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An analysis of Serbia's alignment with the European Union's foreign policy declarations and measures in 2020: Semi-annual Review

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Summary

In the period from January 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020, the European Union (EU) published a total of 25 foreign policy declarations with which partner countries were requested to comply, as well as additional 2 where the alignment was not requested. The EU requests harmonization from candidate countries, potential candidate countries, members of the European Economic Area that are outside of the EU (all EFTA countries besides Switzerland), and countries in the Eastern Partnership. The Republic of Serbia aligned with 12 of the 25 declarations, or 48%. Bearing in mind that Serbia's alignment rate for the same six month period last year was 60%, with an overall alignment percentage for all of 2019 at 57%, the first half of 2020 represents a clear decline in foreign policy harmonization.

Of the declarations that Serbia did not align with, three relate to Russia's involvement in the Ukrainian crisis, another three are devoted to the ongoing crisis in Venezuela, and one declaration each is related to Myanmar/Burma, Iran, Belarus, Nicaragua, Syria, Turkey, and Georgia.

The general conclusion of this report is that, as in previous years, Serbia continually fails to align with those declarations which mainly deal with China and Russia, or when topics are related to the foreign engagement of these two countries. Both China and Russia are permanent members of the UN Security Council; as such they are vital for the Serbian position regarding the independence of Kosovo and its potential membership in international organisations. The same basis goes for several other countries with which Serbia has good relations, such as Iran or Belarus, which do not recognise the independence of Kosovo. Finally, a trend during past decade has been clearly established in which Serbia, vis-à-vis its foreign policy, cooperates and aligns itself with countries and regimes that are visibly non democratic, authoritarian and work against the interests of the European Union and the Euro-Atlantic community.

Analysis of foreign policy declarations and measures

In the past few years, Serbia has extended its partnership with China, both economically and politically, and increasingly edging towards the Chinese political sphere. In previous years, whenever the situation in this country is a topic of the EU declarations, Serbia fails to align. In the first half of 2020, the EU did not issue declarations which dealt directly with China, but it is worthwhile to mention that Serbia, along with Belarus and Russia, is the only European country to support a declaration addressed to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva that defines Chinese flagrant violation of human and minority rights of Uighurs in Xinjiang as a fight against terrorism and extremists who threaten human rights. Furthermore, during May and June, Serbia's officials strongly defended and supported China's new controversial security law on Hong Kong, which was reflected in Serbia not aligning with the EU's declaration condemning the law on July 1 (not officially included in the alignment rate for this report as the cut off date was June 30).

Serbia's behaviour and positioning on China is not recent and goes back to the 2010 controversy when then Foreign Affairs Minister Vuk Jeremic refused to send a delegation to the Nobel award ceremony for one of Chinese decedents which China furiously opposed. While a lower rank delegation was eventual sent after a domestic uproar, Serbia's approach towards China continued in the same direction and was only intensified once President Vucic and his SNS government came to power.

Of the three declarations about the situation in Ukraine, two concerned amending of already existing

1) The analysis covers all EU foreign policy declarations seeking the alignment of third countries, made publicly available on EU Council's webpage consilium.europa.eu.

restrictive measures against entities and individuals from Russia and Ukraine, while one condemns Russia's annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, including the 2018 arrests of Ukrainian soldiers in the Kerch Strait, the construction of the Kerch Bridge, breaches of international law in violation of free passage through the Kerch Strait, and the militarization of the Crimean peninsula. The declaration also emphasizes the EU's refusal to recognize elections held by the Russian Federation in the Crimean peninsula, condemns the rampant violations of human rights, most egregiously affecting the Crimean Tatars in the area, as well as attempts to change the demographic structure in Crimea by transferring population from Russia to Crimea. Finally, the EU calls for release of arrested human rights defenders who have been detained contrary to international law and calls for the respect of human rights and freedoms at the peninsula. Since the inception of the Ukraine crisis Serbia did not align with any of the declarations which are all related to Russia's engagement in this country, either in Crimea or in the Donbas region in the Eastern Ukraine. This also represents one of the major reasons for a continual reduction of Serbia's alignment rate over the last several years.

The declaration on Georgia related to a massive cyberattack on this country that happened on October 28, 2019 could be also related to Russia, thus the reason why Serbia avoided to align. In February 2020, Georgia and several other countries accused Russia as a responsible for the cyberattacks.

As it was observed in the 2019 Alignment report, the reasoning why Serbia did not align with the EU declarations on Georgia in 2019 was probably due to increased Russian engagement with this country, in particular in the field of military cooperation and the arms trade. It is plausible thus to conclude that the same reasoning is behind Serbia's unwillingness to align with the renewed EU restrictive measures against Georgia.

Of the three declarations about the ongoing crisis in Venezuela, all are declarative in nature and represent a reaction to crisis as a whole and to particular events, calling all sides to engage in an inclusive, true and representative process of negotiations. But at the same time, the EU is critical towards Maduro's regime. Both Russia and China are more or less supporting Maduro's regime, which can explain why Serbia did not align with these three declarations. Furthermore, Venezuela has not recognized the independence of Kosovo and has voted with Serbia in keeping Kosovo out of various international organizations. As noted earlier, as well as in previous reports, Serbia's foreign policy first and foremost looks to countries which have not recognized Kosovo as "true friends" and will return their support on Kosovo by not voting or aligning against them, either at the UN or vis-à-vis the EU accession process.

