

## Small States as “Contributing Nations” to the EU’s Normative Power: the Case of Slovenia

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**Abstract:** *How can small states contribute to the overall normative power of the European Union (EU)? In this article we assess how much Slovenia, a small EU Member State with limited financial and human resources, contributes to this normative power. We do this by analysing its foreign policy, which consists of three main guiding principles: internationalism, the desire to solve all outstanding issues with its neighbour Croatia, and an attempt to present itself as a bridge between the EU and the Western Balkans. We discover that, while these principles exist on paper, they are often not consistently carried out in practice, which is a symptom of the still-ongoing reorientation of the country’s foreign policy, after successfully joining the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2004. Slovenian decision makers all too often remain reactive, and prefer to support the initiatives of others. When the country does act on its own initiative, its actions can be seen as too individualistic and uncoordinated, both within its own borders, and with its EU partners, as was the case when Slovenia launched the so-called Brdo Process, aimed at promoting cooperation between countries of former Yugoslavia. The conduct of Slovenian foreign policy is, all too often left, to the initiative and ingenuity of individuals, and such an uncoordinated approach hinders Slovenian efforts to become a normative power and to increase its influence in the Western Balkans. Finally, we argue that Slovenia’s Presidency of the EU Council in 2008 was a unique opportunity to contribute to the EU’s normative power. Slovenia managed to accomplish this only in part; despite the fact that the Presidency was an organisational success, most of its goals was too broadly defined and lacked ambition.*

**Keywords:** *Slovenia, normative power, small state, Presidency, foreign policy, Western Balkans, Croatia, Hungary*

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### Introduction

Slovenia joined the EU and NATO on 1 May 2004. It had thus accomplished its two primary foreign policy goals which it had been pursuing since becoming independent in 1991. It now had to position itself within a community of 25 states, and to define a new set of goals for its foreign policy. Finding a new *raison d’être* for a foreign policy apparatus that was intensively focused on two goals for a decade and half, would be a challenge for any state. For one that is a young democracy, as well as a small state with limited financial and human resources, it was even more so. Due to these constraints, Slovenia has to rely on soft rather than hard power, and attempt to contribute what it can to the EU’s joint normative power as it lacks

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both the economic as well as population base to pursue extensive unilateral policies towards third states. To what extent did Slovenia’s post-2004 reorientation succeed and what are its current foreign policy priorities? Is it leading by example or simply following in the footsteps of other EU members? What is the scope of the EU’s actual normative power, and to what extent does Slovenia contribute to it? How did Slovenia tackle the ultimate chance for a small state’s contribution to the EU’s normative power – the 6 month Council of the EU (EU Council) Presidency – when compared with that of a neighbouring small state, Hungary? The goal of this article will be to answer these questions.

The article is divided into seven parts and proceeds as follows: (1) in the first part we will briefly *discuss the concept of small states, and outline some of their characteristics*; (2) in the second part we will elaborate the idea of *whether the EU is a strong normative power and if it is enough, in the current state of international relations, for that particular international organization to be a normative power only*; (3) in the third part we will analyse *what principles and values are present in and how much do they guide the foreign policy of Slovenia*; (4) in the fourth part, we will discuss *how Slovenia views the relation between EU foreign policy (with particular emphasis on the promotion of Human Rights and Democracy) and its own geographical areas of interest*; (5) in the fifth part we will try to answer the question *whether Slovenia considers human security as being an essential component of its security policy*; (6) in the sixth part we will analyse and compare *the goals of the EU Council Presidency of Slovenia with those of a neighbouring small state, Hungary*; (7) in the conclusion, we will *sum up the findings and assess the current contribution of Slovenia to the normative power of the EU*.<sup>1</sup>

### **Characteristics of small states**

There is no single definition of a small state. Lacking agreed-upon criteria such as the size of territory, population and economy has forced authors to come up with more or less creative definitions. One approach among many might be to simply view any country that is not a middle or great power as a small state (Neumann and Gstöhl 2006, 7). However, that is not to say that a small state cannot be a power of sorts in its own right. Neumann and Gstöhl (2006, 8) warn that the distinction between small and great does not quite coincide with the distinction between strong and weak. We agree with their assessment and believe that, countries such as Switzerland, the Nordic countries, and the small but oil-rich Gulf States prove that even countries commonly regarded as small can have an impact on world affairs. Be it from a large and strong banking sector, through championing human rights and social equality, to a lucky endowment with raw materials, small states can effectively carve a niche for themselves within which their influence can be much bigger than simply what their territory or population size might predict. We discuss Slovenia’s situation in this regard later on in the article.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Colin Gray (in Bučar 2001, 145), the expert of international relations can perform different roles: (1) an innovator who warns about new problems and suggests solutions; (2) an expert who answers specific questions; (3) a promoter of official policies; (4) an advisor who is helping in the decision-making process; (5) a “catalyst” trying to break the reluctance of the bureaucratic apparatus; (6) an institution for legitimization of certain policies; (7) a good-willed critic; (8) an *advocatus diaboli* (defender of the opposing side); (9) a pure scientist trying to contribute to the development of the discipline. The authors of this article would definitely not attempt to legitimize certain policies of the government of Slovenia, while the other roles would blend to some extent.

