

SLOVENIJA IN PRIZADEVANJA NJENE ZUNANJE POLITIKE V ČRNOMORSKI REGIJI: IZBRANE TEME, VIDIKI IN MODALITETE

SLOVENIA AND ITS FOREIGN POLICY OUTREACH IN THE BLACK SEA REGION: SELECTED AREAS, ASPECTS AND MODALITIES

Short scientific article

Povzetek Prispevek predstavlja pomen izstopajoče multilateralne slovenske izkušnje v odnosu do črnomske regije ter do Zahodnega Balkana, vključno s tamkajšnjimi državami. Izhajamo iz dejstva, da je Slovenija nova in mala država, nastala po koncu hladne vojne, k čemur dodajamo dejstvo, da je multilateralizem naravni zaveznik malih držav. Ob tem upoštevamo tudi spremembe v delovanju diplomacije ter v percepciji varnosti, ki so se zgodile v navedenem obdobju in kar dodaja k povečanemu pomenu multilateralne diplomatske prakse.

Zagovarjamo stališče, da multilateralizem spodbuja, pogloblja in včasih tudi delno nadomešča bilateralizem. Navedeno utemeljujemo z analizo slovenskih odnosov do obeh omenjenih regij in njihovih držav. S pomočjo intenzivne slovenske, in sicer redke multilateralne izkušnje, so bili odnosi z državami črnomske regije razviti in dodatno spodbujeni ter tudi poglobljeni, obogateni in okrepljeni.

Na podlagi navedenega sklepamo, da je bilo prav zaradi multilateralnega zunanjepolitičnega pristopa mogoče razviti strukturno raznovrstne in celovite odnose z državami črnomske regije na praktično vseh področjih aktualne mednarodne politike. Ko razpravljamo o zunanjepolitični in diplomatski praksi malih držav, ki imajo omejene resurse, ugotavljamo, da bo multilateralizem pri tem najverjetneje še naprej igral ključno vlogo ter tudi omogočal učinkovito izvajanje bilateralnih odnosov.

V prispevku v metodološkem smislu posplošujemo trende in ugotovitve.

Ključne besede *Slovenija, diplomacija, multilateralizem, male države, integracijski proces, črnomska regija.*

Abstract The article focuses on the importance of significant multilateral Slovenian experiences related to the Black Sea region and the Western Balkans, including the countries of both regions. We derive from the fact that Slovenia is a new and small country created after the end of the Cold War, and the fact that multilateralism is a natural ally of small countries. In addition, changes to diplomatic activity and security perceptions taking place and increasing the importance of multilateral diplomacy practice in the period concerned are taken into account.

We defend the position that multilateralism enhances, strengthens and sometimes also replaces bilateralism. This opinion relies on the analysis of Slovenia's relations with both regions and their countries. With help of intensive Slovenian and otherwise scarce multilateral experiences, the relations with the countries of the Black Sea region are being developed and advanced as well as deepened, enriched and strengthened.

On this basis it can be concluded that the approach of multilateral foreign policy has enabled structurally diverse and extensive relations with the countries of the Black Sea region in practically all areas of the current international policy. Our discussions about the foreign policy and diplomatic practice of small countries with limited resources bring us to the conclusion that multilateralism will most likely continue to play a major role and facilitate efficient bilateral relations.

In terms of methodology, the article provides a generalization of trends and findings.

Key words *Slovenia, diplomacy, multilateralism, small countries, integration process, Black Sea region.*

Introduction During its less than two decades of existence, Slovenia has established and developed its foreign policy outreach in various scopes. This has been, on the one hand, the result of the political programme and, on the other, the policy outcome of various multilateral activities exercised by Slovenian diplomacy. Both determinants complement and produce the current policy output and present the way ahead.

We will focus our attention in this paper on three regions, namely South East Europe, in particular the Western Balkans, and the Black Sea region with most of our research and interest centering on the latter. Bearing in mind experiences already gained and the challenges of the future, this will be presented through the multilateral type activities that have already been undertaken and accompanied by comments on bilateral relations. Since we would like to highlight the basic foreign policy behaviour of a new, small state emerging from the aftermath of the Cold War, our main methodological approach lies in generalizing trends and not dwelling too much on details.¹ Although we do not deal with them, the various differences between the Western

¹ *The author also draws significantly on the method of observing with one's own participation (Gilli, 1974), being a long year diplomat – practitioner as well as theoretician.*

Balkan countries (in particular the successors of the former Yugoslavia) and those of the Black Sea region, which have been determined either by differing national histories (like statehood tradition, and institution building etc.) or by different levels of Soviet influence during the Cold War, should be kept in mind (Isaacs and Downing, 2008). Finally, we will follow the proposition that, as a generalization, it could be used by other such states as Slovenia and in varying environments.