The Myanmar/Burma declaration extended restrictive measures, including the restriction of arms exports and the prohibition of military cooperation by the EU member states, in connection with the situation in the Rakhine State and the violence against members of the Rohingya Muslim minority that began in August 2017. As we have concluded in previous reports, the most likely explanation for Serbia's non-compliance with these declarations is the support provided by Russia, China and other countries to the regime at the end of 2017. This support culminated in their opposition to the UN General Assembly Resolution on the Rohingya initiated by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Serbia also did not support the EU declarations on Iran and Belarus, which renews/prolongs already existing restrictive measures against these countries. Both of these states are close to Russia and have not recognized the independence of Kosovo.

Certainly a novelty in non-alignment are the restrictive measures against Turkey, the EU candidate state in its own right. The EU added two persons to the list in the Annex to November 2019 decision concerning restrictive measures in view of Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. In past years, and especially since the 2016 attempt of coup in this country, Serbia has developed a close relationship (despite the fact that Turkey is one of the greatest promoters of the independence of Kosovo) with the regime of the president Rejep Tajip Erdogan, hence the most obvious reason why it avoided alignment. Turkey remains one of the most important regional players, influential in the Balkans and among Balkan Muslim populations and the ruling elite in Serbia has to take its interest into account, especially in this stage of its EU integration.

Alignment of other states with the European Union's foreign policy declarations and measures in the first half of 2020

In this first half of 2020, Serbia is the least aligned state with EU declarations compared to its fellow candidate countries Montenegro, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania. Only Turkey is lower with a staggering 16 percent. The same trend holds true with countries of the European Economic Area - Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, the last two of which have recorded a lower decline in compliance than in the first half of the previous year. From the countries of the Eastern Partnership, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia have a higher percentage of alignment than Serbia.

State	Alignment percentage
Serbia	48%
North Macedonia	92%
Montenegro	100%
Iceland	76%
Albania	100%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	72%
Turkey	16%
Liechtenstein	72%
Norway	64%
Moldova	88%
Armenia	40%
Georgia	68%
Ukraine	80%
Azerbaijan	0%

ANNEX

**LIST OF THE EU'S FOREIGN POLICY
DECLARATIONS IN 2020**

Alignment with the EU's foreign policy declarations and measures

No	Name of declaration	date	Srb	N.Mac	Mon.	Isl.	Alb.	BiH	Liht	Nor	Mold	Arm.	Geo.	Ukr.	Azer.	Tur.
1	Venezuela: Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell on behalf of the EU on the latest developments on the National Assembly	09/01/2020	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
2	Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell on behalf of the EU on South Sudan	21/01/2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
3	Honduras: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the non-renewal of the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity	22/01/2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
4	Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell on behalf of the EU on the Middle East Peace Process	28/01/2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
5	Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU - call to promote and conduct responsible behaviour in cyberspace	21/02/2020	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
6	Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning the list of persons, groups and entities subject to the application of specific measures to combat terrorism	25/02/2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
7	Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the political situation in Guinea-Bissau	12/03/2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

8	Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell Fontelles, on behalf of the EU, on the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol	16/03/2020	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
9	Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain third countries concerning restrictive measures directed against certain persons and entities in view of the situation in Tunisia	24/03/2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
10	Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures against Belarus	31/03/2020	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
11	Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures in view of Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean	31/03/2020	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
12	Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on Venezuela	03/04/2020	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
13	Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell on behalf of the EU on the UN Secretary General's appeal for an immediate global ceasefire	03/04/2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
14	Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell, on behalf of the EU, on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day, 3 May 2020	02/05/2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
15	Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell, on behalf of the EU, on Nicaragua	04/05/2020	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No

16	Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell, on behalf of the EU, on human rights in the times of the coronavirus pandemic	05/05/2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
17	Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Libya	06/05/2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
18	Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine	07/05/2020	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
19	Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures directed against certain persons, entities and bodies in view of the situation in Ukraine	07/05/2020	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
20	Declaration by the High Representative, on behalf of the EU, on Libya	12/05/2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
21	Declaration by the High Representative Josep Borrell on behalf of the EU on the occasion of the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, 17 May 2020	15/05/2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
22	Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures directed against certain persons and entities in view of the situation in Iran	18/05/2020	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

23	Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures against Myanmar/ Burma	18/05/2020	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
24	Declaration by the High Representative, on behalf of the EU, on the latest developments in Venezuela	04/06/2020	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
25	Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Nicaragua	23/06/2020	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
		date	Srb	N.Mac	Mon.	Isl.	Alb.	BiH	Liht	Nor	Mold	Arm.	Geo..	Ukr.	Azer.	Tur.
	Aligned with		12	23	25	19	25	18	18	16	22	10	17	20	0	4
	Did not align with		13	2	0	6	0	7	7	9	3	15	8	5	25	21
	Alignment Percentage		48	92	100	76	100	72	72	64	88	40	68	80	0	16



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