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## THE LEGAL STATUS OF SUCCESSOR STATES OF THE FORMER SOCIALIST FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA (SFRY) IN CONTEMPORARY NUCLEAR GEOPOLITICS

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### -Abstract-

The objective of this research paper is to analyze the legal status of successor states of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) – namely, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia – as current non-nuclear-weapons states (NNWSs) in contemporary nuclear geopolitics. In that respect, the research approach implemented includes some comparative remarks on Yugoslavia's nuclear program through Marshal Josip Broz Tito's legacy, its international relations and nuclear cooperation with the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.) and the United States (U.S.) before its dissolution, as well as legal commentaries on the successor states' nuclear-related legislation and policy. With the Krško Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) built in 1981 as a joint venture by Slovenia and Croatia which were both part of Yugoslavia at the time, results derived from this research paper imply that the successor states should reinforce their position in global nuclear affairs through both national and international legislation addressing nuclear weapons, in addition to resolving the question of using nuclear energy within their respective domestic borders. By such virtue, the value of this research paper lies in the successor states learning from their Yugoslav past for the purposes of ensuring and strengthening national security as current NNWSs in times of nuclear tensions.

**Key Words:** *International Law; Nuclear Weapons; Geopolitics; Yugoslavia*

### I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON SFRY'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

Policymakers typically ask intelligence analysts two standard questions about the likelihood of nuclear proliferation. First, what might cause a given state to seek the bomb? This is considered to be a “political” question. Second, if the state were to seek the bomb, how quickly could it achieve that goal? This is considered to be a “technical question”.<sup>1</sup> Although both questions are undoubtedly intertwined, the early steps toward nuclear proliferation might also begin by a non-nuclear-weapon state (NNWS) simply considering the option of producing nuclear energy and consequently establishing nuclear power plants (NPPs) within its domestic borders or seeking nuclear cooperation with a nuclear-weapon state (NWS) when bearing in mind the complex

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques EC Hymans, *Achieving Nuclear Ambitions: Scientists, Politicians and Proliferation* (Cambridge University Press 2012) 1.

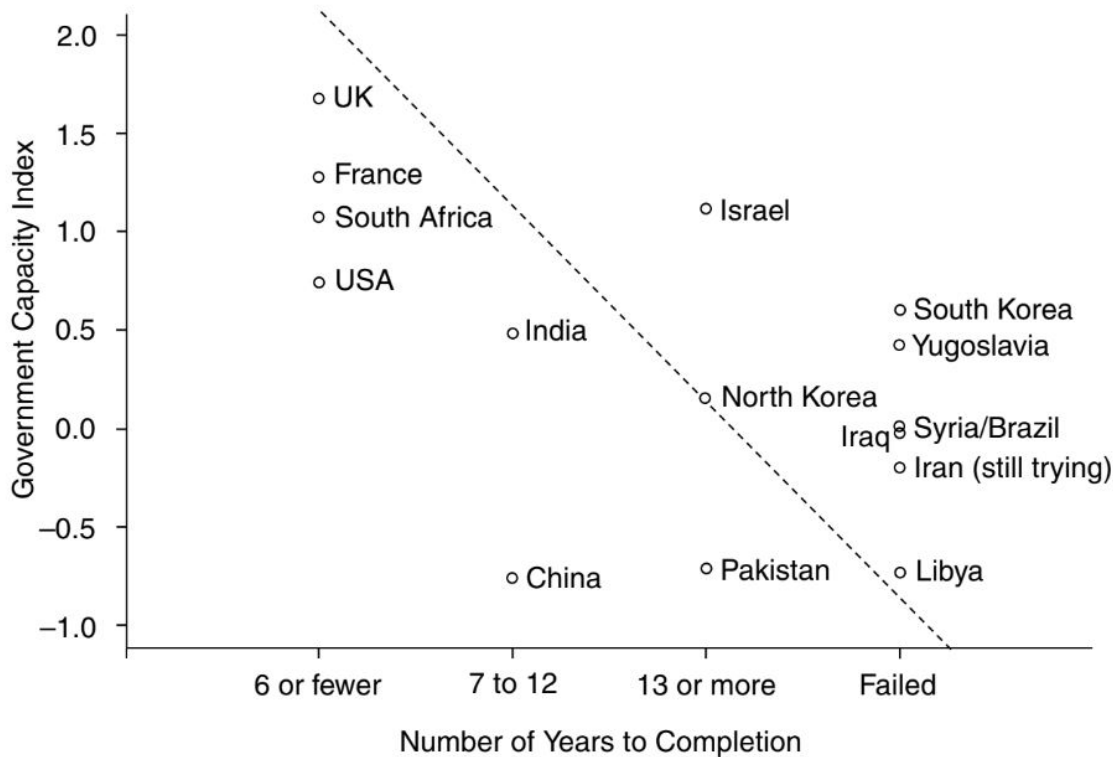
dynamics of nuclear geopolitics. Such factuality has always represented a realistic concern followed by detailed analyses, especially throughout the Cold War. By way of illustration, according to political scientist Dr. Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., within the next generation after 1977 many other states would have acquired nuclear weapons. The list of potential nuclear powers in Europe and its periphery included the Federal Republic of Germany, Spain, Italy, and Yugoslavia, and by the 1990s, Greece and Turkey.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that neither of the listed countries have currently acquired nuclear weapons (including all six successor states of Yugoslavia), it is still important enough to note that various estimates were often made in order to confirm the probability for NNWSs acquiring nuclear weapons. And regarding such estimates, many other important factors were considered playing a pivotal role, including those of political, economic, military and industrial backgrounds. The most important indicator for states obtaining nuclear weapons – and still is to some extent today – regarded the country's *governmental capacity* developed by the sociologist Ann Hironaka which identifies as an independent variable in comparison to a given timeframe for the country's *nuclear weapons project efficiency*.<sup>3</sup> The depiction of such estimate is presented in the scatter plot below, where some of the countries closest to the regression line (for instance, North Korea, Pakistan, India, the U.S., the U.K., France and China) have successfully managed to acquire nuclear weapons and are currently recognized as NWSs. On the other hand, some of the countries further from the regression line (for instance, South Korea, Syria, Brazil and Iran) have not yet managed to acquire nuclear weapons and currently identify as NNWSs. However, what the scatter plot could not statistically depict was the fact that Yugoslavia, compared to other countries for the time being, was close to acquiring nuclear weapons and developing a special military force structure consisting of the JNA, the Yugoslav People's Army, for the federation as an entity combined with the decentralized territorial defense forces in each republic.<sup>4</sup> Such geopolitical factuality was subject of intense international relations involving Yugoslavia with both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert L Pfaltzgraff Jr, 'Emerging Major Power Relationships: Implications for the American Military in the Late Twentieth Century' [1977] *Air University Review* 2.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques EC Hymans, *Achieving Nuclear Ambitions: Scientists, Politicians and Proliferation* (Cambridge University Press 2012) 29-31.

