's speech through the theoretical lens of Realism, assessing how it reflects the core tenets of the theory, including state sovereignty, power politics, and diplomacy. By focusing on Serbia's pragmatic foreign policy – one that seeks to balance relationships with the European Union, Russia, China, and the United States – the article will analyze how Serbia's leaders have navigated international pressures while striving to uphold national sovereignty. Moreover, Vučić's speech provides a significant case study in how smaller states can engage in Realist strategies to protect their interests in a global system dominated by great powers (Mearsheimer, 2001; Gilpin, 1981).

The central argument of this article is that Aleksandar Vučić's 2023 speech at the UN General Assembly exemplifies the key principles of Realism in IR theory. Through his defense of Serbia's sovereignty and critique of Western double standards regarding Kosovo's independence, Vučić highlights the country's pragmatic approach to foreign policy. His emphasis on maintaining diplomatic relations with both Western and Eastern powers while asserting Serbia's national interest reflects Realism's focus on power politics, survival, and the limitations of international law in an anarchic world (Kennan, 1951; Krasner, 1999). Serbia's foreign policy, as articulated in the speech, is a strategic balancing act that aims to maximize its national interest while minimizing the risks posed by larger, more powerful states.

The significance of studying Vučić's speech and Serbia's foreign policy lies in the speech's relevance to current European and Balkan geopolitics. Positioned between East and West, Serbia plays a key role in regional stability and global power dynamics. Understanding Serbia's foreign policy, especially its relations with the EU, Russia, and China, is essential for grasping broader international trends shaped by power politics and Realist theory (Hudson, 2019; Gajić and Janković, 2012). Serbia's refusal to recognize Kosovo's independence remains central to its foreign policy. Vučić's speech highlights the Kosovo conflict and its implications for in-

ternational law and territorial integrity. Vučić's critique of Western intervention in Kosovo reflects the Realist belief that powerful states act in self-interest, often ignoring international norms (Morgenthau, 1948; Krasner, 1999). Studying Serbia's foreign policy through Realism offers insights into how smaller states navigate an international system dominated by great powers. Serbia's striving both to attain EU membership and to preserve ties with Russia and China demonstrates the flexibility needed for smaller states to protect their interests in a multipolar world (Kostovicova, 2005). Vučić's speech showcases Serbia's balancing act, aligning with Realist principles of national interest and survival over ideological commitments (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001).

## II. Theoretical Framework – Realism in International Relations

Realism is a foundational theory in IR, focusing on state behavior in an anarchic international system. Realists believe that the absence of an overarching authority forces states to prioritize survival through self-help (Waltz, 1979). States, as the primary actors, act in self-interest, prioritizing security and sovereignty (Morgenthau, 1948; Glaser, 1997). Key concepts in Realism include the anarchic structure of global politics, where states must rely on their own resources for security. This leads to "self-help" strategies, as states cannot fully trust others and must focus on their own survival (Waltz, 1979).

State sovereignty is critical in Realist thought, emphasizing the need for states to control their territory without external interference, making conflicts like Serbia's with Kosovo central to Realist analysis (Krasner, 1999). National interest, another key concept, drives state behavior, as states seek to maximize power, often resulting in conflict (Mearsheimer, 2001). The balance of power emerges from this competition, where states aim to prevent any single state from gaining too much power (Carr, 1939). Survival, the ultimate goal of states, leads them to prioritize military power and alliances as necessary tools for maintaining security (Waltz, 1979).

*Sovereignty* is fundamental to Realist theory. It asserts a state's right to govern itself without interference, essential for survival in an anarchic system (Krasner, 1999). Serbia's struggle over Kosovo highlights this focus, as Vučić stressed in his 2023 UN speech that maintaining territorial borders is vital to Serbia's national identity and survival (Vučić, 2023). In Realist theory, national interest, often centered on security and power, is pursued irrespective of moral considerations (Morgenthau, 1948). Serbia's foreign policy, balancing relations with the EU, Russia, and China, reflects a pragmatic approach to securing strategic advantages and minimizing external influence.

In Realist theory, diplomacy is interpreted through different lenses depending on the strand of realist theory applied. Classical realists, such as Hans Morgenthau

and Henry Kissinger, emphasize the political and psychological nature of power and view diplomacy as a vital tool for navigating the inherent conflictual tendencies of human nature and international politics. For them, diplomacy is a means of managing temporary peace or securing advantageous outcomes in an anarchic world, but it is approached with caution due to its perceived fragility in the absence of a stable balance of power (Kissinger, 1994; Morgenthau, 1948). By contrast, Neorealists, most notably Kenneth Waltz, treat diplomacy as largely peripheral to their structural analysis, which focuses on the international system's anarchic nature and the distribution of material capabilities among states. In Neorealist terms, diplomacy and foreign-policy decisions are behaviors at the unit level and therefore not central to explaining systemic outcomes (Waltz, 1979).

Despite these theoretical distinctions, Serbia's foreign policy under Vučić can be interpreted through a Realist lens as a form of strategic pragmatism. Vučić's diplomatic balancing act (engaging simultaneously with the European Union, Russia, and China) demonstrates a classical Realist orientation, in which diplomacy is deployed to maximize Serbia's national interest and safeguard its sovereignty amid regional and global pressures. Rather than seeking cooperation for its own sake, Serbia engages in diplomacy that reflects calculated assessments of shifting power dynamics (Naumkina *et al.*, 2023; Chen *et al.*, 2021; Powell, 1991). This approach underscores the classical Realist belief in the fragility and instrumental nature of alliances.

