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State Sovereignty in the Light of Spheres of Influence – a Case Study of Two States: the Republic of Serbia, and Montenegro

Introduction

The question of key importance in the considerations that have been presented in this paper is whether in a situation where a state is under the influence of another state and/or several states, its full sovereignty is still attainable, or whether any influence “from the outside” undermines the degree of sovereignty of a single state. The sphere of influence shall be understood here as, *inter alia*, a variety of contacts established between countries, either through general agreements, or special agreements relating to various areas. This issue will be discussed in light of the two Balkan states that have been selected for analysis: the Republic of Serbia, and Montenegro. The choice of these two states is not by any means accidental, especially in light of the major influence of such major global players as Russia, the US, Turkey or China taking place in various areas concerning these two countries.

When defining the state as the political organisation of society, its three basic components immediately come to mind, i.e. the territory, the population, and the state apparatus. One of the elements of particular importance for the state is sovereignty. Admittedly, sovereignty, in its political sense, is understood as the independence of the state power from any external factors. Sovereignty is a claim to ultimate political power, not subject to any higher authority in making and implementing political decisions, and given the multitude of international relations, sovereignty

means the state's claim to full self-government.¹ In political sciences, there is also a broadly defined category of sovereignty. For example, according to Andrew Heywood, sovereignty, in its simplest sense, is the principle of absolute and unlimited power. However, sovereignty can be understood in different ways. *Legal* sovereignty refers to supreme legal authority, defined in terms of the 'right' to command compliance, while *political* sovereignty refers to absolute political power, defined in terms of the 'ability' to command compliance.² Political sovereignty, which is of primary significance in the context of these considerations, "refers to unlimited political power, that is, to the requirement of obedience that is usually achieved through a monopoly on the use of force. Internal sovereignty concerns the highest power in the state that is in the hands of the body that makes decisions that bind all the citizens, groups and institutions within the territorial borders of the state. External sovereignty refers to the place of the state in the international order and its ability to act as an independent and autonomous unit."³

The goal of this paper is to draw attention to the independence of political elites in making decisions (i.e. internal sovereignty) of selected countries, as well as their ability to act as an independent and autonomous unit (i.e. a real subject in international relations). It is worth noting that as a category recognisable in political science, sovereignty is shaped, especially today, by territorial sovereignty, independence, as well as a "free political, social and economic system, free from external interference, as well as the possibility of coexistence with other nations on the basis of equality and mutual benefits."⁴ The topic in question will be discussed with the use of research methods that are appropriate for social sciences, i.e. the case study method, and the comparative method.

The case of the Republic of Serbia

Since its proclamation of the Act of Independence in 2006, the Republic of Serbia has been subjected to strong influence by countries, such as the Russian Federation, the US, the Federal Republic of Germany, Turkey and, more recently, the People's Republic of China. In the relations between Serbia and Russia, the changes taking place in Serbia's foreign policy have become important to consider, especially with regard to Serbia's vivid aspirations for membership of the European Union. One of

¹ The subject of sovereignty, its definition as well as its various forms were dealt with, among others, by Noel Malcolm, see: N. Malcolm, *Sense on sovereignty*, Centre for Policy Studies, London 1991, in particular pp. 3–12, <https://www.cps.org.uk/files/reports/original/111027161740-SenseofSovereignty1991.pdf> [accessed: 14.03.2020]. For sovereignty definitions, see: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/sovereignty>; <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pl/dictionary/english/sovereignty>; <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sovereignty/> [accessed: 14.03.2020].

² A. Heywood, *Politics*, 4th edn, Palgrave Macmillan 2013, p. 58, https://www.academia.edu/40447704/The_Palgrave_Macmillan_POLITICS_Fourth_Edition [accessed: 14.03.2020].

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ C. Mojsiewicz (ed.), *Leksykon współczesnych międzynarodowych stosunków politycznych*, Wrocław 2000, p. 334. See also: P. Ostaszewski, *Międzynarodowe stosunki polityczne. Zarys wykładów*, Warszawa 2010, p. 45.

the conditions for accession is the alignment of external action with the Common Foreign and Security Policy in the negotiations in Chapter 31.⁵ In this case, this regards Serbia's attitude towards Russia. There are concerns as to whether the European Union may be interested in a country that has a strategic partnership agreement with Russia. The question that arises almost naturally is that the EU ought to be indeed interested in such a country. It seems that the redefinition of Serbia's relations with Russia should be a condition for Serbia's accession to the EU, which is as important as the normalisation of relations with Kosovo.⁶ However, Ivica Dačić, the then Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, reiterated that Serbia's relations with Russia, with which they have a common history of Slavs and Orthodoxy, and contacts with the increasingly powerful People's Republic of China, will not suffer from the plans to join the EU. It should be noted that "Serbia has no intention of doing anything that might jeopardise its path towards the Union, but it will not do anything that might endanger relations with our traditional friends, including Russia, either."⁷ The relations with Russia, which is Serbia's main ally, result from the historical and religious ties that bind them, and recently also from energy-related ties.⁸ It is worth recalling that in 2008, NIS, the largest Serbian oil company, and its entire infrastructure came under the control of Gazprom.⁹ Russia has a strong position in Serbia, which results not only from the raw material and economic dependence, but above all from the strong support for Russia's policy both by Serbian elites and Serbian society itself. The traditionally Russia-friendly attitudes have been strengthened to such an extent thanks to Russia's extensive activities in the field of soft power policy, and, interestingly, a significant part of Serbian society equates Russia's interests with those of Serbia itself.¹⁰ The more important events that confirm the Serbian-Russian relations should be the signing of a strategic partnership agreement between Russia and Serbia, which took place on 24 May 2013.¹¹ At that point, by concluding the

⁵ T. Żornaczuk, 'Serbia's Gas Supply Dilemma (and Others) in Its Relations with Russia', *PISM Bulletin*, No. 1 (733), 2.01.2015, pp. 1–2, https://pism.pl/publications/Serbia_s_Gas_Supply_Dilemma_and_Others_in_Its_Relations_with_Russia [accessed: 12.07.2017].