<sup>4</sup> Jan Oberg, 'Former Yugoslavia and Iraq: a comparative analysis of international conflict mismanagement' in Charles Weben and Johan Galtung (eds), *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies* (Routledge 2007) 68.



**Figure 1:** Governmental capacity and the nuclear weapons project efficiency<sup>5</sup>

Prior to the Yugoslav participation in Atoms for Peace and the U.S.S.R.’s assistance before 1950, the Yugoslav nuclear program was on a steep upward trajectory when Marshal Josip Broz Tito came to power at war’s end, although starting from a very low base. This upward trajectory was greatly aided by the country’s pre-war international scientific connections.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the motivations for nuclear cooperation varied between both NWSs and NNWSs, as well the trajectory of such cooperation toward the aim of acquiring nuclear energy and/or nuclear weapons. Presented below in Table 1 are the determinants of nuclear cooperation in outlying cases, where the motivation for nuclear cooperation between the U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia was twofold: Soviet assistance to Yugoslavia was intended to transform and improve its relationship with Belgrade after diplomatic contact was severed in 1948, while simultaneously aimed towards preventing the West – namely, the U.S. – from exerting further influence against it. On the other hand, the U.S. was also using civilian nuclear assistance to compete for influence in Yugoslavia,<sup>7</sup> much to the U.S.S.R.’s dismay. According to former U.S. Senator James William Fulbright,<sup>8</sup> however, the future of Germany and particularly the fear among the Yugoslavs of whether the Federal Republic of Germany would acquire access to nuclear weapons by any means possible was one of many other matters that agitated Yugoslav-American relations.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques EC Hymans, *Achieving Nuclear Ambitions: Scientists, Politicians and Proliferation* (Cambridge University Press 2012) 32.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid* 182.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann, *Atomic Assistance: How “Atoms for Peace” Programs Cause Nuclear Insecurity* (Cornell University Press 2012) 127.

<sup>8</sup> Senator J W Fulbright, ‘Yugoslavia 1964’ (US Government Printing Office 1965) 19.

Motivation for nuclear cooperation	Cases
Jump-start domestic nuclear industry	Germany-Brazil Italy-Iraq U.K.-South Korea
Strengthen bilateral relations	Canada-Romania India-Vietnam U.S.-Indonesia U.S.S.R.-Yugoslavia
Limit the influence of a threatening state	India-Vietnam U.S.-Indonesia U.S.S.R.-Yugoslavia
Secure a stable oil supply	Brazil-Iraq France-Iraq Italy-Iraq
Discourage proliferation	U.S.-Indonesia
Reserve assurances of nuclear fuel supply	Germany-Brazil

**Table 1:** Determinants of nuclear cooperation in outlying cases<sup>9</sup>

The U.S.S.R. initiated assistance to Yugoslavia in January 1956, when the two countries signed their first nuclear cooperation agreement. During Soviet-Yugoslav cooperation in the 1950s, the government of Tito was exploring the development of nuclear weapons. The Tito regime proclaimed in January 1950: “*We must have the atomic bomb. We must build it even if it costs us one-half of our income for years.*”<sup>10</sup> During the official visit of the Soviet head of state, President Brezhnev, in Yugoslavia, the communiqué concurred in at the end of the visit listed the international problems on which a large measure of agreement had been reached. Among them was the need for agreement on general and complete disarmament, for prohibition of all nuclear weapons and banning of all nuclear tests, for the setting-up of atom-free zones in Central Europe, the Balkans, and Africa.<sup>11</sup> Such statement was further supported by Yugoslav Ambassador Danilo Lekić who pointed out that the Yugoslav Government was for the establishment of denuclearized zones in various parts of the world and was especially interested in the creation of such a zone in Central Europe. Calling attention to the Yugoslav memorandum on questions of disarmament, Lekić proposed the following measures to be taken first of all – a ban on any use of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons and all tests of these weapons, and a ban on the further spread of nuclear weapons, in addition to welcoming the Soviet statement that the U.S.S.R. would not be the first to use nuclear weapons.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann, *Atomic Assistance: How “Atoms for Peace” Programs Cause Nuclear Insecurity* (Cornell University Press 2012) 126.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid* 124-125.

<sup>11</sup> Phyllis Auty, ‘Yugoslavia’s International Relations (1945 – 1965)’ in Wayne S Vucinich (ed), *Contemporary Yugoslavia: Twenty Years of Socialist Experiment* (University of California Press 1969) 188.

<sup>12</sup> Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report, Foreign Radio Broadcasts* (No.86, 1965) BB1.



**Figure 2:** Map of the Balkan Peninsula (1941-1991)<sup>13</sup>

At the fifteenth meeting of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York in the autumn of 1960, African and neutral countries again called on the superpowers to disarm. In their invitation letter to the first conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) half a year later, Gamal Abdel Nasser from Egypt along with Tito called on the ‘non-aligned countries’ to work for the ‘safeguarding [of] peace in the world’.<sup>14</sup> In particular, Tito called the conference to “*devote special attention to the question of economic cooperation among non-aligned countries*”, while he had his speech “*highlight ... the subject of disarmament and the need for banning nuclear weapons and their tests.*”<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding its negative policy toward nuclear weapons and their tests, outside NATO Yugoslavia manifested existing potential for the acquisition of nuclear weapons, as further speculated by Dr. Pfaltzgraff Jr., where depending on the course of events in Yugoslavia after the demise of Tito there would be incentive for the development of a nuclear weapons capability by Yugoslavia, especially the outcome of whatever succession crisis ensued and the Soviet propensity for intervention, although the U.S.S.R. could be expected to exert pressure to prevent the development of a nuclear force there.<sup>16</sup> In that respect, the U.S. was even

<sup>13</sup> Nikos Andrikos, ‘A Balkan nuclear weapon free zone’ (1985) 41(6) *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 29.