After a brief historical overview, our field of research focuses on contemplating and generalizing the Slovenian experience as well as drawing on lessons learned. The broader framework of this paper is marked by huge changes in the international arena, as well as by parallel changes in the way foreign policy and diplomacy is composed and implemented (Comp. A More Secure World, 2004, Barston, 2006, Buzan et al, 1998, Jazbec, 2009, Reiter, 2003).

1 A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Slovenia was established during the process of change initiated by the events of the tectonic shift at the end of the 1980s and the May Declaration of 1988. This declaration, stating Slovenia's ambition to become part of the European family of nations marked a fundamental foreign policy shift in the emerging state (Hribar, 2006). Indeed, this statement was the initial phase of integration for the new state that soon became its long-term foreign policy goal. Furthermore, it seems that it paved the way for the later move towards a multilateral policy, which began during the first half of the 1990s whilst still under the shadow of bilaterally orientated policies. The fact that Slovenia is a small state naturally contributed to its objectives for international organizations are, by definition, an ally of small states (Comp. Amstrup, 1976, Braveboy-Wagner, 2008, Christmas-Møller, 1983, Jazbec, 2001, Thorhallsson, 2006, Väyryen, 1983 etc.). In the mid-1990s the ambition for membership of the EU, as well as of NATO, was already Slovenia's official foreign policy objective and this, decisively, became the hallmark of the following decade. Indeed, one could point out that – due to its dynamics, scope and efficiency – it most probably presented the multilateral backbone for all the activities which followed (Jazbec, 2010).

From a bilateral point of view, two sets of activities marked Slovenia's foreign policy approach during the 1990s. At first, shortly after international recognition had been achieved, the endeavour to establish and develop cooperation with Europe and most other important countries followed. Then, particularly after the conclusion of the war in Bosnia, the direction of foreign policy was focused on the other newly established countries in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and not only on Croatia.² Within the framework of developing strong cooperation with the whole of South East Europe, the Western Balkan countries were gaining in importance.³ Contrary to

² *Slovenia and Croatia coordinated the majority of activities which paved the way for independence of both countries.*

³ *Relations with all successor states of the former Yugoslavia were upgraded after Tudjman's death and the imprisonment of Milošević at the beginning of the new millennium.*

Table 1:
Intensity
of Bilateral
Contacts

Country	Intensity	Indicator of scale: ow - ○, medium - ●, high - ◼.
Bulgaria	●	
Georgia	○	
Romania	●	
The Russian Federation	◼	
Turkey	●	
The Ukraine	●	
Armenia	○	
Azerbaijan	○	
Moldova	○	

this, yet during the same period, bilateral contacts with the countries of the Black Sea region were developing differently, varying from high to low intensity, depending on the country in question as well as on several other factors (namely history, culture, economic cooperation and tradition etc).

Since we are generalizing trends and findings in this paper, it is possible to present the stage of bilateral contacts with the countries of the Black Sea region during the 1990s in the following manner.⁴

The first observation points out the fact that two of the countries compared (Bulgaria and Romania) find themselves in two distinct groups (regions), namely the South East European and Black Sea regions. Also, from the same methodological point of view, the three Caucasus countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – are either part of, or closely connected with, the Black Sea region. Moreover, Moldova, which is located between Romania and the Ukraine and is not a coastal country, could too be treated as part of the region discussed. This all extends our need for a broader geographical generalization that perhaps could be reached by having in mind such regional tools of cooperation as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Council (BSEC).

Furthermore, one can detect huge differences among the countries concerned in various aspects (territory, population, membership of international organizations and other forums, influence, power and foreign policy orientation etc.). Additionally, all of the Western Balkans countries, the three Caucasus and Moldova could be categorized as small countries (Comp. Amstrup, 1976, Jazbec, 2001, pp 36-76, Šabič and Bukowski, 2002, Väyrynen, 1983). This brings us to a certain degree of reservation where the process of generalization (which still remains our main principle and indicator) is concerned and hence, our conclusion, that bilateral relations with the countries concerned did not, on average, exceed medium intensity (although those with the Russian Federation were high all the time).