Moreover, Vučić's public criticism of international institutions and law – particularly in relation to Kosovo – reinforces the Realist skepticism toward liberal internationalism. His argument that powerful Western states manipulate legal norms to suit their strategic goals aligns with the classical and neoclassical Realist view that international institutions, including the United Nations, are often powerless to constrain the behavior of hegemonic actors (Mearsheimer, 1994; Vučić, 2023). While diplomacy itself is not exclusive to Realist theory (and is more centrally theorized in English School scholarship), it is nonetheless consistent with Realist practice when used as a tool to assert sovereignty and secure material or political advantage in a competitive international order.

Realism thus offers a framework for understanding Serbia's foreign policy, particularly in its struggle over Kosovo and its diplomatic relations between global powers. The emphasis on sovereignty, national interest, and the limitations of diplomacy underscores Serbia's power-oriented approach to its international relations.

In this analysis, we employ qualitative content analysis against the theoretical backdrop of IR theory, specifically focusing on Realism as the guiding framework. Our methodological approach involves systematically identifying and interpreting key themes in Aleksandar Vučić's 2023 UN General Assembly speech, assessing

how they align with the fundamental principles of Realism, such as state sovereignty, national interest, power politics, and the anarchic nature of the international system. This allows us to critically evaluate how Serbia's foreign-policy rhetoric reflects established Realist assumptions and strategic imperatives. The study follows a theory-driven qualitative approach, using contextual discourse analysis to examine Vučić's rhetorical choices, political messaging, and framing of international relations. By comparing these elements to Realist thought, we establish analytical criteria for assessing the role of power, diplomacy, and territorial integrity in Serbia's foreign-policy discourse. Additionally, we consider how Vučić's speech fits within broader Serbian diplomatic strategies and geopolitical alignments, ensuring a structured interpretation of their significance. This method allows us to combine textual analysis with theoretical insights, offering a comprehensive examination of Serbia's positioning in global affairs.

### **III. Serbia's Historical Geopolitical Context**

The dissolution of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s drastically altered Serbia's geopolitical landscape. As the dominant republic in Yugoslavia, Serbia faced the breakup of the federation and the Yugoslav Wars, leading to the independence of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia (Giniecki, 2020; Moon, 2018). This fragmentation, especially the Kosovo issue, deeply impacted Serbia's national identity and foreign policy. The Kosovo conflict, rooted in the ethnic Albanian majority's quest for independence, remains a core challenge for Serbia. Its refusal to recognize Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence is tied to its emphasis on sovereignty and territorial integrity (Bieber, 2015; Rrahmani and Bushi, 2003). Serbia's focus on preventing Kosovo's global international recognition reflects Realist principles that prioritize national borders and sovereignty.

Serbia's post-communist transition was marked by instability, isolation, and sanctions due to its involvement in the Yugoslav Wars and the misuse of power by Slobodan Milošević's regime; Vučić himself was the Minister of Information during that time, which was marked by severe attacks on press freedoms (Jovanović, 2019). After Milošević's fall in 2000, Serbia sought reintegration into the international community, although Kosovo remained a key issue in its relations with Western powers. Since the 2000s, Serbia has aimed to join the European Union, with EU membership offering a framework for political and economic reforms (Kostovicova, 2008). The 2008 Stabilization and Association Agreement was a key step toward EU integration. However, normalization of relations with Kosovo remains a prerequisite for accession, as highlighted by the 2013 Brussels Agreement. Serbia also faces challenges resulting from its attempts to balance its EU ambitions with close ties to Russia and China, key allies providing political and economic support,

especially regarding Kosovo (Bieber and Tzifakis, 2019). While EU membership offers economic and political stability, Serbia's partnerships with Russia and China complicate full alignment with EU norms (Keil, 2016).

NATO's 1999 intervention in Kosovo continues to shape Serbia's foreign policy. The bombing, aimed at stopping human-rights abuses, led to significant anti-Western sentiment and reinforced Serbia's view of NATO as an aggressor (Daalder and O'Hanlon, 2004). Vučić has criticized the intervention as a violation of international law, a view that shapes Serbia's reluctance to fully engage with NATO (Vučić, 2023). Serbia's limited cooperation with NATO, through the Partnership for Peace program, reflects its pragmatic approach to international security (Keil, 2016). Serbia's closer ties with Russia are also rooted in shared opposition to NATO's actions in 1999, with Russia providing diplomatic support on the Kosovo issue. This reliance on Russia limits Serbia's full integration with Western institutions like the EU and NATO (Bieber, 2020). Serbia's foreign policy is shaped by the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Kosovo conflict, and the 1999 NATO intervention. While EU membership remains a key goal, Serbia's relationships with Russia and China, along with the legacy of NATO's intervention, influence its diplomatic strategy and complicate its efforts to fully align with Western powers.

#### **IV. Vučić's UN Address from a Realist Interpretation**

The decision to analyze Aleksandar Vučić's speech at the 2023 United Nations General Assembly stems from its rarity and significance within the broader context of Serbian foreign policy. Unlike his frequent addresses to the Serbian public (he engages with domestic political issues almost daily – in 2024, he reached a record of over 300 public outings, prompting Bošnjaković to say that he is “never leaving the screen”; Bošnjaković, 2024), Vučić rarely speaks directly to the international community in such a high-profile, multilateral setting. His speech at the UN represents one of the few occasions where he articulated Serbia's foreign-policy stance before a global audience, making it an important moment for assessing the country's international positioning and strategic messaging. This speech is particularly representative of Serbia's foreign policy because it encapsulates key themes that have defined its diplomatic approach in recent years: the defense of territorial integrity, skepticism toward Western interventionism, and the pursuit of a balanced foreign policy between East and West. Vučić's remarks reflect the core tenets of Realism in IR, emphasizing state sovereignty, national interest, and power politics. His critique of selective applications of international law, particularly regarding Kosovo and NATO's 1999 intervention, aligns with the Realist assertion that international norms are often shaped by the strategic interests of great powers rather than by universal principles.