⁶ B. Marcinkowski, 'Serbia z Rosją na dobre i na złe', *Portal Spraw Zagranicznych*, www.psz.pl/127-unia-europejska/bartosz-marcinkowski-serbia-z-rosja-na-dobre-i-na-zle [accessed: 12.07.2017].

⁷ 'Serbia chce dołączyć do UE i zachować dobre stosunki z Rosją. Serbowie są jednak coraz bardziej sceptyczni co do korzyści z akcesji do UE', *wPolityce*, www.wpolityce.pl/swiat/289417-serbia-chce-dolaczyc-do-ue-i-zachowac-dobe-stosunki-z-rosja-serbowie-sa-jednak-coraz-bardziej-sceptyczni-co-do-korzysci-z-akcesji-do-ue [accessed: 12.07.2017].

⁸ Zob. M. Rekić, 'Serbia w poszukiwaniu miejsca między Rosją a Unią Europejską', [in:] J. Wojnicki (ed.), *Europa Środkowa a Bałkany. Determinanty i ograniczenia przemian*, Warszawa 2016, pp. 117–129. See also: E. Bujwid-Kurek, *Legitymizacja ustroju politycznego państw południowo-wschodnich*, Kraków 2019, p. 135.

⁹ O. Górzyński, 'Rosyjska gra o Bałkany. Moskwa dzieli i rządzi', *WP.pl*, www.wiadomosci.wp.pl/rosyjska-gra-o-balkany-moskwa-dzieli-i-rzadzi-6025251586339457a [accessed: 14.07.2017].

¹⁰ A. Jagiełło-Szostak, 'Polityka zagraniczna i bezpieczeństwa Republiki Serbii', [in:] A. Jagiełło-Szostak (ed.), *Republika Serbii. Aspekty polityki wewnętrznej i międzynarodowej*, Wrocław 2016, pp. 165–187.

¹¹ 'Serbia bliżej UE jeszcze w tym półroczu?', 7.08.2016, *Balkanistyka.org*, www.balkanistyka.org/tag/polityka-zagraniczna-serbii [accessed: 17.07.2017]. See also: 'Partnerstwo strategiczne Serbii i Rosji', 5.06.2013, *Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW)*, www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/201-06-05/partnerstwo-strategiczne-serbii-i-rosji [accessed: 12.07.2017].

agreement, both sides expressed their willingness to further strengthen their cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, culture and education, sport, tourism, and agriculture, as well as fighting organised crime, terrorism, and drug trafficking. Close cooperation in the international arena, e.g. within the United Nations, was also unanimously declared. The cooperation in the field of energy resulting from the signed document is particularly important for both parties. Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation, announced that Russia would finance the construction of the Serbian section of the South Stream. Cooperation in the area of defence was also declared, and two days before signing the document, both countries also agreed to sell six Russian MiG-29 fighters and two new radar stations to Serbia. These purchases are to be financed with funds derived from another Russian loan taken out by Serbia.¹² For some time now, there has been an increased intensification of military cooperation between Serbia and Russia. This fact has already been corroborated by the launching of the Regional Humanitarian Centre in the Serbian town of Niš, where, among others, the Russian sappers are stationed. Given the strategic location of this Serbian city, it can be seen as a bridgehead of the Russian military presence in the region, which is by no means indifferent to Serbia's US/NATO relations, which did not fare well, especially after the intervention (the bombing of Belgrade in 1999¹³ by NATO and the US recognition of the independence of the Republic of Kosovo. The fact that there is a will to improve these relations is evidenced, among others, by such spectacular events as for example that of 25 January 2016, when the farewell meeting of the then Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić¹⁴ took place with the outgoing US ambassador Michael Kirby, followed by an agreement that ensured that the relations between the US and Serbia would be much better in 2016 than in 2013 (when the ambassador took this position).¹⁵ Amidst some other important facts in the US-Serbian relations, one should also note that on 22 May 2014 Serbia received 20 million US dollars from the US for investments in the northern Serbian part of Kosovo. In January 2016, after the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, Tomislav Nikolić, the then President of the Republic of Serbia, harshly criticised the outgoing administration of President Barack Obama, which supported the independence of Kosovo, while expressing hope for a more favourable attitude towards Belgrade by the new American establishment.¹⁶ It should also be remembered that on 19 February 2016, Nikolić signed

¹² For more information, see: L. Leszczenko, 'Współczesne stosunki serbsko-rosyjskie', [in:] A. Jagiełło-Szostak (ed.), *Republika Serbii...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 187–205.

