

From Butmir 2009 to Dayton 2025: U.S. and Bosnia and Herzegovina Relationship

By Steven Rukavina

Introduction

From 2009-2025, the United States maintained a strong and significant relationship with the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) – the Federation of BiH (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS). This brief snapshot reflects a portion of my thirty-five years representing the Croatian American community in Washington, D.C., with a particular focus primarily on American activities and initiatives involving BiH, over the past sixteen years.

The synopsis will emphasize the highlights of U.S. activities showcasing the components of its comprehensive commitments to BiH since 1995. I will divulge substantive details and examine American involvement through electoral reform efforts, sanctions policies, and important Capitol Hill hearings and meetings. I will also dissect current issues, including the regional Southern Gas Interconnection (SGI) Pipeline.

To evaluate American interventionism in BiH, I will share my personal, political, and diplomatic engagements with many BiH principals involved over these years and within this synopsis.

The Camp Butmir Accords

In October 2009, 14 years after the DPA was signed, the U.S. and EU jointly decided to address political tensions in BiH by proposing constitutional reforms that would move the country closer to EU and NATO membership. Swedish Foreign Minister, Carl Bildt, and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, James Steinberg, with the Obama Administration initi-

ated talks with Bosnia's leaders and all three constituent groups were represented. The first meeting was held on October 9 at the EUFOR peacekeeping base at Camp Butmir, near Sarajevo, with little or minimal support from among the three communities. The U.S. and EU plan was designed to strengthen central state institutions, especially in the House of Representatives, and to elect the Presidency members from the BiH parliamentary assembly.

The U.S. and EU proposed reform package was unacceptable to most all of the country's Bosniak, Croat, and Serb leaders. Milorad Dodik, Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska at the time, sent a letter to the U.S. Ambassador in BiH, Charles English, and to the Swedish EU Presidency, stating that the proposed changes were "anti-Dayton, politically incorrect, and unacceptable as a basis for talks." Members of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) accepted the proposal, but the two main Bosniak parties indicated that the international proposal was too weak, shallow and unacceptable. Haris Silajdžić was critical of the proposal for "excluding entity voting" from their proposal. BiH Croat leaders, Dragan Čović and Božo Ljubić, said the reform proposal will further weaken their negotiating positions within the joint institutions.

The "Butmir process" ultimately failed to resolve the political impasse, as the BiH leaders could not reach any consensus on the proposed reforms.

Earlier in 2009, it was a real honor to accompany Cardinal Vinko Puljić to a meeting with Senator Mark Begich. I remember vividly His Eminence telling the Croatian American Senator that the DPA was keeping BiH in a "straitjacket" and little progress had been made over the past ten years. The Cardinal went on to talk about his idea for a BiH based on cantons (or new regions) and more like a Switzerland federalism approach. It was very memorable for me to hear Cardinal Puljić end his meeting with Alaska Senator Mark Begich, by saying that BiH is so immobilized politically that you have to "break your hand to fix it." The Cardinal mentioned it will take a new constitution for BiH to be reset and realigned to be able to create the necessary functionality in the government.

My twenty-five year friendships with Croatian leaders include notable Catholic clergy within BiH, including Cardinal Vinko Puljić (Sarajevo) and Bishop Franjo Komarica (Banja Luka). They both have helped me tremendously understand the complexities and dynamics of BiH. I had the honor to host and engage with Cardinal Puljić three times in the nation's capital (1995, 2009, and 2011) and Bishop Komarica three times and once in Washington D.C., New York City, and Banja Luka. The in-

sights garnered from these two religious leaders transcend politics but greatly put into perspective the challenges that exist within the DPA, the RS and FBiH.

Congressional Resolutions to Improve Western Balkan Stability

The Croatian American community supported Congressional resolutions to improve BiH stability. In May 2013, Senator Mark Begich introduced U.S. Senate Resolution 131, recommending the designation of a Presidential Special Envoy for the Western Balkans. The resolution called for a high-level American representative to assess and propose solutions to address the persistent political stalemate in BiH, with particular attention to address recurring issues affecting the BiH Croat community.