Furthermore, Vučić's speech should not be viewed in isolation, but rather as part of Serbia's broader diplomatic strategy. Over the past decade, Serbia has sought to maintain a delicate balancing act: aspiring toward EU membership while fostering strong ties with Russia and China (Vučić, 2020; Petrovic and Wilson, 2021; Stepaniuk, 2024). This dual approach is evident in Vučić's speech, in which he reaffirms Serbia's commitment to sovereignty and territorial integrity while signaling readiness for dialogue and cooperation. By delivering such a message on the global stage, Vučić reinforces Serbia's long-term strategy of maximizing its diplomatic leverage while resisting pressures to fully align with any single geopolitical bloc. His UN address thus serves as a crucial case study for understanding Serbia's evolving role in international politics and the application of Realist principles in its foreign policy.

### *Overview of Vučić's Key Arguments*

Vučić's 2023 speech at the UN General Assembly highlighted several key themes, including territorial integrity, the importance of sovereignty, and the hypocrisy of international actors, especially Western powers. Central to his address was Serbia's long-standing refusal to recognize Kosovo's independence, which Vučić framed as an infringement on Serbia's sovereignty and a violation of the United Nations Charter. "The attempt of cutting my country into pieces, that had formally started in 2008 by the unilateral declaration of independence of so-called Kosovo, has not ended yet", he declared, emphasizing that this violation of international law was a precursor to broader global issues (Vučić, 2023). Moreover, Vučić criticized the international community for what he perceived as double standards in applying the principles of international law. He pointed to NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999, which occurred without UN Security Council approval, as a direct violation of Serbia's sovereignty. "For the first time, unprecedented in world history, the most powerful 19 countries made the decision, without involvement of the UN Security Council... to brutally attack and punish a sovereign country on European soil", Vučić said, highlighting the inconsistency between the Western powers' actions in Serbia and their stance on sovereignty in other conflicts, such as Ukraine (*ibid.*).

Through these arguments, Vučić positioned Serbia as a defender of international law, calling for respect for the UN Charter and advocating for a consistent application of legal principles. He further emphasized the need for dialogue and peaceful resolutions to disputes, aligning with the Realist notion that diplomacy should be in the service of national interest. Vučić's address at the UN is a compelling case study of how Realist theory informs Serbia's foreign policy. Realism, as a school of thought in IR, asserts that the international system is anarchic, with no central authority to enforce rules or norms. As a result, states act primarily in self-interest,



seeking to secure their sovereignty and enhance their power in a competitive international environment (Waltz, 1979). Vučić's speech, with its focus on sovereignty, territorial integrity, and power dynamics, resonates with these core Realist ideas.

All of this comes with the backdrop of media control, erosion of democracy, and excessive control of the media, for which Vučić has been accused numerous times, and which has been explored in scholarship (Russell, 2019; Jovanović, 2018; Lutovac, 2020). This work, however, concentrates on his speech.

### *State Sovereignty and the Kosovo Issue*

One of the central themes of Vučić's speech was the defense of Serbian sovereignty, particularly concerning Kosovo. Realism places a strong emphasis on state sovereignty, viewing it as the foundation of international order. Sovereignty, in the Realist framework, is the ultimate expression of a state's power and autonomy, and any threat to it is seen as an existential danger. Vučić repeatedly framed the Kosovo issue as a violation of Serbia's sovereignty, stating that "precisely the violation of the UN Charter in the case of Serbia was one of the visible precursors of numerous problems we are all facing today" (Vučić, 2023).

For Realists, protection of state sovereignty is paramount because it ensures a state's ability to act independently and secure its national interests (Agnew, 2005; Albekov *et al.*, 2014; Moses, 2012). Vučić's unwavering stance on Kosovo reflects this Realist priority. In his view, Kosovo's independence was not only an infringement on Serbia's territorial integrity but also a broader challenge to the principle of sovereignty that underpins the international system. This Realist interpretation of sovereignty aligns with Hans Morgenthau's assertion that states must prioritize their territorial integrity and protect themselves from external encroachments regardless of moral or ideological considerations (Morgenthau, 1948).

### *Critique of Western Powers*

Vučić's speech also contained a sharp critique of Western powers, particularly their selective application of international law. He accused these nations of employing double standards, upholding the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity in some cases – such as Ukraine – while disregarding them in others, such as Kosovo. "They didn't laugh out loud when the Russian President used the very same words, justifying his attack against Ukraine. They forgot that they themselves had used the same narrative, the same words, and the same explanations", Vučić remarked, drawing a parallel between NATO's intervention in Serbia and Russia's actions in Ukraine (Vučić, 2023).

This critique reflects a Realist skepticism toward moralism and the pursuit of justice in international relations. Realists argue that international law and norms are



often tools used by powerful states to advance their own interests, rather than objective principles applied consistently (Morgenthau, 1948). Vučić's argument underscores this Realist perspective, as he accuses the West of manipulating legal principles to justify military interventions that serve their strategic goals. For example, NATO's 1999 intervention in Kosovo was justified by some on humanitarian grounds, but Vučić argues that it was a blatant violation of Serbia's sovereignty and an act of aggression by powerful Western states.