⁴ The estimation of intensity is made by the author. It has been generalized upon the criteria, which Small and Singer (1973) point out as an indicator of intensity of bilateral relations between two countries.

However, it became obvious rather soon, partially by design and partially by chance, that the multilateral frame also offered many opportunities for developing bilateral activities. This holds in particular for those countries with which not much was achieved earlier, for several reasons and not only due to previously set agendas. The EU accession process and the advancement of the ambition for NATO membership presented an assortment of opportunities for strengthening cooperation with a variety of countries.⁵ Still, relations and cooperation with all of the countries of the Black Sea region were not a full part of the daily business until the early years of the new decade. Because of this, at the moment Slovenia began to engage intensively in different multilateral topics and processes, the pursuit of bilateral relations emerged in a new and enriched form.

2 SELECTED AREAS, ASPECTS AND MODALITIES

After Slovenia became intensively engaged in the EU and NATO membership activities of the mid 1990s, the idea to opt for the UN Security Council's nonpermanent membership for the period of 1998–1999 soon developed.⁶ The goal was fulfilled at the 52nd session of the General Assembly in the autumn of 1997, when Slovenia was elected. That event launched Slovenia's diplomacy onto a global platform as well as offered her the opportunity to touch base on various topics with countries with which she had hitherto shared little or even no experience or contact (Jazbec, 2001, pp 66-72). It also meant that Slovenian diplomacy became more broadly acquainted as well as familiar with policy topics and issues related to the Black Sea region and previous bilateral contacts were strengthened and deepened along with the referred know how being accumulated.

This experience was intensified during the next decade (1999–2009), which was marked by a series of outstanding multilateral projects which Slovenia headed or played a central role. We are speaking about the following projects: the nonpermanent membership of the UN SC 1998/99, EU and NATO membership (obtained in 2004), the OSCE Chairmanship in 2005, the Chairmanship of the Human Security Network (HSN) in 2005/06 and the Presidency of the Board of Governors of the IAEA in 2006/07 as well as the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2008 and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CoE) in 2009.⁷ This all means that the previous shortage of bilateral contacts with some countries of the Black Sea region and with the region as a whole was, *via facti*, dealt with and that the multilateral projects had been the *de facto* instruments of this intensification of relations. However, the bilateral aspect of these multilateral projects still remained behind as, when carrying a multilateral project, countries generally refrain from linking them directly to bilateral relations. Despite this, however, the

⁵ For example, cooperation with the three Baltic States also increased a lot for multilateral reasons.

⁶ During 1996, the author was a member of regular daily senior diplomats' board meetings of the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the late summer of that year the idea was discussed and the decision taken to forward the proposal to the Government.

⁷ For a more detailed policy overview, see Jazbec (2010).

Table 2:
Slovenian
multilateral
projects and the
intensity of their
relation to the
three regions

No	Year	Project	SEE	WB	BSR	Topics
1.	1998/99	UN SC	○	●	○	Collective Security
2.	1994/2004	NATO	○	●	○	Collective Defense
3.	1994/2004	EU	○	●	○	Crisis Management
4.	2005	OSCE	○	■	■	Cooperative Security
5.	2005/06	HSN	○	●	○	Soft Security
6.	2006/07	IAEA	○	○	●	Nuclear Security
7.	2008	EU	○	■	●	Crisis Management
8.	2009	CoE	○	●	●	Human Rights

high multilateral dynamics in which Slovenia was engaged did deepen the concrete knowledge of the countries concerned and pave the way for a bilateral upgrade later on. At the same time, Slovenia's foreign policy outlook was heavily enriched with various topics and issues which were composed of a multilateral agenda, spanning from global peace and security issues to those of purely regional questions and specific issues (stockpiles, military leftovers and mélange ammunition, etc.). This series of multilateral projects, including their main topics and the intensity of their relations to the three regions, is presented in the following Table.