¹³ B. Kovačević, 'Od medijskog rata do bombardovanja', [in:] Ž. Đurić, M. Knežević, M. Jovanović (eds.), *Razbijanje Jugoslavije*, Beograd 2012, pp. 237–259. See also: D. Elezović, U. Šuvaković, B. Rakić, *NATO agresija u svetlosti pravde (osuuju a presuda po inicijama NATO agresije na SRJ sa prate im komentarima)*, Kosovska Mitrovica 2019, *passim*.

¹⁴ Currently (2021) he is the President of the Republic of Serbia.

¹⁵ In March 2016, protests were held in Serbia against the signing of a cooperation agreement between NATO and Serbia. On March 4, 2016, such a demonstration took place in Niš, followed by others in Belgrade and Novi Sad. See: 'Serbia – fale protestów przeciw NATO', *Balkanistyka.org*, www.balkanistyka.org/category/polityka-2/polityka-zagraniczna/pag/2/ [accessed: 13.07.2017].

¹⁶ 'Serbia counts on Trump over Kosovo', <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/serbia-counts-on-trump-over-kosovo/> [accessed: 14.03.2020].

an agreement with NATO, which allowed the alliance's troops to be granted special diplomatic immunity and freedom of movement in Serbia, as well as the access to Serbian military facilities.¹⁷ Therefore, considering the above-mentioned relations, the Republic of Serbia is in an exceptionally difficult situation. The situation in which Serbia's relations with Russia collide with the parallel relations with the US gives the impression that Serbia is in a particularly difficult political situation consisting in balancing between the 'East' and the 'West', which is also confirmed by Serbia's relations with the German Federal Republic, Turkey, and PRC. Reconciling these radically different orientations is not only problematic but also very difficult, as these issues divide the political elite and Serbian society.¹⁸ Considering Serbia's relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, it should be noted that Chancellor Angela Merkel considers Serbia to be Germany's trusted partner in the process of joining the EU, which was expressed, among others, at her meeting with the then Prime Minister of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić, held on 12 June 2014. Germany supports Serbia on its path to EU membership.¹⁹ This is also clear given the visit of the German Vice-Chancellor to Belgrade on 18 November 2014, who once again reassured that he would provide support and continue bilateral economic cooperation.

In Serbian-Turkish relations, the first meeting of the presidents of Serbia and Turkey, which took place in 2007 (i.e. a year after the proclamation of the independence act by Serbia), deserves equal attention. It should be recalled that these relations deteriorated significantly after the recognition of Kosovo's independence by the government in Ankara in 2008. However, after the visit of Ahmet Davutoğlu, the Turkish Foreign Minister, to Serbia in October 2009, a restoration of good mutual relations can be observed. Despite the Serbian-Kosovar conflict, Turkey declares its readiness to cooperate with Serbia, because Serbia is perceived by it as a neighbour, even though it does not share a state border with it. Turkey has also repeatedly declared that it is interested in deepening further cooperation with Serbia, with which, apart from Bosnia and Herzegovina, it cooperates most intensively among all the Balkan states.²⁰ It should not be forgotten that the intensification of economic relations is of key importance in relations between these two countries. In September 2010, the Turkish-Serbian free trade agreement entered into force. The same year also saw the launching of a visa-free movement scheme between these countries. Serbia and Turkey have signed contracts for the construction of the Novi Pazar-Tutin highway by Turkish companies and the participation of Turkish Airlines in Serbian air transport. Enka, a major Turkish construction company, has donated two million euros for the investment of the Belgrade-Bojlar highway, connecting Serbia with Montenegro. One of the examples of good cultural relations between the two countries is the opening of a Turkish Cultural Centre in New Pazar in Serbia. Serbia and Turkey have also signed agreements on infrastructure, economic, technical and

¹⁷ *Historia Czarnogóry i Serbii – strefa sporna NATO-Rosja?*, www.telewizjapolska24.pl/PL-H23/3/1862 [accessed: 13.07.2017].

¹⁸ For more information, see: E. Bujwid-Kurek, *Legitymizacja ustroju politycznego...*, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

¹⁹ K. Gelles, 'Stosunki niemiecko-serbskie między historią a współczesnością', [in:] A. Jagiełło-Szostak (ed.), *Republika Serbii...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 205–227.

²⁰ 'Turkey, Serbia sign deal on defense industry ties', *Today's Zaman*, 13.05.2009.

financial cooperation, as well as on cooperation in the field of social welfare.²¹ Turkey aspires to play a major role in the stabilisation of the Balkans, including the countries discussed in this paper, as this would strengthen its regional position. The prospects for economic cooperation that could help Serbia to recover from the economic crisis that is severe for Serbia should also be taken into account.²² In the opinion of Turkish analysts, there is a conviction that in the future, Turkey could play a mediating role also in the still ongoing Belgrade-Pristina dispute over Kosovo.²³