### *Security Dilemmas and International Conflict*

Another important Realist concept that is evident in Vučić's speech is the security dilemma, which arises when one state's efforts to enhance its security inadvertently threaten the security of others, leading to a cycle of mistrust and potential conflict (Mitzen, 2006; Glaser, 1997; Jervis, 1978). Vučić alluded to this dynamic when he criticized NATO's intervention in Kosovo and drew parallels with Russia's actions in Ukraine. "Even though Serbia had not stepped its foot in the territory of some other country, nor jeopardized its existence, 24 years ago, the most powerful and the strongest 19 had no mercy for small Serbia", Vučić said, highlighting how Serbia's actions were perceived as a threat by NATO, prompting a military intervention that destabilized the region (Vučić, 2023).

From a Realist perspective, NATO's 1999 intervention in Kosovo reflects the asymmetries of power that shape international behavior rather than the dynamics of a classical security dilemma. Vučić's comparison of NATO's actions with Russia's intervention in Ukraine should not be read as a demonstration of mutual insecurity between states, but rather as a critique of the selective application of international norms by powerful actors. His framing underscores the Realist insight that international law is often subordinated to the interests of hegemonic states, who justify interventions when it serves their strategic purposes while condemning similar behavior by their rivals. Vučić's remarks – highlighting that "they themselves had used the same narrative" (*ibid.*) – point to the inconsistency with which principles such as sovereignty and territorial integrity are applied, reinforcing Serbia's marginal position in a system dominated by great power prerogatives.

Additionally, while Vučić's appeal to diplomacy and negotiation might at first appear to diverge from Realist orthodoxy, it can still be interpreted within a Realist framework. Realists do not reject diplomacy; rather, they understand it as a tool wielded instrumentally in pursuit of state interests within an anarchic and competitive environment (Waltz, 1979; Morgenthau, 1948). Vučić's call for consistent principles ("We did not change the principles for the purpose of daily politics and our own needs") functions as a diplomatic strategy aimed at shoring up Serbia's international legitimacy without ceding sovereignty. His emphasis is not a moral

commitment to peaceful resolution per se, but a tactical assertion of Serbia's rights within a system where military options are constrained and soft power must be leveraged to protect core interests. This calculated use of diplomatic rhetoric to push back against perceived double standards reflects Realist pragmatism, not idealism.

### *Diplomacy and National Interest*

Vučić's call for dialogue and negotiation as a means to resolve disputes aligns with the Realist understanding of diplomacy as a tool for protecting national interests. In his speech, Vučić emphasized Serbia's commitment to dialogue, particularly in its relations with Kosovo, but also in the broader context of international diplomacy. He highlighted Serbia's willingness to engage with international actors, including the European Union, to find peaceful solutions to disputes: "Serbia remains committed to this process in the aim of providing peaceful coexistence of Serbs and Albanians. There is no alternative to peace and stability in the region" (Vučić, 2023).

For Realists, diplomacy is a critical means of securing a state's national interest in an anarchic world where power dynamics are constantly shifting. States engage in diplomacy not out of a desire for cooperation per se, but because it allows them to advance their own interests while avoiding unnecessary conflicts (Khadafi *et al.*, 2023). Vučić's speech reflects a Realist approach, as he called for peaceful dialogue while emphasizing the need to protect Serbia's sovereignty and national interests. His focus on diplomacy as a means of managing conflict also aligns with Realist views on the balance between cooperation and competition in international relations (Kissinger, 1994). Additionally, Vučić's efforts to position Serbia as a neutral actor, maintaining relationships with both Western and Eastern powers, demonstrate a Realist understanding of the importance of balancing alliances to secure national interests. While Serbia seeks EU membership, it also maintains close ties with Russia and China, reflecting a pragmatic approach to foreign policy that prioritizes Serbia's security and economic interests over ideological alignment. "Serbia will cherish its big and traditional friendships in all continents", Vučić stated, underscoring the country's diplomatic strategy of maintaining strong relationships with diverse international actors (Vučić, 2023).

## **V. Serbia's Diplomatic Balancing Act**

Serbia's foreign policy strategy reflects a careful diplomatic balancing act, as it navigates relationships with both Western and Eastern powers in an increasingly polarized global environment (Nexon, 2009; Ryser, 2014; Bock and Hennenberg, 2013). While Serbia pursues EU membership, it simultaneously seeks to maintain strong ties with Russia and China, leveraging these alliances to bolster its security and economic interests. This approach is firmly grounded in Realist principles, as

Serbia prioritizes its national interest and sovereignty while carefully managing power dynamics in the international system.

### *Serbia's Relations with the European Union*

Serbia's relationship with the European Union has been one of cautious engagement. On the one hand, EU membership offers significant economic and political benefits, including access to the single market, development funds, and greater political stability (Mitrović, 2021). On the other hand, Serbia's historical, cultural, and economic ties to Russia and China have prevented it from fully aligning with the West (Brkić, 2023). This pragmatic approach to foreign policy reflects a Realist understanding of the international system, where states prioritize their national interest and pursue alliances that maximize their security and economic benefits.

Serbia has been a candidate for EU membership since 2012, and negotiations officially began in 2014. However, the process has been slow and fraught with challenges, particularly regarding the Kosovo issue (Hajrullahu, 2019; Obradović-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012). The EU has made it clear that Serbia must normalize relations with Kosovo, a condition that has proven difficult for Serbia to meet. Despite this obstacle, Serbia remains committed to the accession process. In his 2023 UN speech, Vučić reaffirmed Serbia's commitment to EU integration, stating that "Serbia is on its European path, ready to change, reform itself and make progress" (Vučić, 2023).

Serbia's engagement with the EU can be interpreted through a Realist lens as a pragmatic strategy to ensure economic development and political stability. By pursuing EU membership, Serbia seeks to enhance its economic growth and improve its international standing, all while retaining its sovereignty and autonomy. This pragmatic approach is consistent with the Realist focus on national interest and the strategic use of diplomacy to advance state goals (Rice, 2008; Ogunseye, 2023). At the same time, Serbia's reluctance to fully break ties with Russia and China reflects its desire to maintain flexibility in its foreign policy and avoid over-reliance on any single bloc.