The mentioned period and the engagement in the above-presented activities has brought Slovenia a rich experience in policy making on a combination of highly various topics that span from hard to soft security issues, with many policy options and approaches in between (from collective and cooperative security to collective defense and crisis management), to the nuclear security of the global community and human rights (Comp. Axworthy, 2001, Hillison, 2009, Nye, 2004). All these would have been unexplored territories had it not been for the multilateral policy and diplomatic approach. Moreover, what is striking is that, despite just eighteen years of Slovenia's existence as a sovereign independent state, eight outstanding multilateral projects have been carried out in barely twelve years. This seems to be a unique case in modern history. Simply put, a highly enriched foreign policy and the diplomatic dynamics of the new state brought around a rare experience and proved again, in practice, that multilateralism works in favour of small countries (Comp. Prasad, 2009). As a result, the trend was enabled due to a changed international environment that carried with it beneficial circumstances on the one hand, and because of an open ear and policy sensibility on the other.

Through these projects Slovenia managed to develop varying and structurally complex contacts and relations with the countries of the Black Sea region on practically all the important aspects of contemporary international politics. In some cases these have been a combination of the already intensive bilateral relations enriched

Table 3:
Types of
Slovenia's
experience
and its
relation to
countries

No	Type	Project	Countries
1.	Bilateral Cooperation	All	All
2.	Integration Process (primarily)	EU + NATO	Majority
3.	Policy and Political Management	All	Majority
4.	Exchange	All	All

by multilateral activities while, in other cases, bilateral activities were stimulated by multilateral contacts and engagement in various forums.

Due to the dynamics of multilateral diplomacy this has been a two-way process in which Slovenia has gained a lot. Its multilateral experiences can be grouped into four main fields. Firstly, bilateral cooperation as a diplomatic and foreign policy fundament; secondly, integration process activities, which encompass a variety of processes, aspects and areas; thirdly, policy and political management, which helped not just to carve out Slovenia's policy approach but to constantly transform it and, fourthly, an overall process of exchanging experiences, ideas, and knowledge as well as enhancing cooperation. A policy overview of this matrix is presented in the following Table.

The overview offers an outlook of the various types of Slovenian experience referring to the countries from all three regions and projects through which these activities have primarily been executed. The first and the fourth type of experience (bilateral cooperation and exchange) refer to all of the countries and were carried out through all projects. This presents the most encompassing experience and general approach; perhaps, it is also the most fundamental approach in each case. The second one (integration process experience) concerns the majority of the countries discussed but primarily the post Cold War endeavours of the EU and NATO (Comp. Bebler, 2009.b, Marc, 2008). The third one (policy and political management) is also related to the majority of the countries involved and has been carried out through all of the projects.

Generally speaking, the matrix demonstrates what dynamic relations with a country look like when carried out through various approaches and within a multilateral framework.⁸ Additionally, one can speculate that in regard to all of the countries, bilateral relations were stimulated, upgraded, and, sometimes, also partially compensated through the multilateral projects discussed here. It also illustrates how strong, efficient and complementary bilateral and multilateral diplomatic and foreign policy approaches can be in the management of contemporary world affairs. Multilateralism serves here as an element of support for upgrading bilateralism as well as serving its

⁸ *Based on our method of generalization, one would hardly exclude any country from all four types. But still, to obtain a clear view of the process, we have done this to show the structural dynamics and various possibilities of different practical cases.*

Table 4:
Intensity of
Slovenian
experience
and challenges
related to the
three regions

	Experiences		Future Challenges	
	Bilateral	Multilateral	Bilateral	Multilateral
South East Europe	☑	☑	○	●
Western Balkans	☑	●	●	☑
Black Sea Region	○	○	○	●

own purposes.⁹ Relations among countries in such cases are much better, closer and fuller in scope and, at the same time, act in a more interlinked manner that enriches their cooperation. At the end of the day, however, it is still bilateralism which serves as the starting point for all these activities.

The last focus in this part of the paper refers to the three regions and the intensity of both the Slovenian experience and the future challenges in relation to them (inside they incorporate a separate look at the bilateral and multilateral aspects). We give a generalized view of the intensity of the experiences which Slovenia gained in its contacts with these regions and of the future challenges they pose over the coming period.¹⁰ A generalized overview is presented in the following Table.