Regarding a small state's behaviour within the EU, Thorhalsson (2006, 218) notes a difference in how small and large EU Member States view the issues concerning the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Regional Policy, as well as how they interact with the European Commission (EC). Furthermore, there are differences in the negotiation tactics employed within the Council of Ministers, the European Council and in bilateral negotiations with the EC. The reason for these differences lies in the small states' lack of staff, expertise and other resources to follow all negotiations. This leads to two outcomes; small states become reactive in many areas, but proactive in those areas they perceive as very important. In this case their small administration can actually become an asset, as it tends to be more flexible than that of larger countries.

However, all advantages of being a small state aside; such a country will likely remain at the mercy of the system level – other, larger countries (often its neighbours) will, in all likelihood, set “the rules of the game”, and a small state will have no choice but work within such a defined system, and to do what it can, despite its size and potential unfavourable geographic position. Some examples within the EU include Luxembourg, situated between France and Germany, and Austria's past position between the Western and Eastern Blocs (Hey 2003, 186–7). Slovenia too faces an unfavourable position, geographically, located at the crossroads of Romanic, Germanic, Slavic and Ugro-Finnic cultures. In the 20th century alone, the present-day Slovenian territory in part, or in its entirety, formed a part of, or was occupied by Austria-Hungary, the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), Italy, Germany, Hungary, socialist Yugoslavia, and independent Slovenia. Perhaps this, more than any previous example, proves just how much a small state is at the mercy of a system which it can hardly influence.

We do not intend to venture deep into the semantics of what a small state is, and what such a state can and cannot do; however, we would like to point out three things that should be kept in mind: *differences between large and small states do exist; however small does not necessarily mean weak; and that small states are deeply dependent on the system.*

### **The EU as a “force for good”**

What makes Europe a particularly intriguing case for analysis is the fusion of cosmopolitan ideas of universal rights with an emerging institutional capacity to protect those rights (Dunne 2008, 13). In the current state of international relations within the EU, a great deal of its member countries sees the Union as an important framework where their national interests can be pursued. However, most of the countries believe it may be wiser not to step fully in the European pond and yield the authority completely to Brussels, but to retain a defined set of powers for themselves. The history of the European continent has been imbued with bloody atrocities and wars between nations. This historical experience is markedly different from that of the United States of America, for example. Therefore, Europe is still far from becoming a centralized and unified power that could be called “the United States of Europe”.

One of the pressing questions that seemed to have remained unanswered for quite a long time is whether it is enough for the EU to have its influence relying on soft power only. If we paraphrase the saying “*Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far*”, that became popular with Theodore Roosevelt at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (although he had claimed the phrase to be of West African origin!), the EU has been aware of the necessity of also developing

robust capacities in order to be a credible player in the international arena. As Dunne (2008, 14) argues, the civilian narrative power remains important in the self-understanding of EU’s role. However, such stance of implying a uniquely non-military identity can be perceived as being unprepared to stand up for what European citizens believes.

A broad consensus has emerged among the Member States concerning EU’s distinctive role in international politics, eschewing traditional power politics and acting as “a force for good in the world.” Not only politicians, but also members of academia follow the saying that the EU is “an ethical power,” although one can find serious arguments speaking in favour of it “not-being-such-an-ethical power.”<sup>2</sup> However, as Hyde-Price (2008, 29) argues, if Member States wish the EU to become a serious international actor, they should ensure that, on the major issues of the day, it acts as a “calculator not a crusader.” In other words, the EU should craft its foreign and security policy on the basis of common interests of its Member States, rather than to pursue normative or “ethical” crusades. It is interesting to see that questions on the “soft and/or hard power capacities of the EU” are not new. Francois Duchene argued in 1972 that the then European Community was a civilian power, and that, given the change in the nature of international politics and the declining utility of hard power capabilities, it was well positioned to become a major international actor.

It is apparent that the EU serves three primary purposes for its Member States, at least in the realist perspective of world politics, argues Hyde-Price (2008, 31). First and foremost, it functions as an *instrument for the collective economic interests* of those states in the context of the global economy. Second, the EU serves as an *instrument for collectively shaping the regional milieu* (the Balkans, European Neighbourhood Policy etc.). Finally, the EU has come to serve as the *institutional repository of second-order normative concerns* of EU Member States. These include human rights, abolition of the death penalty, democracy promotion, environmental protection and tackling poverty in the developing world.

However, international relations should not be perceived as a black or white scenario. EU does not need to accept a binary explanation – usually supported by its fierce critics – according to whom the EU should either become a good old fashioned proto-superpower, or retreat to “EUtopia.”<sup>3</sup> It should find a new path, not based on the binary choice to be either a *hard* or a *soft* power. The appeals to the EU that it should quickly define its role in world

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<sup>2</sup> First, the EU does not officially recognize Hamas although it has won the parliamentary elections in Gaza, and is, therefore, not willing to negotiate with that political organization. Second, “an average cow” in the EU receives a subsidy of a 2.2\$ a day – more than what 1.2 billion of the world’s poorest people live on each day (some experts have suggested that if the EU acted “ethically,” to bring about genuine reform of the CAP, more than 140 million people could be lifted out of poverty). Third, the Common Strategy of the EU on Russia was agreed more than a decade ago (in 1999) – although strong on declaratory principles of common action vis-à-vis the Russian Federation, the major powers pursued their own policies towards Moscow, regardless of the concerns of Poland and the three Baltic states, and have shown little willingness to subordinate their national interests to CFSP. Fourth, as regards Iran, the negotiations of the EU Troika over its uranium enrichment programme have been fruitless, although there is a common stance that Tehran should not develop nuclear weapons. It is interesting what Robert Cooper has argued, saying “when dealing with more old-fashioned kind of states outside the postmodern limits, Europeans need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era.” In other words, in the jungle one must use the laws of the jungle.