In 2015, Rep. Janice Hahn, Co-Chair of the forty-member Congressional Croatian Caucus, reintroduced a revised version of her earlier legislation regarding the establishment of a Special Envoy for the Western Balkans. My organization, the National Federation of Croatian Americans Cultural Foundation (NFCACF), has always stressed that it's a geo-political and economic fact that the Croats in BiH are the glue that will help Bosnia and Herzegovina remain united within any transition to be a member of the transatlantic political community. The House resolution stressed the importance for the U.S. to continue "to work in concert with our European allies to bring stability and progress to BiH, which greatly affects neighboring Croatia and Southeastern Europe as a whole." The discussions over a few years on Capitol Hill for a Special Representative for the region were actualized by 2018 with the appointment of Matthew Palmer to that Western Balkans envoy position and as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State.

FBiH President and the Croat Representation in BiH

On February 2, 2016, the NFCACF delegation met with the President of FBiH, Marinko Čavara, in Washington DC and as part of the National Prayer Breakfast gathering. President Čavara in a two-hour meeting shared many details about the dysfunctionality of the DPA and how it [adversely affects and discriminates](#) against the BiH Croat community. He educated us about electoral law changes imposed unilaterally by High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch, which created lingering issues

affecting BiH Croat representation. He shared with us that the present BiH electoral model does not provide protection to the Croat community to elect a Croat representative to the tripartite Presidency from within the FBiH. The FBiH President said that BiH Croats strongly support NATO ascension and EU membership and was told by a White House official that neither the United States nor the European Union would support a Dayton II to modernize the 1995 Accord.

In November 2017, FBiH President Čavara returned to the U.S. to speak at the Transatlantic Leadership Network Economic Forum in Washington DC, which Senator Roger Wicker (MS) attended. He articulated issues BiH was having trying to answer 400 pages of questions with the first phase of EU membership process. He stressed that we in BiH need the courage to change our constitution that will respect the equality of *three constituent communities* based on the European Constitution. He shared that the BiH election laws need to be changed immediately and the “status quo is a constitutional crisis and a stalemate situation.” He described how “false and fraud political representation and activities”, referring to Željko Komšić’s position in the Presidency, that violates the spirit and the letter of Dayton, and reiterated the need for a solution that ensures legitimate representation for all communities. Similar to a year before, the FBiH President stated that we in BiH “must find a solution that will ensure legitimate representation of all the constituent peoples.” He closed by saying “the European way is the only way that leads BiH to a positive direction alongside the security frame of the NATO alliance. This is the way that we must follow.”

Banja Luka and Sarajevo Meetings

In 2017, during a NFCACF firsthand fact-finding tour to Banja Luka and Sarajevo, I met with major international figures and key regional officials, including Bishop Franjo Komarica; Jonathan Moore, BiH OSCE Director; Deputy Foreign Minister of BiH, Josip Brkić; FBiH President Marinko Čavara; HDZ BiH President Dragan Čović; the senior staff with Cardinal Vinko Puljić; the USAID division at the U.S. Embassy; and the Republic of Croatia’s Ambassador, Ivan Del Vecchio.

It must be said that almost everyone I spoke to, shared different stories on how deeply “ethnocratic” BiH political system remained, with interethnic relations among constituents frozen in the past. Through personal anecdotes, reflections on the political developments, a reoccurring theme developed: the country was incapacitated by entrenched ethnocratic divisions to usurp control using central government insti-

tutions to advance their majoritarian agenda for the overall nation and their proper entity. This is the root of the unwillingness to compromise on issues that are deeply needed. I heard numerous examples of attempts for political consensus – only to see them repeatedly blocked by one ethnic community, avoiding meaningful progress.

Both Croatian leaders Dragan Čović and Marinko Čavara, emphasized to me, during separate meetings in Sarajevo, the urgent need for electoral reform in BiH. They underscored the importance of amending electoral law to ensure the Croat community within the Federation of BiH could elect a Croatian representative as President and also protecting the guaranteed seats for Croats in the House of Peoples.

