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THE WARP OF THE SERBIAN IDENTITY

ANTI-WESTERNISM,
RUSSOPHILIA,
TRADITIONALISM...

BELGRADE, 2016

THE WARP OF THE SERBIAN IDENTITY

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The problem of national identity especially troubles unfinished nations and the countries wherein ethnicity and statehood do not overlap or, moreover, wherein the discrepancy between the two is too large.

In historical perspective, national identities have emerged from communities the members of which would protect at all costs; the same as their leaders they took their major responsibilities were – national. What was probably inevitable once is not enough today. In a world of globalization people belong to many imagined communities – local, regional, constitutional, national or cosmopolitan – that are overlapping mostly thanks to technological and communications revolution and rather affordable travel. Sovereignty is no longer the absolute it used to be to the people.

Bearing in mind the complexity of the problem and the background against which Serbia is in search of its new identity – the pan-Serbian project that suffered defeat at the end of the 20th century and ensuing frustration, and the responsibility for the war and war crimes Serbia would hardly admit – the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights prepared this collection of papers hoping it would trigger off a wider debate on the Serbian national identity.

Instead in modern times Serbia seeks its identity in the past by invoking its “traditionally authentic political identity” – actually, the legacy of the Middle Ages, Eastern Orthodoxy, Byzantine heritage, the folklore of its culture and anti-Westernization.

The first and second Yugoslavia are called into question – especially the latter which is criminalized through revisionism and relativism of fascism.

By wiping off the 20th century from its experience and memory, the Serbian culture actually renounces its greatest achievements. The patriarchal and the modern civilization are in clash in Serbia – at this point, regrettably, renewal of the patriarchal society has the upper hand. Serbia’s mainstream strongly resists the postulates of a modern state: the rule of law, human rights, plurality and tolerance.

The majority of right-wing groups and intellectuals advocate “St. Sava identity of the Serbian people” as a mainstay of “all the victories” and “a hope for Serbia’s recovery.” The predominant nationalistic elites strongly oppose reforms of the country and the society under the pretext of their being destructive to the Serbian identity. But, in fact, Serbia’s modernization would undermine their interests that are tied up with political structures. They see the pro-European civil sector and everyone arguing for Serbia’s membership of EU and NATO as the biggest threat to “St. Sava identity.”

Russia – with its growing presence and influence on Serbia’s cultural and political scenes – plays a major role in shaping a new identity. Russia fuels Serbia’s frustration and the thesis about Yugoslavia as Serbia’s great delusion; and so it also fuels the thesis about artificial nations such as Macedonians, Bosniaks and Montenegrins. The influential, pro-Russian, conservative bloc keeps entrenching the “Russian component” in Serbia’s identity; they promote “Russification of the Serbian nation,” argue for the superiority of the Eastern Orthodox civilization, its Byzantine heritage and Slavic culture, and speak of Slav nations helping one another throughout history.

The Serbs and the Russians alike, as Srđan Barišić notes in his paper, have closely connected Eastern Orthodoxy with state-building, and in both cases Eastern Orthodoxy has been – in the times of many deep crises – a strong integrative factor of the safeguard of national identity. And in both cases, the period of social atheism marginalized and minimalized the significance of public religiousness, whereas with dis-integrations of once federations in the last decade of the 20th century revitalization of religion began.

Both Russia and Serbia experienced failed transitions and exhausting identity wanderings at the international arena, the same as at domestic scenes. Russia compensates for these failures by renewing imperial ambitions and revenging itself for the humiliation it was subject to after the end of the Cold War. And this is the end that justifies the means, including the mechanism of soft power it has been using most successfully and especially in Serbia. Russia is expanding its influence on the Balkans at the time when all the countries of region are unconsolidated and vulnerable, have not rounded off their identities yet and are, therefore, prey to pressure.

This is the subject matter of this collection of papers the authors of which are dealing with various aspects of Russia's presence in Serbia.

Russia's today's presence in the Balkans is nothing new: it logically follows from Russia's imperialism and Serbian-Russian analogies. The majority of Serbia's electorate supports the party that is deep-rooted in Serbia's political tradition. And all this, as Latinka Perović put it, along with the shaky consensus on Serbia's accession to EU is seen as a confusion; the longstanding process the upcoming stages of which cannot be anticipated for sure without proper understanding of the process itself. And the alternative is possible only when this process is truly understood.

SONJA BISERKO

I

TRANSITION AND IDENTITIES

Jovan Komšić¹

DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND IDENTITIES

A View on the Nature of Transitional
Identity Engineering in Serbia

ABSTRACT: By structuring his analysis into four key segments (1) Nation-related contradictions and identity ambiguities; (2) Identity policies and multiculturalism; (3) Transitional identity engineering in Serbia, and (4) Projections of the future and prospects of multicultural strategies, the author corroborates the following thesis: regardless of numerous challenges of multiculturalism and dramatic open issues concerning the economic and financial crisis, as well as the refugee crisis, the EU policies of identity (both national and European) cannot preserve the advantage of the existing and globally unique civilizational values, nor can they prove their effectiveness in the consolidation of the democracy and integration of transition societies if the power to define identity is acquired (or preserved) by xenophobes and ethno-nationalists. Instead of traditional notions and (ultra)conservative (anti-)politics, the crisis requires new ideas and strategies. Therefore, multiculturalism should be given a real chance.

KEYWORDS: democratic transition, identity, nation, ethno-nationalism, citizenship, multiculturalism, political elites, Serbia, autonomy of Vojvodina, constitutional changes.

1 For more details about the concept of identity see Erikson's classical study *Identity and the Life Cycle*. Namely, when discussing *ego identity*, Erikson refers primarily to the sense of identity, or "the accrued confidence that one's ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity (one's ego in a psychological sense) is matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others"; Erik H. Erikson, *Identitet i životni ciklus*, Zavod za udžbenike, Belgrade, 2008, p. 105.

Transition in the countries of Eastern (Central and South-East) Europe has marked the new beginning of citizenship formation in the sense of transforming the subjects of the regime of “dictatorship over needs” (Feher, Heler, Markuš 1986) into the sovereign holders of inviolable human and civil rights, and free participants in a competitive, economic and political “game in town”. One in a series of the basic tasks within this complex and simultaneous process involving a profound transformation of all social structures and subsystems has been (and still is) the transformation of traditional nationalism and absolutist (ethno-)democracy into the forms and contents of constitutional nationalism and constitutional democracy (Heler 1991, 555–57; Fridrih 1996, 83–84).

However, already at the beginning of the transformation of the old, real socialist regime, all difficulties concerning the symbiosis of universalistic ideas of human rights, republican concern for the public good, and the principles and institutional structures of civil nation (“a community of citizens”), including the favoured, populist traditions of “leading cultural nation” (*Kulturnation*), “state-building nation”, “national soul” and the like, became evident in the arena of political pluralization and democratic state and nation building, especially in the Western Balkans (Šnaper 1996, 221–28).

The problem of modernizing and “citizenizing” belated nations (Plessner 1997) of post-communist states and societies has been (and is still) made even more complicated by big waves of the financial and economic crisis from 2008 to the present day. In synergy with the “tsunami” of the refugee crisis in the summer and autumn of 2015, these events are shaking the pillars of EU policies, reinforcing eurosceptic tendencies and undermining the new and still fragile foundations of constitutional democracy and an open civic nation in the countries of Central and (South) East Europe. Moreover, the crisis has announced great shocks within the social tissue of the West European member countries, as well as the European Union’s political and institutional structures themselves.

Therefore, it is not only a question of the controversies about the instruments (EU policies) to be used in solving the migrant problem (war refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants) which is, say, in Britain at the top of the list of possible reasons for holding a referendum on staying in or leaving the European Union. The paradoxes of democracy (“post-democracy”; “ageing and degeneration”; “democraziness”; “videocracy”) (Gidens 2003, 434–36; Kin 2010, 28–31) in the European Union hint at the alternatives resembling

the inauspicious times of the dominant nationalist “blunt desire for simplification” (*reductio ad absurdum*), which John Keane once illustrated by quoting Otto von Bismarck’s instruction: “Germans, think with your blood!” (Kin 2003, 112–28). Namely, it is evident that over the past decades, at the far right of the European countries’ political scene, there has been an increasing supply of ambitious candidates for giving similar instructions to their “endangered” nation and religious community.

In any case, all this gives good reason for focusing our analysis on the temptations of identity strategies of exclusion, on one side, and multicultural policies of integration, on the other, while at the same time structuring it into the following key segments: 1) nation-related contradictions and identity ambiguities; 2) identity policies and multiculturalism; 3) transitional identity engineering in Serbia and 4) projections of the future and chances of multicultural strategies.

Finally, the text to follow will serve to corroborate the following thesis: regardless of numerous challenges, ambiguities and detours of multiculturalism, as well as dramatic open issues concerning the economic and financial crisis, refugee crisis, identity policies in the EU (including both national and European identity) cannot retain the advantage of the existing, globally unique civilizational values, or prove their effectiveness in the consolidation of democracy and integration of transition societies if the power to define identity is acquired (or retained) by xenophobes and ethno-nationalists. Instead of traditional notions and (ultra)conservative (anti-)politics, the crisis requires new ideas and strategies. Therefore, multiculturalism should be given a real chance.

1. NATION-RELATED CONTRADICTIONS AND AMBIGUOUS IDENTITIES

1. 1. *What Is the Genuine “WE” for Our European Times?*

Since “identity“ cannot be understood and defined as the *source of the basic commitments and comprehension of our self (or ego) by means of relatively stabilized emotional and rational matrices (patterns) of our consciousness, which help us organize a complex meaning and experience around one primary idea and thus provide answers to the questions: where do we originate from; who do we belong to; what we are and what we strive to achieve*, I will

point out that, in their own way, all nation models and types of nationalism actually vary the question: what is the key determinant of identity?

Regardless of the exceptional indentedness of modern nation theory, the answers, which have been given over the past two centuries, opt for one of two key paradigms. The first is the monistic (holistic) paradigm of the assigned heritage and hardly changeable nature of “complicity“ in one culture (Herder; according to: Šatle, Dijamel, Pizije 1993, 352; and Smit 1998, 21). On the other hand, there exists the paradigm of multiplicity (A. Smit 1998, 13–21; Volcer 1995, 173–80), development ability (Gidens 2003, 32–33), individual vocations (Domenak 1991, 19–20) and achievements, as the key position of the precisely founded understanding and explanation of extremely complex phenomena of personal and collective identities.

By singling out above all else (a) continuity and (b) differentiation from others as the criteria for identity determination, Montserrat Guibernau says that “identity is a definition, an interpretation of the self, which determines what and where a person is in both a social and psychological sense“ (Giberno 1996/97, 52). Guibernau also points out that “... cultural togetherness and the unity of the senses are the main sources of building and recognizing national identity“, which means that “... the power of culture lies in its ability to create identity, something an individual cannot live without and something that cannot easily be changed“ (Giberno 1996/97, 53, 57).

On the other hand, when the constructivist and manipulative component of identity is in question, I draw attention to Gyorgy Konrad’s thesis: “Identity is the spiritual prosthesis of moderately clever ones. You simply throw a block of texts into the brain... the more you swallow the identity bait, the more you will be in the hands of politicians“ (Konrad 1995, 9). Consequently, by addressing the Western Balkan tribal hysteria at the end of the last century, this author notes that the transition (“renascent“) offers of “authentic identity“ are “a bait at the entrance to a nightclub where one will be fleeced“ (Konrad 1995, 9).

In order to outline a complex semantic structure of identity, I will present the idea of another author, which will lead to the key component of this notion. Namely, bearing in mind the factor of identity changeability and situational (epochal, concrete historical, socio-economic and political) determinants of identity, Timothy Garton Ash, formulates the most reliable litmus question in the introduction to his book *Free World* in that sense: “What’s

the widest political community of which you spontaneously say 'we' or 'us'? In our answer to that question lies the key to our future.“ (Eš 2006, 13, 23).

In this connection, I wish to say that it is not only a question of individual preferences for a collective framework. It is also a question of the very character of the construction and identity framework, whereby a significant role is played by the most influential cultural elites and ruling elites of contemporary nations. The content and method of constructing “us“ and “others“, will determine the legitimacy of the theme devoted to the plurality of our community. Therefore, those aspects of identity theories and policies which raise the question of identity multiplicity; integration patterns and (dis)functionality of setting strict borders and excluding “others“ (“strangers“) from the identification, and legal and political facets of “our“ political community, are very relevant for our theme.

2. Multiplicity and Controversiality of Transition Identities

Multiple (plural) identities and roles pose a standard problem of identity, whether individual or collective (Smit 1998, 13–21). This is just the theme with which Anthony D. Smith begins his well-known study *National Identity*. He brings to mind the year of Pericles' death (429 BCE) after which Athens' power went into a steep decline. In the same year, Sophocles' famous tragedy *Oedipus Tyrannos* (Oedipus the King) was staged. Oedipus's quest for “his origins“; “his lineage“, the answer to his question: “who he is“, is called “the play's motor“, and each “self“ that Oedipus uncovers is also a “social self“ (familial, territorial, class, religious, ethnic. gender...) (Smit 1998, 11–15).

Switching from an artistic to a sociological plane, we will observe that many faces of our “self“ are born, found, changed, hidden and uncovered just on that “social“ plane. Thus, Giddens considers lineage, sexual orientation, national or ethnic belonging and social class to be the important sources of identity (Giddens 2003, 32). Naturally, they can also include generational, professional, religious and other factors.

Otherwise, history shows that the answers to the questions: “Who am I?“ and “Who are WE?“ are frantically sought during periods of big crises, confusion, deregulation, transformation and uncertain perspectives. Post-communist transition is burdened just by such “driving forces“ of violent social dynamics, the destruction of society and the value system, wandering and

searching for new patterns of consciousness and behavioural regularities in human interactions (Sloterdajk 2001, 39–60).

We can say for Serbia and other political and state entities created on the ruins of the former Yugoslavia that they especially represent an extreme case of the epochal disintegration of the old identity and search for a new one and, in general, for a balanced path of the society that should be shaped in the process of transforming community (*Gemeinschaft*) into modern society (*Gesellschaft*) (Tenies 1969, 184–93).

This change, which is not linear or easy, may also be characterized by the controversial strategy of permeating retraditionalization with political modernization trends, whose outcomes include peculiar community-society hybrids, with incomplete (semi-)state structures. As we have seen, the first phase of such a “bakward ó forward” path, which started in the late 1980s, was characterized by a populist, ethno-nationalist “return to the roots” (“race”; “blood”; “holy soil”). Such an ideology, which was overwhelmingly adopted by all Yugoslav nations, was a decisive factor in the destruction of the old, socialist system of “brotherhood and unity of equal peoples and nationalities”.

The task of the second stage of such transition, “democratic nationalist” engineering – after “ethnic paranoia about neighbours” (Sloterdajk 2001, 47) and the Hobbesian state of nature – was to transform soon the recently profiled new (and old, recycled) “natives”, ardent advocates and actors of war and nationalist transition into citizens. In so doing, the retraditionalized, pre-Yugoslav, post-socialist identity seal should be retained, while at the same time removing – from the public domain and institutionalized interactions – the extreme forms and contents of the ethno-nationalization of policies, which portentously resembled the policies characterized by Hannah Arendt in her *The Origins of Totalitarianism* as “the transformation of the state into an instrument of the nation” and nebulous “identification of nationality with one’s soul” (Arent 1998, 232, 237).

Consequently, transformation would generally observe the first principle of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789) that men are born free and equal in rights (Mrđenović 1989, 137). However, in the parlance of Niklas Luhmann, its systemic purpose, including the “institutionalization of particular forms of processing experience (habits, perceptions, interpretation of reality, values)” (Luhmann 1998, 130), would be based on the programme (software) for the substantialization of national identity and

exclusive distinction from others, resembling the old German paradigm of *Leitkultur* (leading culture).

A prerequisite for all these transformations (from tribe into nation; from traditional into constitutional nationalism) should be the ability of the society to reach a consensus² on the foundations of the state and democracy, thus enabling the sustainable building of a democratic nation through the legitimate and efficient institutions of the rule of law, civil society and democratic culture (Komšić 2005, 25–50).

However, the strongly supported transition strategies of ethnificizing the basic structures of a nation, including actors, beliefs, and interest and ideological dynamics, which resists the principle of the rule of law and not the rule of the people, have produced (and still produce) numerous controversies and social rifts. The main contradiction is derived from the fact that a nation is the phenomenon of a modern civic civilization which, in contrast to a tribal (proto-)state and clientages of ethnic political entrepreneurs, must be based, by definition, on the concept of a neutral, territorial state, impersonal authorities and competent government.

Consequently, various transition experiences of the countries that once belonged to a large “archipelago“ of real socialism point to the emergence of many obstacles on the designed path toward post-communist democratization. During the 25-year transition period, the group of 27 former socialist countries differentiated themselves into several segments, ranging from the most successful ones with a consolidated market democracy, through partially consolidated democracies and hybrid systems, to more or less consolidated autocracies (Komšić 2006, 50–52).