<sup>14</sup> Lorenz Lüthi, ‘The non-aligned: apart from and still within the Cold War’ in Nataša Mišković, Harald F Tiné and Nada Boškova (eds), *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi – Bandung – Belgrade* (Routledge 2014) 98.

<sup>15</sup> Gordana P Crnković, *Post-Yugoslav Literature and Film: Fires, Foundations, Flourishes* (Bloomsbury Publishing 2012) 28.

<sup>16</sup> Robert L Pfaltzgraff Jr, ‘Emerging Major Power Relationships: Implications for the American Military in the Late Twentieth Century’ [1977] *Air University Review* 2.

prepared to use nuclear weapons to defend Yugoslavia if the U.S.S.R. attacked Yugoslavia. During a meeting with Canadian officials:

*[Canadian Foreign Minister] Wrong understood that the fundamental assumption, one with which the Canadian Government was in full accord, was that atomic weapons would be used only in the event of war with the Soviet Union. Mr. Nitze [head of the Policy Planning Staff] said that the fundamental assumption; however, there might be certain exceptions, specifically Yugoslavia. In the case of Yugoslavia the United States felt it could foreclose the possibility of the use atomic weapons, for there was some basis for believing that quick atomic retaliation might quickly localize and abort aggression in the area. Mr. Wrong thereupon said that the basic assumption might be rephrased to say that atomic weapons will be used only in the event of war with the Soviet Union except in situations where the use of such weapons might serve to localize the conflict.<sup>17</sup>*

Because it broke with the U.S.S.R., Yugoslavia was the only communist country to become one of the twelve founder member states of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), although its membership did not last very long.<sup>18</sup> Yugoslavia left CERN in 1961 and never reactivated its membership<sup>19</sup> due to financial reasons;<sup>20</sup> the country found that it was too great a disparity between the resources available for physics research on a national scale and the size of its international contribution to CERN.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Yugoslavia sought for a U.S.-built nuclear power facility (referring to the Krško NPP in present-day Slovenia). Considering that Yugoslavia did not have a bilateral Agreement for Cooperation with the U.S., the cooperation between the two countries was carried out through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)<sup>22</sup> to which Yugoslavia had obtained membership in September 1976. Upon the Government of Yugoslavia requesting assistance in obtaining reactor components and enrichment services from the IAEA and the U.S. respectively, the IAEA and Yugoslavia entered into a Project Agreement on June 14<sup>th</sup> 1974; and on the same date, the IAEA, Yugoslavia and the U.S. entered into a Supply Agreement thereunder. The Project Agreement provided for application of the IAEA's health and safety measures and the application of safeguards under the agreement between Yugoslavia and the IAEA (which entered into force on December 28<sup>th</sup> 1973) for the application of safeguards in connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT),<sup>23</sup> prior to Yugoslavia suspending its nuclear weapon program in the early 1960s.<sup>24</sup> These political decisions had significant national impacts for Yugoslavia, where its 1974 nuclear weapons project was characterized by a timeline of abandonment spanning of 13 years, as depicted in Figure 3 below.

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<sup>17</sup> Dale C Tatum, *Who Influenced Whom? Lessons from the Cold War* (University Press of America 2002) 169.

<sup>18</sup> House Committee on Science and Technology, *Hearings before the Task Force on Science Policy on the Committee on Science and Technology House of Representatives* (Ninety-Ninth Congress, First Session, No 50, 1985) 12.

<sup>19</sup> Marc Cogen, *An Introduction to European Intergovernmental Organizations* (Routledge 2016) 189.

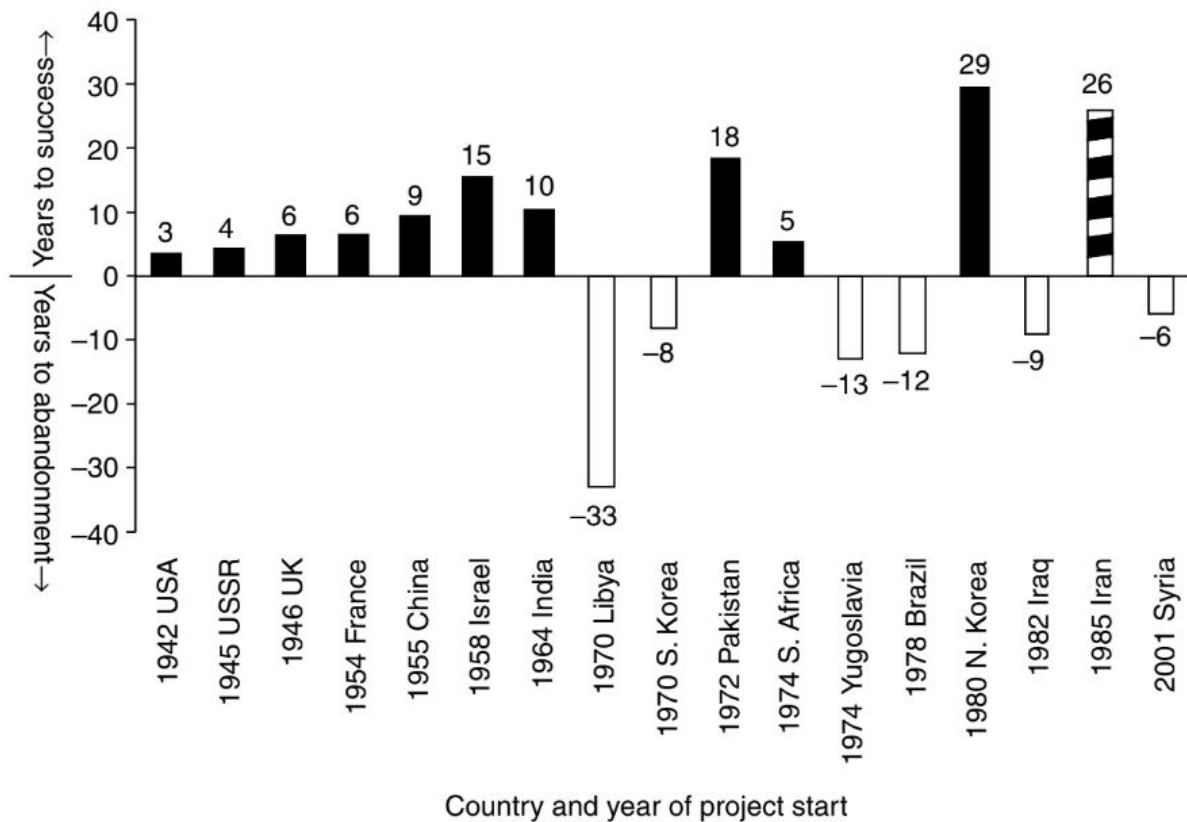
<sup>20</sup> Michael R Krause, *CERN: How We Found the Higgs Boson* (World Scientific 2014) 57.