<sup>3</sup> Eutopia is a homophone of utopia, which expresses the idea of a perfect human existence. Rarely used outside of academic circles, this word combines the Greek prefix *eu* meaning good, happy, or pleasing, with the Greek suffix *topia*, describing a place or localized region. In 1516, Thomas More paired this word with different one, *outopia*, meaning “no place,” to coin a fresh term, *utopia*. While More’s term is used to describe one of any number of idealistic, fictional political systems, eutopia simply refers to a place of happiness (WisegEEK.com 2011).

affairs, if it wants to continue its existence in the era of other emerging powers (i. e. China, Brazil etc.), is problematic for at least two reasons: first, if the EU institutions (mainly the EC and the European Parliament) try to force member countries into further integration and/or military build-up of common military capabilities, the reluctance of the countries to work “for Europe” may emerge; second, a quick reaction to such distressed calls would mean that the EU, which strongly promotes cooperation, actually sees world affairs as a competition (a zero-sum game) and, in practice, cannot blend aspects of realism with idealism (and thus, is afraid of competition).

### **Guiding principles of Slovenian foreign policy and its orientation towards the Balkans**

What can a small country, contributing less than 0.5 percent to the EU population, and producing 0.3% of the EU GDP, do in the current state of affairs? With a professional army consisting of about 7 thousand soldiers, who are mostly being deployed to NATO-led operations, it is difficult to rely on other than soft power instruments. Soft power seems to be the most important instrument for small countries, such as Slovenia, since there are certain niches in the framework of the EU that can be filled up by such states.

Principles that are followed by states in international relations are indispensably connected with specifics of a certain state and also with the international environment the state exists in. We argue that three main principles, originating from above mentioned demographic and economic circumstances, as well as from some other presumptions (geographic, historic, cultural etc.); have recently been guiding Slovenian foreign policy. These principles are: 1) *internationalism*; 2) *the resolution of outstanding issues with Croatia* and 3), *an aspiration of becoming the bridge/facilitator between the EU and the Balkans/South-Eastern Europe*.

#### ***I. Internationalism***

Although rarely stated directly, internationalism<sup>4</sup> is embedded in the framework of Slovenian foreign policy thinking, in *lexis* (what is written and said about it), as well as in *praxis* (what it means in terms of everyday action, from policies to tactics on the ground) to some extent. However, there are also some limitations the politicians or experts talking about internationalism need to be aware of. What Hyde-Price argues for the EU can be said also for Slovenia: that the concept of the EU, as an ethical or normative power, tends to rest on the assumption that there are cosmopolitan norms and values that transcend the particularistic claims of discrete political communities (Hyde-Price 2008, 33). Such an approach can be seen as hegemonic towards the others, with the EU claiming that “it knows how to cure the diseases of the others”, or “what is good for the EU is also good for the world as a whole.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> With internationalism we mean especially emphasized support for multilateral action anywhere in the world.

<sup>5</sup> As H. E. Carr notes (in Hyde-Price, 2008, 33-4), clothing one’s “own interest in the guise of a universal interest for the purpose of imposing it on the rest of the world is nothing new.” Theories of social morality are always the product of a dominant group which identifies itself with the community as a whole, and which has facilities denied to subordinate groups or individuals for imposing its view of life on the community. The concept of internationalism (or cosmopolitanism) is a special form of the doctrine of the harmony of interests.

With the new president of Slovenia, Dr. Danilo Türk, internationalism became embedded in Slovenian foreign policy thinking on the top political level.<sup>6</sup> Internationalism, especially the necessity of human rights protection, is reflected in his speeches, as well as in continuous support for multilateral action in the framework of international organizations. Additionally, those ministers that are inherently connected with international affairs, such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence, strongly support international endeavours in volatile regions such as Afghanistan, Kosovo etc. In praxis, internationalism can be seen from the engagement of Slovenian troops abroad,<sup>7</sup> official development aid and also from individual “internationalistic” actions of certain officials that are highly praised by a majority of Slovenians. Among these two are worthy of a specific mention. The first are the unilateral endeavours of former president Dr. Janez Drnovšek, in 2006, to broker a peace treaty between the government of Sudan and the Darfur Rebels. The second is the medical treatment of Palestinian children, wounded during the Israeli offensive on Gaza in 2009. This action was triggered and sponsored by President Türk.

## ***II. Solving outstanding issues with Croatia***

Almost two decades after the break-up of Yugoslavia, several issues between Slovenia and Croatia remain unresolved. The most important of these is the problem of the border between both states, which historically had not been clearly defined along its entire length.<sup>8</sup> Several attempts were made by all Slovenian governments after 1991 to settle the dispute, as well as by various joint commissions, international facilitators (including some EU officials – e.g. the then Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn), but none of the attempts have been successful. The current Slovenian and Croatian governments have, at least on the media level, improved bilateral relations, and decided that the border issue would be settled by international arbitrage. From an outsider’s point of view, such an approach could seem wise, but one has to note that, if the Slovenian Foreign Minister says that 90 percent of his time has been devoted to solving the issue with Croatia, one would guess that Croatia is either a strong country, dangerous to the national interests of Slovenia, or that the problem needs to be solved urgently, with no possibility of postponing it to a later time, when emotions would not be as strained as they are now. Although regularly in the news since 1991, the perennial disputes with Croatia began gaining in frequency after 2004, especially after 22 September of that year, when a severe incident took place at one of the disputed border crossings.<sup>9</sup> This and similar disputes leading all the way up to the arbitrage agreement of 2010 certainly add weight to the aforementioned Foreign Minister’s statement.