I would say that Peter Sloterdijk’s remark on the possible existence of democracy-exporting limits is in many respects applicable to all less successful and unsuccessful transition processes. For “... on the path toward democratization, in the Western sense of the word, there are the massive relics of

2 Dominique Schnapper writes the following about consensus: “*Consensus* simply means that citizens recognize explicit and implicit rules which permit at least the provisional settlement of their conflicts in a non-violent way, through a discussion, compromise and commonly adopted reference to a general interest, proclaimed and adopted as such, which is not to be confused with the interests of individuals or particular groups. In this light, it was a commonplace throughout the whole second half of the nineteenth century to contrast the paper ballot to the gun“; D. Šnaper, *Zajednica građana*, Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, Sremski Karlovci, Novi Sad, 1996, p. 137.

‘cultures’ which, in compliance with their essential characteristics, observe older principles or, more exactly, the principles of the agrarian epoch” (Sloterdijk 2001, 54).

In such cultures, which can be described “... as a set of the fundamental tones for tuning populations to co-belonging and joint music playing” or, in other words, as “an attempt to preserve an ethnic continuum”, the paradox of humankind, in the sense of “co-belonging with those with whom we can hardly co-belong”, can primarily be resolved by using Plato’s *noble lie* “... which supports the state and enables those who conduct policy to commit all members of a community to a joint, sweet and useful deception” (Sloterdijk 2001, 29–30, 44, 48–49; italic J.K).

Consequently, as pointed out by Sloterdijk in his philosophical essays on hyper-politics, it is a question of the political management of fusion,³ based on an “imaginary bloodline”, “quasi-religious nation-state identities” and “state simulations of hyper-hordes”. Instead of the progress of free citizenship, civil society, and the culture of tolerance, openness and universalism, such “hordes” continue to exist through village. The appropriate forms of fusion policies, which wrongly design small to be big, just as they wrongly search for a commune (community) in a large (state) framework of society, easily end up with non-democratic extremes, “co-belonging pathologies” and “hyper-horde totality” (Sloterdijk 2001, 30–31, 44–45, 52–54).

Returning to Smith’s considerations, I wish to point out that, while listing the common assumptions of a nation, he first determined the fundamental attributes of *national identity*. Those are: (a) historic territory or homeland; b) common myths and historical memories; (c) common, mass public culture; (d) common legal rights and duties for all members, and (e) common economy with territorial mobility for members (Smit 1998, 29–30). Accordingly, Smith defines a *nation* as “... named human populations with a shared historic territory, common myths and historical memories, common, mass public culture, common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (Smit 1998, 30).

Consequently, national identity is multidimensional, changeable, conceived, constructed, but not completely imagined. As a specific historical “amalgamation”, it can never be reduced to one of the mentioned elements and is clearly differentiated from any concept of the state. To put it more

3 Now known as *corporate identity policy*.

exactly, the concept of a state and the concept of a nation overlap in some cases, but in others they do not. For these reasons, as argued by Smith, striving toward homogenization or the fusion of cultural, institutional and political components is exposed to the danger of being disputed even by ethnic communities within the borders of old-established western states. These cases (and there are many of them) illustrate a *deep gap between the notion of a state and the notion of a nation*, the gap emphasized in historical documents.“ (Smit 1998, 31; italic J. K).

So far, I have devoted considerable attention to the mentioned issue in a number of my books and papers, including the most recent book dealing with the democratic management of cultural differences (Komšić 2015). Therefore, the comment of the renowned historian Eric Hobsbawm about “a surprising degree of intellectual vagueness“ in the liberal discourse of the 19th and 20th centuries, which “made it difficult to consider the nation intellectually at all“ (Hobsbaum 1996, 32), will be relevant for our analysis.

Namely, by pointing to the changeability of identity (even within a very short period of time), as well as the fact that democratization also generates xenophobia as a political force, Hobsbawm argues that political activists and intellectuals are most responsible for a dangerous reduction of plural identities (a series of identifications determining a human being) to one national identification level, without relieving people from a certain responsibility for the corruption of democracy. All this undoubtedly confirms the view that the interactive relationship: nation ó state ó democracy is just such a field of study which most urgently needs attention and research (Hobsbaum 1996, 18; Hobsbaum 1999, 25).

In that sense, after having adopted these Hobsbawm’s ideas, I especially analyzed the fact – in one text devoted to the paradoxes of transition democracies (Komšić 2010, 331–52) – that old ideas and tools, such as the traditional understanding of state aims, ethnocentric homogenization and the like, which are not suited to the 21st century, still have many proponents and followers in Serbia. This is evidenced by the election results and the results of public opinion surveys. If we also bear in mind that in our theoretical production, to put it mildly, there are many examples of misunderstanding the key dimensions of the problem concerning the ethno-nationalist corruption of the state and democracy (Beljinac 2011, 140), it is necessary to consider some other aspects of the mentioned relationship.

2. IDENTITY POLICIES AND MULTICULTURALISM – SEVERAL THEORETICAL VIEWS

2. 1. *Multiculturalism should be encouraged! (Giddens)*

Dominique Schnapper points out that a democratic nation should be “the optimum of diversity“ which, according to Claude Levi-Strauss, „... does not prohibit the participation of populations in the common political domain” (Šnaper 1996, 195). Naturally, it is clear that this optimum depends on many factors and “...varies according to the national tradition, and according to the history of statist institutions and of patriotic sentiment” (Šnaper 1996, 195).

Drawing upon this thesis, the British social theorist Anthony Giddens broadens the scope of civil, liberal democracy and, giving preference to agreement over domination and violence, advocates the ideas and policies that will enable the prudent and sustainable interaction of legal, social justice and cultural diversity principles.

According to Giddens, the introduction of the cultural aspect into the centre of the debate over social welfare represents the basic issue of the reform of social model (Gidens 2009, 45). On the other hand, this does not mean that “... immigrants and ethnic minorities should be left alone to get on with whatever activities they choose.“ This actually means the opposite: multiculturalism anticipates a search for the ways to bring diversity into harmony with prevailing values (Gidens 2009, 45).

Consequently, as an actor in a highly relevant rethinking of Europe in the global age, including the reflections of positive multicultural experiences with “Britishness“, as a popular identity for members of minority communities in Britain (Gidens 2009, 154), Giddens said in 2007 that the *idea of multiculturalism was popularly – and populistically – rejected*. However, a great number of participants in a debate about multiculturalism *understand it wrongly* (Gidens 2009, 156).

Since multiculturalism is not a description of society in which there are diverse cultural groups – for which the term “cultural pluralism“ is most appropriate – but is a set of policies (programmes and measures) that recognize “... *the authenticity of different ways of life within a social community, and seek to promote fruitful and positive transactions between them – but within an overall, and singular, system of citizenship rights and obligations*“ (Gidens

2009, 158; italic J. K.), Giddens rightfully concludes that “multiculturalism has so far barely been tried in Europe“ and where it has been tried its effect has been positive. All things considered, the theorist of the Labour’s “Third Way“ emphasizes that one should promote multiculturalism and not abandon it⁴ (Gidens 2009, 160, 168).

2. 2. A great destructive potential hides underneath identity differentiation from “others“! (Kermani)

The same views can be found in one of the most credible recent studies on multicultural society and Muslims in Germany, with the title in the form of the question *Who Are We?* Its author is Navid Kermani who, inter alia, reminds us of the well-known fact that “our identity exists only if there is some other identity, which itself is natural“. However, the problem emerges – and it can be very big and dramatic – “... just there, in the construction of something what we ourselves are and in our differentiation from others“. This author argues that “... a great destructive potential is hidden just there“ and points to the absurdity of such an essentialization of national identity and one’s own culture, “... which is experienced as a separate entity and whose existence and effects do not depend on people“. Moreover, it seems quite frightening that someone “... always feels like a German and only like a German, regardless of what he does, thinks or feels, someone who acts, eats and loves exclusively like a German!“ (Kermani 2013, 20, 96).

Just as the author argues with reason that “a monocultural society would be a real nightmare“ and turns attention to two opposite concepts and camps, as well as the necessity of changing the climate, critique of essentialist stereotypes and prejudice, as well as of a patient, step-by-step building of new institutional structures (Kermani 2013, 113–21), John Keane – in his book *Civil Society*, written in the late 1990s and based on the experiences of the first decade of post-communist transition – searches for an answer to the question of “how the limits of democracy can be overcome in practice by inventing new institutional methods of preventing the growth of democracy’s own poisonous fruit“?

4 For more details about the “Third Way“ see: Kregar, Josip. 2000. “Treći put: novi politički i ideološki okviri socijalne politike“.

2. 3. How the "growth of democracy's own poisonous fruit can be prevented"? (Keane)

Nationalism is just that democracy's own *poisonous fruit*. Keane regards it as "the murderous *reductio ad absurdum*", which means that the "child of democratic pluralism" possesses such an "anti-democratic potential of the struggle for national identity" which, in an adequate historical context, can become and is becoming "the continuation of totalitarianism by other means" (Kin 2003, 118–27).

Among other things, nationalism is "a judgement disorder"; it is "driven by a bovine will to simplify things"; it has "a fanatical core"; "its simultaneous treatment of the Other as everything and nothing"; "the Other is seen as the knife in the throat of the nation", including a fanatical wish to clean up the community from bad elements and curb internal differences. Finally, bearing in mind the destructive consequences of nationalism in our lands, Keane concludes: "Nationalism is evidently a serious and dirty business, in this case resulting in the forcible tearing apart of Yugoslavia and the destabilization of the whole Balkan region" (Kin 2003, 119–24).

Consequently, we must determine how in such an atmosphere Keane finds the solution to the problem of nationalism. By rejecting the simplified explanations shifting the blame to capitalism or communism (Kin 2003, 125), he suggests that: "Solving the problem of nationalism by democratic means is possible, but not easy" (Kin 2003, 127). The seemingly surprising difficulties are also evidenced by the precise insight that just such "... democratic mechanisms (including civil society) facilitate the transformation of national identity into nationalism". Therefore, Keane's proposal is inclined towards limiting the undeniability and omnipresence of "national" and "nationalist" in the everyday life of people and modern states:

"Democracy is best served by abandoning the doctrine of national self-determination and regarding a shared sense of national identity as a legitimate but *limited* form of life. This thesis contains a paradoxical corollary: national identity, an important support of democratic institutions, is best preserved by restricting its scope in favour of *non-national* identities that reduce the probability of its transformation into anti-democratic nationalism" (Kin 2003, 127–28).

According to Keane, in a more concrete sense and in the European context, it is possible to envisage four independent mechanisms for curbing the force of nationalism.

The first is the *decentralization* of the institutions of the nation state through the development of interlocking networks of democratically accountable sub-national and supra-national state institutions. (Kin 2003, 128). Namely, finding the potential facilitation of the “birth of a post-national Europe” or, more exactly, the diversification and limitation of state power in the member countries, in the “Europe of the Regions“ trends, Keane holds that this adds to “pressure on nationalist movements, political parties, governments and leaders to recognize the fact and legitimacy of countervailing political powers, even in such sensitive matters as ‘national economic policy’ and the resolution of so-called ‘national conflicts’” (Kin 2003, 130–31).

The second mechanism is the “formulation and application of the *internationally recognized* legal guarantees of national identity” in which Keane also finds a “vital adjunct of the breaking down of the sovereignty of the nation state“. Using the example of the constitutionalization of the principle of citizenship (“transnational citizenship”) in the European Union (Maastricht Treaty, 1993), this implies the “depoliticization” and “deterritorialization” of national identity. Thus, national identity is seen “as a *civil* entitlement of citizens“ and the increasingly pronounced multinational character of the European states is recognized, while at the same time contesting “... the early modern assumption that national loyalties are exclusive and that citizenship and democracy are therefore possible only in a nationally homogeneous state” (Kin 2003, 131–34).

The third mechanism that guarantees national identity and democracy against nationalism is the *pluralization of identities* or, in other words, “the development of a pluralist mosaic of identities within civil society“. In this mosaic, national identity is legitimate, but still only one possible identity among many others, says Keane expecting that this will provides spaces “... for citizens to act upon other chosen or inherited identities, thus *limiting* the probable role of national identity in the overall operation of state and civil institutions and political parties, communications media and other intermediary bodies” (Kin 2003, 134).

This is especially significant because of the negative effects of “modeling” state institutions and civil society exclusively on the matrix of national

identity. In fact, this would mean “privileging one aspect of citizens’ lives, devaluating others, and contradicting the pluralism so vital for a democratic civil society, thus rendering those citizens’ lives nation-centres and one-dimensional and, thus, susceptible to the rise of nationalism” (Kin 2003, 135).

Finally, the *deterritorialization of national identity by means of an international civil society* is, according to Keane, the fourth and least certain remedy against nationalism. The author draws such a conclusion because “... the internationalization of civil society is destroyed by nationalism and genocidal war, as in south-central Europe” (Kin 2003, 140).

2. 4. Democratic Consociation – The Solution for Plural Societies (Lijphart)

In view of the fact that – by relying on Arend Lijphart’s analyses of democracy in plural societies – I have so far considered the significance of a consensus on the foundations of democracy, including the elements of consociation in policy and government procedures (Lijphart 1992, 32–50; Lajphart 2003, 97–102)⁵ in a number of papers, it is now reasonable to devote attention to some of Lijphart’s ideas and principles that are indispensable for contemporary theory. A significant starting point for this analysis of transitional institutional and cultural engineering and identity management in Serbia, is the knowledge that, on the basis of complex empirical comparison, Lijphart respects the determining power of culture relative to structure, without diminishing the significance of the feedback influence of institutions on the transformation of cultural patterns of behaviour and, in particular, the mitigation of social rifts (Lijphart 1992, 17–19; Lajphart 2003, 287).

Using the development of consensual democracy in Switzerland and Austria as an example, Lijphart confirms the thesis on the effective impact of institutions on the transformation of the cultural domain towards consensuality. On the other hand, he points to the difficulties faced by Belgium, India and Israel, which need consensual institutions but lack a cultural basis. Israel

5 The most recent relevant studies are: J. Komšić, *Vojvođansko pitanje u procesu srpske tranzicije (1988–2013)*, Dan Graf, Belgrade, 2014; and J. Komšić, *Demokratsko upravljanje kulturološkim različitostima*, Centre for Regionalism, Novi Sad, Dan Graf, Belgrade, 2015.

and India encounter a particular problem due to their “distinct disharmonic and conflicting structure” (Lijphart 2003, 287).

Consequently, this type of democracy, including its limitations and vulnerabilities, is also functional in western societies because, like in the case of Switzerland and Belgium, it is compatible with “transitional cultural pluralism” (*Van den Berghe*). Lijphart announces the good news in the following way.

Although consociational democracy usually enhances the plural nature of a plural society over a shorter period of time, a successful consociational government can succeed in resolving some of the most significant differences among the segments and, thus, depoliticize them over a longer period of time. Such a government can also develop a high enough level of mutual trust both among the elites and masses over a longer period of time, and thus become superfluous (Lijphart 1992, 227, 234).

Consequently, we see that in the case of heterogeneous societies in which communities (segments) “mix with each other but do not merge”, while the cultural dividing lines closely follow political divides (Lijphart 1992, 11, 24), the political elites can play a decisive role both in the development of mutual trust and consensual culture among the members of the demos, and the destruction of the presumptions of joint life and democracy in general.

2. 5. The Decisive Role of Political Elites!?

Just as we can say that Bismarck’s “art of the possible” really serves as a key measure of the performance of modern politics, we can also point out that the model of organizing links and homogenizing large groups in “the sphere of something common to all” (Sloterdijk 2001, 9, 23), which is based on the state-sponsored straightening out of historically inherited cultural “bumps” and the creation of a new “imagined but not imaginary community”,⁶ seems to be very simple. However, its application faces peoples and nations with numerous uncertainties and unpredicted and utterly

6 In that sense, by varying Benedict Anderson’s well-known thesis that nations are imagined communities, Richard Jenkins writes that “... if ethnicity is *imagined*, however, it is *anything but imaginary*”; it is both ancient and modern (italic J. K.); Ričard Dženkins, *Etnicitet u novom ključu*, Biblioteka XX vek, Belgrade, 2001, p. 291; see also: Benedikt Anderson, *Nacija: zamišljena zajednica*, Plato, Belgrade, 1998, pp. 17–19.

different outcomes relative to the purpose (meaning, aims and objectives) of the “system“ (Luhmann 1998, 127–60).

In any case, it is difficult to dispute the fact that the elites and media redesign tradition to suit their current interests and beliefs. They invent the “national soul” and “authentic identity” of the dominant group by “recycling” the inherited, parochial and mythological patterns of consciousness which, in a mass society, return to the source of nominal and effective power and authority as the “prevalent public opinion”, frequently in the form of a mere reflection of such a politically drained, not rarely forged and perverted (quasi-)cultural phenomenon and “public good”. In this way, the outputs or demands of a systemic environment (Luman 2001, 283–90), which are sent to the governing nucleus of the political system, obtain the desirable content of the “authentic will of the people” and measure (“red lines”) of domestic and foreign policies for the ruling elites.

Unfortunately, apart from good modernization and harmonization outputs, the ruling and opposition elites in young democracies may induce intolerance, exclusiveness and selfishness in the public sphere to such an extent that they turn politics into a zero-sum game, institutions into a gladiatorial arena and, with media assistance, “spread the virus” of anti-politics⁷ and strengthen the patterns of such a political “war of all against all” (*Bellum omnia contra omnes*) in the tissue of a traditional social environment.