<sup>21</sup> John B Adams, 'CERN: The European Organization for Nuclear Research' in Sir John Cockcroft (ed), *The Organization of Research Establishments* (Cambridge University Press 1966) 258.

<sup>22</sup> John W Wydler, 'Oversight of European Nuclear Energy Development' (US Government Printing Office 1978) 8.

<sup>23</sup> Energy Research and Development Administration, *U.S. Nuclear Power Export Activities* (Vol. 1 of 2, April 1976) 3-123.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann, *Atomic Assistance: How "Atoms for Peace" Programs Cause Nuclear Insecurity* (Cornell University Press 2012) 124-125.



**Figure 3:** Nuclear weapons projects’ timelines to success or abandonment (Black bars: success; White bars: abandonment; Striped bar: outcome uncertain)<sup>25</sup>

Despite its productive nuclear cooperation with the IAEA and the U.S., Yugoslav officials of the national power group who were in charge of building the atomic plants indicated that American insistence of new conditions for obtaining nuclear plant technology had seemed to affect the sovereignty of Yugoslavia. They pointed out specifically the delicate balance they must maintain between the East and the West, to which former U.S. representative John Waldemar Wydler<sup>26</sup> remained very doubtful of Yugoslavia agreeing to any significant changes or additions at their present agreements on atomic cooperation. Furthermore, within the Statement of the Government of Yugoslavia on May 30<sup>th</sup> 1975 at a conference for reviewing the operation of the NPT, protocols to the NPT for imposing a ban on the testing of nuclear weapons and sharp reductions in the numbers of delivery vehicles when the number of NPT parties reached 100 were suggested. Yugoslavia even threatened to withdraw from the Treaty in part because “*the nuclear weapon states have not fulfilled their basic obligations under the Treaty: they have not discontinued the nuclear arms race; they have not stopped the nuclear weapon test; vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons has continued.*”<sup>27</sup> With this threat of withdrawal from the NPT, it was almost expected for Yugoslavia to independently resume its nuclear weapons program due to American convictions

<sup>25</sup> Jacques EC Hymans, *Achieving Nuclear Ambitions: Scientists, Politicians and Proliferation* (Cambridge University Press 2012) 3.

<sup>26</sup> John W Wydler, ‘Oversight of European Nuclear Energy Development’ (US Government Printing Office 1978) 8.

<sup>27</sup> United States Arms Control and Disarmament, *Documents on Disarmament, 1979* (Publication 111) 376, 628.

of possessing technological and financial capabilities of building an atomic bomb within four years. Nevertheless, with Tito's health declining in the latter half of the 1970s which lead to his death in 1980, Yugoslavia's once ambitious nuclear plans ultimately diminished by the late 1980s, just as ethnic rivalries between competing officials took center stage<sup>28</sup> before its dissolution. On that account, it must be understood from a geopolitical perspective that multiple factors – influenced by both national and international circumstances – played a pivotal role in the suppression of Yugoslavia's nuclear program through Tito's legacy, including the shifting political context of U.S.–Yugoslav and U.S.S.R.–Yugoslav nuclear cooperation, economic constraints, as well as the pressure originating from the international community particularly after Yugoslavia becoming a State Party of the NPT, where certain responsibilities and obligations were expected to be fulfilled.

## II. SFRY'S SUCCESSOR STATES IN CONTEMPORARY NUCLEAR GEOPOLITICS

Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the successor states (Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Slovenia) obtained their independence and sovereignty recognized within the international community. In present geopolitical circumstances, the majority of them have not yet installed NPPs within their respective domestic borders nor had they consequently explored the potential development of nuclear weapons. Such technological setback represents a complex political question dependent on technological and financial capacities, as well as the lack of nuclear cooperation with other States which throws into sharp relief Yugoslavia's rather advanced nuclear program throughout the decades up until the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster in the U.S.S.R. (present-day Ukraine) which indirectly affected its successor states. Namely, the construction of NPPs, nuclear fuel productions plants and plants for used nuclear fuel processing for NPPs has been forbidden since 1989 – in the wake of the Chernobyl disaster – predating the breakup of the former Yugoslavia,<sup>29</sup> up until 2000.<sup>30</sup> In terms of electric power generation and distribution equipment, Yugoslavia depended on coal, nuclear power and hydropower to meet its energy needs.<sup>31</sup> In particular, nuclear energy was considered to be a necessity for Yugoslavia, which was short on fossil energy resources.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps one of the most significant outcomes of Yugoslavia's nuclear program was the establishment of the Krško NPP in 1981 as a joint venture by Slovenia and Croatia which were both part of Yugoslavia at the time. Besides the Krško NPP which was already in operation by 1982, similar energy facilities were planned to be constructed in Vojvodina, Serbia and Macedonia, while Croatia and Slovenia

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<sup>28</sup> Joseph Fitsanakis, 'CIA believed Yugoslavia was on the brink of going nuclear in 1975' (*Intelnews* 23 November 2017) <https://intelnews.org/2017/11/23/01-2219/> accessed 6 October 2024

<sup>29</sup> World Nuclear News, 'Serbia gathers experts to establish nuclear energy programme' (*World Nuclear News*, 12 July 2024) <https://world-nuclear-news.org/Articles/Serbia-gathers-experts-to-establish-nuclear-energy> accessed 28 September 2024

<sup>30</sup> House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *Report of the Congressional Delegation in Europe (August 7 to August 19 1989) prepared for the use of the Committee on Energy and Commerce U.S. House of Representatives* (101<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1990) 15.