I had the profound honor of being hosted by Bishop Franjo Komarica for two days in Banja Luka. His presence radiated humility and strength, despite our conversations carrying the weight of melancholy. We spoke at length about the fate of the Croat communities in RS. After 22 years since the DPA was signed, only 7% of the Croats remain in RS and only 9,355 out of the population of 152,856 from the mid-1990s. Bishop Komarica expressed frustration during our meeting in Banja Luka, lamenting that despite the guarantees outlined in the DPA, the U.S. had done little to protect or support Croats in RS. He was particularly disappointed that the RS Croats were not awarded any USAID funding regarding economic revitalization and basic human rights. He shared that the majority of his Catholic school students were Serbians, underscoring the demographic shifts and the marginalization of the Croat community in Banja Luka.

The bishop emphasized that “we are witnessing the start of the virtual elimination of an entire Catholic diocese in Europe.” Just before my departure from Banja Luka, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee urged me to share his message to the diplomats in Sarajevo, that “Croats in RS should have equal rights and please support Croats who want to return to their homes, and we need economic revitalization and please don’t forget we are here.”

Russian Influences in BiH and RS

By 2018, concern was mounting on Capitol Hill over Russian influences in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly through the newly elected leader of RS, Milorad Dodik who has widely been the destabilizing force of regional instability. House Foreign Affairs Chairman Dana Rohrabacher scheduled a hearing on April 18, 2018, through the Europe Subcommittee titled “Legacy of Dayton, Future of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans.”

During the hearing, Sasha Toperich, with the Transatlantic Leadership Network, testified and stressed that BiH and the Southeastern Europe region had now slid into the worst instability over the past 15 years. The former BiH diplomat outlined three key recommendations in his testimony. First, he urged that the U.S. and EU mediation in electoral law reform to urgently address systemic dysfunction and ensure fair representation. Second, he called to counteract Russian influences with more enhanced NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) program. Third, he advocated for EU-backed sanctions against Milorad Dodik, citing his role in undermining democratic institutions and regional stability. There were several other witnesses who spoke about the rising instability in the region, and the Russian Serbian alliance within BiH and the broader region. They emphasized that both the EU and NATO must move beyond symbolic gestures towards more defined strategic and active incentive initiatives.

During the day of the hearing, I submitted a NFCACF statement to the Europe Subcommittee and stressed the need for the constitutional courts to implement the Ljubić Case to address the need to protect the rights of the country's *three constituent communities* and to elect their own representatives enshrined in the DPA. I also reminded everyone that recently all the Croat political parties, independent think tanks, and the Central Election Commission have all offered solutions to fix the broken electoral code. However, the ruling Bosniak leaders rejected all these election law proposals. This scenario of inaction with election law reform has caused a constitutional crisis.

Strengthening the Framework for Continued Peace

The U.S. contributes a major commitment to the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) which works to promote a stable, secure, and democratic state by strengthening democratic institutions, supporting good governance, human rights, and fostering social cohesion and all based on the General Framework of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA). The OSCE activities include monitoring war crimes cases, countering terrorism and violent extremism, supporting national minorities, improving security sector governance, building capacity for good governance and the rule of law, and working to enhance women's participation in political processes.

During Donald Trump's presidency (2017–2021), the U.S. engagement in the Western Balkans combined the long-standing policy continuity with

support for the DPA with a distinct emphasis on economic deal-making and particularly between Serbia and Kosovo. The Trump administration maintained the traditional U.S. stance that a stable, prosperous, and Euro-Atlantic-oriented Bosnia and Herzegovina serves American and European security interests. Vice President Mike Pence's 2017 visit to Montenegro underscored that "the future of the Western Balkans is in the West," reaffirming commitment to NATO and the DPA.

The Trump Administration sought new visible achievements, particularly in Serbia-Kosovo relations, to signal American influence. Together, these efforts ensured that the U.S. remained seriously engaged in a strategically important region, even as the style and emphasis of policy shifted from institution-building toward transactional diplomacy. However, the 2020 Washington Agreement involving both Serbia and Kosovo was never signed by both parties.

It is a fact that NATO and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) have pursued a wide-ranging and mutually beneficial program of cooperation, which includes support for democratic, institutional, security sector and defense reforms. The Reform Program, as the main framework for cooperation, helps guide the country's reform efforts as it continues to pursue its Euro-Atlantic path.

As of September 2025, BiH is not a member of NATO but is an aspirant country actively participating in the Membership Action Plan (MAP). However, its progress toward full membership is hampered by significant internal political disagreements, particularly from the Bosnian Serb leadership, and external pressure from Russia. BiH was invited to join the MAP in 2010, which provides guidance and support for necessary reforms. The country officially submitted its first Reform Program under the MAP in 2019.