Thus, in plural societies, with an impatient nationalist imperative of the prevalence of linguo-genetic loyalty to kinship, territory and religion, in addition to the involvement of national elites and their identity management which, according to Ernest Gellner, means “to take a great deal of very forceful cultural engineering” (Gelner 1997, 144), the paradoxes of democracy can multiply, while the state and society can find themselves paralyzed, which leads to the collapse of democracy.

In his well-known study of polyarchy, Robert A. Dahl pointed to the risks from such situations, which we can recognize to a lesser or greater degree in most transition societies in the Western Balkans. Therefore, in order to show, in principle, the extent to which the current and future nature of the state and society in Serbia can be shaped by the *beliefs of political elites*, I will refer to

7 If “politics“ could be regarded as the addition of interests in favour of public good, then transition “anti-politics” could be regarded as some kind of predatory subtraction or a zero-sum game, in which the winner gets it all and the loser has to fall.

Dahl's statement that the potential role of beliefs is too great to be neglected. Namely, there are credible reasons to believe that certain beliefs affect the chances of hegemony and polyarchy (Dal, 1997, 137–98).⁸

In that context, this author points out that the period of “stability” of beliefs may not bring political stability, or peace. Instead, it may bring religious wars, ideological conflicts, violence. He sees the possibility of change and chance that an actor adopts a new belief in the period of receptivity in the concurrence of very complex conditions (Dal 1997, 193–95).

For purposes of our analysis we have sufficiently presented the theoretical aspect of the influence of political culture and beliefs of political activists on the nature of a political regime. Thus, the question follows as to the status of the cultural components of transition processes in Serbia and whether they function in favour of consensual culture and democratic stabilization?

3. TRANSITIONAL IDENTITY ENGINEERING IN SERBIA

3. 1. *The Assessment of Transition in Serbia*

The specificity and unexpectedness of our path of postcommunist transition is also reassured by the assessment of Robert A. Dahl, one the most renowned contemporary political scientists, that, in a sense, the political change in Eastern Europe occurred contrary to the standard path of democratization. Namely, on the basis of the Coppedge-Reinicke analyses and classifications of contemporary regimes, the mentioned author points to the “plausible sequence“, which implies that “*political* rights and liberties cannot be assured unless they have been preceded by certain *pre-political* rights“. Consequently, it is a process going

„... from alternative sources of information, to a wider public expression, then to a plurality of illegal and semi-legal associations and groups... Other than in the near-polyarchies or the proto-polyarchies, elections should be seen as a critical stage following a process of liberalization, probably a lengthy

8 According to Dahl, “... any theorist who wants to explain the differences in regimes between diverse countries“ will have to treat such factors as the socio-economic level of a country, nature and degree of inequality, level of subculture and the like as a major independent variable, such a theorist “will have to treat [as a practical matter] the beliefs and ideas of political activists as a major independent variable” (Robert Dal, *Poliarhija*, Filip Višnjić, Belgrade, 1997, p. 198).

process, in which the prior institutions and appropriate underlying conditions for stable democracy have been developed” (Dal, 1995/96, 132–35).

In the light of abrupt changes following the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), Dahl checks out his views and concludes that, in essence, they have proved correct. However, staging pluralist (foundational) elections, frequently without completing the process of liberalization of the state and society, has prompted the author to conclude: “Yes, I probably underestimated the extent to which the setting of elections can *under some conditions* turn into a driving force that enormously speeds up the whole sequence“ (Dal 1995/96, 135).

The effectively removed obstacles standing in the way of democratization represent “some conditions“ the author thinks about. The first obstacle to which he turns attention is the *employment of instruments for violent coercion* by leaders who have gained or maintained their power. The second obstacle concerns the nature of the socio-economic system and *level of development*, while the third obstacle concerns the (non-)existence of acute and persistent *conflicts*, especially “subcultural conflicts“ (evolved over religion, language, race, ethnic group, region, ideology...). The fourth obstacle to democratization depends on the type of *foreign influence* and control, while the fifth obstacle depends on the *cultural environment* of political institutions (ideas, political beliefs, belief system, habits and norms of behaviour) (Dal 1995/96, 133–35).

Consequently, in the early 1990s, Robert Dahl pointed out that “... if any of the five obstacles mentioned above... stands massively in the way, elections cannot produce democracy and fundamental rights”. It is also necessary that the prior sequence elements (sources of information, freedom of expression and freedom to organize) should “... already be in place firmly enough to survive the vicissitudes of the post-election period” (Dal 1995/96, 135). As for the possibility of “speeding up history“ which, by the way, was expected by Karl Marx from the dictatorship of proletariat, Dahl holds that

“... international opinion, information and policy can nowadays exert an extraordinary influence on the development of these crucial elements, on the conduct of the elections themselves, and on the postelection transition. It is possible, indeed, that international influences may now help to shorten a process of change that historically was ordinarily quite protracted” (Dal 1995/96, 135).

Synthesizing the experiences of postcommunist transition and understanding democracy as “a combination of certain procedures and uncertain outcomes”, Claus Offe also offers a series of reassuring answers. At the same time, he draws attention to a number of great dilemmas and uncertainties, caused by the widespread *atmosphere of uncertainties and fears*. In view of the fact that such feelings do not contribute to the development of a strong civic culture, Offe focuses his attention on the problem of immature and greedy elites.

In that sense, while speaking about the “temptations of absolutely selfish *suave-qui-peut* strategies“, he thinks of the context in which many people can get a lot, but an even greater number of them may lose virtually everything. The following passage especially sounds like a warning: “*If democratic policy produces the results which – under international diktat or by definition – create the pauperized and excluded class, people without hope, alienated and marginalized, then there is not much left that can redeem democracy in the eyes of citizens*” (Ofe 1999, 372; italic J. K).

Finally, when it comes to the results of comparing the above ideas about the assumptions of consolidated democracy with the current situation in Serbia, in 2005/06 I offered to scientists and the general public a synthetic assessment in a tabular form (Table 1).⁹ I also present this table now because I hold that the key parameters and processes have not substantially changed in a qualitative terms.

9 For more details see: J. Komšić, *Dileme demokratske nacije i autonomije*, Službeni glasnik, Belgrade; PHILIA, Novi Sad, 2006, pp. 72–76.

Table 1: TRANSITION ASSESSMENT IN SERBIA

ASSUMPTIONS OF SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION	SITUATION IN SERBIA
Formal institutions and procedures	(??) Unclear boundaries of the separation of powers and autonomy of the legislative, executive and judiciary branches of government; powerless parliamentarism; unstable, "party-occupied" and insufficiently competent and efficient public administration; controversies over decentralization and resistance to the institutional implementation of European standards.
Homogeneous nation state	(??) Plural society: small chances that all segments of the population develop a "strong feeling of national identity" in the foreseeable future, within the same state boundaries; the problem of Kosovo's self-proclamation of independence.
Legitimacy	(?) Low level of confidence in leaders and political institutions; changeable and fragile support to reformers.
External political factor	(?) Normalization of relations and cooperation in the Western Balkans heavily burdened by the war legacy; controversial effects of the political and economic conditions for support to reforms and EU accession.
Strong collective actors	(?) Associational weakness and uninfluential civil society associations; polarized pluralism and the lack of the necessary degree of inter-party confidence and cooperation.
Ideas, values, culture	(?) Vague awareness of the nature and consequences of democratic changes; ethnification of democracy and the state; insufficient support to the inclusive strategies concerning the liberalization of multiethnic society; prevalent <i>Gemeinschaft</i> orientation: traditionalism, conservatism, patriarchalism, authoritarianism, ethno-nationalism, submissive culture; anomy; frustrated majority and massively socialized fears of the present and future.
Development level	(???) Devastated economy and the society of scarcity; enormously high poverty and unemployment levels; crisis of unfulfilled expectations; widespread feeling of lossiness due to transition and uncertainty.

If Table 1 succeeded in providing a more comprehensive view of the actors and nature of transition processes in Serbia, the next logical step in this analysis is associated with the aspect called “understanding the state“. In fact, the empirical data on Serbian citizens’ stance on the desirable type of state will be used to obtain a more precise answer to the question as to the relationship between the official government aims and objectives and the value and rational interest aspirations¹⁰ of the population, on one side, and the overall character of the so-called cultural basis for democratic processes in Serbia, on the other.

3. 2. Serbian Citizens’ Stance on Democracy, State, Nation and Multiculturalism

Continuous public opinion surveys confirm empirically that in Serbia there exist all *four cleavage axes*: socio-economic, historical-ethnic, cultural-value and ideological, and that all of them have a significant influence on the (re)grouping of political parties (Komšić, Pantić, Slavujević 2003, 163). It could also be observed that there are clear differences relating to the key issues such as the democratic definition of national identity, character of the state and political system.

As for a group identification variable it has been shown that local belonging is most preferred by national minorities, while Serbs opt below average for this level of togetherness (35 per cent). It is especially indicative that “... the identification of the largest (especially territorially concentrated) minorities with Serbia is either non-existent or very weak“. On the other hand, “for more than a third of Serbs (37 per cent) Serbia is the most important mainstay of their identity, which is followed by local community (35 per cent)“. All things considered, *ethno-national belonging appears to be the crucial mainstay and differentiation variable of social identifications of the members of the largest national communities in Serbia* (Komšić, Pantić, Slavujević 2003, 55–77).

Public opinion research conducted during the last decade shows that, in essence, Serbian citizens *understand the notion of democracy quite well*. However, in view of the fact that in theory there is no prevailing agreement on the

10 On the “value“ and “rational“ orientations of work see: M. Veber, *Privreda i društvo*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Vol. 1, 1976, pp. 15–18.

key elements of the notion itself,¹¹ one should not be surprised by the finding of the researchers Srećko Mihailović and Zoran Slavujević that respondents understand democracy “... *in different ways and that under this notion they anticipate quite different things*” (Slavujević, Mihailović 1999, 222–31).

According to these social scientists, just as nearly three fourths (73 per cent) of correspondents associate democracy with political freedoms, nearly half of respondents are ready to associate democracy with a good standard of living. The fact that many things are not consequential in understanding the notions of democracy and state in Serbia is also evidenced by the data pointing to the “prevalence of the organic-collectivist view of the ‘totality of people’ (incompatible with democracy), which points to the widespread stance (even 87 per cent) that ‘the interests of the totality of people must stand above all particular interests’” (Slavujević, Mihailović 1999, 222).

By linking the already mentioned and other variables (such as the attitude towards parliamentary democracy and the desired type of leadership) we will obtain the indicators of several different orientations based on the system of government: (1) democratic (34 per cent); (2) authoritarian (28 per cent); (3) mixture of undetermined and unclear views on both systems of government (17 per cent) and (4) contradictory orientation. All this prompted the researchers to set a hypothesis about the existence of a strikingly illogical syndrome (*oxymoron*), in the form of *authoritarian democracy* (Slavujević, Mihailović, 1999, 222–31).

If these research findings are a little older (they originate from the second half of the 1990s), let us take a look at the public opinion surveys of the population in Serbia, without Kosovo and Metohija, which were conducted ten or so years later. Namely, in 2005 and 2006, the CESID team (Belgrade), led by the already mentioned researcher Srećko Mihailović, checked the views on the state, democracy and political differences, and found out that five years after the democratic change one third of respondents hold that those “... events in the autumn of 2000 marked the beginning of Serbia’s democratic transformation. One fifth of citizens still hold that it was the beginning of Serbia’s decline. A strong third holds that nothing happened and that ‘everything remained the same’. Every ninth citizen does not know what

11 J. Komšić, *Teorije o političkim sistemima*, Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade, 2000, pp. 338–47.

happened to him/her nor does he/she understand what they were actually asked".¹²

Consequently, sociological studies of the awareness of the citizens of Serbia (without Kosovo and Metohija) show that the post-2000 transition process which, by definition, also implies a change in cultural patterns is accompanied by cultural value cleavages along the following lines: a) traditionalism – modernism; b) liberalism – conservatism; c) pro-reform – anti-reform orientation; d) authoritarianism – non-authoritarianism and the like (Pantić 2003, 95–129).

Fortunately, all surveys confirm that, despite a great deal of discontent with the current situation in Serbia, the *democratic system of government* is still *legitimate*. The already mentioned 2006 CESID survey¹³ shows that a relative majority (41 per cent) holds that “democracy (is) better than all other systems of government”. Other answer options include: (b) “... both democratic and non-democratic regimes are the same” (20.4 per cent), as well as the possibility that (c) “in some cases a non-democratic government can be better than a democratic one” (16.4 per cent). At the same time, 22 per cent of respondents could not choose any answer.

As an argument in favour of the thesis about the *liberal democratic commitment of most citizens* of Serbia, it is possible to use the answer to the following statement: “Serbia should be organized as a state of all citizens living in it regardless of their nationality“. Almost three fourths of correspondents agree with such a nature of the state (72 per cent), 18.4 are undecided, while almost every tenth respondent (9.5 per cent) does not agree.

At this level of the problem, there are grounds for optimism, because citizens do not insist on the exclusive ownership over the state by the titular, dominant ethnic group. A good news is also the fact that 85 per cent of correspondents agreed (fully or largely) with John Kenneth Galbraith’s statement:

12 “Političke podele u Srbiji – pet godina posle”, CESID Report, Belgrade, May 2005, p. 23.

13 The author of this text participated in the preparation of some instruments for the CESID survey (in March 2006), which provided the basis for checking Serbian citizens’ understanding of the idea of a state. A more complex analysis of the data on the respondents’ value judgements concerning the aims, objectives and role of a state by this author is given in: Jovan Komšić, “Paradoksi tranzicione države i demokratije u Srbiji“, in: Milan Podunavac (ed.), *Država i demokratija*, Službeni glasnik, Faculty of Political Science, 2010, pp. 331–352.

“In the good society all of its citizens must have personal liberty, basic well-being, racial and ethnic equality”.¹⁴

However, if you realize that in a state, which is not culturally (ethnically, religiously, linguistically...) homogeneous, there is a strong commitment to so-called *monocultural citizenship*, regardless of the constitutionally guaranteed protection of minority identities, optimism will start to dwindle, to say the least. Namely, *the lack of consensus on the principles of multiculturalism* is demonstrated by the data on the alarming percentage of opponents to consensual culture and minority rights. Almost one third of respondents (31.1 per cent) agree that “in a civic state there is no need for the official use of the languages of national minorities living in local government units and the provinces”. There are also a considerable number of undecided respondents (28 per cent). Thus, if we add up the number of opponents to linguistic equality and the number of undecided respondents, we will find out that an absolute majority of citizens (59.1 per cent) hold that that it is not good for the state and society to enable others to have something we want for ourselves. However, the face of tolerance and civility of the Serbian population was saved by a relative majority of respondents (40.6 per cent) who do not agree with the above mentioned idea of the decree-based engineering of a monolingual ethno-national state.

As for the European principles of democratic tolerance for diversity, an even higher percentage of citizens agreed with the statement: “The civic character of the state of Serbia will not be called into question by recognizing the European standards of human and minority rights“ (45.4 per cent). There is a very high percentage of undecided respondents (40.5 per cent), while 14 per cent of citizens do not agree with this statement.

However, there’s the “devil“ in the data, which is best evidenced by the fact that one fourth of correspondents hold that “Europe has invented human and minority rights standards in order to call into question the national identity of the state of Serbia“ (24.5 per cent). The percentage of undecided respondents is higher (30.1 per cent), but a relative majority is still not buying this “conspiracy theory“ against Serbs and “everything Serbian“ (45.4 per cent).

As for the political sentiment of the population in Serbia, it is evident that there are increasing divisions among different segments of Serbian

14 Cf. Dž. K. Galbrajt, *Dobro društvo – humani redosled*, Grmeč, Belgrade, 1997, p. 11.

society, in proportion to the concretization of the model of state decentralization and competences of territorial autonomies. At the same time, the political party programmes point to the lasting reproduction of divisions along *centralism – regionalism – autonomism* lines (Komšić, Pantić, Slavujević 2003, pp. 55–60, 71–78, 88–93, 163–69; Komšić 2012, pp. 91–105).

There are many reasons to carry out additional analyses and verifications. Namely, they are imposed by the finding of the mentioned 2006 CESID survey that a relative majority of respondents (45.1 per cent) agree with the thesis that “a state is most efficient if it has only one centre with legislative powers and only one government“. It seems, however, that at least three things are certain. First, the frustrations caused by the inglorious collapse of the complex, (con)federal states (SFRY, FRY and State Union of Serbia and Montenegro) still have a strong influence on the projection of the desired political system. Second, considered from this viewpoint, it seems quite logical to search for a safer and more lasting alternative, which is allegedly a stronger, centralized unitary state. The third and final thing, which points to the *centralist syndrome* of the largest segment of the population, is the confirmation of Alexis de Tocquille’s assessment made a long time ago: “Only peoples who have only a few or no provincial institutions deny their utility; that is, *only those who do not know the thing at all, speak ill of it...*“ (Tokvil 1990, 79, 85–87; italic J. K.). Apart from the mentioned 45 per cent of respondents giving preference to centralism, there is a noticeable percentage of undecided respondents (29.7 per cent) while the number of respondents not being seduced by the idea of unity, simplicity and efficiency, without the vertical separation of powers, is not neglectable either (25.2 per cent).