### *Realist Interpretation of Serbia's Pragmatic Approach*

Serbia's foreign policy is characterized by what scholars refer to as "multi-vector diplomacy", where it pursues diverse alliances and avoids rigid alignment with any one power (Stanojević, 2025). This is particularly evident in its relations with the EU, Russia, and China. While Serbia is keen to join the EU, it has also maintained strong political, economic, and military ties with Russia, a country that provides significant support for Serbia on the Kosovo issue. China, too, is an increasingly important partner, with large-scale investments in Serbia's infrastructure through the Belt and Road Initiative.

This balancing act is a hallmark of Realist diplomacy, where states seek to maximize their security and autonomy by aligning with multiple powers rather than becoming dependent on a single hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2001). By engaging with both the EU and its traditional allies, Serbia increases its bargaining power, which allows it to extract concessions from both sides while minimizing the risks of isolation. Vučić's speech reflects this approach, as he emphasized Serbia's ability to maintain relations with diverse actors, stating that "Serbia will cherish its big and traditional friendships in all continents" (Vučić, 2023).

### *Serbia's Traditional Alliances*

One of the defining features of Serbia's foreign policy is its long-standing relationship with Russia (Aghayev, 2017; Aleksa, 2018). Historically, Serbia and Russia share deep cultural, religious, and political ties, with both nations identifying as Slavic and Orthodox Christian. Russia has been a key supporter of Serbia's stance on Kosovo, using its veto power in the United Nations Security Council to block Kosovo's full international recognition. This support has been invaluable to Serbia, as it seeks to prevent further erosion of its territorial integrity. In return, Serbia has maintained a pro-Russian stance on several international issues, including its refusal to join Western sanctions against Russia following the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

From a Realist perspective, Serbia's close relationship with Russia is a strategic alliance that enhances Serbia's security and diplomatic leverage. In an international system where power is distributed unevenly, small and medium-sized states like Serbia often align with more powerful states to secure protection and support. For Serbia, Russia serves as a counterbalance to Western pressure, particularly regarding Kosovo. As Vučić noted in his UN address, "Serbia has not stepped its foot in the territory of some other country, nor jeopardized its existence", highlighting Serbia's need to defend its territorial integrity against external threats (Vučić, 2023).

In addition to its relationship with Russia, Serbia has also cultivated strong ties with China. Over the past decade, China has emerged as one of Serbia's most important economic partners, investing heavily in infrastructure, energy, and telecommunications. The Belt and Road Initiative has been a key driver of Chinese investment in Serbia, with major projects including the construction of highways, railways, and power plants (Stojanović-Višić *et al.*, 2023). These investments have provided Serbia with much-needed economic development and positioned the country as a key hub in China's efforts to expand its influence in Europe.

For Serbia, the relationship with China offers both economic and strategic benefits. Economically, Chinese investment has helped modernize Serbia's infrastructure and boost its GDP. Strategically, China provides Serbia with an alternative to the West, allowing it to diversify its alliances and avoid over-dependence on the

EU. From a Realist perspective, this relationship enhances Serbia's autonomy by providing it with multiple sources of economic and political support (Keil, 2016). As a result, Serbia can resist Western pressure on issues like Kosovo while continuing to pursue its national interest.

## **VI. Kosovo, Diplomacy, and Realism: Serbia's Strategic Imperatives in a Fractured International Order**

Kosovo's 2008 unilateral declaration of independence remains one of the most significant and contested developments in post-Cold War international relations. For Serbia, the issue is not merely territorial, but indeed existential: touching on sovereignty, national identity, and legal legitimacy. From a Realist perspective, this conflict demonstrates how international law is often subordinate to geopolitical interests and how diplomacy, though essential for smaller states like Serbia, is constrained by the power politics of the global system (Sterio, 2008; Vidmar, 2009; Muharremi, 2008).

### *The Kosovo Issue – Law, Power, and Identity*

Kosovo's declaration of independence on February 17, 2008, was the culmination of a protracted conflict rooted in the disintegration of Yugoslavia and exacerbated by the ethnic tensions between Albanians and Serbs. NATO's intervention in 1999, without United Nations Security Council authorization, marked a watershed in international law and order (Krieger, 2001; IICK, 2000). After nearly a decade of UN administration, Kosovo's ethnic Albanian leaders declared independence, a move rapidly recognized by many Western states.

Legally, the International Court of Justice's 2010 opinion stating that the declaration did not violate international law (ICJ, 2010) brought little resolution. Serbia continues to contest the legality and legitimacy of Kosovo's independence. Vučić's 2023 UN General Assembly speech reiterated this defiance: "The attempt of cutting my country into pieces... has not ended yet" (Vučić, 2023). In Serbian Realist thought, Kosovo is a red line; its secession represents not just territorial loss but a challenge to the norms of sovereignty and non-intervention that Serbia holds essential for its survival (Krasner, 2002; Koskeniemi, 2006).

### *Diplomacy as Realist Strategy*

Diplomacy, while often idealized in Liberal and Constructivist paradigms, is for Realists a tool of strategic necessity rather than normative virtue. Vučić's foreign policy, guided by the legacy of the "Four Pillars" doctrine (Gajić and Janković, 2012), illustrates this. In his speech, Vučić lamented the global marginalization of peace and the selective morality of powerful states: "Peace has become a forbidden word... all of them have their favorites and their culprits" (Vučić, 2023).