<sup>31</sup> Jeremy Keller, *Marketing in Yugoslavia* (OBR 88-09, 1988) 7.

<sup>32</sup> Energy Information Administration, *Commercial Nuclear Power 1987: Prospects for the United States and the World* (Energy Information Administration, Office of Coal, Nuclear, Electric and Alternate Fuels, U.S. Department of Energy 1987) 70.



already had a project for a NPP under preparation in Prevlaka.<sup>33</sup> However, plans for new NPPs have been compromised both by the Chernobyl disaster and Yugoslavia's difficult economic situation.<sup>34</sup> As a result, the country's second NPP (referring to the Prevlaka NPP in Croatia) had been delayed by political opposition<sup>35</sup> and later scrapped entirely.<sup>36</sup> The counterproductive ending of Yugoslavia's anticipated NPPs throughout its territory was fairly expected. Around the world in the aftermath of Chernobyl, the whole nuclear power industry was called into question,<sup>37</sup> particularly from political and environmental perspectives. The political effect of Chernobyl was strongest in Sweden and Yugoslavia, where massive protests stopped immediate building of new NPPs;<sup>38</sup> the environment also became a matter of special concerns to Slovenes after the Chernobyl disaster since Yugoslavia's only nuclear reactor was at Krško on Slovenia's border with Croatia.<sup>39</sup> After open and sharp debates in Yugoslavia about completely abolishing nuclear power plants as such, the increasingly vocal and organized opponents of nuclear energy seemed to have won the battle for both the elite and public opinions against the pronuclear lobby in parliament.<sup>40</sup> The decision was heavily influenced by the Youth Organization of Yugoslavia.<sup>41</sup> In May 1989, the federal parliament passed a law barring any further construction of nuclear plants. An amendment to soften the resolution with a time limit failed.<sup>42</sup> Similarly enough, after the Chernobyl disaster, the Polish opposition movement 'Freedom and Peace' campaigned on the ecological dangers of nuclear power and opposed the building of a NPP near Gdansk.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, it is a universal value that each country should not only enjoy the right to a peaceful use of nuclear energy, but also shoulder the responsibility and obligation of preventing nuclear proliferation, maintaining nuclear safety and nuclear security.<sup>44</sup> The future of nuclear power within the European region depends on the country considered. There are several groups of countries that can be identified. These groups are the following:

- Countries using nuclear power and with plans to extend the use of this type of energy for electricity production in the coming years;
- Countries using nuclear power, but without approved plans to expand the use of this type of energy for electricity production in the coming years;

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<sup>33</sup> Yugoslav Press and Cultural Center, *Yugoslav News Bulletin* (836.2306, 1981) 1.

<sup>34</sup> Jeremy Keller, *Marketing in Yugoslavia* (OBR 88-09, 1988) 7.

<sup>35</sup> Jeremy Keller, *Marketing in Yugoslavia* (OBR 88-09, 1988) 24.

<sup>36</sup> House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *Report of the Congressional Delegation in Europe (August 7 to August 19 1989) prepared for the use of the Committee on Energy and Commerce U.S. House of Representatives* (101<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1990) 15.

<sup>37</sup> Timothy W Luke, *Screens of Power: Ideology, Domination, and Resistance in Informational Society* (University of Illinois Press 1989) 186.

<sup>38</sup> Bogdan Denis Denitch, *Limits and Possibilities: The Crisis of Yugoslav Socialism and State Socialist Systems* (University of Minnesota Press 1990) 46.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Cause, Course and Consequences* (New York University Press 1995) 103.

<sup>40</sup> Bogdan Denis Denitch, *Limits and Possibilities: The Crisis of Yugoslav Socialism and State Socialist Systems* (University of Minnesota Press 1990) 46.

<sup>41</sup> Energy Information Administration, *Commercial Nuclear Power 1989: Prospects for the United States and the World* (Energy Information Administration, Office of Coal, Nuclear, Electric and Alternate Fuels, U.S. Department of Energy 1989) 53.

<sup>42</sup> Bogdan Denis Denitch, *Limits and Possibilities: The Crisis of Yugoslav Socialism and State Socialist Systems* (University of Minnesota Press 1990) 46.

<sup>43</sup> April Carter, *Peace Movements: International Protests and World Politics since 1945* (Routledge 1992) 197.

<sup>44</sup> IAEA, *Nuclear Law: The Global Debate* (TMC Asser Press 2022) 39.

- Countries not using nuclear power, but with plans to introduce the use of this type of energy for electricity production in the coming years;
- Countries not using nuclear power and without plans to introduce the use of this type of energy for electricity production in the coming years;<sup>45</sup>

Regarding Yugoslavia's successor states, Slovenia falls into the group of countries using nuclear power and with plans to extend the use of this type of energy for electricity production in the coming years; to be specific, the country currently considers adding a second unit at the Krško NPP. In January 2024, Slovenia's prime minister said that a cross-party summit had agreed on the need for both renewables and nuclear energy as part of "*the path to a carbon-free future.*"<sup>46</sup> Croatia also falls into this group, considering the open support and announcement of Croatia's interest in investing in the Krško 2 NPP project in Slovenia,<sup>47</sup> despite the absence of NPP installments on its territory. Contrastingly enough, BiH<sup>48</sup> and Montenegro<sup>49</sup> fall into the group of countries not using nuclear power and without plans to introduce the use of this type of energy for electricity production in the coming years. Lastly, Macedonia<sup>50</sup> and Serbia<sup>51</sup> fall into the group of countries not using nuclear power, but with plans to introduce this type of energy for electricity production in the coming years through national and international efforts. In correspondence, brief legal commentaries are provided for the national efforts of Yugoslavia's successor states toward obtaining nuclear energy and the potential of possessing nuclear weapons in the future (or lack thereof) from the perspective of contemporary nuclear geopolitics.