An even more credible indicator of the lack of any genuine decentralist, democratic experience is also the above-average resistance of respondents (58.9 per cent) to the thesis that the “new Serbian constitution should allow for the possibility of forming new provinces in Serbia“. This thesis is supported by 14.5 per cent of respondents, while 26.6 per cent are undecided.

In addition to the mentioned one fourth of citizens who do not support a centralized, hierarchized “monopoly of physical coercion“, the question about provinces points to an even higher percentage of respondents holding that a genuine unity is the one that legitimately and institutionally ensures unity in differences by means of territorial autonomy. Thus, for example, 36.1

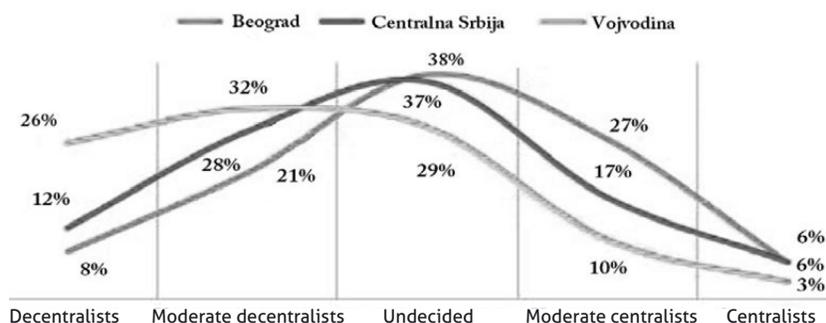
per cent of respondents disagree with the statement: “The existence of the autonomous provinces undermines the unity of the state and its sovereignty“.

However, increasing differences in opinions at a more concrete level of the problem, including (de-)centralization options, are confirmed by the data on the crystalization of three thirds. Thus, apart from 36.1 per cent of respondents who disagree with the above statement, 31.5 per cent of respondents agree and 32.3 per cent of respondents are undecided.

There are almost the same differences in respondents’ answers to the following statement: “The new Serbian constitution should entitle the Province of Vojvodina to pass provincial laws”. One third agrees with the statement (33 per cent), one third is undecided (33 per cent) and one third opposes it (33.9 per cent).

For a complete empirical picture on a longitudinal (temporal) plane, it will be interesting to present a few more data. Namely, when it is a question of Serbian citizens’ stance on systems of government and, in this context, power decentralization, the findings of a survey conducted in 2011 point to *undecidedness* as the prevailing characteristic of the Serbian population’s sentiment, in addition to a moderately decentralist syndrome being dominant in the population structure of Vojvodina (Graph 1).¹⁵

Graph 1: REGIONAL BELONGING AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARD DECENTRALIZATION



15 Source: Izveštaj o istraživanju javnog mnjenja: Decentralizacija i regionalizacija Srbije iz ugla građana, CESID, Office of the National Council for Decentralization, Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, July 2011, p. 38; accessible at: http://www.decentralizacija.org.rs/new_file_download.php?show=vesti&int_asset_id=390&int_lang_id=33; accessed on 11 September 2013.

Consequently, this graph shows the decentralist sentiment of most citizens of Vojvodina (decentralists 26 per cent + moderate decentralists 32 per cent = 58 per cent). In Central Serbia, decentralist sentiment is relatively prevalent (12 per cent + 28 per cent = 40 per cent). The level of decentralist orientation is the lowest in Belgrade (8 per cent + 21 per cent = 29 per cent), which should not be surprising if one takes into account the fears of Belgrade's residents that, in the case of the country's regionalization – the possible redistribution of resources would call into question the leading position of the metropolis in terms of per capita income and other economic, financial and social indicators. Here I can also add the finding of the latest survey that Belgrade's residents are overwhelmingly against Serbia's integration into the European Union.¹⁶

All these and many other data prompt us to question whether the centralist syndrome is the unchangeable characteristic of Serbian citizens' consciousness, their "destined" cultural and traditional pattern, or the elite-induced sentiment in terms of the roles, values and behaviour suiting the aims and logic of political system institutions?

In view of the fact that it is impossible to answer such a question emphatically, that is, more reliably, I will opt with caution for the thesis that *it is not a question of the "hard" facts of Serbian culture, which are not receptive to multicultural, decentralist values, principles and forms of democratic organization of the state and society in Serbia, in the way Serbian nationalists would to present this urbi et orbi. In other words, I hold that, over the past half century of Vojvodina's developed institutional autonomy, the cultural tradition of Serbs, especially Vojvodina Serbs and other nationalities, has acquired the capacity to increase a civic consensus on the foundations of multicultural democratic consociation.*

It is not only a question of the non-recognition of the civilizational achievements of consensual culture in Vojvodina from the 1960s to 1990s on the part of Serbian nationalists. Rather, it is a question of ignoring the better part of Serbian liberal-nationalist heritage, which also includes Miletić's famous resistance to the Hungarian concept of "one political nationality in

16 Šta građani misle o svojoj i o bezbednosti Srbije, BCBP, Građani Srbije: između EU, Rusije i NATO, p. 19.

the state“ and advocacy that “nationality in the political sphere is ensured to all peoples and all nationalities”.¹⁷

The crucial problem lies in the fact that the capacity for tolerance, openness, mutual confidence and culture of mutual understanding, including openness to different institutional state and democracy designs, are overwhelmed by ethno-nationalist convictions, mythological projects and selfish strategies of the prevalent corpus of ideational and political elites in transitional Serbia.

This can especially be recognized in the constitutional definition of the character of the state (as an ethno-nationalist rather than a civic state) and, thus, in the example of the authoritative interpretation of the allowable content of Vojvodina’s autonomy by the Constitutional Court of Serbia. In view of the fact that I have already appraised critically the theoretical justification of the state which, in large measure, determines the decisions of the Constitutional Court of Serbia concerning Vojvodina’s autonomy (in 2012–13), in several texts,¹⁸ I will now present some key points of those analyses.

17 Svetozar Miletić, *O srpskom pitanju*, Municipal Library, Novi Sad, 2001, pp. 213, 230; for more details see: Jovan Komšić, *Demokratsko upravljanje kulturološkim različitostima*, Centre for Regionalism, Novi Sad; Dan Graf, Belgrade, 2015. pp. 31–33.

18 Jovan Komšić, “Ustav 2006: simuliranje konstitucionalizma u Srbiji i destrukcija pretpostavki multikulturalnog građanstva u Vojvodini“, in: Milan Podunavac and Biljana Đorđević (eds.), *Ustavi u vremenu krize – postjugoslovenska perspektiva*, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science and Society for Political Science of Serbia, Belgrade, 2014, pp. 343–56; see also: Jovan Komšić, “Principi konstitucionalizma i njihovo krivotvorenje u Srbiji – Vojvođansko pitanje u svetlu odluka Ustavnog suda republike Srbije 2013. godine“, *Glasnik Advokatske komore Vojvodine*, September–October 2014, Nos. 9–10, pp. 549–72.

3. 3. *The Constitution of 2006 and Contesting the Multicultural Citizenship of Vojvodina!?*

In accordance with Will Kymlicka's indicators of the form and depth of (non-)liberalism of a state's "nationalizing policy",¹⁹ it is evident that the attempts of our ethnocentrists, authors and interpreters of the Constitution to clear out the concept of autonomy to a maximum, can be classified, without much hesitation, as a type of *non-liberal cultural nationalism*, closer definition of nation and exclusive national identity. It is actually a question of contesting the specificity of Vojvodina's identity politics and the constitutional non-recognition of the original competences of the province, including the proven possibilities and abilities of a civic synthesis of cultural specificities based on the multiple and complementary identities of the members of Vojvodina's territorial autonomous community.²⁰ In order to support this thesis, I will give two examples. The first is the way of contesting citizenship and the second is the removal of consociational elements from Vojvodina's institutions and decision-making procedures.

Consequently, pursuant to the decision of the Constitutional Court of Serbia, Article 4 of the Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina stipulating that "the holders of the right to provincial autonomy shall be the citizens of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina", was contested. The reason for disputing, that is, repealing this provision was found in the alleged

19 It is a question of the following nine key indicators: 1) *the degree of coercion* in the promotion of a common national identity; 2) *narrowness of "public space"* for expressing the dominant national identity and breadth of the "private sphere" in which differences are tolerated; 3) *possibilities of expression* and political *mobilization* based on the platforms posing a threat to privileging national identity; 4) more open or closed *definition of national community*; 5) weaker or stronger *national identity conception*; 6) instrumental (contextual) *access to nation*, or the sacralization of nation and its transformation into sanctity; 7) cosmopolitanism, openness and *plurality of societal culture*, versus the "purity" and "authenticity" of non-liberal cultural nationalism; 8) lesser or greater *exclusiveness* of national identity, and 9) the degree of *public recognition* of the legitimacy of democratic forms of minority nationalisms; Vil Kimlika, "Etnički odnosi i zapadna politička teorija", in: *Habitus*, Alpar Lošonc (ed.), Novi Sad, March 1999, pp. 45–50.

20 Jovan Komšić, "Tranzicioni institucionalni inženjering i kapaciteti AP Vojvodine u upravljanju kulturološkim razlikama", in: Aleksandra Đurić Bosnić (ed.), *Zatvoreno-otvoreno – društveni i kulturni kontekst u Vojvodini 2000–2013*, CINK, Novi Sad, 2014, pp. 59–77.

fact that “the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina was not formed by ‘its citizens’, but by the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia...”. More specifically, it is argued that

„... the constitutional category of citizens of constituent territorial political communities exists only in states with complex systems of government; by contrast, under the constitutional and legal system of the Republic of Serbia as a unitary state, its ‘citizens’, as persons who enjoy political rights and freedoms and who are holders of sovereignty, are only the citizens of the Republic of Serbia”.²¹

Consequently, the Constitutional Court of Serbia has offered a very interesting equilibristics. Insofar as the attributes of power are concerned, every single “gram” of the normatively protected power to effectively influence the behaviour of members of the political community is linked to the supremacy of the ethno-national substance of the political community (“a state of Serbian people and all citizens who live in it“, Article 1 of the Constitution). On the other hand, when the identification of the *civic sources of Vojvodina’s autonomy* is contested, the substantialistic (ethno-national) philosophy of the Serbian state is abandoned, while at the same time activating, in principle, quite a different argumentative “drive“ of nation as a “community of citizens“, implying a neutral state with an “abstract citizen“ as the central category of the Serbian constitutional system.

Since the Constitution is based on the conception of Serbia as an ethno-national state, which does not institutionally recognize the regional and multicultural specificities of citizenship in the autonomous provinces, the Constitutional Court of Serbia denies the right to AP Vojvodina (APV) to base its national equality on the use of the term “national community”. It is emphasized that “... the contested provision of the Statute raises not only a terminological question; instead, it implies a ‘substantial change of the political system and the introduction of the constitutiveness of national minorities into AP Vojvodina’”.²²

21 Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia, Decision IYo-360/2009, p. 15; accessible at: <http://www.ustavni.sud.rs/Storage/Global/Documents/Misc/I%D0%A3%D0%BE-360-2009.pdf>; accessed on 21 December 2013.

22 Odluka u predmetu IYo-360/2009 – Ocena ustavnosti Statuta Autonomne pokrajine Vojvodine, Constitutional Court of Serbia, accessed on 18 December 2013; accessible at: <http://www.ustavni.sud.rs/Storage/Global/Documents/Misc/I%D0%A3%D0%BE-360-2009.pdf>; pr. 18; accessed on 21 December 2013.

The same argumentation pattern was also used to call into question the Council of National Communities as the mandatory consultative body participating in the APV Assembly's decision-making on the issues concerning the rights of the national communities (Article 40 of the APV Statute). The reason was found in the alleged non-compliance of this provision of the Statute with the "equality of citizens and the principles of civic democracy". Moreover, in the proposer's opinion, this provision "covertly introduces bicameralism into the Provincial Assembly, so that the Council of National Communities will practically be able to put a veto on the adoption of a great number of parliamentary decisions".²³

It is not difficult to notice the full harmony of the above arguments of the Constitutional Court of Serbia with the warnings of "national awakeners"²⁴ that "autonomists" wish "... to radically change the constitutional status of Vojvodina and make it a state within a state, while at the same time not caring about the fate of Kosovo...", so that the proposal on the equality of "national communities in Vojvodina" actually implies the "institutional reduction of the Serbian ethnic majority to the status of a national minority" (Čavoški 2005, 210–13).²⁵

23 Ibid, p. 49.

24 For more details on intellectuals, "nationalist awakeners" and techniques of the so-called ideological alarm see: Ernest Gelner, *Nacije i nacionalizam*, Matica srpska, Novi Sad, 1997, pp. 73, 140, 175; see also: Rudi Supek, *Društvene predrasude*, Radnička štampa, Belgrade, 1973, pp. 197, 246–48.

25 "So far, two concepts of state have been confronted on this soil: the nation state of the Serbian people and the so-called state of all citizens, that is, of peoples and nationalities who live in it. If Vojvodina is to be constituted under this draft basic law, it will really be unique in the world. It will be the state of national minorities for the first time in history... as far as we know – there has never been a state in which several national minorities could rule over the ethnic majority. This is just the way the state of Vojvodina will be if – God forbid! – the mentioned draft basic law is adopted". Čavoški also says: "The crucial concept that reveals the nature of the conceived state of Vojvodina is the concept of national community... there is no doubt that, according to this draft, the Serbian people is only one of a greater number of national communities... a great novelty due to which the authors of this draft will be remembered in the world history of constitutionality is the personal autonomy of national (ethnic) minorities and their right to a peculiar subjectivity". Kosta Čavoški "Vojvodina – država nacionalnih manjina", in: Đorđe Vukadinović (ed.), *Vojvođansko pitanje*, Nova srpska politička misao (special issue), Belgrade, 2005, pp. 212–13; at the final debate in the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia, which was held

Nevertheless, I will point out that, provided that they respect the democratic aims and values of constitutionalism, our “constitutionalists“ could (and had to) critically revalorize the described syncretic model (giving the ethno-national reason to justify the state and using the sovereignist principle of indivisible citizenship to negate autonomy) if they read a little more carefully the relevant literature dealing with constitutional theory. In this regard, it will suffice to heed Carl J. Friedrich’s warning that *absolute democracy* is incompatible with the most important assumptions of constitutional democracy and multicultural, civic sovereignty. In his opinion, if democracy is understood in terms of absolute and unlimited rule of the majority of members of a political community, then it must be admitted that there is a strong and insoluble conflict between federalism and democracy. These difficulties can be surmounted *only if the concept of constitutional versus absolute democracy is adopted. In this case, all that is necessary is to recognize the rights to every member of the political system of a narrower community, so that he becomes the citizen of two communities functioning at two levels, regional and national (federal)* (Fridrih 1996, 83–84; italic J. K).

3. 4. Serbia: What Society, Homogeneous or Plural?

In view of the fact that in my analyses conducted over the past years I have offered a number of more complex answers to the question of the nature of society in the post-communist transition process (Komšić 2015, 61–66), I will now single out several findings.

The first postwar population census (conducted in 2002) shows that 82.86 per cent of the population of Serbia (without Kosovo and Metohija) account for Serbs (6,212.838). As for the remaining, minority corpus, which consists of twenty or so nations and ethnic groups, it can be observed that Hungarians account for 3.91 per cent. They are followed by Bosniaks, Roma and Yugoslavs, whose percentages range from 1 to 2 per cent. All other minorities account for less than one per cent (Croats, Montenegrins, Albanians,

in May 2013, Čavoški said: “Serbian people cannot be treated as a national community, as stipulated by the Vojvodina Statute, because the Constitution recognizes exclusively the Serbian people and national minorities”; accessible at: http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2013&mm=05&dd=21&nav_category=11&nav_id=715622, accessed on 10 September 2013.

Slovaks, Vlachs, Romanians...). These data could serve for the conclusion about the consolidation of a homogeneous social tissue due to the fulfilment of the colloquial theoretical criterion of the 80 per cent share of members of the titular national community in the country's total population.

However, there are many reasons which, in our case, do not allow one to speak about a homogeneous social structure without reservation. It is also impossible to speak about a political nation based on the non-problematic, consensually agreed presence of one "collective dimension – which surmounts the horizons of ethnicity" (Semprini 2004, 120). I will try to explain that such a supra-ethnic dimension of "shared civic identity", with such a "level of mutual concern, accommodation and sacrifice that democracies require" (Kimlika 2002, 203), cannot be expected in Serbia as long as its elites insist on a classical political liberal model of central creation and transmission of monocultural patterns (Semprini 2004, 98–122),²⁶ by offering the following arguments.

The very fact that in some historical regions and local communities ethnic Serbs do not surpass the colloquial threshold of homogeneity (80 per cent), or do not constitute an absolute or relative majority,²⁷ confirms the objective presence of multiculturalism. As for Vojvodina, I must note that, despite changes in the population structure over the past two decades (a decrease in the minority corpus versus an increased share of Serbs, up to two thirds of the population),²⁸ it still remains plural, that is, an amalgam of peoples who mix among themselves, but do not merge among themselves (Lijphart). Moreover, the complexity of the political culture patterns in Vojvodina is also enhanced by value cleavages within the dominant (Serbian) national corpus in the Province. Such intranational divisions are especially

26 In that sense, Ernest Gellner speaks about the "nationalist imperative of the congruence of a political unit and culture", while Andrea Semprini points to the "boundaries of the power system", which are "only based on socio-cultural factors: participation in the same project, sharing the same view, common references, adoption of the values created in the centre of the system"; E. Gellner, *Nacije i nacionalizam*, Matica srpska, Novi Sad, 1997, p. 170; A. Semprini, *Multikulturalizam*, CLIO, Belgrade, 2004, pp. 100–101.

