

## **CONCLUSION OF THE COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA ADOPTED ON THE OCCASION OF THE ARMED CONFLICT ON THE TERRITORY OF UKRAINE THAT BEGAN ON 24 FEBRUARY 2022.**

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to try to explain the foreign policy of small states in contemporary and current international relations through the theory of neoclassical realism and on the example of the case study of the Republic of Serbia. The contribution of this paper in the theoretical sense testifies to the applicability of the theory of neoclassical realism in current international relations. When it comes to scientific knowledge, a kind of contribution to the theory itself is provided, bearing in mind the fact that it is about the application of the said theory to a small country, with limited economic, political, military and diplomatic capacities on the international level. In the context of small states, this work provides a contribution to the understanding of the creation of foreign policy and the adoption of foreign policy decisions by small states, and provides an explanation of how much room for maneuver they have in foreign policy action in current international relations.

**Keywords:** small states, foreign policy activities, national security, Serbia, neoclassical realism

### **INTRODUCTION**

The conclusion of the National Security Council of the Republic of Serbia, adopted the day after the beginning of the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine, is the subject of the analysis of this paper, in which we will try to explain the foreign policy actions and foreign policy decision-making of the Republic of Serbia in the current internal political circumstances, as well as the challenges that the Republic

of Serbia faces in regional, European and international plan. The importance of this analysis is twofold: First, in order to analyze the model of making foreign policy decisions of the Republic of Serbia, in the institutional sense, that is, to determine how much the constitutional-institutional framework determines the foreign policy action and decision-making of the Republic of Serbia, on the one hand, and on the other hand, to analyze how much these decisions and foreign policy processes of Serbia are influenced by the political elite, that is, more specifically, the decision-makers in the political system; Second, the importance of this analysis is reflected in the need to understand the relationship, that is, the pressures that the Republic of Serbia faces on the foreign policy front in the context of open regional issues and its foreign policy action and decision-making. More specifically, we are talking about the challenges regarding the territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia and the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina as a determinant that greatly affects the foreign policy of Serbia, and especially on the concrete example of the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine and the violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine as an independent and sovereign state, a member of the United nation, the status enjoyed by the Republic of Serbia, which is also simultaneously faced with the challenge of preserving its territorial integrity, however without armed actions.

Through the analysis of the conclusion adopted by the National Security Council of the Republic of Serbia, we will try to answer the following questions: is the conclusion and such a foreign policy decision aligned with the national interests of the Republic of Serbia? Is such a conclusion in line with Serbia's foreign policy goals? What is the role of the institutional mechanism of the Republic of Serbia in the process of adopting this conclusion? To what extent is the conclusion a product of the internal political consensus of the ruling coalition? Is the conclusion of the National Security Council of the Republic of Serbia determined by the political convictions, worldview and understanding of current international relations of the most influential political figure, that is, the President of the Republic?

In this analysis, we will not try to answer only the question about the way and methods used in the foreign policy action and decision-making of the Republic of Serbia, but we will indirectly determine how significant the model of neoclassical realism is in defining and implementing foreign policy decisions, not only in large states where political elites enjoy great international reputation based on the economic, political, military or resource power of their country, but also with small countries like the Republic of Serbia, which have limited resource capacities, and their room for maneuver is in a certain sense limited by the fact that their foreign policy action and decision-making in itself brings greater risks and challenges.

## **THEORETICAL MODEL**

In order to provide a precise theoretical and practical explanation of the topic of this paper, we decided on the model of neoclassical realism because we believe that this model fits in the theoretical sense to provide an explanation of the conclusions adopted by the Republic of Serbia and related to the beginning of the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine. However, before entering into the process of connecting the model of neoclassical realism and the aforementioned decision of the Republic of Serbia, we must point out that numerous authors approach the study