As for China's influence in Serbia, it should be noted that the first joint political agreements between these countries began in the 1990s, when China expressed its support for Serbia's position on Kosovo. After Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008, China has consistently expressed its support for Serbia's position on the matter, arguing that "Kosovo's unilateral act may have consequences that could negatively affect peace and stability in the Balkans [...]."²⁴ China's position in support of Serbia was also expressed during the ongoing proceedings before the International Court of Justice regarding the legality of the declaration of independence, thus defending the principle of territorial integrity. It should also be remembered that in the difficult situation for Serbia, the imposition of sanctions on Serbia by the United Nations, as a result of which Serbia found itself in international isolation, China took its side. On 18 June 2016, a comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries was signed in Belgrade, which was reinforced by a meeting held in Beijing from 28 March to 1 April 2017, attended by the then President of the Republic of Serbia Tomislav Nikolić, and Chairman of the PRC Xi Jinping, as well as Prime Minister Li Keqiang.²⁵ At this meeting, it was emphasised that both countries should make every effort to maintain positive economic conditions in their mutual relations. It is not only about cooperation on the governmental or parliamentary levels, but also about collaborating with political parties and local authorities. Of the numerous layers of cooperation, economic issues were identified as particularly important, such as: the involvement of Chinese investors in the reindustrialisation of Serbia, privatisation of the RTB Bor metallurgical and steel conglomerate and the Nikola Tesla in Belgrade, and the creation of direct Belgrade-Beijing air connections, which would help to strengthen Chinese-Serbian cooperation within the framework of the New Silk Road. It is worth recalling that for 20 years China has been making its presence more and more visible in Serbia, especially in the economy. According to Balkan Insight, 2009 was a turning point for both Serbia and China, given the increase in the importance of mutual relations to the level of strategic partnership, among which the most important are infrastructure projects, just to mention the construction of a bridge in Belgrade for 260 million US dollars (2010) or

²¹ 'Vuk Jeremić: Stabilna BiH u UE interes i Srbije i Turske', <http://www.nspm.rs/hronika/vuk-jeremic-stabilna-bih-u-ue-interes-i-srbije-i-turske.html?alphabet+1> [accessed: 22.05.2010].

²² 'Turcja rozwija kontakty z Serbią', 21.07.2010, *Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW)*, www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2010-07-21/turcja-rozwija-kontakty-z-serbia [accessed: 13.08.2017].

²³ E. Shipoli, 'The Turkish Balkan initiative', *Today's Zaman*, 26.05.2010.

²⁴ K. Stasiak, 'Chiny i Serbia pogłębiają relacje', *Puls Azji*, <http://pulsazji.pl/2017/04/13/chiny-i-serbia-poglebiaja-relacje> [accessed: 6.12.2019].

²⁵ *Ibid.* This position can be justified, it seems, by China's fear that the case of Kosovo may become a precedent for Taiwan, Tibet.

the construction of two sections of motorways: Pojate-Preljna and Novi Sad-Ruma for the total amount of 850 million US dollars (2013), and in 2014 the construction of the Belgrade-Obrenovac motorway section for the amount of 330 million US dollars.²⁶ China Road and Bridge Corporation plays a key role for Serbian-Chinese cooperation, which not only contributed to the infrastructure that dominates among jointly implemented projects, but also, which is worth noting, in the energy sector.²⁷ Although Serbia benefits from these numerous investments, China is not a disinterested donor. Investments are made largely by Chinese companies and Chinese workers, which obviously contributes to the growth of Chinese exports. However, it should not be forgotten that the Chinese capital allocated to financing infrastructure projects does not originate from direct investments, but rather from loans, mainly from Export-Import Bank of China, which will be severely felt by Serbia, because it will be the burden of paying off the loans taken.²⁸ If one were asked about the reasons for China's increased interest in a small state such as Serbia, it seems that geopolitics is the decisive factor of all the others at stake. Serbia has signed a free trade agreement with the European Union, with EFTA and CEFTA countries, as well as with Russia and Turkey; therefore, it is not surprising that it is an attractive spot for China given the possibility of multi-directional economic expansion – such as e.g. increasing Chinese investments abroad – which results from the “go global” strategy. At this point, I concur that although China ranks fourth among the largest exporters of goods and services to Serbia, it is beyond any doubt endeavouring to strengthen its position on the Serbian market.²⁹

The case of Montenegro

Montenegro, after it simultaneously with Serbia announced the act of independence in 2006, faces a politically important challenge to define its image in relations with other countries, which is not easy for several reasons. On the one hand, Milo Đukanović, the current president, is striving to build the possibly most friendly relations with the “West”, and on the other hand, he is still struggling with the presence of Russian influence, which has been inherited from the country's recent “divorce” with Serbia. Since 5 June 2017, Montenegro has been a full member of NATO. This fact was preceded by the signing of the protocol on the accession of Montenegro to the North Atlantic Alliance on 19 May 2016. It was back then that NATO

²⁶ *China Global Investment Tracker*, <https://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker> [accessed: 30.11.2015].