### *1. Macedonia's nuclear legislation and policy*

According to estimates, Yugoslavia had conditions to first build one NPP of 200 megawatts (MW) and later a second NPP of 500 MW. For the two being the greatest interest for the construction of a NPP has been shown by the Yugoslav republics of Slovenia and Macedonia, and by the province of Vojvodina.<sup>52</sup> Had the planned NPP been built on Macedonian soil in the vein of the Krško NPP in present-day Slovenia, the national question regarding electricity generation through nuclear power would have been resolved. In its directive for 2001 to 2005, one variant suggested that a

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<sup>45</sup> Jorge Morales Pedraza, *Electrical Energy Generation in Europe: The Current Situation and Perspectives in the Use of Renewable Energy Sources and Nuclear Power for Regional Electricity Generation* (Springer 2015) 457.

<sup>46</sup> World Nuclear Association, 'Nuclear Power in Slovenia' (*World Nuclear Association*, 28 July 2024) <https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-o-s/slovenia> accessed 9 October 2024

<sup>47</sup> Marina Kelava, 'Dispatch from Croatia' (*Clean Energy Wire*, 19 April 2024) <https://www.cleanenergywire.org/news/dispatch-croatia> accessed 12 October 2024

<sup>48</sup> IAEA, 'National Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the 8<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting on the implementation of the obligations under the Convention of Nuclear Safety' (State Regulatory Agency for Radiation and Nuclear Safety 2019) 3.

<sup>49</sup> CDM, 'No nuclear power plants to be built in Montenegro until 2030' (*CDM*, 12 March 2018) <https://www.cdm.me/english/no-nuclear-power-plants-to-be-built-in-montenegro-until-2030/> accessed 12 October 2024

<sup>50</sup> Vesna Damcevska, 'Does Macedonia need a nuclear power plant?' (*Sloboden Pecat*, 3 September 2024) <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/en/dali-na-makedonija-%D1%9D-e-potrebna-nuklearna-centrala/> accessed 12 October 2024

<sup>51</sup> Milica Stojanovic, 'Serbian Ministries Sign Memorandum on Development of Nuclear Power' (*Balkan Insights*, 10 July 2024) <https://balkaninsight.com/2024/07/10/serbian-ministries-sign-memorandum-on-development-of-nuclear-power/> accessed 12 October 2024

<sup>52</sup> Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report, Foreign Radio Broadcasts* (No. 196, 1966) NN1.

NPP of 300 MW installed power was to be built in Macedonia. Due to some serious geopolitical issues, however, the effects of the proposed variant are quite different than originally anticipated.<sup>53</sup> Such circumstances have not discouraged Macedonia in attempting to install a NPP within its domestic borders, given that Professor Konstantin Dimitrov believes in the project's feasibility, albeit not characterized with megalomaniac proportions and capacity.<sup>54</sup> Further considering the lack of economic capacities, Macedonia's government could seek partnership willing to support its national nuclear program.<sup>55</sup> Such efforts include Macedonia's recent discussions with the former director of the U.S.'s national intelligence, Richard Grenell.<sup>56</sup> At present, Macedonia does not possess any nuclear installations either for energy production or for research purposes, despite having an established nuclear legislation and policy; it has enacted a Law on Ionizing Radiation Protection and Safety, which concerns nuclear safety and radiation protection, in addition to becoming a member of the Incident and Emergency Centre of the IAEA and of the European Radioactivity Data Exchange Platform (EURDEP).<sup>57</sup> There is also the Law on Transport of Dangerous Goods, adopted on May 25<sup>th</sup> 2009 and amended on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1993, which regulates the transport of radioactive materials.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, Macedonia guaranteed for the prevention of nuclear proliferation. Namely, in Opinion No.6 on the Recognition of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia by the European Community and its Member States, "*the Republic of Macedonia abides by all the relevant undertakings given on disarmament, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, security and territorial stability*" in response to the question of whether the country was willing to abide by all the undertakings given on disarmament and the non-proliferation on nuclear weapons.<sup>59</sup> While Macedonia is a State Party of the NPT by succession from Yugoslavia since 1995, it has consistently voted against the annual UNGA resolutions on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW),<sup>60</sup> to which the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) regrets that Macedonia shows support of the potential use of nuclear weapons,<sup>61</sup> although such aspirations have not yet been expressed in an official manner.

## 2. Serbia's nuclear legislation and policy

While Yugoslav nuclear programs were supported by comprehensive research and development (R&D), educational programs and pertinent training in the country and abroad, since 1989 the

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<sup>53</sup> Bozin Donevski, 'Energy Sector in Macedonia: Current Status and Plans' in Kemo Hanjalic, Roel van de Krol and Alija Lekic (eds), *Sustainable Energy and Technologies: Options and Prospects* (Springer 2008) 304.

<sup>54</sup> Vesna Damcevska, 'Does Macedonia need a nuclear power plant?' (*Sloboden Pecat*, 3 September 2024) <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/en/dali-na-makedonija-%D1%9D-e-potrebna-nuklearna-centrala/> accessed 12 October 2024

<sup>55</sup> Radica Gareva and Metodi Hadji-Janev, 'Achieving Greater Security through a New Approach in Applying of Nonproliferation and Arms Control: Macedonia in Context' [2012] ISSN 1057-9419 *Applied Science and Analyses* 1.

<sup>56</sup> Vesna Damcevska, 'Does Macedonia need a nuclear power plant?' (*Sloboden Pecat*, 3 September 2024) <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/en/dali-na-makedonija-%D1%9D-e-potrebna-nuklearna-centrala/> accessed 12 October 2024

<sup>57</sup> MP Ram Mohan and Fiona Geoffrey, 'V. Energy' (2008) 17(1) *Yearbook of International Environmental Law* 341.

<sup>58</sup> Marija Ampovska, 'Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Law in Macedonia and Neighbor Countries – Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania' (2013) 1 *BSSR* 12.

<sup>59</sup> Snežana Trifunovska, *Yugoslavia through Documents* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers 1994) 492.