of foreign policy in different ways and from different points of view, applying different academic approaches, but we must also emphasize that international relations as a scientific discipline they are most often divided into sectors that study international relations in a systemic sense and international relations as a whole, but also sectors that deal with the analysis of foreign policy with a focus on states and their foreign policy actions. (Hellmann and Urrestarazu 2013 op. cit.) It is important to point out that neoclassical realism, like realism, does not represent a normative theory that deals with the desirable behavior of states, but tends to explain the foreign policy and actions of states without defining correct behavior. (Meibauer, Desmaele, et al. 2021, 2, op. cit.) This is exactly why neoclassical realism can offer a more objective analysis without ideological overtones. (Mintas 2020, 15) In fact, neoclassical realism seeks to explain the variation in the foreign policy of one state in a certain period or between several states facing similar foreign policy constraints. (Mintas 2020, 17) However, in order not to go in the direction of misunderstanding neoclassical realism as a model, it is also important to say that neoclassical realism accepts Waltz's assumption that world politics and the policies of individual states are limited by the structure of the international system. (Meibauer, Desmaele, et al. 2021, 2, op. cit.)

Namely, neoclassical realism starts from the assumption that the state will shape its foreign policy primarily as a response to the signals coming from the international community, but not all leaders will perceive all those signals in the same way, that is, how the signals will be accepted and perceived depends primarily on the leaders and the executive authorities, and their attitudes, views on the world, ideology, as well as beliefs. And that is precisely why it is possible that certain foreign policy decisions are taken exclusively from internal political motives, and it is also possible the other way around, regardless of whether it is in the national interest or not. (Ripsman 2017, 11, op. cit.) In addition, it is important to emphasize that the national interest is also the starting point and the main guiding line in foreign policy in the model of neoclassical realism, however, in neoclassical realism, unlike the position of classical realists, the national interest is not considered completely given in advance, but the fact is emphasized that it can be defined and determined by the leaders of the states. (Reichwein 2020, 18, op. cit.)

Neoclassical realists believe that they must possess certain knowledge and experience in order to be able to correctly understand systemic opportunities and threats and at the same time transform them into foreign policy decisions, for which they need a certain amount of time both for making and for implementing that decision. (Mintas 2020, 26) What we fundamentally associate with the topic of this work is the position of neoclassical realists that leaders are very often faced with the challenge of not having enough time or information in the process of making and implementing foreign policy decisions, and decisions are made on the basis of prior knowledge, understanding, ideas, but also ideology. (Mintas 2020, 26) Therefore, in neoclassical realism, it is important to include the so-called ideation (creative) variable in the analysis, which can help leaders understand opportunities and dangers, and as such, provide them with guidelines in the decision-making process. (Meibauer, Interests, ideas, and the study of state behaviour in neoclassical realism 2020a, 27, op. cit.) But because of the possibility of introducing an ideational

variable into the analysis, neoclassical realism is particularly important for the inclusion of subjectivities that are grounded in the beliefs and styles of leaders. (Foulon and Meibauer 2020, 15, op. cit.)

In this context, we actually find a key link that will help us in analyzing and explaining the conclusion reached by the National Security Council of the Republic of Serbia, which concerned the beginning of the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine. Although it is a decision of one institution, because the National Security Council of the Republic of Serbia has institutional frameworks, we did not choose a model of bureaucratic politics in this analysis of foreign policy decisions, bearing in mind the role of leaders and the internal political circumstances of Serbia as key determinants in foreign policy action, and thus foreign policy decisions of the Republic of Serbia.

And when it comes to leaders and their role in foreign policy action and foreign policy decision-making, it is important to note that leaders will assess opportunities and threats on the international level also in context, i.e. according to a cause-and-effect model depending on their identity, interests and beliefs, and that's why it is not impossible to imagine that internal processes influence the objectivity of decisions and actions of leaders in foreign policy decision-making. (Sterling-Folker 1997, 19-20, op. cit.) In neoclassical realism, the leader's perceptions, beliefs and ideas are a particularly important variable that helps explain the leader's role in understanding and interpreting systemic incentives, and subsequently in shaping and implementing foreign policy. (Marsh 2012, 489, op. cit.) Leaders try to respond to challenges that come from outside, but at the same time they are under the influence of their personal perception, worldview, beliefs and ideology, so the foreign policy of a country can differ greatly depending on who is in power, even though the position is also relative material. the power of the state in the international system is equal. And in the short and medium term, foreign policy decisions do not always have to correspond to external requirements. (Marsh 2012, 490, op. cit.)