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<sup>6</sup> As an expert of international law, Dr. Türk worked in the office of Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) Kofi Annan as Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

<sup>7</sup> More about the engagement of Slovenian Armed Forces in foreign countries, esp. in Afghanistan, in Grizold, Zupančič (2009, 197): *Five Years in the Alliance and 60 Years of the Alliance: Slovenia and NATO*. Available at: [http://www.slovenskavojska.si/fileadmin/slovenska\\_vojaska/pdf/bilten\\_sv/bilten\\_sv\\_11st03.pdf](http://www.slovenskavojska.si/fileadmin/slovenska_vojaska/pdf/bilten_sv/bilten_sv_11st03.pdf) (accessed on 22 June 2011).

<sup>8</sup> The dispute is about a few square kilometres of land along the Slovenian-Croatian border and about the partition of the Gulf of Piran on the Adriatic coast, which provides Slovenia with access to international waters.

<sup>9</sup> Several members of the Slovenian People’s Party (SLS), including its President, Janez Podobnik, were detained by Croatian police while visiting the home of Joško Joras, a Slovenian who lives on disputed territory claimed by both countries. The arrests took place after a brief physical altercation that was caught on television cameras, and caused a stir in Slovenian domestic politics. It also led to a proliferation of anti-Croatian rhetoric, however many believed the incident was merely a carefully orchestrated provocation by SLS.



It would be interesting to count how many times the Slovenian-Croatian dispute featured prominently in media headlines in the last few years. This preoccupation with Croatia undoubtedly dominates the general discussion about foreign policy and, therefore, puts aside the necessity of engagement in “other-than-Croatia” international affairs. It could be argued that, after the two major goals of joining the EU and NATO were achieved, solving the border dispute with Croatia was the Foreign Ministry’s first large challenge in the post-2004 period.

### ***III. Slovenia as a potential bridge between the EU and the Balkans/South-Eastern Europe***

From a security point of view, the main geographical areas of interest for Slovenia have been the Balkans and South-Eastern Europe in general. From an economic point of view, the region has also been a priority, especially due to the reputation of Slovenia in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia.<sup>10</sup>

However, Slovenia began seriously thinking about the Balkans/South-Eastern Europe only recently, two decades after becoming an independent state (it does not mean that previously there were no attempts to define the policy towards the region, but the attempts were uncoordinated and inconsistent, fluctuating with changes of governments). This serious “thinking” had culminated in 2010, when Slovenia adopted the so-called *Directives of the Republic Slovenia towards the Western Balkans*.<sup>11</sup> Although, for the time being, the document is more *lexis* than *praxis*, it has to be noted that it is the very first approach for a coordinated strategy of Slovenian economic, political and other subjects towards the region. The important aspects of the document are: a) a call to enable visa-free travel regime for all the countries in the region;<sup>12</sup> b) scholarships and other education opportunities for the young people of the region; c) other incentives, such as promotion of human rights, democracy, the rule of law etc. In order to help achieve these goals, the position of national coordinator for the Western Balkans would be institutionalized within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Western Balkans issue is also defined as a priority area in the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia.<sup>13</sup>

Although it has to be said that Slovenian foreign policy towards the Balkans/South-Eastern Europe has become slightly more consistent recently, some critics do argue that Slovenia is acting too independently, without coordinating with other EU countries. One clear example was the conference on the Western Balkans at Brdo, organized by the Slovenian government in March 2010, which was not as successful as it could have been. The conference was a kick-start of the so-called Brdo Process, aiming at interconnecting the region on all possible levels of cooperation.

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<sup>10</sup> This reputation is generally regarded as positive, although there were occasional calls to boycott Slovenian products in the past. These usually coincided with bilateral tensions, especially between Slovenia and Croatia, as well as Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (see [http://www.economist.com/node/10753142?Story\\_ID=E1\\_TDSVPTQN](http://www.economist.com/node/10753142?Story_ID=E1_TDSVPTQN), accessed on 23 June 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Vlada Republike Slovenije (2010): *Smernice za delovanje Republike Slovenije do Zahodnega Balkana*. Available at: [http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/Zunanja\\_politika/Zahodni\\_Balkan/Smernice\\_ZB.pdf](http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/Zunanja_politika/Zahodni_Balkan/Smernice_ZB.pdf) (accessed on 23 June 2011).

<sup>12</sup> An especially positive role was played by a Slovenian Member of the European Parliament, Tanja Fajon, who had been struggling for the implementation of a visa free travel regime for Serbians, Macedonians and Montenegrins even before 1 January 2010. In 2010 she has also actively worked on enabling visa-free travel regimes for citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania.