The Electoral and Croat Representation Crisis in BiH

In 2021, the EU and US agreed to mediate discussions with all three constituent communities and focused on how to implement ECHR rulings and the necessary electoral reforms. Matthew Palmer, the U.S. Special Envoy for Electoral Reform in Bosnia, and Angelina Eichhorst, an official of the EU's diplomatic service scheduled meetings in Sarajevo, Mostar, and Neum.

However, it has been widely reported that in contrast with the "Butmir" talks that Envoys Palmer and Eichhorst did not bring a specific proposal

regarding “electoral reform and limited constitutional reform” and they wanted to facilitate discussions. For the most part, the key Bosniak leaders boycotted the meetings which demoralized the effort at an early stage.

Meanwhile, in September of 2021, the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission in Serbia, Gabriel Escobar, took over as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs at the US Department of State and as the Special Representative for the Western Balkans, held recently by Matthew Palmer. In July 2022, a new round of talks began in Sarajevo and was a failure with no progress. However, there was one change and with the arrival of new U.S. Ambassador Michael Murphy (replacing Eric Nelson), the U.S. support for electoral reform became more assertive.

Due to lack of progress, the BiH Croats threatened to boycott the 2022 elections without any electoral reforms and with electoral manipulation already in motion. Not only was Zagreb concerned, but the State Department was alarmed that several Bosniak political parties were planning to use electoral manipulation to seize Croat seats to take control of e.g. House of Peoples. Also, the U.S. worried that the non-implementation of Ljubić court decision would have problematic results. It could in effect end the tripartite division of power sharing guaranteed with the DPA. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and EU officials have said consistently over the past few years that BiH’s current electoral ethnically defined representation is problematic and must be reformed.

By August of 2022, Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) Special Representative Gabriel Escobar was instrumental in exerting U.S. support, backed by the other Quint countries, to pursue political solutions that can only be realized and implemented by the High Representative. The Quint countries involved with BiH are the United States, France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. They work with the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and its “Bonn Powers” to implement the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Ultimately, under the leadership of U.S. Diplomat Gabriel Escobar, the U.S. backed the efforts of the OHR to stop the drift towards a Bosniak majoritarian rule. This resulted in the October 2 ruling by the OHR, which reaffirmed the Dayton Peace Agreement’s power sharing guarantees and principles among the three-constituent leadership. High Representative Christian Schmidt issued a “functionality reform package” which imposed limited and electoral and constitutional changes to protect tripartite power sharing. The High Representative only intervened after endless and unproductive negotiations that were stuck in an impasse.

Schmidt's reform package prevented the likely loss of Croat seats from the FBiH House of Peoples which would have meant majoritarian Bosniak control of the FBiH. My Capitol Hill and State Department sources told me that the U.S. was very worried that the Bosniak takeover of the FBiH would clearly create more instability and give momentum and benefit the RS overall with even more Russian support. The decision drew harsh criticism from the Bosniak political parties in BiH, who viewed it as a setback against the civic state society model of governance.

The U.S. Treasury Department, through its Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), implemented targeted sanctions against individuals and entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) for corruption, destabilizing actions, and undermining the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA). To date, at least a dozen individuals have been sanctioned in BiH, with many are directed at Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik's family and patronage network.

Special Representative for the Western Balkans, Gabriel Escobar testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in May 2023 and the first time on Capitol Hill in two years. Escobar pointed out that the main goals of the Biden Administration policy in the Western Balkans were based on one simple principle: the continuous integration of the region into Euro-Atlantic structures. In this context, he emphasized, the importance of the "involvement of the U.S. when it comes to calming tensions in the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia and stabilizing the situation in BiH.

During the follow-up questions and discussion: Escobar stated that "unfortunately, the President of the Republic of Srpska (RS) entity, Milorad Dodik remains focused on unpacking the DPA and the state constitution" and his "persistent secessionist and anti-democratic activities threaten the stability, security and prosperity of the country and the wider region." Also, when asked how Washington intends to stop Milorad Dodik's destructive policy which threatens not only BiH but the region, Special Representative Escobar stated: strengthen EUFOR forces, Washington's full support of High Representative Christian Schmidt and the Bonn powers, continuation of the sanctions and coordination with our EU partners to prevent loans and donations to the RS.