This is precisely why we consider this theoretical model to be fully suitable for the analysis of the selected topic in order to provide a more comprehensive answer to the question and try to explain Serbia's foreign policy decision regarding the beginning of armed conflicts on the territory of Ukraine. The theoretical model, on the other hand, in this work will also serve us in the context of a better understanding of neoclassical realism in contemporary international relations, more specifically in the processes of foreign policy action and foreign policy decision-making by small states on the example of the Republic of Serbia.

## **CASE STUDY**

The armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine began on February 24, 2022, while the Republic of Serbia defined its position and position on this conflict one day later, on February 25, 2022, when the Conclusion of the National Security Council of the Republic of Serbia was adopted. After two consecutive sessions of the National Security Council of the Republic of Serbia, a 15-point conclusion was adopted, which was summarized by the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, with the following statement: "Serbia respects the norms of international public law, because that is the only way to protect its principles, but Serbia understands its

needs very well." regardless of what anyone would like, Serbia respects traditional friendships and does not forget what happened in 2015 and 1999, nor the years that preceded this year". (Đurović 2022) After that, President Vučić pointed out that there was a difficult decision before the top of the state and that Serbia was faced with almost no hidden pressures, but that the decision was made in the best interest of Serbia. In addition, he pointed out that Serbia is on the European path, but that it will not rush into hostilities because someone is asking for it, even though the European Union said that it expects Serbia, as a candidate country, to join the sanctions against Russia. (Đurović 2022)

In addition, he pointed out that it was not possible to impose sanctions on Russia, because it was the only one that did not impose sanctions in the 90s, did not impose sanctions on Republika Srpska, protected Serbia in 2015 at the United Nations when it vetoed the adoption of the resolution on Srebrenica, and maintains the position of the Resolution 1244 as a permanent member of the Security Council. (Đurović 2022)

But in order to have a clearer picture of the position of the Republic of Serbia regarding the beginning of the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine, we will list in full all 15 points adopted by the National Security Council of the Republic of Serbia.

#### **NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL CONCLUSION ADOPTED 25 FEBRUARY 2022.**

On the basis of Article 5, Paragraph 2 of the Law on the Organization of the Security Services of the Republic of Serbia, the National Security Council, based on its role in protecting national security, reached the following conclusion at the session of 25 February 2022:

1. The Republic of Serbia most sincerely regrets everything that is happening in Eastern Europe. Russia and Ukraine have always been friendly countries for the Republic of Serbia, and the Serbian people consider Russians and Ukrainians as brotherly nations. We perceive the loss of life of every person in Ukraine as a true tragedy.
2. The Republic of Serbia is committed to respecting the principles of territorial integrity and political independence of states, as one of the basic principles of international law contained in the Charter of the United Nations and the final act from Helsinki (1975), which guarantees the right of states to the inviolability of borders.
3. Starting from Article 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, which stipulates that the foreign policy of the Republic of Serbia rests on generally recognized rules and principles of international law, one of the basic principles of the foreign policy of the Republic of Serbia is consistent respect for the inviolability of the territorial integrity of sovereign states. Just as it is committed to preserving the sovereignty and integrity of its territory, the Republic of Serbia also advocates respect for the territorial integrity of other sovereign states and the principle that borders can only be changed in accordance with the rules of international law.