<sup>13</sup> Državni zbor Republike Slovenije (2010): *Resolucija o strategiji nacionalne varnosti Republike Slovenije*. Ur. l. RS 27/2010. Available at: <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava.jsp?urlid=201027&stevilka=1189> (accessed on 23 June 2011).

The majority of the region’s leaders took part at the conference.<sup>14</sup>

Obviously, the EU does not see Slovenia as the main bridge from the EU to the Balkans. Just on the eve of the conference the President of the European Council (EC) Herman Van Rompuy and the Foreign Minister of Spain (who at that time presided the EC), Miguel Angel Moratinos, cancelled their participation. Such a message from Brussels can be seen as a signal to Slovenia to coordinate more, and not to act on its own. Another grey spot on the conference was probably too ambitious and unrealistic of a desire of the Slovenian government to have the highest political representatives of Serbia and Kosovo seated at one table. In the end, the Serbian representatives did not come to the conference.<sup>15</sup>

### **How does Slovenia view the relation between EU foreign policy (with particular emphasis on promotion of human rights and democracy) and its own geographical areas of interest?**

In our opinion the bulk of EU’s normative power lies in its reputation for being an advocate of human rights and democracy (as well as human security, which we expand on later in the article). A small state like Slovenia can therefore contribute most to said normative power by aligning its foreign policy to help promoting human rights, as well as the spread of democracy, both in its vicinity, as well as further afield. Regarding the commonality of the principles and values of the EU and Slovenia, a brief analysis of the speeches of the representatives of the Slovenian authorities and the core legal acts, such as the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, the National Security Strategy etc. shows that, *de jure*, there is no big deviation between Slovenian and European principles and values.

Due to the proximity of Slovenia to the Balkans/South-Eastern Europe, the country is very interested in having a stable neighbourhood. On the declaratory level, Slovenia fully supports the integration of the Balkan countries into the EU.<sup>16</sup> This is fully consistent with the official position of the EU. After becoming a Member State, Slovenia began to apply the Common Foreign and Security Policy, which essentially involves the promotion and protection of human rights. The EU implements this policy in compliance with the EU Guidelines (which deal with areas such as the death penalty, torture, children’s rights, the participation of children in armed conflict, human rights advocates; guidelines on violence against women are being drafted), in dialogue and consultation with third countries, by integrating human rights into other foreign policy segments and through active engagement in international forums, particularly the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly Third Committee.

During its EU Council Presidency in the first half of 2008, Slovenia chaired the EU Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) and coordinated the implementation of the extensive EU Human Rights Policy agenda. Slovenia has established dialogue and consultations with two additional subjects of international relations (the African Union and Turkmenistan).

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<sup>14</sup> Prime Minister (PM) of Bosnia and Herzegovina Nikola Špirić, PM of Albania Sali Berisha, PM of Macedonia Nikola Gruevski, PM of Montenegro Milo Đukanović, PM of Kosovo Hashim Thaci.

<sup>15</sup> Some Slovenian initiatives – on the Western Balkans and otherwise – have met with more approval. One example is the appointment of a Special Rapporteur for Bosnia and Herzegovina by PM Pahor which was welcomed by both the High Representative/EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Valentin Inzko, and by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton.

<sup>16</sup> However, Slovenia has been conditioning its support for Croatia with the necessity to set the conditions for the resolution of the border problem for some months, using its position of power as a member country *vis-à-vis* the country aspiring for membership.



However, it has to be noted that during the first years of independence (in the 1990's), Slovenia mostly relied on hard power instruments in relation to the Balkans (military instruments, such as peacekeepers, and economic instruments), although the troops were sent to the Balkans "in the name of human rights protection."<sup>17</sup> Slovenia has only recently started to rely on instruments of soft power vis-à-vis the Balkans.

According to the key priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the issue of children's rights (both violence against children and children in armed conflict) will remain the focus of Slovenia's activities. A comprehensive approach addressing the human rights issue in close connection with the development and security policies should be followed.

Despite the existence of a certain policy towards the region that is perceived as the most important for Slovenia regarding the aspects of stability and integration, it has to be noted that Slovenia does not have real ambitions that go further than the immediate neighbourhood, for example Africa, the Caucasus, the Middle East or Central Asia. In that respect, Slovenia usually "jumps on the bandwagon" and joins the initiatives of certain EU countries or the EU as a whole, without having concrete policies of its own towards distant areas.<sup>18</sup> For example, in November 2010 President Türk emphasized the need for more ambition in Slovenia's foreign policy, and the need to become more involved outside the Balkans, but, at the same time, three out of four areas he believes Slovenia should focus on, still remain in the geographic proximity: *Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Mediterranean*. He also stressed the need for *increased efforts within international institutions* (Türk 2010).

That is not to say that in the mid- to long-term, Slovenia will not look further afield and develop an active policy to solidify its often sporadic internationalism. Perhaps economic necessity will ultimately prove to be the cause of such a shift. In order to attract foreign investment to help Slovenia's ailing economy,<sup>19</sup> in 2010 and 2011 Prime Minister Pahor travelled to – among other places – China and India, while President Türk visited Qatar and Kuwait. Their efforts have met with mixed success, but managed to secure at least one strategic partnership, that between the struggling Slovenian national carrier Adria Airways and Air India.