27 In some municipalities of Vojvodina, Raška (Sandžak) and southern Serbia (in the Preševo Valley) Serbs constitute a minority population.

28 The data are accessible at: http://pod2.stat.gov.rs/ObjavljenePublikacije/Popis2011/Knjiga4_Veroispovest.pdf, accessed on 24 October 2013.

reflected in the attitude towards the content of Vojvodina's autonomous competences, identity policies, preferences for the traditional or modern character of the state, culture and the like (Golubović 1995, 350; Komšić 2006, 429–35; Puzigaća 2011, 20–21).

In view of the fact that the constitutional system and dominant socio-political trends at the national level have a decisive impact on the nature of the integrative and disintegrative components of the socio-cultural context, I hold that the following synthetic summary of the key characteristics of the political mobilization and hybridization of the patterns of community (*Gemeinschaft*) and society (*Gesellschaft*) in the tissue of transitional Serbia will be useful.

1. The plurality of Serbia's social tissue under conditions of delayed and distorted transition (Komšić 2006, 42–84), in the formative and very dramatic nation and state building stage, was not static in character. It moved and changed from pronounced to moderate intensity and vice versa, depending on the so-called state of the nation, peace or war, the country's foreign policy direction and relations with the regional neighbours and beyond, as well as the programme, and economic and social results of political and economic reforms, character of democratization and the like.

In that sense, our country's and other historical examples show that in borderline and extremely conflict-ridden situations, with a decline in confidence in "the other" and increasing fears, communities withdraw into themselves, thus making the "grammar of co-belonging" more stratified (Sloterdijk 2001, 20, 44). On the other hand, in times of peace and security, the capacity for tolerance increases, while identities surmount tribalist exclusiveness, open to others and pluralize. This brings about the relaxation of international relations and the whole public scene.

Just as Michael Walzer and Yael Tamir observe quite well, in principle, that the "multiplication of identities divides the passions" (Volcer 1995, 175, 179–80), and that "overlapping membership stimulates moderation and cooperation" (Tamir 2002, 29–31, 46, 238–48), it can be said that in our case such possibilities have been indicated by the consensus on Serbia's accession to the EU achieved by political actors. Considered from the minority viewpoint, such a strategy is of utmost importance. We have seen, and this is also pointed out by John Keane, that inter-ethnic communication rights and standards can be established only within the broadest European framework.

In this way, not one national minority will feel like a hopeless community of historical losers. Nevertheless, there are many obstacles to such a European grammar of co-belonging.

2. Serbia has a specific plural social structure, with one dominant *ethno-national group*, which determines the identity matrix and purposes of the state and, to a lesser or greater degree, has a decisive impact on the content of public policies. From the viewpoint of a democratically sustainable management of cultural differences, such a fact has both positive and negative implications (Dal 1997, 117–32). From the viewpoint of decision-making efficiency, it is a fact that the procedures of majority democracy (Lajphart 2003, 80–94) and the standard rule of governance by a 50% + 1 majority, do not impose the obligation on the representatives of the ethno-national majority to form parliamentary coalitions with small, regional political parties and representatives of minority communities.

However, the fact that the political representatives of the majority nation can comfortably control the monopolistic resources of the state authorities, and pass and implement laws within their own cultural and interest area, can hardly be considered a strong basis for improving the capacity of the political class and Serbian society as a whole for democratic tolerance and the development of consensual political culture (Lajphart 2003, 286–87).

The combination of the legitimacy offered by multi-party elections and the material and other advantages offered by the state authorities to power holders in a society of scarcity like ours, gives a very strong systemic source of the *multiplication of opponents of consensual political culture*. A *cost-benefit* analysis will easily show that, in such circumstances, the unpreparedness of the most powerful democratic actors to maintain institutionalized cooperation with minority and regional political elites in resolving the most important issues concerning the state identity, type of constitutional political system, legal, political and fiscal decentralization, as well as their refusal to expand the list of participants in the division of election spoils, brings them more corporative and personal benefits than instantaneous political damage (Kiš 1997/98, 904–05).

On the other hand, the legitimacy of state authorities as well as the political system and the state in general is declining in the entire minority communities, in proportion to the character of the exclusion of minority political elites from the state governance procedures and tasks. Such a situation not

only affects the managerial efficiency of the system in the main sectors and some geographical regions, but also calls into question the possibility of democratic conflict management (Preševo Valley).

3. So far, all democratic elections (since 1990) have shown that the organizations representing the interests of ten or so relevant ethno-national communities (in terms of their number and political subjectivization capacity) have established themselves on the overcrowded and frequently polarized political party scene. There are also actors trying to articulate regional interests in civic and intercultural terms (the case of Vojvodina). In addition to all the efforts of civic-oriented political parties, which are active in the entire state territory, and political parties belonging to the family of so-called nationalist parties (Goati 2000, 69, 88–99) to attract members of minority communities, it is realistic to expect that the *historical, minority and regional factors* of politics will preserve their significance.

The infrastructure of political parties and the politicization of the interests of ethno-national communities, as well as the articulation of regional interests will actually be a constant feature of the Serbian political scene as long as those communities exist. Democratic governance under conditions of pronounced pluralism, especially at the local level and in Vojvodina, will need plenty of skills, patients and mutual confidence. This will primarily depend on institutional and political architecture, type of democracy, form and content of (de)centralization, as well as the dominant political culture and convictions of political activists at the country level.

In that respect, Vojvodina is an example of the positive results of the application of consocial policy and decision-making components (Lajphart 2003, 96; Lijphart 1992, 227) in the period following democratic change. Despite all proverbial and periodical tensions within the so-called (pro-) Vojvodina bloc, it is hard to challenge the conclusion that after 2000 the maximization of the number of actors within the ruling coalition in the Vojvodina Assembly generated a favourable effect on confidence building and maintenance among partners and the depoliticization of a number of cultural differences.

Finally, if everything that has so far been said could satisfy the ambitions of this paper with a non-so-pretentious title as an overview of transitional identity engineering in Serbia, there follows a logical conclusion, including the assessment of the future prospects.

4 PROJECTIONS OF THE FUTURE AND CHANCES OF MULTICULTURAL STRATEGIES

4. 1. A Principled Aspect

As it could be seen, I have corroborated the hypothesis presented in the introduction to this paper by offering the theoretical views of a number of renowned experts on national and nationalist phenomena. In this connection, I recall Kermani's view that Europe is "obsessed with homogenization from which it is painstakingly and slowly freeing itself", so that for those reasons, in contrast to the essentialist variation of identity and so-called *Kulturkampf*, which calls for supremacy among cultures, Europe must learn the lesson much faster than hitherto that "*identification succeeds where it is not only reduced to identity*" (Kermani 2013, 32, 110). While insisting on "radical openness", as the solution and "secret" of European success, Kermani argues that "universality (is) the essential characteristic of the European idea in an empathic sense, the idea of a secular, transnational, multireligious and multiethnic community, based on the will for togetherness" (Kermani 2013, 108–110; italic J. K.).

As already mentioned, John Keane also offers very similar principles and methods for preventing the growth of "democracy's own poisonous fruit". "Fertile soil" for corruption as well as the collapse of democracy is just the absolutization of ethno-nationalism at the expense of all other components of our identity and life in society. Therefore, the genuine and effective solutions for the defence of nationalism from its absolutization must be sought by means of a radical critique of the project of the destined community of "blood and soil" and the practice of "hyper-horde totalitarianism".

All this actually implies a strong defence of the rights and freedoms of individual vocation, as well as the affirmation of a "compact nation" (Renan),²⁹ and not the determination of indigenous communities. Finally, in times of the refugee crisis, advent of (ultra)conservative worldviews in

29 Ernest Renan focused the essence of nation on the "salutary principle of free accession to a nation" or, in other words, on "... an evident fact: on consent, that is, a clearly expressed wish to continue to live together. *The existence of a nation ... is the fruit of a daily plebiscite*"; according to: Cvetan Todorov, *Mi i Drugi*, Biblioteka XX vek, Belgrade, 1994, pp. 213–17. (Italic J. K.)

Europe and proclamation of multiculturalism dead, it is necessary to stand up for a more humane project of the future, offered by the idea of an open “secular, transnational, multireligious and multiethnic community, based on the will to togetherness“ (Kermani).

I also emphasize that all mentioned and other multicultural views of engaged, renowned and competent intellectuals are based on the recognition of the decisive importance and role of *powerful support* to a good idea. Being aware of this requirement, even ancient Romans (Tacitus)³⁰ used to point to two facts: (a) “Of all things human nothing is so unstable and transitory as power not based on force“ and (b) “Authority is kept not for the reason of authority, but for the authority of reason“ (Komšić 2000, 73, 196).

Count Christian von Krockow also deals with the authority of reason in his own way, pointing to the significance of the question: who has (and who will have) the power to define “national“ (Fon Kroko 2001, 153). Concluding his treatise on German myths, this author writes that Europe “... will probably be or become one ‘community’, but it will be comprised of historically conscious nations and their states“ (Fon Kroko 2001, 145). Consequently, we „... cannot change anything with respect to what being one nation means, but we can project one or the other future for it“ (Fon Kroko 2001, 164).

One option is to return to the *myth* about the enemy and death. As pointed out by Count von Krockow, it is now also emerging in the manner of Botho Strauss’s opposition to the “total rule of the present“ and with the idea of the “existential delineation vis-à-vis the other and alien“ (Fon Kroko 2001, 152–53, 163).

The other option is to *reconcile freedom and nation*. In such a “... projection, it is a matter of life in freedom for which an enemy is not needed; rather, it only needs a very resolute defence when freedom and the promise of humanity and happiness embedded in it are endangered“ (Fon Kroko 2001, 144, 163–64).

Consequently, like Giddens and Domenac’h, as well as Keane, Ash and Kermani, Krockow also holds that we can choose a better future if we have volition and will. Thus, by giving preference to life and freedom, and adding the skill factor to will, I offer the following conclusion: for the sake of democratic consolidation in plural societies in the post-communist countries, new EU members and EU candidates, it is definitely necessary to overcome the

30 Publius Cornelius Tacitus.

concepts of “organic nation“ and the practice of ethno-national statehood, which excludes minorities and regional communities in building political identity through democratic procedures, involving mutual recognition and commitments, as well as decision-making on a public good.

In that sense, institutional changes meant to provide systemic support to the development of consensual political culture and more consequential constitutionalization and establishment of Serbia as a civic, decentralized state, will be a very important factor and indicator of Serbia’s genuine Europeanization.

Everything else, which resembles the “Leitkultur“, “Kulturkampf“ and exclusive essentialism of a closed nation state with the prevailing ideas that openness, citizenship, pluralism, universalism and multiculturalism have suffered a collapse, drags us even more strongly down a blind alley of crisis, and brings us back to the aspects of Europe’s fatal flounders and collapse in the dark fourth and fifth decades of the 20th century.

4. 2. Several Recommendations for Changes to the Constitutional Regulation of the Autonomy of Vojvodina

In my opinion, twenty five years of transition in Serbia have given a negative answer to the question: “Is it possible to consolidate the institutions and procedures for democratic competition for power in Serbia on the basis of a traditional understanding of the state aims, using the tools of party monopoly-oligopoly, centralist hierarchy and ethno-centrist homogenization?” (Komšić 2010, 332). Therefore, at the end of this paper I will make several recommendations for the ruling elites as well as for the professional and general public concerning the ways to eliminate Vojvodina’s facade autonomy and overcome the simulation of constitutional democracy in the process of Serbia’s accession to the European Union.³¹

31 It is a question of the recommendations given in my paper: “Ustavna reforma u Srbiji i autonomija Vojvodine – kako na evropski (EU) način prevladati fasadnu autonomiju Vojvodine i simulaciju konstitucionalne demokratije u Srbiji?“ (Constitutional Reform in Serbia and the Autonomy of Vojvodina – How to Surmount Vojvodina’s Facade Autonomy and Simulation of Constitutional Democracy in Serbia?), prepared under the project of the European Movement in Serbia, Novi Sad: *Ustavna revizija i APV: kako redefinisati pokrajinsku autonomiju?* (Constitutional Revision and APV: How

4. 2. 1. *Conclusions and Recommendations*

1. Serbia's strategic commitment to achieve the status of a EU member country represents not only its obligation and ability to assume the rights and responsibilities arising from the EU *acquis*. It also implies an exceptional chance for a new stage in the *socio-political education of political actors* and the stabilization of a new quality of political culture and behaviour with a view to completing the transition to democracy and a market economy, as well as the implementation of European values, principles and patterns of life.

2. Such an orientation also implies a high-quality new *philosophical and sociological justification of the state*, as a prerequisite for the creation of the legal system of a plural, republican and constitutional democracy with the right of every member of the provincial, legal and political system to be the citizen of both the provincial and republican communities.

3. In principle, such a solution means that *politics* and the *political system* should not be reduced to an authoritative distribution of values, mechanics of power and substantial possession of power, with the accumulation of interests in the state capital. Instead of the reason of authority, constitutional legal norms must ensure the authority of the publicly supported reason.

4. Consequently, there is no reason that Serbia postpones any further the *implementation of the European principles and strategic plans* of the European Union concerning the multi-level system of governance, partnerships, networking, smart specializations and bottom-up restructuring (from the local to the regional level).

5. Just the constitution-based implementation of the European *subsidiarity standards and regionalization principles*, as well as the appropriate regionalization strategies and regional development policies will enable Serbia to establish a more competent and *more effective communication with the EU structural funds*.

6. *The implementation of the principles of subsidiarity, regionalization and regional democracy* in the new constitution of the Republic of Serbia and the subsequent institutional and other policies should mean:

6. 1. *The constitutional guarantee of broad autonomy for AP Vojvodina* (implying the guarantee of the provincial legal system, with

to Redefine Provincial Autonomy) (financially supported by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Office for Serbia), Novi Sad, 2015.

primary legislation within the original, exclusive competences of the province). This further requires:

6. 2. *The adoption of the concept of regional state*, that is, institutional (political) regionalism based on Model 1 of the Council of Europe (CDLR),³²
 - a/ with the constitutional division of legislation into: (a) primary – exclusive competences of the central (national) level of power, based on the model of positively enumerated competences; (b) exclusive competences of the provincial level of power, as well as (c) mixed legislation – with central, framework laws and provincial laws, which are adopted on the basis of delegated competences;
 - b/ in the gradual process of so-called asymmetric regionalization of the state, during which it will not be necessary that all regions achieve the same level of competences and organizational structure.
6. 3. An alternative to the previous solution (6. 2) can be a more consistent constitutional articulation of the concept of *unitary state with broad autonomy for Vojvodina*, based on Model 2 of the Council of Europe – a unitary state with the elements of broad regional autonomy (with the rights of the region-province to pass primary laws, which cannot be contested against their will, despite the fact that such legislation is not guaranteed by the constitution).
6. 4. *Guaranteeing the effective limitation of state power*, that is, a more consistent concretization of the constitutional principle on the limitation of state power by the “right of citizens to provincial autonomy and local government“ in the entire constitutional text (Article 12).
6. 5. Bearing in mind the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, which is based on “the rule of law... and commitment to the European principles and values“ (Article 1), it is necessary to adjust Serbia’s political system to the European model of multi-level governance system and the implementation of the principle of *subsidiarity and proportionality* (Article 3a, Item 1, of the Treaty on European Union – Lisbon 2007).

32 For more details on the European models of regional autonomy see: Jovan Komšić, “Ustavna reforma u Srbiji i autonomija Vojvodine – kako na evropski (EU) način prevladati fasadnu autonomiju Vojvodine i simulaciju konstitucionalne demokratije u Srbiji?“, European Movement in Serbia, Novi Sad, 2015, op. cit.

6. 6. From the viewpoint of the principles and practice of *citizenship*, it is necessary to omit the elements of absolutist democracy from the constitution. Consequently, *it is necessary to base the constitution and regulate the normative system in accordance with the concept of constitutional democracy*, including the recognition of the right of every member of the political system of a narrower community to be the *citizen of two communities*, provincial and national (republican).
6. 7. This would enable a more consistent realization of the EU aims and policies that “*decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizens of the Union in compliance with the principle of subsidiarity*“ (Lisbon Treaty, 2007), as well as the overcoming of democratic deficits generated by the situation in which Vojvodina has no right to create and conduct its own provincial policy, in compliance with the specific needs and interests of the citizens of AP Vojvodina, and the legitimately recognized and confirmed qualities of good governance.
6. 8. *Constitutional provisions on the autonomous provinces should be harmonized with the principles and provisions of the Draft European Charter of Regional Democracy (2008)*, due to the democratization of the decision-making process as well as the added value that can be achieved on the basis of good regional governance.
6. 9. It is especially important to ensure *partnership at all levels of government (national, provincial and local)*, as well as the *participation of the Province in decision making at the republican level* in compliance with Article 42.1 of the *Draft European Charter of Regional Democracy*.
6. 10. In accordance with the above mentioned, the democratic principle of proportional representation of civil and provincial interests in the national parliament must be ensured by constitutional regulation of the decision-making process in the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. This would ensure, in the form of so-called unicameral decision making, that the consent of the deputies elected in the electoral units coinciding with the provincial, that is, regional borders, should be obtained for the decisions considered essential for the provinces.