<sup>60</sup> ICAN, 'North Macedonia' (ICAN n.d.) [https://www.icanw.org/north\\_macedonia](https://www.icanw.org/north_macedonia) accessed 12 October 2024

<sup>61</sup> ICAN, 'Stakeholder submission for the 46<sup>th</sup> session of the Universal Periodic Review – Report on the Republic of North Macedonia' (ICAN n.d.).

nuclear expertise has deteriorated considerably in Serbia due to the adopted law on ban of NPP construction and the weak economic situation.<sup>62</sup> As of July 2024, however, the Minister of Mining and Energy and representatives of five other ministries and from 20 academic faculties, scientific institutes and energy companies have signed a memorandum of understanding on nuclear energy development in Serbia for “*examining the possibility of establishing a program for peacetime application.*”<sup>63</sup> Serbia is a member of the IAEA and contracting party of the Vienna Convention. Nuclear safety and radiation protection issues are regulated by the Law on Ionizing Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety, while the Serbian Agency for Ionizing Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety (SRPNA) was established as a separate body in 2009 and started functioning in mid-2010.<sup>64</sup> Regarding the issue of nuclear nonproliferation, national efforts to secure highly enriched uranium (HEU) have been realized *ad hoc* by Project Vinca in August 2022 which reportedly removed enough HEU for two nuclear weapons from a research reactor in Serbia and flew it to Russia, where it had originated.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Serbia acceded to the NPT in 1992 and maintains policies and practices that are compatible with all the prohibitions in Article 1 of the TPNW, although it consistently abstains from voting on the annual UNGA resolutions.<sup>66</sup>

### 3. Croatia’s nuclear legislation and policy

While the joint ownership of the Krško NPP between Slovenia and Croatia is politically accepted since 1981, its public acceptance is broadly positive in Slovenia, but very negative in Croatia.<sup>67</sup> One instance includes *Hrvatska Elektroprivreda d.d. v. Slovenia* – a dispute between a Croatian electric company and Slovenia over the Krško NPP that provides a significant amount of power to both countries.<sup>68</sup> Croatia has also discussed with Albania about the possibility of jointly building a NPP at Lake Shkodër, close to the border with Montenegro, a plan that has gathered criticism from Montenegro due to seismicity in the area.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, Croatia has always been vocal regarding the issue of nuclear nonproliferation by notably taking into account Croatian Ambassador *Ranko Vilovic* calling on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to return to the Six-Party Talks and accede to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), where he stressed the need to ensure that all provisions of the resolution that will hopefully be adopted by consensus are strictly implemented.<sup>70</sup> Another account includes the Agreement between the U.S. Government and the Croatian Government concerning Cooperation to Suppress

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<sup>62</sup> Milan Pesic and Dragana Nikolic, ‘Needs for restoration of the nuclear knowledge management in Serbia’ (2005) 1 *International Journal of Nuclear Knowledge Management* 223.

<sup>63</sup> Milica Stojanovic, ‘Serbian Ministries Sign Memorandum on Development of Nuclear Power’ (*Balkan Insights*, 10 July 2024) <https://balkaninsight.com/2024/07/10/serbian-ministries-sign-memorandum-on-development-of-nuclear-power/> accessed 12 October 2024

<sup>64</sup> Marija Ampovska, ‘Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Law in Macedonia and Neighbor Countries – Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania’ (2013) 1 *BSSR* 13.

<sup>65</sup> Jonathan Medalia, ‘Nuclear Terrorism: A Brief Review of Threats and Responses’ in Amy L Fitzgerald (ed), *Terrorism and National Security* (Nova Science Publishers 2007) 9.

<sup>66</sup> NWBM, ‘Serbia’ (NWBM, n.d.) <https://banmonitor.org/profiles/serbia> accessed 12 October 2024

<sup>67</sup> Pamela M Barnes, *The Politics of Nuclear Energy in the European Union – Framing the Discourse: Actors, Positions and Dynamics* (Barbara Budrich Publishers 2018) 204.

<sup>68</sup> James D Fry, *Legal Resolution of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Disputes* (Cambridge University Press 2013) 198.

<sup>69</sup> International Business Publications, *Albania Investment and Business Guide Volume 1 Strategic and Practical Information* (International Business Publications 2016) 32.

<sup>70</sup> Alexander Mühlen, *Role Plays for International Negotiations* (Lit Verlag 2015) 217.

the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, their Delivery Systems and Related Materials by Sea.<sup>71</sup>

#### 4. Montenegro's nuclear legislation and policy

Pursuant to Montenegro's current Law on Ionizing Radiation Protection and Radiation Safety ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", No.49/2024), construction of NPPs, plants for production of nuclear fuel and plants for the treatment of used nuclear fuel is banned, as well as any research or activity aimed at development, production and use of nuclear weapons, as well as any use of radioactive or nuclear material for production of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In addition, the director general of the environment department at the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism, Ivana Vojinovic, stresses that the exposure of Montenegrin citizens to ionizing radiation is measured continuously. The mean annual effective dose, as a measure of the radiological burden of each inhabitant, is estimated as well.<sup>72</sup> Regarding the issue of nuclear nonproliferation, although Montenegro acceded to the NPT in 2006, it boycotted the TPNW negotiations in 2017 and has consistently voted against the annual UNGA resolutions on the Treaty.<sup>73</sup>

#### 5. Bosnia and Herzegovina's nuclear legislation and policy

Scholars of comparative law would presume that BiH has currently adopted a similar nuclear legislative policy to Montenegro as its neighboring country; pursuant to the Framework Energy Strategy of BiH until 2035 was adopted on August 29<sup>th</sup> 2018 by the Council of Ministers of BiH, the country does not have plans to use NPPs for electricity generation until 2035.<sup>74</sup> Besides the absence of NNP and research reactors, BiH has membership to the IAEA since 1995, has signed the CTBT in 1996 (ratified in 2006) and succeeded to the NPT in 1994.<sup>75</sup> Concerning the question on nuclear nonproliferation, although BiH acceded to the NPT in 1994 it abstained from voting on the annual UNGA resolution on the TPNW in 2023 for the first time. In previous years, it had voted against the resolution.<sup>76</sup>

#### 6. Slovenia's nuclear legislation and policy

After its breakup from Yugoslavia, Slovenia learned that its greater international exposure was a double-edged sword. One particular example illustrating the responsibilities which come with a

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<sup>71</sup> Anastasia Strati, Maria Gavouneli and Nikolaos Skourtos, *Unresolved Issues and New Challenges to the Law of the Sea: Time Before and Time After* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers 2006) 327.