²⁷ Thanks to a loan taken by Serbia in China in the amount of USD 293 million, the first phase of the revitalization of the Kostolac thermal power plant was finalized, as part of which not only the existing infrastructure was renovated, but also new flue gas desulphurization installations were launched. Thanks to these achievements, further cooperation was started after 2014. An example may be the second phase of the modernization of the Kostolac power plant – an investment worth 608 million US dollars, which involved the construction of a new 350-MW coal-fired unit. This project, which is very important for the Serbian economy, was one of the first of its kind.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced that the signing of the protocol was an extremely important step that occurred at a historic moment for Montenegro – the tenth anniversary of the proclamation of the act of independence.³⁰ A little earlier, on 29 March 2017, the US Senate voted to ratify the protocol on Montenegro's accession to NATO, which was followed by a majority of senators, which Duško Marković, the then Prime Minister of Montenegro, regarded as a confirmation of the country's pro-Western policy. Montenegro's accession as the 29th member to the North Atlantic Alliance was also accompanied by events with the participation of its prime minister, who attended the annual Security Policy conferences in held Munich.³¹ For NATO, the fact of admitting Montenegro to the Alliance is of key importance, as it is a clear message sent out to Russia that the enlargement process is still in progress, and that NATO does not consider any veto voiced by third parties against the process. One has to remember that since 2013 Russia has been looking for regional partners who would allow Russian warships in the Mediterranean Sea access to ports for replenishment and maintenance. With Montenegro's accession to NATO, Russia has lost access to the strategic Montenegrin ports of Bar and Kotor, as they have become NATO ports.³² As a result, Russia has lost access to the northern part of the Mediterranean Sea and, thereby, a valuable logistic base, important from the point of view of the operations conducted by the Russian Navy in this region.³³ After Montenegro has joined NATO, the Montenegrin Adriatic coast is open to the US 6th Fleet.³⁴

In the context of the issues at stake, it is worth noting that since the 1990s, the then Prime Minister of Montenegro Milo Đukanović has developed close relations with Russia, which consisted primarily in allowing Russian investments in Montenegro. It is estimated that the Russian middle-level oligarchy still owns around 40% of the entire real estate sector there. The Russians have also become owners of the largest Montenegrin steelworks in Pljevlja. Currently, the pro-Western policy pursued by Montenegro, already clearly confirmed by membership in NATO and, probably in the near future, of the European Union, puts Russian investments in this country into question. It is undisputed that if there is a sharp outflow of capital, it will have a major impact on the economy of this far-off country.³⁵ This is also true of a potential further military cooperation with Russia. According to the Russian Novosti agency, both countries' military and technical projects will be broken. In the opinion expressed by Viktor Ozerov, the Chairman of the Security and Defence

³⁰ 'Kosowo/Serbia: zmniejsza się liczba państw przyznających niepodległość Kosowa', *Balkanistyka.org*, <http://balkanistyka.org/kosowoserbia-zmniejszyla-sie-liczba-panstw-pryznajacych-niepodleglosc-kosowa/> [accessed: 13.08.2017].

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² M. Babić, 'Czarnogóra, czyli mały- duży gracz między NATO a Rosją', 23.05.2016, *BiznesAlert*, www.biznesalert.pl/babic-czarnogora-czyli-maly-duzy-gracz-miedzy-nato-a-rosja [accessed: 13.07.2017].

³³ L. Gibadło, 'Czarnogóra i Serbia; rosyjskie veto dla NATO [ANALIZA]', *Defence24*, www.defence24.pl/czarnogora-i-iserbia-rosyjskie-veto-dla-nato-analiza [accessed: 15.08.2017].

³⁴ T. Wójcik, 'Agrokor. Jak Rosja używa rynku i służb na Bałkanach', *BiznesAlert*, www.biznesalert.pl/wicik-agrokor-rosjauzywa-rynku-sluzb-balkanach [accessed: 19.07.2017].

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Committee of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, Russia will also stop implementing joint projects with Montenegro.³⁶ The *Duma* of the Russian Federation has passed a resolution warning Montenegro that accession to the North Atlantic Alliance could have a negative impact on its tourism, investments and economic cooperation between the two countries.³⁷ The then prime minister M. Đukanović, responding to the resolution pronounced by Russia, emphasised that Montenegro, like any independent state, would decide about its future on its own. The fact that Russia is opposed to NATO enlargement does not mean that Montenegro will change its plans for European and Euro-Atlantic integration. According to Đukanović, this is the only solution leading to the stabilization and dynamic development of the Balkans.³⁸ It is important to bear in mind that in 2015 Russia punished Montenegro with an embargo banning the import of food products. This was a retaliation for supporting Western sanctions against Russia, which was a reaction to the annexation of Crimea. Given the fact that Montenegro is part of NATO, it does not currently conduct political talks with Russia, occasionally limiting itself to the basic administrative level. Russia, not surprisingly, was strongly opposed to Montenegro's membership of NATO.³⁹

The attitude of the Federal Republic of Germany towards Montenegro can be proved by the support it received on 19 May 2016 in Brussels by the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who signed the protocol on Montenegro's accession to NATO. For Germany, Montenegro's accession to NATO is an element of a broader policy of stabilizing this inflammatory part of the world.⁴⁰ Montenegro is keenly interested in joining the European Union, and it makes these efforts through the mediation and support of Germany, as evidenced by the recent (November 2019) visit of the country's Prime Minister Duško Marković to Berlin to hold talks on a bilateral partnership with Germany. It is no secret that during this conversation, the topics discussed included primarily Montenegro's accession to the EU, along with issues related to combating crime and corruption.

Turkey recognised Montenegro's independence just days after the declaration of the Independence Act in June 2006. In July of the same year, the two countries established diplomatic relations. In 2008, Turkey opened its embassy in Montenegro. Turkey actively supported Montenegro in the process of integration with NATO, and continues to support its efforts to gain full membership in the EU.⁴¹

³⁶ 'NATO się rozszerza: zaproszenie dla Czarnogóry. Tymczasem Rosja grozi', *Polskie Radio*, www.polskieradio.pl/5/3/Artykul/1552280,NATO-sie-rozszerza-zaproszenie-dla-Czarnogor-Tymczasem-Rosja-grozi [accessed: 15.07.2107].