The BiH Southern Gas Interconnection (SGI) Pipeline Project

The most important American geopolitical project in the 2020-2025 time frame that involves Croatia and BiH in the energy space is the SGI

Pipeline. This project has been stalled for over a decade due to complex internal politics and ethnic divisions in FBiH. It is a fact that the Republic of Croatia and BiH Croat representatives oppose the Bosniak approved plan supported by the Biden Administration to allow 100% ownership for the Bosniak controlled and Sarajevo-based state company BH-Gas.

The SGI Pipeline holds strategic overall importance for Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) as it introduces a diversified source of natural gas, thereby reducing the country's near-total dependence on Russian gas routed through Serbia. Although faced with challenges and criticism, the project has major economic and political implications beyond energy security. The BiH Croats extended a plan that would create a three-way ownership to reflect the geopolitical and economic realities of the Croatian pipeline transporting liquefied natural gas (LNG) gas through the Federation in BiH. The pipeline would connect BiH to the Croatian gas network, giving it access to Croatia's LNG terminal on the island of Krk and other potential sources in the Caspian region. The United States and the European Union have urged BiH to move forward with the project, framing it as crucial for energy independence and European integration.

From personal experience, U.S. State Department made a decision that the priority pipeline issue was not in the portfolio of the American Special Representative responsible for the Western Balkans. This SGI project was delegated to the State Department diplomats in the energy space. The State Department energy diplomats appeared to lack familiarity with the complex political dynamics of the region and showed limited engagement with the strategic investments made by the Republic of Croatia, a key NATO ally and stakeholder. Additionally, concerns of issues emerged regarding the U.S. Ambassador in Sarajevo, particularly with the relations with the BiH Croat community. During critical junctures when legislation concerning the SGI Pipeline was under discussion, the American Ambassador reportedly held meetings exclusively with Bosniak leaders, raising questions about a balanced diplomatic outreach and inclusivity.

Croatian Prime Minister's Reception on Capitol Hill

On May 7, 2025, the Congressional Croatian Caucus and the Embassy of Croatia in Washington, D.C. hosted a reception to honor Prime Minister Andrej Plenković, who was in town to accept an At-

lantic Council Leadership Award. It was my honor to discuss with the Prime Minister and Croatia's Minister of Energy, Ante Šušnjar, regarding the nuanced details about the status of the SGI pipeline. I was informed that the Republic of Croatia is asking for support from the Trump Administration for a new compromise about the ownership for the SGI pipeline, as opposed to a 100% ownership for BH-Gas. The Prime Minister mentioned to me that Croatia will proudly host the next Three Seas Initiative Summit in Zagreb in 2026 with an energy focus.

In Pursuit of a Great BiH Compromise

There have been hundreds of columns and articles written this century, highlighting all the on-going constitutional issues keeping BiH paralyzed within the DPA and with these articles offering partial or unworkable solutions. The article by Professor Edward P. Joseph (SAIS) in the Balkan Insight from May 21, 2025, stands out for its nuanced observations, proposed solutions and all the while analyzing the complexities of one of the most complex political systems to be found globally. Professor Joseph, who had four postings in ex-Yugoslavia, offered the best compromise idea to replace ethnic identifiers in BiH (required by European Commission and the OSCE) with a political approach similar to the U.S. Senate (The Great Compromise of 1787-Constitutional Convention) that protects the collective interests of the smaller constituent peoples overall in BiH and that were to be protected by the DPA.

Edward Joseph is one of the few Southeastern Europe experts to fully realize the significance of the Croats and Bosniaks to collaborate and engage together to save their country. He stands out for directly mentioning the “elephant” in the room, considering Milorad Dodik to be the ultimate problem in BiH. How does BiH fully integrate into NATO and the European Union without dealing with the separatist issues from the “Republika Srpska” left unresolved?

Professor Joseph also shared that the practice where the larger Bosniak political forces have “repeatedly chosen the Croat member of the Presidency, which he concludes has damaged the goal of moving BiH towards a civic state” and “underscoring the fears of Croats and Serbs about the dangers of majoritarian model.”