Serbia's diplomatic outreach aims to preserve its strategic autonomy. While aspiring to join the EU for economic and institutional benefits, Serbia simultaneously cultivates ties with Russia and China to offset Western conditionalities. As Bieber (2020) observes, this multi-vector diplomacy allows Serbia to avoid becoming a satellite of any single bloc.

Particularly on the Kosovo issue, Serbia has used diplomacy to build coalitions that resist Kosovo's international recognition. Russia and China's support in the UN Security Council has been critical, though Realists recognize that this support is rooted not in principle, but in mutual strategic interest. Serbia's persistence in framing Kosovo as a global legal issue rather than a Balkan dispute aims to internationalize its position while minimizing unilateral Western pressures.

### *The Limits of Diplomacy in a Hierarchical World*

Despite its utility, Serbia's diplomacy faces intrinsic limits in an anarchic system. The recognition of Kosovo by over 100 states (most of them Western-aligned) demonstrates how global power asymmetries restrict what smaller states can accomplish through negotiation (Fidler, 2011). The EU has made the normalization of relations with Kosovo a condition for Serbia's accession, putting the country in a dilemma between sovereign principles and integration goals.

In this geopolitical context, Vučić's emphasis on diplomacy serves a dual purpose: it projects Serbia as a reasonable actor while reinforcing its moral and legal position. Yet, as Mearsheimer (1994) reminds us, diplomacy succeeds only when backed by power. Vučić himself acknowledged this imbalance in his UN address, noting that Serbia's calls for legal consistency were ignored while great powers rewrote the rules: "When one follows such politics, when there is no morality in the world politics, then it is clear that we are about to enter... big conflicts" (Vučić, 2023). In Kosovo, Serbia sees not only a legal dispute but a battlefield of legitimacy and geopolitical standing. Through its diplomacy, Serbia strives to keep its options open in a world where small states must maneuver carefully. The limits of international law and diplomacy, shaped by the asymmetry of power, confirm the enduring relevance of Realism for understanding Serbia's foreign policy and, more broadly, the constraints faced by states outside the circle of global hegemons.

## **VII. Conclusion – Serbia's Realist Approach in a Multipolar World**

Aleksandar Vučić's 2023 address at the United Nations General Assembly serves as a compelling example of Realist principles in action within Serbia's foreign policy. His speech emphasized the protection of state sovereignty, the pursuit of national interest, and a pragmatic approach to diplomacy amidst the power dynamics of a multipolar world. These core tenets of Realism – particularly the focus on power

politics and the inherent competition among states – are evident in Serbia's ongoing efforts to navigate between competing global interests, particularly as it balances its relationships with the European Union and traditional allies such as Russia and China. Serbia's diplomatic strategy reflects a nuanced understanding of Realist thought, especially in how smaller states can assert their sovereignty in a world dominated by more powerful actors.

Vučić's UN address emphasizes Serbia's commitment to defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity, particularly concerning Kosovo. This reflects the Realist view that states must protect their territorial integrity for survival in an anarchic system (Waltz, 1979). Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence remains central to Serbia's foreign policy, which Vučić frames as a violation of international law (Vučić, 2023). This aligns with Realist assertions that international law is often subordinate to power politics (Mearsheimer, 1994).

He critiques the inconsistent application of international law by Western powers, particularly regarding Kosovo and Ukraine, emphasizing how great powers manipulate international law to suit their interests (Koskeniemi, 2006; Vučić, 2023). Serbia's foreign policy balances EU aspirations with strong ties to Russia and China, reflecting its use of alliances to maximize security (Waltz, 1979).

Serbia's foreign policy will likely continue balancing relationships with the EU, Russia, and China. EU membership remains a key goal, but the unresolved Kosovo issue complicates Serbia's accession prospects. Vučić stresses Serbia's refusal to recognize Kosovo's independence, framing it as an issue of sovereignty. Serbia's ties with Russia and China provide economic and diplomatic support, particularly regarding Kosovo, but complicate its relations with the EU. As global power dynamics shift, Serbia may face pressure to align more closely with the West, particularly amid rising tensions with Russia. Vučić's pragmatic diplomacy will be crucial in navigating these challenges (Bieber, 2020, p. 78).

Serbia's foreign policy exemplifies how smaller states navigate a system dominated by great powers. Realist theory argues that smaller states enhance security and autonomy by forming alliances and engaging in multilateral diplomacy (Waltz, 1979). Vučić's focus on multilateral diplomacy, seen in Serbia's participation in the UN and the Open Balkan Initiative, reflects this strategy. However, alliances with great powers often pose challenges, as their interests may not align with those of smaller states. Serbia's alignment with Russia and China has complicated its relationship with the EU, but it has also provided key diplomatic and economic benefits. Vučić's criticism of selective international law application reflects Realist skepticism of international norms, especially regarding Kosovo (Mearsheimer, 1994). Despite the challenges, Serbia's diplomacy demonstrates the resilience of small states in asserting sovereignty.