³⁷ 'Spór między Czarnogórą a Rosją. Moskwa nie chce Podgoricy w UE', 21.11.2015, *Dziennik.pl*, wiadomości.dziennik.pl/swiat/artykuly/506178,zaostrza-sie-spor-miedzy-czarnogora-i-rosja-chodzi-o-czlonkostwo-w-nato.html [accessed: 14.08.2017].

³⁸ *Ibid.* See also: E. Bujwid-Kurek, *Legitymizacja ustroju politycznego...*, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

³⁹ A. Prager, 'Premier Czarnogóry: Chcemy stać się częścią Unii Europejskiej', 21.05.2019, *Euractiv.pl*, <https://www.euractiv.pl/section/polityka-zagraniczna-ue/interview> [accessed: 8.12.2019].

⁴⁰ K. Szubart, 'Stanowisko Niemiec na szczyt NATO w Warszawie: dialog i odstraszenie', *Biuletyn Instytutu Zachodniego*, No. 248, 2016, <https://www.iz.poznan.pl/plik,pobierz,1574,96d-96d241c45053b187886369c4be51e/248NiemcyNATOWarszawa.pdf>. [accessed: 13.07.2018].

⁴¹ T. Żornaczuk, 'Polityka Turcji wobec Bałkanów Zachodnich i jej znaczenie dla Unii Europejskiej', [in:] A. Szymański (ed.), *Turcja i Europa. Wyzwania i szanse*, Warszawa 2011, p. 223.

Currently, Turkey seems to be playing an increasingly more active role in the territory of the Balkan countries. This is because many countries in this area share their border with Turkey, thus fitting into the concept of the so-called strategic depth⁴², on which Turkey's foreign policy was based at the beginning of the twenty-first century. According to the concept that has been adopted, Turkey should use both the legacy of the Ottoman Empire and its strategic geographic location to shape a multi-vector foreign policy. In practice, this would mean pursuing an active, independent foreign policy in relation to the neighbouring regions, including the Balkans. It is also worth noting that Turkey today aspires to play a mediating role in the Balkans, including the countries in question, contributing to the lasting stabilisation of this region which still needs to be looked after. For this purpose, tripartite cooperation mechanisms: Turkey-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia have been launched. It is also worth noting that the proximity of Kosovo, where one of the largest NATO military bases is located near Pristina, means that, for strategic reasons, Turkey also takes a keen interest in this area.⁴³

It is worth noting that apart from the European Union and Russia, China has also been showing a vivid interest in Montenegro. As for Montenegro's relations with China, they seem to be conducted to a slightly lesser extent than in the case of Serbia. However, both are the result of collaboration within the 16+1 platform. It is important to highlight that cooperation understood in this way was initiated in 2013 and defined the framework for regional cooperation allowing for the deepening of bilateral relations between individual countries of the region of Central and Eastern Europe countries, and China.⁴⁴ This cooperation can be explained by the indisputable fact that China's largest trading partner are indeed the European Union countries, which explains the birth of the new silk route concept, which puts emphasis on the importance of Central and Eastern European countries, including the countries that are of interest to Poland, i.e. Serbia and Montenegro. It is about creating new important nodes and transport routes enabling an increase in trade with China⁴⁵. Remembering that Serbia and Montenegro mainly implement infrastructure projects. An example of such a project in Montenegro is the construction sector, and more specifically the construction of a part of the Bar-Boljare highway. This investment is estimated at 1,120 million US dollars.⁴⁶ China is keenly interested in investing in this area in Montenegro, in particular in the energy sector. The Chinese Exim Bank has granted Montenegro a 20-year loan with an interest rate of two percent and a six-year maturity. Therefore, 85 percent of the motorway is built thanks to this loan, and

⁴² A. Szymański, 'Polityka zagraniczna Turcji w latach 2007–2009: kontynuacja czy zmiana?', *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny*, No. 2(48), 2009, pp. 45–48.

⁴³ For more details, see: E. Bujwid-Kurek, *Legitymizacja ustroju politycznego...*, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

⁴⁴ The cooperation within the 16+1 platform is pragmatic, its initiator and main driving force is China. It is part of the global strategy of the Middle Kingdom, which is aimed mainly at obtaining economic benefits. This initiative was launched during the visit of Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao to Poland in 2013. See more: R. Koszek, 'Kraje Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej wobec ekspansji chińskiej gospodarki', *Prace Komisji Geografii Przemysłu Polskiego Towarzystwa Geograficznego*, No. 30(1), 2016, p. 189.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁴⁶ *China Global Investment Tracker*, *op. cit.*

the remaining 15 percent of the funds are derived from the state budget. Therefore, it is actually difficult to talk about Chinese investments in Montenegro, because it is only an investment carried out by a Chinese company. One of the statements of the Prime Minister of Montenegro, Duško Marković, suggests that Montenegro would be much more interested in European companies.⁴⁷