4. The Republic of Serbia has always led a responsible and principled foreign policy and has paid dearly for its commitment to the principles and rules of international law, including the principles of territorial integrity, because due to its efforts to preserve its territorial integrity at the end of the 20th century, it was exposed not only to restrictive measures but and the aggression of 19 NATO countries. Despite all that, the position of the Republic of Serbia in international relations has always been and remains legally and politically flawless, responsible and principled. No objection can be made to the Republic of Serbia due to its consistency in respecting the principles of international law.
5. In accordance with its previous policy of advocating for consistent and principled respect for the principles of international law and the inviolability of borders, the Republic of Serbia provides full and principled support for respect for the principles of territorial integrity of Ukraine.
6. The fundamental principle of modern international law is the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes and refraining from the threat and use of armed force against the territorial integrity and political independence of any state and in any way that is not in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Guided by the basic principles on which it bases its foreign policy, the Republic of Serbia considers it very wrong to violate the territorial integrity of any country, including Ukraine.
7. The Republic of Serbia, regardless of the provocations that often come from the countries and entities in the Western Balkans, remains consistent with respect for the principle from its Constitution that it bases its foreign policy on the generally accepted principles and rules of international law and permanently advocates that those principles be respected and that preserve peace in the region at all costs. The Republic of Serbia believes that the preservation of peace and stability is of key importance both for the progress of its economy and for the biological survival of its citizens. This is precisely why the policy of the Republic of Serbia must be even more careful and lenient towards irresponsible statements and actions coming from the region, because the preservation of peace represents the vital interest of the Serbian people and citizens of the Republic of Serbia.
8. Proceeding from the fact that its basic duty is to devote all its forces to preserving the peace and well-being of its citizens, the Republic of Serbia, when considering the need to possibly adopt restrictive measures or sanctions against any country, including the Russian Federation, will be guided exclusively by the protection of its vital economic and political interests. As a country that experienced Western sanctions in the recent past and whose compatriots in the Republika Srpska are suffering sanctions today, the Republic of Serbia believes that it is not in its vital political and economic interest to impose sanctions on any country at this time, not even its representatives or economic entities.
9. Starting from the principle of military neutrality of the Republic of Serbia, and bearing in mind the tremendous pressures to which the state of Serbia is exposed, it is necessary that all planning and training activities of the

- Serbian Armed Forces and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia with foreign partners be stopped immediately, and that such activities are not undertake until further notice.
10. In accordance with Article 13 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, which stipulates the obligation of the Republic of Serbia to protect the interests of its citizens abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with other competent state bodies, will take all measures provided by law to protect the safety of citizens of the Republic of Serbia residing in Ukraine.
  11. All state bodies and officials of the Republic of Serbia are warned of their legal obligation to refrain from inciting and helping individuals to participate in conflicts in Eastern Europe. Competent state authorities will take all measures to prevent the participation of citizens of the Republic of Serbia, the so-called volunteers, in the conflicts in the east of Europe and will sanction all citizens who do not comply with the legal prohibitions from art. 386a and 386b of the Criminal Code.
  12. The Republic of Serbia, of course, will provide all kinds of humanitarian aid to the endangered people and population of Ukraine.
  13. In accordance with their powers, the competent state authorities will take all measures to ensure that in the time ahead, citizens and the economy are supplied with the necessary amount of energy, oil and oil derivatives, gas, but also with food and other necessities necessary for a decent and dignified life.
  14. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will introduce this Conclusion to diplomatic and consular missions of the Republic of Serbia abroad and instruct them to strictly adhere to this conclusion in their actions.
  15. For the purpose of implementation, submit this conclusion to the General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the General Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces, the Security and Information Agency, the Military Security Agency and the Military Intelligence Agency. (Official site, President of the Republic of Serbia 2022)

#### **ANALYSIS OF THE CONTENT OF THE CONCLUSION OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

Point 1 of the Conclusion is a declarative statement of the Republic of Serbia, which does not speak about the foreign policy of the state regarding the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine, nor about the possible condemnation of the military activities of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine, but only declaratively states the fact that both Ukraine and Russia are for the Republic of Serbia friendly countries and peoples throughout history. Viewed from the point of view of neoclassical realism, this point actually represents a political formulation of the political leadership of Serbia in which regret is expressed for the beginning of armed conflicts in Ukraine, but the action of the Russian army on the territory of the neighboring sovereign country is not precisely condemned.

Point number 2., similarly to point number 1., cannot be interpreted as a conclusion adopted at the session of the National Security Council, but as a general principle that in essence and in practice should be respected by every member state of the United Nations, as well as Serbia, and this point as such does not serve anything in this context, except to confirm adherence to the principles of territorial integrity and political independence, which was done according to the same model in point 3, except that in the third point it is emphasized that there is an article in the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia that guarantees that Serbia's foreign policy is based on the principles of international law.

If we analyze these three points from the point of view of the adoption of specific foreign policy decisions of a UN member state, we will determine that these points represent perhaps a kind of excess, bearing in mind the fact that all of the above could be presented in one concrete sentence in which it would be stated that the Republic of Serbia as a state a member of the UN committed to the principles of the UN Charter, which speaks volumes and testifies to respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of any country, including Ukraine. This calls into question point 1, in which the context of friendly relations in no way changes the fact that the Russian Federation carried out military aggression on the territory of a sovereign country.