## REFERENCES

- Aghayev, E. (2017) 'Relations Between Russia and Serbia', *European Researcher, Series A*, 8(1), pp. 4-8.
- Agnew, J. (2005) 'Sovereignty regimes: territoriality and state authority in contemporary world politics', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 95(2), pp. 437-461. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.2005.00468.x> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Albekov, A., Polubotko, A. and Akopova, E. (2014) 'The problem of preserving the nation-state sovereignty in the context of globalization', *Asian Social Science*, 10(23), pp. 178-183. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n23p178> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Aleksa, F. (2018) 'Russian-Serbian relations-challenges and perspectives', *Обществ. Среда. Разумие (Terra Humana)*, 4(49), pp. 31-42.
- Beeson, M. (2003) 'Sovereignty under siege: globalisation and the state in South-east Asia', *Third World Quarterly*, 24(2), pp. 357-374. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0143659032000074637> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Benhabib, S. (2016) 'The new sovereigntism and transnational law: legal utopianism, democratic scepticism and statist realism', *Global Constitutionalism*, 5(1), pp. 109-144. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s2045381716000010> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Bieber, F. (2015) 'The Serbia-Kosovo agreements: an EU success story?', *Review of Central and East European Law*, 40(3-4), pp. 285-319. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15730352-04003008> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Bieber, F. (2020) *The Rise of Authoritarianism in the Western Balkans*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bieber, F. and Tzifakis, N. (2019) *The Western Balkans in the World: Linkages and Relations with Non-Western Countries*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Bock, A. M. and Henneberg, I. (2013) 'Why balancing fails', *Working Papers on International Politics and Foreign Policy*, 2, pp. 1-19.
- Bošnjaković, Ž. (2024) 'U 2024. više od 300 pojavljivanja: Zašto se Vučić "ne skida" sa malih ekrana?', 31 December, *Danas*. Available at: <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/aleksandar-vucic-tv-obracanja/> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Brkić, D. (2023) 'Serbian energy sector in a gap between East and West', *Energy Exploration & Exploitation*, 42(1), pp. 330-340. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/01445987231215445> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Caratan, B. (1999) 'NATO i Kosovo: Geneza problema i mogućnosti rješavanja krize', *Politička misao: časopis za politologiju*, 36(2), pp. 3-14.
- Carr, E. H. (1939) *The Twenty Years' Crisis: 1919-1939*. London: Macmillan.

- Chen, G., Zhu, C., Zhang, X., Qiao, C. and Han, Y. (2021) 'Evaluating realism and liberalism: which school of thought better explains world politics?' in 2021 4th International Conference on Humanities Education and Social Sciences (ICHESS 2021), pp. 1146-1153. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211220.197> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Daalder, I. and O'Hanlon, M. (2004) *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Dalby, S. (2016) 'Realism and geopolitics' in K. Dodds (ed.) *The Ashgate research companion to critical geopolitics*. London: Routledge, pp. 33-47.
- Fels, E. and Fels, E. (2017) 'Theoretical Framework: Realism as a Lens for Analysis' in *Shifting Power in Asia-Pacific? The Rise of China, Sino-US Competition and Regional Middle Power Allegiance*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 85-152.
- Fidler, D. P. (2011) 'Navigating the global health terrain: mapping global health diplomacy', *Asian J. WTO & Int'l Health L & Pol'y*, 6(1).
- Føllesdal, A. (2015) 'Machiavelli at 500: from cynic to vigilant supporter of international law', *Ratio Juris*, 28(2), pp. 242-251. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/raju.12079> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Gajić, A. and Janković, S. (2012) *Četiri stuba srpske spoljne politike*. Belgrade: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu.
- Gilpin, R. (1981) *War and Change in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ginieczki, T. (2020) 'Constructions of identity and war: a reciprocal relationship in former Yugoslavia', *Oregon Undergraduate Research Journal*, 17(1), pp. 19-28. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5399/uo/ourj/17.1.3> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Glaser, C. (1997) 'The security dilemma revisited', *World Politics*, 50(1), pp. 171-201. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0043887100014763> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Gow, J. (2003) *The Serbian Project and its Adversaries: A Strategy of War Crimes*. Montreal: McGill – Queen's University Press.
- Hajrullahu, A. (2019) 'The Serbia Kosovo dispute and the European integration perspective', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 24(1), pp. 101-120.
- Hudson, V. M. (2019) *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- ICJ (International Court of Justice) (2010) *Advisory Opinion on the Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo*. Available at: <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/141> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- IICK (Independent International Commission on Kosovo) (2000) *The Kosovo report: conflict, international response, lessons learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Jervis, R. (1978) 'Cooperation under the security dilemma', *World Politics*, 30(2), pp. 167-214. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009958> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Jovanović, S. M. (2018) "'You're Simply the Best": Communicating Power and Victimhood in Support of President Aleksandar Vučić in the Serbian Dailies Alo! and Informer', *Journal of Media Research – Revista de Studii Media*, 11(31), pp. 22-42.
- Jovanović, S. M. (2019) 'Confronting Recent History: Media in Serbia During Aleksandar Vučić's Ministry of Information in the Milošević Era (1998–1999)', *Hiperboreea*, 6(1), pp. 61-74.
- Jovanović, S. M. and Cook, R. J. (2019) 'The operational code analysis of the Serbian Orthodox Church's official political discourse on Kosovo (2008-2019)', *SEEU Review*, 14(1), pp. 250-270.
- Judah, T. (2008) *Kosovo: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Keil, S. (2016) *Multinational Federalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Kennan, G. F. (1951) *American Diplomacy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Keohane, R. O. (1984) *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Khadafi, B., Salahudin, S. and Yumitro, G. (2023) 'The art of defense diplomacy: how new forms of diplomacy are shaping international relations', *Jurnal Pertahanan*, 9(1), pp. 53-71. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.33172/jp.v9i1.2465> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Kissinger, H. (1994) *Diplomacy*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Koskenniemi, M. (2006) *From Apology to Utopia: The Structure of International Legal Argument*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kostovicova, D. (2005) 'Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space', *Journal of International Studies*, 12(3), pp. 45-68.
- Kostovicova, D. (2008) *Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space*. London: Routledge.
- Krasner, S. D. (1999) *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Krasner, S. (2002) 'Realist views of international law', *Proceedings of the ASIL Annual Meeting*, 96, pp. 265-268. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0272503700063515> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Krieger, H. (ed.) (2001) *The Kosovo conflict and international law: an analytical documentation 1974-1999*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lutovac, Z. (2020) 'Populism and the Defects of Democracy in Serbia', *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, (15), pp. 192-205.