### **Does Slovenia consider human security as being an essential component of its security policy?**

The concept of human security has steadily gained recognition in recent years, and we predict it will represent an increasingly large role in the EU's normative power in the coming years. Human security as a concept is only slowly gaining grounds in Slovenia. However,

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<sup>17</sup> First troops of the Slovenian Armed Forces were sent to Albania in 1997 as part of operation ALBA, in the framework of the OSCE operation there. A few months later they began taking part in the SFOR (later EUFOR) operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in Kosovo in 2004. In 2010, the majority of foreign-deployed troops were in Kosovo (about 400). The main reason why Slovenia contributed with military force first, and only later with soft power instruments, were mainly two: first, it is easier to deploy troops, because one does not need to have a clearly defined strategy, which Slovenia still lacks (this may seem illogical, but if a country does not have its own area/sector of responsibility, it "only" trains and equips its troops that later work in the contingent of the leading nation); and second, the soldiers were already at disposal within the framework of the Slovenian Armed Forces, while Slovenia did not have enough experts and diplomats who could pursue proper policies towards the region.

<sup>18</sup> It cannot be much different with a very limited (human) resources at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For example, at the Africa Section of the Ministry, only three people were employed in 2009.

<sup>19</sup> In 2009 alone, Slovenia's Gross Domestic Product dropped by 7.8%.

despite not being present in *lexis*, it does not mean human security is not embodied in very practical and concrete initiatives/actions taken by Slovenian political representatives. Thus, in the following years, it would be wise to highlight the necessity of human security in legal documents, as well as to materialize the concept in practice.

If we first look at the core legal acts of Slovenian foreign policy, it is very obvious that human security is not explicitly mentioned in them. That applies for all three core documents: Law on Foreign Relations (2003),<sup>20</sup> the Declaration on Foreign Policy of Slovenia (1999)<sup>21</sup> and the aforementioned National Security Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia (2010). All the documents favour a *realpolitik* orientation of foreign policy/national security.

Slovenia has been a member of the Human Security Network (HSN) ever since it was launched at the margins of the UN General Assembly meeting in 1998.<sup>22</sup> In praxis, human security is strongly favoured by the Slovenian President, Dr. Türk, who uses every opportunity to promote it, and also occasionally promotes activities that are more related to human security than to a realistic concept of security (providing for the medical treatment of Palestinian children, mentioned in the previous chapter).<sup>23</sup> The necessity of providing for human security is occasionally mentioned also by the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Defence.

Slovenian political leaders are aware that human security is the buzzword in international relations, though, except the experts and bureaucrats who are explicitly dealing with it as a part of their work, or the political leaders who have wider knowledge of international relations (such as the President, the Defence Minister and the Foreign Minister), the concept as such does not lead foreign policy thinking. We may conclude this part by saying that: for Slovenian foreign policy “human security, in the troubled regions, is important, but it is much more legitimate if some national interests are connected to it.”

### **Small states compared: the objectives of the EU Presidencies of Slovenia and Hungary<sup>24</sup>**

#### *1. The Slovenian Presidency*

Slovenia assumed the Presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2008, the first of the ten states which joined the EU in 2004. The domestic public perceived this as recognition by the EU of the country’s economic and political progress since 1991, as well as a reward for being a constructive Member State. For the first time in history, Slovenia had the opportunity to influence the system level, as well as to represent a community with a population of 500 million people. The Presidency was one of the biggest organizational undertakings in the

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<sup>20</sup> Državni zbor Republike Slovenije (2003): *Zakon o zunanjih zadevah*. Ur. l. 113/2003. Available at: <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava.jsp?urlid=2003113&stevilka=4929> (accessed on 23 June 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Državni zbor Republike Slovenije (1999): *Deklaracija o zunanji politiki Republike Slovenije*. Ur. l. 108/1999. Available at: <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava.jsp?urlid=1999108&stevilka=5028> (accessed on 23 June 2011).

<sup>22</sup> The HSN was established as an informal group of countries, on the initiative of Canada and Norway, with the goal of encouraging the resolution of international issues that present an immediate threat to human security.

<sup>23</sup> For example, at the 64<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly he said it is necessary “...to think about the fate of human rights /.../ this protocol will give the individuals an additional and potentially significant instruments of implementation of rights.” Besides that, he also urged the strengthening of the *Responsibility to Protect* the concept.

<sup>24</sup> Few would argue that Slovenia is not a small state, but in the case of Hungary such a label is perhaps less clear-cut. Despite this, we feel that both countries have enough in common and are subjected to most of the constraints and limitations that small states face (such as dependence on the system and limited resources), that a comparative analysis of their respective EU Council Presidencies is valid and justified.

country's history, and probably strained its resources – financial and human – considerably. It ended up costing over 62 million euro and required the participation of more than 3,000 people, 245 of which were students, called in to assist (Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008a).

An analysis of the programme of the Presidency<sup>25</sup> reveals it to be fairly vague in most parts. An exception to the rule in this case is the goal of *the successful ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty*, which the Slovenian Presidency considered its number one priority. The other four goals were: *decisive action to tackle the issue of energy and climate change; further implementation of the Lisbon Strategy; continued EU enlargement and strengthened cooperation with countries in the EU's Southern and Eastern neighbourhood and supporting intercultural dialogue* (Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008b, 2–4).

