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The **Center for Diplomacy of Andrassy University Budapest** cordially invites you to an  
event in our series

**Religion and Diplomacy**

with

**Jelena Jorgačević Kisić**

*Religion journalist and President of the NGO "Forum on Media, Religion and  
Culture of Remembrance", Belgrade*

**The Serbian Orthodox Church and its influence in Serbia and the  
Western Balkans**

Venue: Spiegelsaal  
Date: Wednesday, May 31 2023, 6.00 pm-7.30 pm (CET)  
Registration: [Please register here](#)  
Language: English

Religion plays an important role in the Balkans. The largest religious community in the region is the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC). In Serbia, 85 percent of the citizens identify with the Orthodox Christianity. Besides the Church in North Macedonia that recently received autocephaly, the SOC is the only recognized (canonical) Orthodox Church in other former Yugoslav countries. To this day, the SOC has a considerable influence on the state and society. However, it is by no means monolithic. However, many portrayals unfortunately lack nuance. Thus, on the one hand, religious representatives and the Church are blamed for all kinds of negative tendencies in politics and society, especially those that are violent, divisive, and backward. On the other hand, the Serbian Orthodox Church was portrayed as an almost infallible guardian of national identity that must not be criticized at any price.

The burning issue for the public remains the relationship between the political authorities in the region and the hierarchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Some see this relationship as too conflictual, while others see it as too close. As in other countries, there are conflicts, for example, over bioethical issues, especially between the Orthodox Church and liberal circles. The world of religious communities in this region, including the SOC, is still strongly dominated by men. Overall, however, the Serbian Orthodox Church is much more heterogeneous than it seems at first glance.

Some problems also arise from relations between Orthodox Churches, first between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church, and the position of the SOC in this conflict. These relations have been exacerbated by Russia's attack on Ukraine, which is defended by the Russian Orthodox Church.

We are pleased to have **Jelena Jorgačević Kisić**, a renowned Serbian religious journalist, as our guest, who will talk about the Serbian Orthodox Church and its influence on politics and society in Serbia and the region and will be happy to answer our questions afterwards. We would like to thank the HSS, which invites us to a small reception afterwards, for their renewed support.



**Jelena Jorgačević Kisić** graduated from the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade (Serbia), then obtained a master's degree in Theory of Culture at the same faculty, and then a master's degree in Religious Studies at the University of Erfurt (Germany). Currently, she is pursuing her doctorate at the University of Regensburg (Germany).

She is a journalist for the Belgrade weekly "Vreme", where she mostly covers topics related to religion, education, and human rights. She publishes texts in other domestic and foreign media. Her articles were awarded several national journalism prizes. From 2022, she is the vice-chair of the International Association of Religion Journalists (IARJ).

Being engaged in the civil sector as well, she has organized and participated in numerous conferences and discussions on various aspects of the relationship between religion, society, and the state, as well as religion, the media, and especially inter-religious dialogue. She is the non-governmental organization Forum on Religion, Media and Culture of Remembrance chairwoman. Most recently she published the book "Jedni smo drugima na dobro dati" (We were given to each other to do good") which consists of conversations with the eminent religious representatives of the former Yugoslavia.



**Dr. Heinrich Kreft M.A., B.A. (USA)**, holds the Chair for Diplomacy II at Andrassy University Budapest and is the Director of its International Relations and European Studies program. He is also the Director of its Center for Diplomacy. Previously, he was Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (July 2016 - August 2020), Special Ambassador for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue and for International Academic Relations, and Deputy Head of the Planning Staff of the Federal Foreign Office. Other assignments in his 38-year career have taken him to Washington, Tokyo, Madrid and La Paz.

In between, he was a visiting fellow at the Henry L Stimson Center, the Heritage Foundation, the Brookings Institutions, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the Transatlantic Academy of the German Marshall Fund of the United States in Washington, DC.