- Machiavelli, N. (1998) *The Prince*. Translated by H. C. Mansfield. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (1994) 'The False Promise of International Institutions', *International Security*, 19(3), pp. 5-49.
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001) *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Mitrović, M. (2021) 'Assessments and foreign policy implementation of the national security of the Republic of Serbia', *Security and Defence Quarterly*, 34(2), pp. 7-19. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.35467/sdq/135592> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Mitzen, J. (2006) 'Ontological security in world politics: state identity and the security dilemma', *European Journal of International Relations*, 12(3), pp. 341-370. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066106067346> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Moon, P. (2018) Reconstructions of Serbian national identity in the post-Yugoslav era: a thematic survey', *Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology*, 13(4), pp. 1069-1089. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.21301/eap.v13i4.8> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Morgenthau, H. J. (1948) *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Moses, J. (2012) 'Sovereignty as irresponsibility? A realist critique of the responsibility to protect', *Review of International Studies*, 39(1), pp. 113-135. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210512000113> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Muharremi, R. (2008) 'Kosovo's declaration of independence: self-determination and sovereignty revisited', *Review of Central and East European Law*, 33(4), pp. 401-435.
- Naumkina, S., Kokoriev, O. and Dmytrashko, S. (2023) 'Public diplomacy as a tool for settlement of international social and economic disputes', *Baltic Journal of Economic Studies*, 9(5), pp. 176-185. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.30525/2256-0742/2023-9-5-176-185> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Nexon, D. H. (2009) 'The balance of power in the balance', *World Politics*, 61(2), pp. 330-359.
- Obradović-Wochnik, J. and Wochnik, A. (2012) 'Europeanising the "Kosovo question": Serbia's policies in the context of EU integration', *West European Politics*, 35(5), pp. 1158-1181.
- Ogunseye, I. I. (2023) 'The Concept of National Interest and Diplomacy in International Relations: An Endless Debate', *Acu Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, 4(1), pp. 101-114.
- Pavel, C. and Lefkowitz, D. (2018) 'Skeptical challenges to international law', *Philosophy Compass*, 13(8). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12511> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).

- Petrovic, M. and Wilson, G. (2021) 'Serbia's relations with its Western Balkan neighbours as a challenge for its accession to the EU', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of European Studies*, 10(3), pp. 49-68. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.30722/anzjes.vol10.iss3.15203> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Powell, R. (1991) 'Absolute and relative gains in international relations theory', *American Political Science Review*, 85(4), pp. 1303-1320. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1963947> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Rice, C. (2008) 'Rethinking the national interest: American realism for a new world', *Foreign Affairs*, July-August, pp. 2-26.
- Rrahmani, B. and Bushi, P. (2023) 'Kosovo-Serbia dialogue: from Brussels to Ohrid', *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs, Institute for Research and European Studies – Bitola*, 9(3), pp. 476-515. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.47305/jlia2393476r> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Russell, M. (2019) 'Serbia at risk of authoritarianism?', European Parliament Briefing. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/637944/EPRS\\_BRI\(2019\)637944\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/637944/EPRS_BRI(2019)637944_EN.pdf) (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Ryser, R. C. (2014) 'From "balance of power" to democratizing international relations: Balancing relations between nations and states in a new era', *Fourth World Journal*, 12(2), pp. 174-179.
- Stanojević, N. (2025) 'Serbia's multi-vector foreign policy: the effects on trade with the European Union and Russia', *Post-Communist Economies*, 37(1-2), pp. 1-24.
- Stepaniuk, J. (2024) 'Dimensions of Europeanisation: impact of Serbo-Russian relations on the course of the EU integration of Serbia', *Političke perspektive*, 14(1), pp. 145-169. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.20901/pp.14.1.06> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Sterio, M. (2008) 'The Kosovar Declaration of Independence: Botching the Balkans or Respecting International Law', *Ga. J. Int'l & Comp. L.*, 37, pp. 267-304.
- Stojanović-Višić, B., Jelisavac Trošić, S. and Simić, M. (2023) 'Development of the Belt and Road Initiative in Serbia', *Ekonomika preduzeća*, 71, pp. 230-242.
- Thucydides (1951) *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Translated by R. Warner. London: Penguin Books.
- Vidmar, J. (2009) 'International legal responses to Kosovo's declaration of independence', *Vand. J. Transnat'l L.*, 42, pp. 779-851.
- Vučetić, R. (2021) 'Kosovo 1989: The (Ab)use of the Kosovo Myth in Media and Popular Culture', *Comparative Southeast European Studies*, 69(2-3), pp. 223-243.
- Vučić, A. (2023) *Address by the President of the Republic of Serbia at the General Debate of the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).

- Vučić, M. (2020) 'European Union integration and the belt and road initiative: a curious case of Serbia', *Medjunarodni problemi*, 72(2), pp. 337-355. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2298/medjp2002337v> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).
- Vulović, M. (2023) 'The Serbian Progressive Party's re-articulation of the Kosovo myth within the internal dialogue on Kosovo, 2017–2018', *European Politics and Society*, 24(4), pp. 518-534.
- Waltz, K. (1979) *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison–Wesley.
- Weller, M. (2008) 'The Vienna Negotiations on the Final Status for Kosovo', *International Affairs*, 84(2), pp. 163-185.

**Srđan M. Jovanović**, Associate Professor, Nankai University, Faculty of History, Tianjin, China. *E-mail*: [smjovanovic@nankai.edu.cn](mailto:smjovanovic@nankai.edu.cn)