As one of the three guidelines of Slovenia's foreign policy, some emphasis was put on the area of the Western Balkans, but it is interesting to note that it was not defined as a top priority of its 6-month Presidency. However, the programme still encouraged the need for this region to join the EU (Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008b, 5–6). Slovenia also supported the enlargement of the Schengen area, which coincided with the planned abolition of border controls at EU airports in March 2008. Slovenia, at that time a member of the Euro area for one year, also supported the further expansion of this zone. Apart from its support for the Lisbon Strategy, a strengthened role of education and improving the research infrastructure, the Slovene Presidency also vowed to continue with the implementation of the GALILEO satellite navigation system (Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008b, 6–8). In addition, the Presidency focused on diverse areas, such as easing the access to financing for small and medium-sized enterprises, deepening market integration, strengthening market regulation, the further development of information and communication technologies, to name a few (Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008b, 9–10).

The programme also recognized the increasing difficulties connected with an ageing population and recommended *flexicurity* as the answer. Other needs addressed were the need to provide equal opportunities in the workplace, to boost youth employment, to create a new integrated climate and energy policy, to ensure a secure, sustainable and competitive energy supply, to guarantee food safety, to evaluate the readiness of Switzerland to join Schengen, to enhance cooperation on security issues and in the fight against terrorism, among others (Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008b, 10–15). The last two pages of the programme (15 and 16) expand on the need to enhance the external role of the EU in the area of security, development and economic relations in EU's neighbourhood, but also further afield, e.g. in Central Asia. One of the goals stated here is also the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean University, to be located in the Slovenian coastal town of Piran.

## *II. The Hungarian Presidency*

When Hungary assumed the Presidency of the EU Council on 1 January 2011, the situation in Europe had changed dramatically since early 2008, when the economic crisis was barely looming on the horizon.

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<sup>25</sup> Slovenian Presidency of the EU (2008b): Slovenian Presidency Programme. Available at: [http://www.predsedovanje.si/files/slovenian\\_presidency\\_programme.pdf](http://www.predsedovanje.si/files/slovenian_presidency_programme.pdf) (accessed on 23 June 2011).

Therefore, the Hungarian Presidency Programme<sup>26</sup> mainly focused on dealing with the consequence of the crisis and its aftermath. It defined four priority areas: *promoting economic growth by strengthening the economic governance and concentrating on job creation and social inclusion; strengthening of EU’s common policies by finding ways of making them more efficient and competitive, but at the same time preserving their underlying fundamental values; bringing Europe closer to its citizens and continuing the expansion process in a responsible and credible manner* (Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU 2011, 5).

The first of these areas, ensuring growth, jobs and social inclusion, seemed to be a definite priority, including the realization of the Europe 2020 Strategy. This goal was elaborated upon in more detail, including the stated need for more student mobility, the need for innovation and a Digital Europe, as well as initiatives such as the Platform against Poverty and Resource Efficient Europe. The questions of demographic trends, financial sustainability, unemployment and the implementation of the Single Market Act were also addressed. The Presidency also vowed to pay special attention to Roma people integration and child poverty (Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU 2011, 6–8).

As the Lisbon Treaty was already in force during the Presidency, the programme also promised to exploit the opportunities offered by the new policies introduced by the Treaty, as well as to make existing policies more modern and efficient. The latter especially included a discussion on the future of the CAP and the EU’s energy policy. Hungary also planned to boost the protection of fundamental rights of European citizens, as well as to help expedite Romanian and Bulgarian accession to the Schengen Agreement, and to work towards expanding the EU in the future: to Turkey, Iceland and especially to Croatia and the rest of the Western Balkans (Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU 2011, 9– 14). On the last three pages (14 to 16) Hungary pledged to foster both the Eastern and Euro-Mediterranean Partnerships and to help the newly established European External Action Service, which began its work in 2011. Finally, it mentioned the need to do more in assisting developing countries and to drawing up further plans to help countries achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals.

### *III. Presidencies compared*

As mentioned earlier, the Slovenian Programme set the successful ratification of the Lisbon Treaty as its main priority. In this it was ultimately unsuccessful, as the Treaty entered into force on 1 December 2009. The other goals of the Presidency were perhaps broader in scope and “safer” in content. The lists of the objectives of both Presidencies are exactly 16 pages long. However, the programme of Hungary is 57 pages long altogether, as it also operationalizes its Presidency programme in more detail. In our opinion this presents an important difference in the programmes of both countries – by not going into too much detail, Slovenia had ensured itself more room to manoeuvre, as well as less space for criticism in case of failure. For example, the goal of expanding the Schengen area was a guaranteed success, as it was scheduled to expand to airports in March 2008 even before the Presidency began, and would have probably taken place whether it was a Presidency goal or not.

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<sup>26</sup> Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2011): *The Programme of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 1 January–30 June 2011*. Available at: [http://www.eu2011.hu/files/bveu/documents/HU\\_PRES\\_STRONG\\_EUROPE\\_EN\\_3.pdf](http://www.eu2011.hu/files/bveu/documents/HU_PRES_STRONG_EUROPE_EN_3.pdf) (accessed on 6 July 2011).