6. 11. As for legislative initiatives, it is necessary to oblige the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia to express its views on draft republican laws, other regulations and general enactments submitted by the provincial assembly within a reasonable time-limit, but not longer than six months.
6. 12. It is necessary to ensure *stronger constitutional guarantees for the financial autonomy* of the autonomous provinces, including the concrete regulation of taxation rights, as well as the forms and levels of state subsidies available to the autonomous provinces.

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LATINKA PEROVIĆ

SERBIAN-RUSSIAN HISTORICAL ANALOGIES

The Matrix of Denying the Western Europe's Course:
Development Barring Liberalism and Capitalism

*Populism is not entirely socialist, but populism is
entirely against capitalism and liberalism*

V. V. ZVEROV

Based on years of thorough study, this paper tries to summarize the historical context of the emergence, mutual relationship and development of two major ideas, though differently entrenched in Serbia's modern history – liberalism and socialism.

Notwithstanding all the similarities with Balkan nations under the Ottoman rule and regardless of everything differing it from South Slav nations under Austria-Hungary, what sets the Serbian people apart – and influenced considerably the history of the above-mentioned ideas as well – is the revolution in the early 19th century (1804).³³ This revolution paved the way for liberation and unification: for the 19th century Serbian state that has, over one hundred and fifty years, waged several wars, declared many constitutions, and had different forms (from an autonomous principedom within Turkey, through an independent principedom and a kingdom, to a republic).

In the 1840s and 1860s when liberalism and socialism saw the light of day in Serbia, Serbia was a backward agrarian country of illiterate population. Out of 1,216,246 people, according to the 1866 census, 1,094,063 or 89 per cent were peasants. Forty-two out of one thousand persons were literate. As there was no other tradition (social, cultural, monarchic or other) nationalism was the only factor of unification. Territorial, economic and cultural

³³ Titles of partial studies used in this summary are quoted at the end.

limitations precluded autochthonous ideas and theories. As of the mid-19th century these ideas have been imported from abroad: from developed countries of the Western Europe – with Austria-Hungary as their paradigm – and from Russia where gentry's intelligentsia (“intelligentsia that repents”) was seeking for answers to the questions that had been raised in Europe as well, and providing answers of its own. Besides, Russia was the biggest Slav state. And pioneers of these ideas in Serbia were young people studying on government scholarship in Western Europe and Russia.

As an echo of the French Revolution in 1848 liberal ideas emerged in Serbia: the unity of external and internal freedom (Jevrem Grujić, „Obzor države“/“The State Horizon”). Under the influence of the counterrevolution in Europe, these ideas were prosecuted in Serbia until their young torchbearers – studying at European universities since the 1850s – resumed them in 1858 (the so-called St. Andrew Assembly).

In the 1860s and 18870s more radical ideas were circulating at Serbia's public scene. Western European socialist teachings (by San Simon, Furrier, Proudhon, Blanc, Lassalle, etc.) were being taught to the students of the so-called Big School, and their works translated into Serbian. Young Serbs – especially a bigger group of them in Zurich the members of which will later on, in the struggle against the Obrenović dynasty and in the 1912–14 wars, become major political players in Serbia – were closely connected with the International Workers' Association, the International (worked in its branches and were involved in the struggles between Marxists and anarchists) and, hence, with *Marxism* that “turned socialism into a science.” Their indirect ties with Western European socialist teachings were by far more complex, reaching them via Russia in many ways.

The Serbs schooled in Zurich were in touch with all the currents of Russia's emigration (Bakunin, Lavrov, Tkachov, Nechayev and others). But crucial were the ties they have established – during their studies in Russia – with Russian revolutionaries. At the time the founding father of socialism in Serbia (Svetozar Marković) came to Moscow to study on government scholarship, the helm of the revolutionary thought has already been in the hands of the second generation – the “children” generation. The older generation – the generation of “fathers” – was made up of rebellious noblemen. They had been “Westernizers” in noblemen's circles of the 1840s divided into *Slavophiles* and *Westernizers*. The French Revolution in 1848 found them in emigration.

There, disappointed with the “unsettled” social issue (A. I. Herzen), they turned to the East, to Russian *opshtina* (municipality) as the basis of socialism and a bridge of reconciliation between Westernizers and Slavophiles. Acting theoretically, they were importing revolutionary propaganda to Russia.

The generation of “children” admits that they have broken through Nikolai’s despotism after the Decembrist Rebellion (1832). But this generation comes from lower social strata – “*raznochintsy* intelligentsia.” They are active in Russia and they call for deeds – for action. In other words, they call for revolution of the peasantry as they feel that the Russian Empire, after the defeat in the Crimean War (1857), is weak and has to be reformed: feudal law is the heart of the system and cannot be abolished without the change of the entire system. And that means that freedom without “the solved problem of daily bread” is a delusion. Russia should not thread the path the Western Europe, with its legacy of liberalism and capitalism, had already trodden. Russia should find its own way towards development – it should skip phases by detecting in its history principles similar to or even same as the principles preached by Western European socialist teachings. *Opshtina* is a panacea: as a community of property and labor, it can help Russia not to be doomed to backwardness once again. This is what historians of the Russian socialism such as Polish historian Andrzej Velicky named finding “the latest in the oldest.”

The history of the Western European socialism is a history of a range of teachings. In the clashes between their proponents participated representatives of all the currents of the Russian socialism. But in Russia itself the theory of populist socialism was being developed: developed in several phases in a row, and by the order that rounded off revolution as a ultimate solution and shaping its means. It could be that not only the end of one historical cycle but the beginning of the next revealed that the Russian populist socialism has assumed all the characteristics of the Russian state.

Disintegration of the USSR and the end of the political monopoly of the communist party gave birth to various interpretations of communism – everywhere, in Serbia included. According to the mainstream interpretation communism was a deviation from the orderly, Western European course Serbia had followed before the WWII. And yet, factual history leads to different conclusions. In other words, socialism in Serbia too – the same as communism

– was finding of the above-mentioned “latest in the oldest.” So two liberally oriented Serbs wrote in the 1850s:

“Had Thomas More and Furrier known our history they would not have fabricated utopias. French Utopians and German dreamers would have seen that customs and spirit of a nation could safeguard communism partially but that communism could not be decreed where there is no germ.” (Milovan Janković and Jevrem Grujić).

Many years later, in 1915, in a letter to Lev Trotsky, ideologist of „Young Bosnia“ Vladimir Gaćinović writes about the springs Serbian revolutionaries were drinking from, ideologically and emotionally. “We know your country and we love it,” he wrote, “Chernishevsky, Herzen, Lavrov and Bakunin are among our best teachers. We are, so to speak, your ideological colony. And a colony always lags behind a metropolis.” And how is this reflected in the history of social ideas of the 20th century Serbia?

THE 1869 CONSTITUTION: THE FIRST CONSTITUTION THAT WAS NOT DECLARED UNDER THE INFLUENCE FROM ABROAD;

Serbian intelligentsia divided into liberals and social liberals radicalized in Serbia

Unlike in the Western Europe, liberalism in Serbia was not born out of industrial revolution, as political philosophy of the revolutionary bourgeoisie justifying people’s sovereignty. The idea about Serbia’s liberalization was more oriented towards political institutions than economic development. The liberal intelligentsia wanted to come to power so as to realize its ideas. But once it did come to power – following the assassination of Prince Michael in 1868, the agreement it reached with the Regency and the adoption of the first Constitutions (1869) – it denied any possibility for some new opposition to emerge. Consequently, its influence was weakening – especially its influence on students. The Liberals have never become a party that would stand for the peasant masses; their elitism of sorts and belief that “their knowledge entitles them to the custody of the masses,” distanced them from the latter. (Gale Stokes, *Legitimacy through Liberalism – Vladimir Jovanović and the Transformation of Serbian Politics*). A more radical opposition – the socialists also labeled communists and radicals – emerged from the left wing of the liberal current. Their founding fathers – Vladimir Jovanović, familiar with

countries of the Western Europe, and Svetozar Marković, who studied in Russia on government scholarship and then left for Switzerland (1869) only to be recalled for his criticism of the Constitution (“Serbian Delusions”) – started the polemics on the social issue. Dominated by Western European socialist teachings – the International Workers’ Association (International) and the turmoil in the illegal circles of the revolutionary Russia had contended – this polemics crystallized in Serbia the *matrix of discontinuity with the Western European course*, or – of the *development without capitalism and liberalism*. This matrix will mark all the cycles of Serbia’s modern history.

A rebel against autocracy, Vladimir Jovanović was among the pioneers of the struggle for principles vs. dynastic skirmishes. For him, the national revolutionary to whom liberation and unification of the Serbian nation was closely connected with the struggle of South Slav peoples, federation or confederation was the only logical outcome of the fight for the common cause. At the same time he was trying to place the Eastern Question in the context of European policy and was, therefore, working hard to connect Serbia’s liberal movement with bourgeois-democratic movements in the Western Europe. As someone searching Serbia’s history for the germs of modern European institutions – constitutional monarchy, representative government, the freedom of expression and association, and free market – Jovanović was a national romantic. On the whole, he is the most prominent ideologist of liberalism in Serbia, whose ideas were up to his European teachers. He was open-minded and rational in his interpretation of socialism. For him, socialism was consequent upon “imposed inequality” based on monopolies, privileges and plunder – and contrary to freedom and justice. But he would not accept socialism as negation of the *civil society*. The civil society, he argued, should be upgraded rather than radically changed. It rests on an individual and on private property that preconditions individual freedoms, and its development follows the natural law of order – it advances through perpetual reforms. Socialism borrows equality from democracy, but wants to implement this equality through social rule over individual freedoms. Socialism makes difference between equality and freedom and that is why it differs from democracy. Vladimir Jovanović was clean forgotten by Serbia’s historiography. Foreign historians were those who practically “discovered” him. Svetozar Marković, his once follower and later opponent, was among the most productive authors in Serbia’s modern history. Many members of the Serbian intelligentsia, including

those most outstanding (like Slobodan Jovanović, or Jovan Skerlić) thought they should have their say about him. No phases or changes Serbia has gone through after Marković's death (1875) upset his place in history or had the monuments to him removed. How can this be explained?

A key answer to this question went unnoticed among tons of literature published to mark the 100th anniversary of Marković's death (1975). Namely, in his criticism of the *civil society* – the non-socialist (“patriotic”) intelligentsia have also shrunk from – he actually “found himself shoulder to shoulder with the most conservative and the most progressive wings of the Serbian society at the same time” (Predrag Protić, „Svetozar Marković and the Civilian World”). This is the balance that made Marković's long duration possible. And it was not just by chance that this balance, as it would turn out, commanded influence on the Serbian society's stationary even at dramatic turn of the 20th century.

The founding father of Serbia's socialism was quite familiar with at least crucial Western European socialist ideas, including Marxism. In polemic articles he penned with Vladimir Jovanović (“Social and Political Struggle in Europe” and “Criticism of ‘Social and Political Struggle in Europe’”) Marković called the emergence of Marx's ideas a new chapter of the history of European revolutionary ideas. But Marx was studying the laws of capitalist development that were not universal. It was exactly in the Western European capitalist society that Marx detected the means for its transformation, the means applicable to this society only. So, what about rural countries such as Russia? This is where revolutionary teachings leading towards socialism were born. And what are the differences? Interestingly, Serbian Marxists have never raised or considered this question.

In the 1860–70s Serbia was also a peasant country, fundamentally different from the countries of the Western Europe: the industrial and political revolution had changed their structures. To follow the road Western European peoples had already trodden would be the same – from the viewpoint of social revolution – as being their inferiors again. Hence, the slogan “Serbia = Socialism” (“Criticism of Liberalism” by Dragiša Stanojević “Serbian Socialists of the 19th Century,” Volume I, by Latinka Perović). That it is possible to avoid inferiority Marković finds in the writings of Russian philosopher N. Chernyshevsky whose work “Political Economy and People's Wellbeing” he translates into Serbian (1872). For him, two of Chernyshevsky's ideas are crucial. First,

all societies need not follow one and only road to development, and certain stages can be either skipped or abridged. Second, *opština* (municipality) is the nucleus of common property and cooperative production. Do not Western European socialist teachings (workers' associations) proclaim the tenets of traditional institutions identical to those of *Russian peace and municipality*, and *Serbian commune and municipality*?

Against the background of “the bow strung taut” between “the latest” and “the oldest” the reliance on traditional institutions would make it possible to protect an entire nation from being turned into proletariat, from class divides and civil war destructive to unity as precondition to liberation, unification and the safeguard of a big state not only Russian but also Serbian intelligentsia were preoccupied with.

Opština – municipality – as a nucleus of socialism (for Herzen it was the basis for reconciliation between Slavophiles and Westernizers) also needs a driving force. “To act as a driving force,” wrote Marković, “a nation must be familiar with the form of a new society or there should be a driving minority in the nation, trusted by it and strong and capable enough to direct a popular movement, and chart and cement the course of social transformation” (Svetozar Marković, “Socialism or Social Issue”).

Serbian socialists have borrowed the idea about driving forces from Russian philosopher P.L. Lavrov. In his work “Historical Letters” (1868–69) – also translated into Serbian – Lavrov expounded the idea about “critically thinking figures,” organized hierarchically within a large popular movement. Serbian socialists were cooperating closely with Lavrov’s followers (it was only the modern Serbian historiography that studied these ties in detail). Serbian socialist called themselves “critics of everything existing” (“new people”), while Lavrov’s followers saw in Serbia – in its large popular movement and nucleus of “critically thinking figures” – what they could not detect in Russia. Strong propaganda from Kragujevac in 1873–74 spread through papers “Javnost,” “Nova Javnost” and “Oslobođenje,” and magazine “Rad” Lavrov contributed to, and the radical opposition in the People’s Assembly called communist, combined with Svetozar Marković’s articles, prepared the terrain for formal establishment of the party.

Marković’s associates – above all Nikola Pašić (leader of People’s Radical Party from its beginnings in 1881 till his death in 1926) – remained faithful to the tenet they had formulated together even after Marković’s death. “We

are after democratic freedom, decentralization, we want to save the people from the mistakes made by the Western industrial society that generates proletariat on the one hand and unthinkable affluence on the other, we are after developing industry on communal basis... And when it comes to 'liberation and unification' we shall always back this up, though we would prefer liberation effectuated by a revolution as the revolution inspires people for freedom, makes them suffer less losses, and surely initiates liberation – while the people rather than rulers would decide on the act of unification" (Nikola Pašić, *Pisma, članci i govori.../Letters, Articles and Speeches/*).

Having accepted just technological and scientific achievements of the Western civilization but not its spirit – the things he saw as separable – Nikola Pašić alerted of the Western civilization's new threats to Serbia. He warned against the *civilization of money* that paves the way for economy that, in turn, changes people's spirit and customs. Therefore, he argued, the influence of Germany and Austria-Hungary is more dangerous than five centuries of Turkish rule under which the Serbian nation managed to safeguard patriarchal institutions of economic and political life (*commune, municipality and self-government*). Isolation safeguarding these patrimonial principles, along with reliance on the great Slav Russia – seeing the same principles as alternatives to "the empire of darkness" – became *modus vivendi* to Serbia still having to achieve "the goals pledged with a solemn oath:" to "take vengeance for Kosovo" and to liberate and unify the entire Serbian nation. Institutions disappeared step by step, but mentality survived.

INDEPENDENT STATE OF SERBIA;

Serbian and Russian intelligentsia divided along the same lines – into Slavophiles and Westernizers

Following the 1876 and 1877–78 wars Serbia proclaimed independence. The Berlin Congress (1878) set the frame. The course the young state should take in domestic and foreign policy brought about a split – mostly among the handful of Serbian intelligentsia. The divide between Slavophiles and Westernizers was almost the same as that between members of Russian intelligentsia in the early 1840s that remained a constant in Russian history.

Nikola Pašić described the above-mentioned division rather precisely. "I could be said that the common people were dissatisfied with the outcome (of

the Berlin Congress) but did not delve further into the issue. Intelligentsia, however, split into two *camps*” (*Ibid.*). The split was visible in Serbia’s first political parties (1881). In a letter to a Russian official, Pašić, rather precisely again, described the differences between the two *camps* – to turn into political parties later on – the differences he saw at the poles of different civilizations: of the East and the West. It could be seen as a paradox that being a Westernizer often had nothing to do with one’s being educated in the West. On the contrary, Western education seemed to frustrate former students and frighten others. (“We were all nationalists,” Jovan M. Žujović, one of Serbian students in Zurich, scientist and politician later in life, used to say.) Eyes were lifted up to the East: this is where “light was coming from,” as Herzen used to say. No matter what Russia – be it imperial, Slavophile or “underground” – was, therefore, considered a mainstay.