Conclusions

As has already been noted, “the modern concept of sovereignty is influenced by territorial sovereignty, independence, and a free from external interference political, social and economic system, as well as the possibility of coexistence with other nations on the basis of equality and mutual benefits.”⁴⁸ Taking into account the complexity of contemporary transnational relations, the multifaceted and multidimensional functioning of the state as a political organization of society, it is indisputable that there is no such thing as “absolute” state sovereignty, i.e. one that has no restrictions at all. This kind of sovereignty is to a different extent limited by a variety of obligations made towards another state or other states, which *expressis verbis* results from the principles and objectives of foreign policy. Both general principles are taken into account, as exemplified by multilateral agreements or particular rules, i.e. membership in alliances (like e.g. NATO), or making both bilateral and multilateral (plural-lateral) agreements. This occurs by implementing a given goal or a set of goals – whether it is functional, consisting in the position, prestige, role of the state on the international stage, or existential, concealing in its designation the security and political independence of the state, or a coexistence goal, which is related to, *inter alia*, economic and civilisational growth.

At this point, I fully share the sovereignty endowment with specific parameters as expressed by W. Raymond Duncan, Bob Switky, and Barbara Jancar-Webster.⁴⁹ These parameters have been specified as follows: first, the highest authority is the institution of the state; second, the impossibility of any obligations on a state by another state or an international organization; third, all the decisions are made by a legitimate government for the benefit and interest of society.⁵⁰ Taking into account the countries discussed in this paper, it can be noticed that the verification of these parameters leads to the conclusion that both Serbia and Montenegro are sovereign states. However, if we take into account the relations and interdependencies – especially those economic ones – between states, it is clear to notice what the literature on the subject of international relations recognises as a phenomenon labelled interdependence. Although the supporters of the dependency school⁵¹ have criticised this phenomenon of interdependence, the case of both Serbia and Montenegro only

⁴⁷ A. Prager, ‘Premier Czarnogóry: Chcemy stać się częścią Unii Europejskiej’, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸ Cz. Mojsiewicz (ed.), *Leksykon współczesnych stosunków międzynarodowych*, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

⁴⁹ W.R. Duncan, B. Switky, B. Jancar-Webster, *World Politics in the 21st Century*, New York 2004, p. 43.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* See also: P. Ostaszewski, *Międzynarodowe stosunki polityczne...*, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

⁵¹ Among the representatives of the dependent school there are e.g.: C. Furtado, L. Cardoso, A.G. Frank.

confirms the belief that interdependence between states leads to a progressive dependence of the poor and the rich. It would be difficult to find a self-sufficient state, let alone countries which, despite the passage of time and still struggling with independence, have to face the difficult economic situation which undoubtedly characterises the countries considered here. In international cooperation, there is a regularity that proves that relations between states should be based on an agreement concluded between them despite the frequent differences of interests in order to reach agreement to the satisfaction of both the weaker and stronger parties (i.e. the states). It usually happens that strong states impose their own economic and political interests and derive benefits from this situation.⁵²

The analysis presented above strengthens the belief that for countries such as Russia, the USA, Germany, Turkey and China, both Serbia and Montenegro are exceptional places of key importance in the region. They are important for at least two reasons. First, it is an area of mutual competition on a global and regional scale, and second, it is a key region in terms of controlling energy supply routes to Europe and strengthening Russia's dominant role in the European energy sector.⁵³ The case of China is a confirmation of the so-called "money diplomacy" concept, which rests heavily on the idea of introducing money into the real economy, which is primarily geared towards increasing Chinese influence in various regions of the world, and this, undoubtedly, has an indirect impact on the limitation of the sovereignty of these countries.⁵⁴

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⁵² E. Haliżak, R. Kuźniar (eds), *Stosunki międzynarodowe. Geneza, struktura, dynamika*, Warszawa 2006, *passim*.

⁵³ Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, www.mid.ru/en/foregin_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6B6BZ29/content/id/1221186 [accessed: 15.03.2019]. See also: M. Szpala, 'Russia in Serbia – soft power and hard interests', 29.10.2014, *Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) Commentary*, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2014-10-29/russia-serbia-soft-power-and-hard-interests> [accessed: 12.07.2017].

⁵⁴ B. Góralczyk, 'Dyplomacja pieniądza', *Obserwator finansowy*, <http://www.obserwatorfinansowy.pl/tematyka/makroekonomia/dyplomacja-pienadza> [accessed: 18.10.2015].

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Suwerenność państwa w kontekście sfer wpływów – casus dwóch państw: Republiki Serbii i Czarnogóry *Streszczenie*

W artykule podjęto próbę ustalenia, czy w sytuacji gdy państwo znajduje się w sferze wpływów – rozumianej tu m.in. jako nawiązanie kontaktów między państwami – jest możliwe zachowanie jego pełnej suwerenności, czy też każde oddziaływanie z zewnątrz, mimo dobrowolnie nawiązanych kontaktów, nawet w oparciu o wypracowanie konsensusu, ogranicza zwłaszcza państwa słabsze. Pod rozważę wzięto dwa państwa: Republikę Serbii i Czarnogórę oraz nawiązaną przez nie współpracę bilateralną z takimi państwami jak: Rosja, USA, Niemcy, Turcja, Chiny. Przeprowadzona analiza utwierdza w przekonaniu, że zarówno Serbia, jak i Czarnogóra są przedmiotem żywego zainteresowania wymienionych państw. Nie tylko dlatego, że Serbia i Czarnogóra są państwami słabymi pod względem gospodarczym, dającymi się łatwo podporządkować, ale także, a może przede wszystkim, że ich położenie ze względu na walor strategiczny jest niebywale intratne. Nadto, co szczególnie warto jest podkreślić, zarówno w Serbii, jak i w Czarnogórze ścierają się interesy najbardziej liczących się obecnie państw świata. Taka sytuacja sprawia, że Serbia i Czarnogóra nie są w pełni samodzielnymi państwami, mimo ogłoszonych przez nie aktów niepodległości, lecz są obiektem zainteresowania aktorów zewnętrznych, co może doprowadzić do zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa w regionie bałkańskim.