At least not explicitly Slovenia did not appear to include many of its own foreign policy goals, except the need for EU expansion into the Balkans, into its programme. We believe that one of the reasons for this was the simple fact that, at the time, Slovenia lacked clearly defined, specific foreign policy goals, as it had not yet managed to find a new *raison d'être* for its Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Despite having the three guiding principles mentioned earlier, they are not operationalized sufficiently and could not be translated properly into Presidency goals. Slovenia therefore chose to focus on – in our opinion – unproblematic, widely acceptable and achievable objectives for its 6-month term. However, on the normative front three goals – those of climate change/energy security, strengthening cooperation with third countries and the fostering of intercultural dialogue – definitely represent an attempt towards contributing to EU's soft power. Through them, Slovenia presented itself as being aware of pressing contemporary issues and contributed to the EU by increasing its influence in its surrounding regions, while the last goal served as a reminder that the EU values dialogue between cultures and religions. Additionally, the sub-goal of establishing a Euro-Mediterranean University in Piran was accomplished successfully.

Due to the difficult economic situation within the EU by the time it assumed its Presidency, Hungary had to prioritize areas related to economic growth and recovery. Considering the different circumstances, when compared to three years earlier, this shift in focus is understandable. Both countries supported the expansion of both the Schengen area as well as the EU as a whole, and the strengthening of cooperation with third countries. They both addressed other similar issues as well, such as youth (un)employment, health care, climate change and energy security. We could say that apart from e.g. their main priorities, both programmes are similar in many regards, with the major difference being Hungary's more detailed operationalization of its goals. Both states managed to include at least some issues which could be seen as being of national interest – apart from Slovenia's efforts regarding the Western Balkans, Hungary's programme repeated several times the need for Roma people integration.

## Conclusion

The challenge for the European small state of 2011 remains the same as always: to do as much as it can with what little it has. Despite the fact that Slovenia passed the age of adolescence only recently, there are certain achievements it should be proud of: its non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council, the organization of a high-level meeting between Presidents of the United States and Russia, Bush and Putin, in 2001, Chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2005, Presidency of the EU Council in 2008, its Presidency of the Council of Europe in 2009, and last but not least, its current candidacy for another two year term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. However, a legitimate question remains: to what extent did it manage to behave as a normative power?

Slovenia's Presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2008 was an ideal opportunity for the country to greatly contribute to EU's normative power. Despite the smooth conduct of the Presidency and almost universal praise for Slovenian diplomacy during that period, the country missed a unique opportunity to truly "place itself on the map" by introducing a far-reaching agenda. Its main goal, the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, could not be achieved for reasons outside of Slovenia's control as the lengthy national ratification processes ensured the Treaty would not enter into force for almost two years after Slovenia's Presidency began. The

other four goals, that were broader and more general in scope, produced some results, but the question of how much they contributed to Slovenia’s reputation as a soft/normative power, or to the soft/normative power of the EU as a whole, remains.

However, as a small country with limited financial and human resources, Slovenia cannot act on its own, if it wants to become a credible partner in international relations. In the first decade after independence, its foreign policy could be described as “jumping-on-the train policy,” meaning that there were no real initiatives coming from Ljubljana. Instead of having its own initiative(s), Slovenia rather joined the actions taken by certain states and/or international organizations.

We argue that Slovenia should strengthen its role in the framework of the EU on the fields where it can fill niches, and omit unnecessary spending of energy/resources on issues where other countries can contribute better. Why, for example, are the Nordic countries nowadays seen as credible and benevolent contributors in the field of conflict resolution? And Slovenia is not? As they have decisively pursued a consistent foreign policy vis-à-vis the countries in their neighbourhood. Slovenia (as well as other small states) should follow that example, but of course, should not forget to take local specifics into consideration, and pay attention to areas where it can do the most. Indeed, the Balkans seems like a “natural” area for Slovenian activities, and Slovenian authorities are aware of that. That is positive, indeed, but as mentioned in the article, Slovenian action in the framework of the Brdo Process was seen as uncoordinated by Brussels, therefore it did not have the success it could have had. Similar criticism was levelled towards the attempts to mediate a peace treaty between Sudan and the Darfur Rebels. Slovenian decision makers usually prefer to follow the footsteps of other countries, but when unilateral initiative is undertaken, it is often criticised as being too unilateral.

To achieve foreign policy success and be a credible provider of normative power to neighbouring regions, it is urgent that Slovenia coins not only long-term strategy on what it wants to achieve there, but also to intertwine the activities and work of existing institutions, such as research institutes, universities and think-tanks etc. with political (decision-making) institutions on all levels, as well as with business, which is an important factor of “presence” of a country in a foreign state. Such a well-developed foreign policy would stand a better chance of being proactive, instead of reactive, as it is often the case at present.

Only when that is achieved can the real potential of a certain country’s normative power be accomplished. At the moment, there are some positive initiatives from the Slovenian side in terms of normative power, especially in the Balkans. If they were being coordinated firstly within Slovenian institutions (political, business, research), and then at EU level, the success would be much higher than it is currently. However, for the time being, a certain amount of friction between the EU and Slovenia persists, as demonstrated by the strong reactions of Prime Minister Pahor and Foreign Minister Žbogar when no Slovenian diplomats were invited into the European External Action Service in mid-2011. Žbogar even claimed the time had come for serious talks on the representation of Slovenian officials in European institutions.

Slovenia’s guiding principles in international affairs, those of internationalism, solving outstanding issues with Croatia, and establishing itself as a bridge between the EU and the Western Balkans present a solid foundation for a post-2004 *raison d’être* for its foreign policy. However, this should be a policy that is not only well structured on paper, but also consistently executed in practice, rather than one that is all too often left to the goodwill, initiative and ingenuity of individual officials and diplomats.



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