But that is precisely why here we find numerous elements of neoclassical realism, which, in addition to foreign political circumstances, also takes into account internal political circumstances, coalition circumstances, leaders' beliefs, but also time frames regarding the speed of decision-making.

In fact, point 4 represents the most precise presentation of Serbia's position on the conflict on the territory of Ukraine, although it is indirectly given as such. In this point, Serbia uses its personal example to state that it was exposed to aggression in modern history, but that despite this it remained consistent with the principles and principles of international law. This is followed by point 5, in which Serbia expresses its full and principled support for the respect of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, which *de facto* condemns the Russian military operation on the territory of Ukraine and at the same time promotes the national interest in the preservation of territorial integrity, which has otherwise been threatened for the past 24 years. In addition to that, point 6 is added, where the Republic of Serbia clearly states its position that it is wrong to violate the territorial integrity of any country, including Ukraine. When it comes to sanctions against the Russian Federation, the position is expressed in point 8, which states that when making a decision on the introduction of sanctions against Russia, Serbia will be guided exclusively by the protection of its vital economic and political interests, and as a country that has experienced Western sanctions in the recent past. and whose compatriots in Republika Srpska continue to suffer sanctions, Serbia believes that it is not in its vital political and economic interest to impose sanctions on any state and its representatives and economic entities. (Đurović 2022)

Point 8 is also very closely related to the views of representatives of the neoclassical realism model because it takes into account multiple constant and changing variables in the process of making foreign policy decisions. As constant variables here, we can recognize the vital economic and political interests of Serbia,



as well as the experience of dealing with the policy of sanctions, which is also a given and unchangeable variable, while opening the possibility for the possible adoption of restrictive measures or sanctions is actually a changeable variable that can contribute to the adoption of a new foreign policy decision or a new course of foreign policy action depending on the new circumstances.

If we look at this point through the prism of the non-alignment of Serbia's foreign policy with the Common Security and Foreign Policy of the European Union, more specifically in the context of sanctions, while keeping in mind the material possibilities of Serbia and its room for maneuver in foreign policy action, and in the context of the attitudes of neoclassical realists, we can very simply determine that the given decision turned out to be correct in the sense that Serbia was not faced with restrictive measures in the past period when it comes to the process of European integration, especially in the field of trade cooperation with the EU and with the member states of the Union, in the field of using EU financial instruments, but also the domain of investments from the EU and member states.

When it comes to point 9, it is important to point out that in the given circumstances on the international level, Serbia has decided to preserve a kind of balanced position, temporarily stopping intensified military cooperation with all foreign partners, that is, those who condemn the military operations of the Russian army on the territory of Ukraine, but also with those who support Russian military activities on Ukrainian territory.

Point 10 represents a foreign policy decision typical of all subjects of international law when it comes to the protection of their fellow citizens living in war zones.

When it comes to point 11, it is interesting that this document contains a warning to citizens who would potentially participate in conflicts on the territory of Ukraine on a voluntary basis. In fact, the leadership of the Republic of Serbia made it clear to the citizens of Serbia who are simultaneously members of extremist and radical groups, regardless of whether they support the Ukrainian or Russian side, and based on the experience of the Republic of Serbia with volunteers during the wars of the 90s, that participating in wars abroad on a voluntary or mercenary basis is a punishable crime. With this stance, the Republic of Serbia has once again shown its commitment to the principles and principles of international law by sending a clear message to the citizens of Serbia that it will not tolerate the participation of any individual in hostilities in Eastern Europe, primarily referring to the conflict in Ukraine.

Point 12 actually represents a message addressed to the authorities and citizens of Ukraine, i.e. the provision of indirect support through the readiness to provide humanitarian aid to the vulnerable population.

Point number 13 is actually outside the domain of foreign policy decisions because it does not deal with the foreign policy of the Republic of Serbia, but with internal issues, i.e. providing a kind of guarantee to the citizens of Serbia that the necessary and required amount of energy sources, oil and oil derivatives, gas, but also other food and necessary necessities for the sustainability of a decent and dignified life of the citizens of the Republic of Serbia. This point testifies to the adoption of the Conclusion concerning Serbia's foreign policy action, but at the

same time it is also based on the current internal circumstances, which representatives of neoclassical realism talk a lot about when it comes to the adoption of foreign policy decisions. With this point, the political elite actually tried to avoid any kind of social panic and hysteria when it comes to issues of sufficient resource capacity, and based on examples from societies in Western, Central and Northern Europe when the inhabitants of countries in those parts of Europe interpreted the beginning of the Ukrainian conflict as an existential issue, especially in terms of energy and resources, bearing in mind the role played by Russian energy companies in the economic sector in the member states of the European Union until that moment.