Słowa kluczowe: suwerenność, państwo, współpraca międzynarodowa, sfera wpływów, Republika Serbii, Czarnogóra

State Sovereignty in the Light of Spheres of Influence – a Case Study of Two States: the Republic of Serbia, and Montenegro *Abstract*

The paper makes an attempt to determine whether in a situation where a given state finds itself in a sphere of influence – which is understood here as, *inter alia*, establishing contacts with other states – it is still possible to maintain its full sovereignty, or whether any form of external influence, despite the voluntarily established contacts, even on the basis of working out a consensus, actually limits the weaker states in particular. Two countries have been taken into consideration: the Republic of Serbia, and Montenegro, with major emphasis on the bilateral cooperation they have established with countries such as Russia, the US, Germany, Turkey, and China. The analysis that has been conducted confirms the assumption that both Serbia and Montenegro are of great interest to the above listed countries: this is true not only because they are economically weak countries that can be easily subordinated, but also, and perhaps above all, because their location is extremely profitable and of strategic significance. What is particularly worth emphasising is the fact that both in Serbia and in Montenegro, the interests of the most important countries of the world clash. This means that Serbia and Montenegro are not only not fully independent states, despite the acts of independence they have announced, but also that they are in fact “object of interests” for a number of “foreign” players, a situation that may ultimately lead to a threat to security in the Balkan region.

Key words: sovereignty, state, international cooperation, sphere of influence, Republic of Serbia, Montenegro

Staatssoveränität im Lichte der Einflussbereiche – eine Fallstudie zweier Staaten: der Republiken Serbien und Montenegro

Zusammenfassung

Der Beitrag versucht festzustellen, ob es in einer Situation, in der sich ein bestimmter Staat in einem Einflussbereich befindet – der hier unter anderem als Kontaktaufnahme mit anderen Staaten verstanden wird – weiterhin möglich ist, seine volle Souveränität aufrechtzuerhalten. Oder ob jede Form von externem Einfluss, trotz der freiwillig eingerichteten Kontakte, auch auf der Grundlage eines Konsenses, insbesondere die schwächeren Staaten einschränkt. Zwei Länder wurden berücksichtigt: Serbien und Montenegro, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf der bilateralen Zusammenarbeit mit Ländern wie Russland, den USA, Deutschland, der Türkei und China liegt. Die durchgeführte Analyse bestätigt die Annahme, dass sowohl Serbien als auch Montenegro für die oben aufgeführten Länder von großem Interesse sind: Dies gilt nicht nur, weil es sich um wirtschaftlich schwache Länder handelt, die leicht untergeordnet werden können, sondern auch und vielleicht vor allem, weil Ihr Standort äußerst profitabel und von strategischer Bedeutung ist. Besonders hervorzuheben ist die Tatsache, dass sowohl in Serbien als auch in Montenegro die Interessen der wichtigsten Länder der Welt aufeinander treffen. Diese Situation macht Serbien und Montenegro trotz ihrer erklärten Unabhängigkeitsakte nicht zu völlig unabhängigen Staaten, sondern zu Objekten des Interesses externer Akteure, was zu Sicherheitsrisiken in der Balkanregion führen kann.

Schlüsselwörter: Souveränität, Staat, internationale Zusammenarbeit, Einflussbereich, Republik Serbien, Montenegro

Суверенитет государства в контексте сфер влияния – на примере двух государств: Республики Сербии и Черногории

Резюме

В статье предпринята попытка дать ответ на вопрос, возможно ли в ситуации, когда данное государство находится в сфере влияния другого (например, в следствии налаживания контактов между государствами), сохранение полного суверенитета, или же, любое внешнее влияние (несмотря на добровольно установленные контакты, даже на основе выработанного консенсуса), ограничивает суверенитет особенно слабых государств. В исследовании был рассмотрен пример двух государств: Сербии и Черногории, а также налаженное ими двустороннее сотрудничество с Россией, США, Германией, Турцией, Китаем. Проведенный анализ подтверждает предположение о том, что и Сербия, и Черногория находятся в поле внимания упомянутых государств: не только потому, что Сербия и Черногория, являются слабыми, с точки зрения экономики, государствами, которые легко подчинить, но прежде всего ввиду их чрезвычайно важного стратегического положения. Следует подчеркнуть, что в Сербии и Черногории сталкиваются интересы важнейших в настоящее время государств мира. Такая ситуация делает Сербию и Черногорию не полностью самостоятельными государствами, несмотря на провозглашенные ими акты независимости. Они являются «объектом интересов» для ряда внешних игроков, что в конечном итоге может представлять угрозу безопасности в балканском регионе.

Ключевые слова: суверенитет, государство, международное сотрудничество, сфера влияния, Республика Сербия, Черногория