It looks as if the intensity of Slovenia's relations with these regions has, to date, depended upon Slovenian integration ambitions. During the pre-membership period in NATO and the EU, for example, Slovenia was mostly occupied with carrying out activities which would lead it to membership status and the relations with the regions in question and the various countries within them were determined by these facts. Later, after membership (actually, during the final stages of the process), relations were enriched with the transfer of the integration experiences to these countries and regions.¹¹ However, other multilateral projects also determined the scope and intensity of the relations discussed. Perhaps one can point out here that it was the Slovenian OSCE Chairmanship of 2005 that, in various ways brought together Slovenia and the Black Sea region in particular. It could also be stressed that the multilateral approach has been crucial for the upgraded activities with these regions over the past period albeit with the exemption of the Western Balkans (although relations with the Black Sea region remain behind the other two.).

Speculating about the future challenges in these relations, one could say that it is the multilateral approach that will dominate the management of these relations. Most

⁹ Form more on this compare, for example, Simoniti (1994).

¹⁰ As far as the agenda is concerned, we presuppose that it will be composed primarily of the topics determined by various multilateral forums and their activities. This would mean that participation of countries from these regions in various integration processes form or determine their policy agenda. Compare Brzezinski (2009), Glenn (2009) and Kennedy (1993).

¹¹ This primarily applies to the Western Balkans and some countries of the Black Sea region, while the majority of South East Europe was included in the integration process more or less at the same time as Slovenia.

probably the Western Balkans region will stand out more, which is to be expected given the rich political, historical, security, economic, cultural, and other aspects involved. Since the majority of South East Europe is already firmly ensconced in the notion of integration, one could further speculate that the intensity of the challenges is unlikely to exceed that of the gained experiences. Hence, the Black Sea region is gradually spreading and increasing the variety of its contacts and participation in those multilateral endeavours where Slovenia is also heavily engaged, a policy which could upgrade the existing intensity.¹²

Conclusion The main ambition of this paper was to present the importance of Slovenia's outstanding multilateral experience with regards to its relations with the relevant countries, but particularly with the Western Balkans and the Black Sea region. We focused on multilateral activities accompanied by comments on bilateral activities, as well as taking into consideration the experiences already gained and the future challenges that Slovenian foreign policy is likely to face.

The broader framework of our discussion was established by the fact that Slovenia is a small (as well as the majority of countries discussed) newly independent state, which emerged from the tectonic changes that came about as a result of the end of the Cold War. This enhances the proposition that multilateralism works as a natural ally of small states. Additionally, as a consequence of the changes in 1989, several shifts of policy have also occurred in the directions of diplomacy as well as in the perceptions of security. The reordering of world affairs has coincided with the necessity to observe, detect and cope with the outburst of the globalization process, which has, at the same time, deepened the importance and the efficiency of multilateralism in diplomatic practice.

Perhaps the most important observation in this paper would be that multilateralism stimulates, enhances and sometimes partially also compensates for bilateral relations. This fully illustrates the current structural dynamics between the two aspects of diplomatic practice. We have showed this in the case of Slovenia and its relations primarily with the countries of the Black Sea region, supported with similar, but less intensive findings about the Western Balkans where bilateralism still plays a highly important, if not crucial role. On a general level though, whilst multilateralism serves as a policy approach it also appears, in practice, to be a diplomatic tool and a methodological framework for bilateralism.¹³ Due to Slovenia's rare and intensive multilateral experience, relations with the countries of the Black Sea region have not only been improved and stimulated, but also upgraded, enriched and strengthened. There are, of course, differences as far as the various countries are concerned, but the general observation is relevant.

¹² Again we point out the diversity of this engagement in the Black Sea region (referring to some of the countries like Russia and Turkey) and the necessity of generalization in the paper.

¹³ The intention of the paper is not to support all these with several empirical examples, but at least to present the author's personal, diplomatic view that there are many such issues in Slovenian diplomatic practices across various areas.

It has been its multilateral policy orientation that has enabled Slovenia to develop structurally diverse and complex contacts and relations with the countries of the Black Sea region on practically all the important aspects of contemporary international politics. There are cases where this has been a combination of the already intensive bilateral relations in place being enriched by multilateral activities, and there are cases where bilateral activities have been stimulated by multilateral contacts and engagement in various forums and on other such platforms. As a consequence, since we hail from the foreign policy and diplomatic practice of a small country with limited resources, multilateralism will most probably continue to play a dominant role and continue to shape and enable the efficient implementation of our bilateral relations.

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