The conclusion of the National Security Council of the Republic of Serbia represents a modern and original empirical example of the role of the neoclassical realism model in the foreign policy action and foreign policy decision-making of small states, in this case on the example of the Republic of Serbia. A conclusion defined in this way, which includes different segments, starting with support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine, through the challenges that the Republic of Serbia faces in terms of protecting territorial integrity, and the decision to refuse to accept the policy of sanctions against the Russian Federation, which is also based on the personal experience of the Republic of Serbia, up to the decision to provide humanitarian aid to the vulnerable population of Ukraine, as well as providing a kind of guarantee to the citizens of Serbia when it comes to energy sustainability in the new circumstances, testifies to the application of the neoclassical model in practice in the process of making concrete foreign policy decisions.

Author Mandoline Rutkovski for the German newspaper Welt stated that the Serbian president dares to walk the geostrategic tightrope, adding that Serbia has close economic ties with the European Union, with which it achieves about two-thirds of its trade, at the same time describing the president as a political figure oriented towards to the East, who presents himself as a defender of Serbian interests and in this way panders to the voters, while the European Union lets him go, because he is their only hope to reach a compromise on the Kosovo issue that would be acceptable to the Serbian population. (Đerković 2022)

Immediately before the adoption of the Conclusion, the member of the European Parliament from the ranks of the Greens, Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, announced that it is high time for Serbia and President Aleksandar Vučić to publicly condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and she wrote on the social network: "Time to sit for two chair is finished". (Nastevski 2022) Such a conclusion of the National Security Council of the Republic of Serbia was interpreted as a negative point for Serbia in Europe, and foreign policy analyst Boško Jakšić said at that moment for Deutsche Welle that the time of Angela Merkel, when indecision would be read favorably, and that Serbia had the opportunity to on this occasion brought it closer to the European Union, but that it did not take advantage of it and that we will see what price Serbia will pay for that. (Petrović and Rujević 2022) However, on the other hand, the opposition candidate for president at the time, Zdravko Ponoš, gave a more balanced statement, and said that Serbia should first of all insist on respecting international law because it went through the trauma of 1999 and the rush

of recognition of the unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence. (Petrović and Rujević 2022)

In fact, there were various comments regarding the Conclusion won by the National Security Council of the Republic of Serbia, however, all those comments were mostly politically motivated, without a realistic understanding of the objective circumstances that the Republic of Serbia was facing at that moment and in different domains. , starting from the pressures for harmonization with the Common Security and Foreign Policy of the European Union, through the long-standing problems faced in the matter of preserving the territorial integrity and status of Kosovo and Metohija within the framework of the Republic of Serbia, all the way to modern security challenges such as the stable supply of energy resources due to which Serbia is also in a kind of dependent status.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, we tried to use the example of the foreign policy decision of small states in the case study of the Republic of Serbia to show the application of the model of neoclassical realism in foreign policy decision-making in contemporary international circumstances, as stated by the representatives of the model of neoclassical realism, almost in the same way the foreign policy decision of the Republic of Serbia was adopted. on the occasion of the beginning of the conflict on the territory of Ukraine. That decision took into account not only the current circumstances on the international and European scene, but also the current political circumstances on the internal level of Serbia, the perception and interpretation of the current situation by the political elite in Serbia, the understanding of the attitudes and positions of Serbian society, respect for vital national interests of the Republic of Serbia, threats to them, but also to economic interests and goals in the direction of creating a sustainable future in the current uncertain times. Apart from that, Serbia managed during the conflict period to ensure energy sustainability for its population and economic sector, which realistically represented a big risk not only for developing countries, but also for developed countries. This work certainly provides an opportunity for further research in the field of foreign policy decision-making of small states through the theories of realism, neorealism, neoclassical realism, but also through the comparison of these models on concrete empirical examples.

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