Another perspective came recently from the Heritage House, re-published in this book, which speaks for it self in terms of realism.

The 30th Anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accord (DPA), held in Dayton, Ohio from May 22-24, was both historically significant and symbolic, especially for the coincided return of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly after a 20-year hiatus. The event featured an impressive lineup of DPA principals, American diplomats, members of Congress and General Wesley Clark, with strong representation from the Bosniak and Croatian communities. Notably, however, the BiH Serbian community was absent.

The gathering included over 240 lawmakers from the 32 member countries representing NATO and partner nations, and reflected on the legacy of the Dayton Accords, which were initialed at the nearby Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in 1995. There was a substantive symposium highlighting the origins of the DPA and how it stopped the war.

Panels reflected on Dayton's legacy and its role in ending the war. Croatian participants and former U.S. Ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith, raised the Operation Storm's and two follow-up operations with decisive contribution to the peace negotiations. However, the event largely avoided addressing future constitutional reforms or new frameworks for BiH's governance, even if Deputy State Secretary Christopher Landau suggested that the U.S. policy would move away from its previous nation-building efforts.

The Ohio Congressman Mike Turner deserves appropriate recognition. As head of the U.S. delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), he helped spearhead the effort to bring the Assembly's 2025 spring session to Dayton, Ohio. The ten-term Congressman and member of the House Armed Services Committee has been the most vocal Congressional member supporting a Dayton II Summit. The former Mayor of Dayton introduced in 2020 a Congressional resolution that called on BiH authorities to make the DPA the basis for the constitutional reform, the promotion and protection of political rights, and representation for all three communities. Representative Turner's resolution asked the U.S. Congress to continue to support BiH with constitutional and economic issues and through the goals and values set by the EU for the Euro-Atlantic path for BiH.

Conclusion

Thirty years later, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and DPA anniversary on American soil was well attended with VIP European and NATO principals from Croatia and BiH. However, this time there was no arrangement to keep all leaders from BiH hostage in Dayton until

all the right constitutional compromises were made. The 2025 Dayton and NATO PA anniversary in Ohio, though rich in symbolism, produced no new constitutional breakthroughs, except Christopher Landau's indication that the U.S. may look at this issue differently than the past U.S. Administrations. This would be consistent with what Richard Holbrooke once said, Dayton was never intended as a permanent political solution.

As the old Balkan saying goes, "why should I be a minority in your country when you can be one in mine." This sentiment reflects the deep-rooted mistrust and ethnic divisions within the government that the DPA and the Washington Agreement intended to resolve through guarantees of equal rights for all *three constituent communities* through power-sharing. However, Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs are still intensely divided in a broken country with no possibility of significant economic growth, sovereignty, and stability. The principles of Dayton need to be respected and honored by the three constituents, which requires a new constitutional approach.

A majoritarian "civic" model risks deepening divisions rather than healing them. The country's path forward lies in federalism and consociationalism — a balanced power-sharing system that guarantees segmental autonomy, proportionality, and mutual vetoes to protect its diverse communities; as envisioned in the new Heritage House and Balkan Insight proposals, as well as earlier updated thinking from the International Crisis Group July 2014 report, and European Parliament resolutions.

It must be cited that the strategic SGI pipeline is the ideal Southeastern Europe project that the Western Powers need to be an immediate catalyst to help the Republic of Croatia and the FBiH find an off-ramp to a win-win compromise. There has to be U.S. and EU involvement to solve this impasse. Encouraging the priority of economic transactions within the public and private sectors is vitally important to ensure strategic convergence that protects the national sovereignty of BiH without the need for separatism or partition to be the ultimate goal. If energy resilience projects and economic revitalization initiatives succeed among the *three constituent communities*, this could pave the way for more meaningful constitutional and federal reform discussions in the future.

In summary, the record shows that American policy towards BiH in the 21st century has been characterized by limited progress on various political, democratic development, and diplomatic fronts, and there have been no major developments from a constitutional perspective. Clearly,

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a number of U.S. and EU initiatives have been slowed and curtailed by Balkan fatigue and by the veto power by one ethnic community, time after time.

However, let the Western powers aspire to the reality that there could be a Paris or a Dayton II Summit to free BiH from the Dayton Peace Accords straitjacket, once and for all.