<sup>72</sup> CDM, 'No nuclear power plants to be built in Montenegro until 2030' (CDM, 12 March 2018) <https://www.cdm.me/english/no-nuclear-power-plants-to-be-built-in-montenegro-until-2030/> accessed 12 October 2024

<sup>73</sup> NWBM, 'Montenegro' (NWBM n.d.) <https://banmonitor.org/profiles/montenegro> accessed 12 October 2024

<sup>74</sup> IAEA, 'National Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the 8<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting on the implementation of the obligations under the Convention of Nuclear Safety' (State Regulatory Agency for Radiation and Nuclear Safety 2019) 3.

<sup>75</sup> NAM Disarmament Database, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina' (NAM Disarmament Database n.d.) <http://cns.miis.edu/nam/index.php/site/search?keywords=bosnia+&yt0=Search> accessed 12 October 2024

<sup>76</sup> NWBM, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina' (NWBM n.d.) <https://banmonitor.org/profiles/bosnia-and-herzegovina> accessed 12 October 2024



more prominent international position was the episode where Slovenia initially supported an U.N. initiative to aim for a world free of nuclear weapons, and later withdrew its support when Washington tacitly expressed its discontent with this Slovenian foreign policy move.<sup>77</sup> More than a decade later, pacifists and environmentalists opposed NATO because they rejected in principle the presence of foreign troops and nuclear weapons on Slovenian soil and/or everything related to the military and to nuclear energy. Among critics, one was also filled with nostalgia for the former Yugoslavia and Tito's past policy of non-alignment.<sup>78</sup> It was not only the Slovenian public that was most opposed to stationing NATO nuclear weapons,<sup>79</sup> but also by many individuals and organizations throughout Europe.<sup>80</sup> The general crisis in Yugoslavia and the war on Slovenia's borders, shifted public opinion toward NATO, albeit only temporarily,<sup>81</sup> considering that Slovenia has been a party to the NPT since 1992 and the Additional Protocol on its safeguards agreement with the IAEA entered into force in 2000. It has been party to the Paris Convention on civil liability for nuclear damage since 2001 and the supplementary Brussels Convention since 2003.<sup>82</sup>

### III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One cannot deny that Yugoslavia's ambitious nuclear program, besides successfully establishing the Krško NPP, came considerably close to obtaining nuclear weapons which might not have been a particularly favorable outcome in nuclear geopolitics; at the same time before Croatia and Slovenia declared independence, the Western alliance was preoccupied with the U.S.S.R.'s dissolution. The disposition of thousands of nuclear weapons in the Soviet republics agitating for independence was a priority for politicians in every Western capital.<sup>83</sup> Another important legal aspect regards the succession of international treaties, which further explains how the Russian Federation retained the special status of NWS under the NPT, while the other component parts of the former U.S.S.R. either succeeded or acceded to the Treaty as NNWSs.<sup>84</sup> Yugoslavia had also signed the NPT in 1968 soon after it was open for signature and ratified it in the National Assembly in 1970, thus granting the country an even stronger position to promote global nuclear disarmament amidst the emerging détente between two Cold War superpowers.<sup>85</sup> After Yugoslavia's dissolution, every successor state acceded to the NPT as NNWSs, despite their divided policies on

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<sup>77</sup> EastWest Institute, *Annual Survey of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union: 1998: Holding the Course* (M.E. Sharpe 2000) 106.

<sup>78</sup> Anton Bebler and Milan Jazbev, 'Slovenia' in Anton Bebler (ed), *NATO at 60: The Post-Cold War Enlargement and the Alliance's Future* (IOS Press 2010) 55.

<sup>79</sup> Anton Bebler, 'The Slovenian Case' in Laurent Goetschel (ed), *Small States Inside and Outside the European Union: Interests and Policies* (Kluwer Academic Publishers 2013) 134.

<sup>80</sup> John K Cox, *Slovenia: Evolving Loyalties* (Routledge 2005) 154.

<sup>81</sup> Zoltan Barany, *The Future of NATO Expansion: Four Case Studies* (Cambridge University Press 2003) 106.

<sup>82</sup> World Nuclear Association, 'Nuclear Power in Slovenia' (*World Nuclear Association*, 28 July 2024) <https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-o-s/slovenia> accessed 9 October 2024

<sup>83</sup> Christopher Merrill, *Only the Nails Remain: Scenes from the Balkan Wars* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers 2001) 80.

<sup>84</sup> Frank Berman and Eirik Bjorge, 'Treaties and Other International Instruments IV – Ratification, Accession, Acceptance and Approval, Treaty Succession' in Sir Ivor Roberts (ed), *Satow's Diplomatic Practice* (8<sup>th</sup> edn, Oxford University Press 2023) 561.

<sup>85</sup> Marko Miljković, 'Yugoslavia's Ambitious Nuclear Policy in the 1960s and 1970s' (*The Wilson Center*, 11 March 2024) <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/yugoslavias-ambiguous-nuclear-policy-1960s-and-1970s#:~:text=Putting%20these%20words%20and%20promises,between%20two%20Cold%20War%20superpower> accessed 30 September 2024.

nuclear energy. Be that as it may, Yugoslavia's successor states could learn some valuable lessons from their Yugoslav past when developing their domestic nuclear programs for the purposes of ensuring and strengthening national security as current NNWSs in times of nuclear tensions, especially regarding international atomic cooperation as a crucial component; the Krško NPP was built by cooperation of Slovenia and Croatia by investment sharing 50/50. The 50% produced electricity exported to Croatia without payment, thus avoiding ecological and extremely negative economic consequences. This example shows feasibility and sustainability of multi-national nuclear projects. Especially if such project is shared between neighboring countries – this may demonstrate strong guarantees of peaceful development of whole regions.<sup>86</sup> And while it is evident that the production of energy from nuclear sources in the present-day region of the former Yugoslavia is small, it certainly must be considered as an element of strategy for sustainable energy development. Acceptance or rejection of nuclear power is defined by separate legislation in each country in the region.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Jumber Mamasakhlisi, 'Nuclear Energy & Energy Security' in Samuel A Apikyan and David J Diamond (eds), *Nuclear Power and Energy Security* (Springer 2010) 91-92.

<sup>87</sup> Mirjana Golušin, Siniša Dodić and Stevan Popov, *Sustainable Energy Management* (Elsevier Science 2013) 355.

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