So, according to Pašić, the liberals (Jovan Ristić) and the reformers (Milan Piroćanac) made up one *camp*: they were equally advocating Western European institutions. The only difference was that the liberals were “more cautious about and slower in transferring Western institutions to Serbian soil” while the reformers “wanted to turn Serbia immediately into a new little country of the West.” However, the differences between this *camp* and the *camp* assembling socialists/communists/radicals were different in character. These differences “lie in deeper moral and political foundations, and perceptions of the world and Slavic peoples.” Hence, unlike Liberal and Progressive party, Radical Party “holds that the Serbian people have so many good and healthy institutions and customs, and all it takes is to cherish them and enrich with good institutions to be found among the Russians and other Slav tribes, and from the West borrow only technical knowledge and science to be applied in the Slavic spirit” (Nikola Pašić, *Pisma, članci i govori...*)

In its foreign policy Radical Party stuck to Eastern Orthodox Russia and in domestic followed Serbian customs and mindset. With such “unity” of foreign and domestic policy Pašić used to explain the phenomenon – “inexplicable” to many – of “the entire nation having accepted our party at once or said promptly that our stands and observations were identical to theirs.” Such identification with poor and uneducated peasantry – with “the people” – left little room for the other *camp*; and not only throughout the 1870s and 1880s.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT STATE "IN DEPTH" AND TERRITORIAL PRETENSIONS

The decade from independence declaration (1878) till the declaration of a new constitution (1888) was crucial to Serbia, though overlooked – and not by chance – in the science of history. Torchbearers of and people behind the ideas promoted by the *camp* opposite to the mainstream one made up of socialists – or radicals – and leaning on Russia have not been the matter of study until recently. The advocates of the actually alternative development for Serbia after independence declaration were labeled philo-Austrians and traitors of “the goals pledged with a solemn oath.”

The twelve-year rule of the Liberals ended in 1880. Its main achievements were the 1869 Constitution Serbia declared for the first time ever without any influence from abroad, and independent statehood in 1978 – the year every nation would consider sacred, as Leopold von Ranke was telling the Serbs. But neither independence nor the Constitution would make most of Serbia’s intelligentsia happy. Prince Milan entrusted premiership to Milan Piroćanac who, along with Stojan Novaković, Milutin Garašanin and Čedomir Mijatović, made up the first nucleus of Serbia’s intellectuals in the modern sense of the word, assembled in the “Videlo” magazine. In between this small circle of elite – in scholarly and professional terms – was a “layer” of intelligentsia coming directly from the “people.” They were, as Svetozar Marković used to say, “Sons and grandsons of peasants, raised on cornbread and potatoes” and “people’s intelligentsia” by self-determination. “Members of this intelligentsia take it as their duty not to differ from people in any way, but also not to allow anyone else to. Their dedication to the people is total, and their interests inseparable from those of the people. Their education obliges them to formulate and advocate the interests of the people – only because they know their interests the best. Whoever shares not this belief is not a friend but an enemy of the people.”

Members of *the people’s* intelligentsia, said Milan Piroćanac, are creators of the “axioms” to become constitutive parts of an ideology: the ideology of the people’s mindset, of the rule as a reflection of the people as a whole, of backwardness being an advantage, of accepting the achievements of the West’s science and technology but of its spirit in no way; and, above all, the ideology of the safeguard of Slav roots. Serbian socialists saw themselves

as parts of the great Slav whole to which the laws of the Western European society apply not.

Milan Piroćanac was against the 1876 and 1877–88 wars. “These wars, he said, “were waged without a goal, by foreign plan and in someone else’s interest” (referring to Russia). As an independent state, Serbia should align itself with “the peoples of Europe.” His cabinet (1880) launched synchronous reforms (economic, political and cultural) by the model of Western European countries that would have been crowned by a new constitution guaranteeing representative democracy. Two stumbling blocks were in his way: the Prince (the King since 1882) holding two-third of power over the People’s Assembly, and the Radicals who wanted to turn the Assembly into a convent.

Resistance to the legislative “top-down revolution” was huge. The Law on Standing Army implying the end of the people’s army was seen as the last straw. The Radicals’ campaigning against the law incited a rebellion in the villages of East Serbia (the Timok Rebellion in 1883) that was put down in bloodshed. The state of emergency was called, the army deployed, all the leaders of the People’s Radical Party were arrested and court-martialed – except for Nikola Pašić who had fled the country.

The reforms undertaken by the first reformist cabinet to be crowned by a new constitution both Serbian Progressive Party and People’s Radical Party had their drafts for, were curbed. Not a single factor of the country’s political life remained as it used to be: either the King or political parties. Nikola Pašić, in exile, continued his struggle against King Milan’s “Western orientation” with the helping hand from Metropolitan Michael, the “great” Slavophile expelled from Serbia. With the assistance from the Metropolitan he was trying to establish ties with Slavophile circles in Russia and then with Russia’s officials as well. This was nothing new in his orientation. The Slav civilization vs. the Western civilization is the basis of the teachings of Serbia’s first socialists. In exile, Pašić acted along these lines, translated N.Y. Danilevsky’s book “Russia and the West” and wrote his work “Serbs-Croats Accord” expounding his social philosophy: the philosophy of a man belonging to the Eastern civilization. This belonging determined the place of Russia – as the biggest Slav country – in his political thought and action. (Some historians like Đorđe Stanković take that Pašić wrote this work while in Zurich. Still, he is mostly focused on the Slav question while in exile – 1883–89.).

The second reformist cabinet (1884–87) led by Milutin Garašanin distanced itself, in principle and in practice, from the program of the first. It turned itself into the King's party. In its foreign policy it moved closer to Austria-Hungary; and in domestic it was blocked by the war against Bulgaria (1885) and the divorce of the royal couple. Nervous about a possible agreement between the Liberals and the Reformers, the King turned to the Radicals imprisoned after the Timok rebellion. The agreement between the Liberals and the Radicals led to the ouster of the second reformist cabinet. The Reformers were subject to pogrom known as the *people's deep sigh of relief*. Many were brutally killed or abducted, their property was seized and destroyed, and many were expelled from the country. All such acts of violence remained unpunished. For all this Serbia earned a reputation of "the most savage people in Europe" (Milan Piroćanac, *Beleške /Notes/*). The press was inciting violence while the regime remained indifferent to it. The goal was not just to defeat politically Serbian Progressive Party but to destroy it. The Reformers were once again assaulted at their convention of May 14–15 1889 following the proclamation of the 1888 liberal constitution – on paper. The Progressive Party had answered the indisputable needs of any modern and cultured country. And yet, it has never recovered itself after the above-mentioned "reliefs" though it had tried to several times.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST PARTISAN STATE IN SERBIA

Following the proclamation of the 1888 Constitution King Milan abdicated: Regency was established for the second time in the period of 20 years. Nikola Pašić came back from his six-year exile (1883–89). He began invigorating the People's Radical Party: strengthening its unity, discipline and hostile attitude towards political opponents – who were not to come to power against.

In early elections for the Big People's Assembly (1889) the Radicals were after winning the majority that would make it possible for them to control the implementation of the newly proclaimed Constitution. And they managed to win majority of parliamentary seats: out of 117 they won 102, the Liberals got 15, whereas the Reformers had abstained. Nikola Pašić was elected the speaker. He said difficult tasks were awaiting the Assembly: it was elected after "a terrible rule...that had strayed from the people's traditional policy."

The Big People's Assembly was "constituted as a purely one-party assembly." As such it produced a homogeneous, Radicals' cabinet. The Radicals were in the majority in all governmental institutions (State Council, Cassation, Appellation, Chief Control, etc.). And so, the Radical Party, "until then powerful only in the grassroots, among the people, fortified thoroughly its position at the 'top' of the state apparatus" (Živan Živanović, *Politička istorija Srbije u drugoj polovini devetnaestog veka, 3 /Political History of Serbia in the Second Half of the 19th Century, Vol. III /*). The state became partisan in character. Serbia was in agony throughout the last decade of the 19th century: it had to juggle one crisis after another.

TAKING STOCK OF THE FIRST DECADE OF INDEPENDENCE (1878–1888)

the traditional (patriotic) principle wins the day

In this *Notes* that saw the light as late as in 2003 – though firstly published in the collection of paper "Serbia's International Position and Foreign Policy" in 1892 – Milan Piroćanac took stock of the first decade of Serbia's independence (1878–88). "All the measures the government has taken were marked by its concern with popularity...When one takes all this into account it is obvious why was it that the Serbian state has retained this type of primitive, totally disorganized state with failed institutions in all spheres till this very day."

For Piroćanac Serbia was a young, independent state where two tendencies – two principles were in clash: the traditional ("patriotic") and the modern one. This clash was reflected in two constitutional drafts (1882): the one developed by the Reformers Piroćanac wanted to use to round off the reformist process, and the other planned by the Radicals that was in line with "the traditional people's policy." The former was focused on empowering individuals in all spheres. Hence, it provided a lower election threshold and a bicameral system so as to involve intelligentsia in parliamentary proceedings. The latter, the Radicals' draft (discussed secretly in the party), that saw the people as a collectivity, set the following goals for the state: equality, wellbeing, undivided power, and liberation and unification all the Serbian nation. Hence, the representation of people was provided as a convent.

The Reformers' draft was based on modern European tenets. In a dramatic parliamentary debate on construction of Serbia's first railroad ever, retorting to a MP from the parliamentary majority's argument that by opening the door to foreign capital Serbia took risks of becoming a colony, and losing its independence and traditional friendship with the Slav, Eastern Orthodox Russia, one of the Reformers' leaders Stojan Novaković said, "We cannot distance ourselves from Europe. We can be with it together, in a same community. And if we have to fight against it, we can only fight it by the same means and forces it threatens us with...Or else we must become some wonder people...to be shunned by the rest of the world" (Latinka Perović, *Između anarhije i autokratije /Between Anarchy and Autocracy*).

The parliamentary majority voted against only the law on Serbia's first railroad but other laws as well such as those on public healthcare, livestock protection, standing army and even on pest and disease control of vineyards. The parliamentary majority that also included educated people followed the logic: the worse, the better. All in all, as Slobodan Jovanović noted, "Modernization of the state was as unpopular as necessary" (Slobodan Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića, II/ The Rule of Milan Obrenovic, Vol. II/*).

The advocates of the other principle (traditionalism) were looking up to Russia. Though it had made a considerable progress Russia was still a backward country without a social stratum to promote modernism. In Europe, at the same time, culture "was no longer treading but flying and could not be stopped." Besides, "Europe is being mapped as one of many different parts of a complex whole...What a man is to a state, a state is to people" (Milan Piroćanac, *Međunarodni položaj/International Position*).

As of the early 1840s each generation of the Russian intelligentsia raised the question of *what was to be done* – to lessen Russia's lagging behind Europe. Disappointed in the outcome of the French Revolution in 1848 that, they argued, failed to solve the social issue, Russian Westernizers tried to reconcile with Slavophiles of the Russian popular socialism. Wasn't *opshtina* as a community of property and production not only a point of agreement with them but also a meeting point with Western European socialism promoting the same principles? The answer to this question implied that Russia would offer Europe an idea of universal significance and so not only catch up with it but also outstrip it. Therefore, in the 1880s in Russia capitalism should be curbed through a political revolution led by an organized minority

that would, once in power, embark on social revolution in the interest of the majority of people. A similar tendency was characteristic of Serbian socialists at the time People's Radical Party was formed, in close connection with Russia's terrorist organization "People's Will" (Dimitrije Mita Cenić, *Izabrani spisi*, 1 /Selected Writings, Vol. I/).

What was in all this the orientation of Milan Piroćanac in the last decade of the 19th century? His contemporaries saw him with good reason as "a political thinker of rare acuity and originality" (Slobodan Jovanović, *Milan Piroćanac*). "In his estimates of developments and people Piroćanac was a deep, knowing and reliable thinker, and in legislation – explicit and liberal" (Milan Đ. Milošević, *Dodatak Pomeniku*). With human, political and statesman characteristics as such Milan Piroćanac was more than capable of taking the "sad" stock not only of the first decade of Serbia's independence (1878–88) but also of the entire 19th century.

"Sad is the fate of this country. Karađorđe was killed. Alexander Karađorđević was expelled. Michael was expelled and then murdered. Milan abdicated. There have been two regencies within the period of twenty years. And even today the Obrenović dynasty hangs by a thread: one child and that's its end," noted Milan Piroćanac in his diary on February 22, 1889, on the day King Milan abdicated (Milan Piroćanac, *Beleške*). Aware that violence was a constant of Serbia's history, he even anticipated the bloodshed of May 29, 1903 when officers-conspirators murdered the Obrenović royal couple thus putting an end to the dynasty. "Over here everything repeats itself constantly, and in the same way" (Ibid.). Helene d'Encausse's study "Le Malheur Russe" /Russian Misfortune/draws makes the analogies between Serbia and Russia quite clear. In the absence of mechanisms and procedures of a modern state, the issues of succession and change of power are being resolved unavoidably by brutal murders.

DYNASTIC OVERTHROW (MAY 29, 1903)

preparations for the era of wars (1912, 1913, 1914)

Contemporaries perceived differently the assassination of the Obrenović royal couple (Dubravka Stojanović, predgovor u *Nikola Pašić u Narodnoj skupštini*, 3 /preface to *Nikola Pašić in the People's Assembly, Vol. III*). For some, that was a watershed, the beginning of a *new era* crowned by parliamentarianism – the “Golden Age” of Serbia’s democracy. Until recently historiography has stuck to this interpretation of the events of May 29, 1903, making no difference between norms and practice (Olga Popović – Obradović, *Parlamentarizam u Srbiji 1903–1914. Godine /Parliamentarianism in Serbia 1903–14*). As for others, at home and abroad, the murder of the royal couple by the officers who had pledged their allegiance to the King – was a disaster. European courts closed their doors to Serbia’s new dynasty.

However, the murder of the royal couple did not come as a surprise to Nikola Pašić. At the Zagreb railroad terminus, on his way from Opatija back to Belgrade, he commented on the assassination in an interview with the editor-in-chief of the “Novi Srbobran” paper. “*Was it possible to anticipate the catastrophe?*” asked editor Budisavljević. To this Pašić replied, “You know Serbia has had an overthrow after an overthrow, laws that have been passed and then annulled, and a conflict after a conflict. We, the Serbians – or, if you like, South Slavs generally – *are nothing like the peoples in the West*, protesting promptly against breaches of the law. We are of somewhat passive nature: so we are letting sin after sin accumulate until enough is enough and the sinner himself realizes that he has no choice. Conflicts have led unavoidably the late King to a catastrophe.”

And then the reporter asked him, “*You, Mr. Minister, know the people sitting in the Assembly and the Senate. Are the majority of them for a monarchy or a republic? For, the word has it that they are divided over the form of the government.*” To this Pašić replied as follows:

“I know our parliamentarians and senators very well. They, the great majority of them, stand up for a monarchy. A republic is not fit to Serbia, it’s too early for it, and we are still far from it. As a republic Serbia would have been exposed to many, strong foreign influences, and that would be the biggest evil of all. *Serbia takes into account not only itself – as it is today – but also the Serbian thought. Establishment of a republic would be the same as letting*

go the thought it has committed itself to. Even as a monarchy it resists foreign influences with difficulty. Besides, my dear sir, there are Serbs who wouldn't know what to do with too many and unlimited freedoms, as they know nothing about respecting the freedom" (Čedomir Višnjić, *Srbobran 1901–1914; Srpsko kolo 1903–1914*).

So, what is it the dynastic overthrow has changed and opened the doors to? Formally, the 1903 Constitution took over most provisions from the 1888 Constitution. At the political arena, back in 1901, People's Radical Party split into two factions ("Old Radicals" and "Young Radicals"), which signaled the beginning of the bipartisanship. The party factionalized when "Old Radicals" gave their vote to the so-called Decretive Constitution (imposed/dictated). Nikola Pašić argued that "a less progressive constitution, but the one that guarantees power of legislation and control to the people, and ensures its participation in state affairs, while *letting it rest at peace to gather its strength, to amend and compensate whatever it lost in the past battles, and better prepare Serbia for the developments abroad*" would be fine.

A constitution is anyway just means. "For me, my struggle or my work for Serbia's constitutional arrangement is just means for easier achievement of goals that are, in my view, higher and loftier, and these goals are liberation and unification of the Serbian nation." Freedom of "the entire Serbian nation," the national freedom, is for Pašić "an ideal bigger and stronger than civil freedoms in the Kingdom" (Nikola Pašić, *Moja politička ispovest /My Political Confession*). It was obvious what the leader of the People's Radical Party that – at the historical juncture of the dynastic overthrow – identified itself with the people as a whole, prioritized as Olga Popović – Obradović noted in her study *Kakva ili kolika država /The Character or the Size of a State/*.

A group of intellectuals of the People's Radical Party – to found the Independent Radical Party later on – assembled in the "Odjek" /Echo/ magazine and fought against King Alexander, the creator of the Decretive Constitution, writing regular columns under the headline "Cries and Echoes." They saw themselves as "the salt of the people preventing the Serbian society from rotting," and held Serbia "more important than anyone and anything else." They were major factors in the preparation of the terrain for a political murder. "It was the army that killed King Alexander but only after our *Echo* had

first shot him dead with its moral fire” (“Scientist and Politician: Jovan M. Žujović,” in Latinka Perović: *Između anarhije i autokratije*).

The Serbian Social Democratic Party emerged at the political arena after the dynastic overthrow (1903). As a Marxist party at the scale of European Modernism, it advocated economic unity of the Balkans, development of capitalism and social legislation. Unlike other political parties in the Balkans that – following national ideals – aspired at rounding off nation-states, Serbian Social Democrats argued that war and development could not go hand in hand, and promoted a federation of Balkan nations (Dubravka Stojanović, *Prilog proučavanju srpske socijaldemokratske partije /Contribution to the Study of Serbian Social Democratic Party/*).

The true prizewinner of the coup d’etat was the Army. Until 1906 it had had a crucial influence on the King. It was only under the pressure from abroad that conspirators went into retirement. But in 1991 they formed the secret organization “Unification or Death,” better known as “Black Hand.” In the *Piedmont* magazine they publicized their program under the motto “state-building national egotism first of all and above all.”

Those thinking differently about the complot stood no chance: in the People’s Assembly the murder of the royal couple was seen as a patriotic act. Pašić himself used to say, “The act of May 29 is not a crime, for, had it been a crime, all the struggles for freedom worldwide would have been crimes... This act was an act of patriotism.” And he called the “threat of the army” a handful of oppositionists were alerting of – “totally overblown.” He said he that would use all possible financial resources of the country to prepare the army – that is, to arm it. “We are ready, and the people are ready to sacrifice all our possible needs to prepare Serbia for the developments to come... Hence, we were working to the best our knowledge, we have procured arms, as many as the people with expertise told us to” (*Nikola Pašić in the People’s Assembly, Vol. III*).

The generations raised (in families, school, by church or the army) on “the revenge of Kosovo” and “Serbian Bible oath,” all other priorities and interests of the independent state placed below these goals, people who were victimized and treating any other option as high treason – were making the army stronger and stronger. The army did not usurp the roles of other actors: the King, political parties, intelligentsia and masses; but the army, especially after the Customs War/Tariff War (1906) and annexation of

Bosnia-Herzegovina (1908) was the agent distilling nationalism as the value shared by all. All that was needed was a “reason why” to start the epoch of wars.

SERBIA WITHOUT RUSSIA AS A POWERFUL ALLY

Serbia came out of the Balkan Wars ended (1912, 1913) with bigger territory and population. Appetites, especially in military circles, grew. After the WWI (1914–18) an eminently political question was on the agenda: whether the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and “old state” – meaning the extended Kingdom of Serbia – or quite a new state of ethnically the same tribes but different nations. And throughout this important period Serbia was left without its powerful ally – the imperial Russia where the October Revolution had changed the balance of power.

A year before Pašić’s death, historian Radoslav Jovanović, his long-standing confidant in Russia, wrote (1925), “Pašić loves Russia with his body and soul, like something fundamentally close to him...and sees the fall of the Russia czarism as the biggest misfortune of the humankind” („Srpski istoričar Radoslav S. Jovanović o revoluciji u Rusiji“ /”Serbian Historian Radoslav S. Jovanović on Russian Revolution”/, Latinka Perović, *Srpsko-ruske revolucionarne veze. Prilozi za istoriju narodnjaštva u Srbiji /Serbian-Russian Revolutionary Ties; Contributions to the History of Populism in Serbia*). One hundred years later Russian President Vladimir Putin said about the same thing. According to him, disintegration of the Soviet Union is the biggest geo-political catastrophe (Milan Subotić /ed./, *Druga Rusija /Alternative Russia/*). Two historical actors thinking the same at the distance of one century testifies of their identical perception of the sum and substance of Russia’s history: Russia is the biggest Slav state and a civilization in itself, opposite to the Western; its disintegration, therefore, leads to geopolitical unbalance.

Besides Pašić’s perception of the fall of the Russian czarism was the traditional friendship between Serbia’s Karađorđević dynasty and the Russian imperial court; hence, those who have defeated it were seen, by definition, as Serbia’s enemies. For, the October Revolution that changed the balance of power – and not in Russia only – affected inevitably the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians.

About 35,000 Yugoslavs fought for the Bolsheviks. Once back home they believed that all was needed as a spark to set the fire of revolution in the Kingdom (Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1978/History of Yugoslavia 1918–78*, 1986). Conscientious objection at fronts, the landless people's movement and the social turmoil in the country devastated by the war and frustrated with the heavy toll in human lives – generated fear of anarchy.

Besides, the October Revolution was like a tectonic earthquake to the labor movement all over the world, and so in the Kingdom too. The social-democrat, reformist current was applauding the fall of the Russian czarism but not the theory of revolution as a historical U-turn. The revolutionary current was supporting the Bolshevik revolution and aspiring towards its universalization. Social-democratic parties in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina launched the initiative for the establishment of a unique Yugoslav revolutionary party. At the constitutive congress of the Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia /communist/ – SRPJ(k) – on April 20–23, 1919 revolutionary and reformist currents maintained the compromise to be ended at the Second Congress of SRPJ(k) on June 20–25, 1920 in Vukovar. The new name the party took – the Communist Party of Yugoslavia /KPJ/ – itself testified of its program. As a branch of the Third Communist International (Cominform), KPJ was following its general strategy and tactics.

The Party's actions, as well as its election success (1920) disturbed the regime, the more so since the Croat opposition used to side with the republican and the communist one. Under the pretext that the regime "has the right to defend itself" the Proclamation /*Obznana*/ was passed (1920) to curb activism of the communist opposition (organizations, propaganda, sympathies for the Bolsheviks, etc.). To this *white terror* the communists responded with the *red terror*, which resulted in the adoption of the Law on the Protection of Public Law and Order (1921). KPJ had been an illegal party for twenty years – until 1941. After all the meanderings and wanderings – under the Cominform's dictate or by decisions of its own – it finally rounded off its Bolshevikization; and this implied a strongly centralized party of cadres, based on the principle of democratic centralism. Such organizational arrangements made it possible for the party to withstand, without notable commotion, the Moscow Processes (1936, 1937 and 1938) and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939) – and prepare itself for the defense of the country and revolution: "There shall be no return."

In the WWII (1941–45) the People’s Liberation Army allied itself with the antifascist coalition. This was not only recognized by the Allies but German Nazis as well. In his book “Tito and Comrades” Slovenian historian Jože Pirjevec quotes German sources emphasizing Tito’s military and statesmanship abilities. Because of such abilities, say these sources, they would treat him as a Marshal should they capture him.

SOVIET MODEL SEEN AS IDEAL IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE WWII

In the post-war period the Federative People’s Republic of Yugoslavia – ruled undividedly by the Communist Party – was developed by the Soviet model of state ownership and political monopoly. Not even after Stalin and Molotov’s letter (1948) to Yugoslav top party officials was this model abandoned. Independence of the state was defended with legitimacy of the independence earned in the struggle against Nazism. In his memoirs (*Juriš na nebo/Storming at the Skies*) one of leading Praxis followers in Serbia, Professor Mihailo Marković, says that Tito’s biggest success in 1948 was in having convinced the Serbs to go to war against the Soviet Union – and the Russian people – should it be necessary.

In the articles he penned Milovan Đilas was the one to initiate the ideological criticism of the Soviet model (1953). He suggested a watershed: leaving the Soviet patrimonial model of state and society behind. His fate (expulsion from party leadership, years-long imprisonment, ban on his writings, etc.) determined the line the Party would cross to change everything but its essence. All economic reforms in Eastern European countries – including Yugoslavia’s most comprehensive reforms of 1965 – ended up as failures. And the reason behind these failures was the same: social consensus and political monopoly were not to be undermined. Like his liberal predecessors and followers („Milan Piroćanac – zapadnjak u Srbiji 19. Veka”/A Westernized in the 19th Century Serbia/, Latinka Perović, *Između anarhije i autokratije*; Dragan Marković, Savo Kržavac, *Liberalizam od Đilasa do danas*, 1 – 2/*Liberalism from Đilas till Today*/), Milovan Đilas was left at the margins even after the change of the regime as a man with “double” biography (Latinka Perović, *Dominantna i neželjena elita/Predominant and Unwanted Elites*). Actually, the regime changed just people in power but not its sum and substance.

Emerging cyclically in the Communist Party (in the 1960s and 1970s) liberalization tendencies usually ended in purges that strengthened the Party's ideological unity. All the above-mentioned attempts at liberalization testified that life was stronger than any doctrine and, no doubt, more flexible than the rigid state socialism, political monism and ideological dogmatism of even those critics of the system for whom the West – above all its capitalism and liberalism – was the “Otherness” to be shunned from through “improvements” in state socialism. Calls for changes did not imply readiness for taking the responsibility through freedom of expression, division of power and its control, but the right to replacement of ruling political structures. In this sense, guarantors of the system and “critics of everything existing” were in agreement – true, a silent one. They both acted by patrimonial equality though neither of the two groups lived by its norms.

TWO CONCEPTS FOR THE YUGOSLAV STATE: THE TIME OF LESSENERD TENSIONS

The pressure from the Soviet Union was strengthening the cohesion of the Second Yugoslavia. Paradoxically, policy of the West was producing the same effect considering the crack in the East's military-political bloc after the conflict in 1948. For its part, Yugoslavia was having more space to maneuver in thanks to the fact that it not in the Warsaw Pact and – at least rhetorically – in conflict with the international communist movement. The country's economic growth and cultural development, as well as higher international ratings, lessened the tensions between two concepts for the state: between a centralized, unitary state organized by the principle of “one person, one vote” and a democratic community of sovereign nations.

From an administrative federation of the Soviet type (1945) Yugoslavia, searching for a “formula of sustainability” through frequent constitutional amendments, in 1974 evolved into the country with a confederate constitution. It was the balance of power than made its proclamation possible: on the one hand there was Serbia, and, on the other, all other republics. Objectively speaking, the model of a centralistic state was closer to Tito's heart and he was, in this sense, in agreement with Serbia. And yet, though adherent to one idea and unable to find a solution, he has balanced between the two concepts his entire life. His biological end coincided with the dawn of a new

historical era: the end of the cold war, the fall of the Berlin Wall and Euro-Atlantic integrations. In the second half of the 1980s changes of internal borders were hinted at openly with reliance on the Yugoslav People's Army, one of the biggest armies in Europe at the time, and Tito's stance that this army was authorized not only to defend the country's international borders but also to settle conflicts at home – but with no assumption whatsoever about a possible disintegration of the Soviet Union (*Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences*).

The Eight Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia when promoters of a more liberal party line were eliminated (Ivan Stambolić); the emergence of a consensual autocrat in the person of Slobodan Milošević; the anti-bureaucratic revolutions under the slogan “*Who says, who lies Serbia is small; it's not small, it's not small, it has fought three wars, and will fight again by a stroke of luck;*” The war for supremacy in Yugoslavia or for the unity of the Serbian ethnic space (“Greater Serbia”) became a reality. Many books and studies have been written about it. But its stock – that preconditions the projection of an alternative – has not been accurately taken yet.

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE?

The “implosion” of real socialism called communism in its core, the Soviet Union, raised the question of how to proceed: to adopt the Western European model, restore the Soviet one or to return to the pre-Soviet era. Expectations about speedy changes turned out to be a delusion; a powerful historical inertia filled the blank space. There are differences between Eastern European countries but there are similarities too: some historical analogies remained. It turned out, at the same time, that half a century under the rule of the Soviet model scarred the tissue of Eastern European countries deeper than expected. Since the time of the Decembrists (1835) Russia has known that the unity of the system makes expansion possible.

In Serbia, the attempt of the Zoran Đinđić's cabinet to take the country – standing at its latest historical crossroads – along Western European course and towards European integration ended up in the Premiers' assassination. Serbia's mainstream was doing its best to suppress the recent past, to forget not only the victims but also the heavy cost of the war. It was focused on

the present time and “threatening dangers” coming with it (neo-liberalism, globalism, plunder, corruption, etc.). “I wouldn’t be surprised,” said Zoran Đinđić after one hundred days of his premiership, “should a part of national being stood up and say ‘Hit the brakes! What West, what rotten West are you leading us to! We want no capitalism, we want not to work for others and be their servants, and our factories in foreign hands!’” (Latinka Perović, „Zoran Đinđić“ in *Dominantna i neželjena elita*).

That was among fundamental reasons why Serbia began accession negotiations with the European Union so late and is still, in its foreign policy, in between EU and Russia. And all that at the time of Russia’s crystallized domestic and foreign policy orientation: an autocratic state being a big one or an empire, the Russian “world” and the Russian civilization. But in fact a huge country that has suffered for two centuries from its late modernization and, basking in the conjuncture of a resource state at the beginning of the 21st century, missed the opportunity to come to grips with backwardness. “Russia,” as an intellectual critic of today’s Russia put it, “should place both its legs in the modern era. We are still at its entrance...In Russia history is seen as repetition rather than a diversity of varieties worthy of consideration” (Boris Dubin, „Istorijsko ponavljanje i poseban put“ in: Milan Subotić /ed./, *Druga Rusija/Alternative Russia*).

Russia’s today’s presence in the Balkans, especially in Serbia, is nothing unexpected. It originates from Russia’s imperialism, which actually compensates its civilizational lagging; but of Serbian-Russian analogies too. The majority of Serbia’s electorate supports the party deep-rooted in Serbian political tradition. Rhetorically at least, this party sticks to Nikola Pašić’s motto, “God, people and Russia.” And all this, along with the shaky consensus on Serbia’s accession to EU, is seen as confusion. But in fact it is all about a longstanding process the stages of which cannot be anticipated with certainty unless the process itself is understood properly. In between “the left” and “the right” an alternative peeps out with much difficulty, since “the left” and “the right” have too much in common: they both are, above all, against economic diversity that could lead towards disintegration of traditional lifestyles. (Zoran Đinđić, *Politika i društvo /Politics and the Society/Izabrana dela/Selected Writings/, Vol. IV*)

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A DIFFERENT RUSSIA: FROM SERBIA'S PERSPECTIVE³⁴

In 2016 it will be five years since the “August putsch” (1991) the failure of which sped up disintegration of the Soviet Union and brought about the Russian Federation and other independent states – member of the once “shatter-proof union.” To many Sovietologists analyzing the “first socialist country” for decades, the peaceful collapse of the global superpower – Vladimir Putin called the “biggest geopolitical catastrophe in the 20th century” at the very beginning of his second term in office (2005), came as a surprise.³⁵ It is only logical, therefore, that theoreticians are still crossing swords over the causes and dynamics of the disintegration of the country its citizens and foreign observers “had seen as eternal until it dissolved” (Yurchak, 2005). In the 1990s these disputes were mostly focusing on interpretations of the Soviet history since based on the conviction that the future of the post-Soviet societies and countries, unlike their blurred past, was quite predictable. Namely, according to the mainstream “transition paradigm” of the time, by adopting the model of market economy based on private property and building democratic systems, these societies could easily unburden themselves of the communist past and follow in the footsteps of the West the victory of which in the Cold War testified of its superiority. Optimism marked the beginning of the first decade of the 20th century: it was believed by many that the history of conflicts between big ideologies was over and done with and that the

34 This paper is an abridged and adapted version of the author’s preface to the book *Alternative Russia: Critical Thought in Today’s Russia (Druga Rusija: kritička misao u savremenoj Rusiji)*, Biblioteka XX vek, Belgrade, 2015.

35 Soviet dissident in exile Andrey Amal’nik and French historian Helene Carrere d’Encausse were the exceptions ; back in the 1970s they predicted that the Soviet Union would disintegrate but were wrong in identifying the causes (See: Амальник, 1970; Carrère d’Encausse, 1978).

issue of social and political changes was a mere technicality of the tempo of implementation of the existing solutions. True, some isolated, dissonant voices were somewhat disrupting the unison of the democratic euphoria and “offhandedly promised speed” of post-communist transition. So, for instance, back in the 1991 Klaus Offe was warning that the post-communist, “triple transition” implied “the dilemma of simultaneity:” the choice between making simultaneously or sequentially radical changes at three different levels – the government (modern nation-state building), economy (transformation into market economy) and politics (establishment of a democratic system).³⁶ Offe’s advice about the advantages of simultaneous reforms was easier to defend in theory than implement in everyday life: for most of post-socialist countries his recommendation was something like a story about Baron Munchhausen pulling himself out from quicksand by his own ponytail. This mostly referred to the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia: the two socialist federations the member-states of which had placed /re/definition of their borders at the top of their agendas. The fact that the two had made different choices – the one opting for agreed and the other for armed disintegration of the common state – was a sort of a “riddle” to be deciphered through comparative research and thorough theoretical interpretation (see: Vujačić, 2015). And yet, although the Soviet Union disintegrated peacefully, the processes of building nation-states are not over yet as testified by not only scores of small-scale territorial disputes but also the ongoing “Ukrainian crisis” and Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Whatever, from ex-Yugoslavia’s perspective in the 1990s, seemed to be the advantage of the Soviet “disintegration model” was questioned by growingly stronger demands for revision of (“unjust”) borders to solve the reopened “national questions.” The Russian Federation is not the only one making such requests: however, political and military power it has make it the major factor in the post-Soviet territory, while the many-sidedness of the concept of the “Russian world” opens the door to radical changes for borders inherited from in the Soviet era. Since the revision as such depends not on Russia only, its future course and effects cannot be pre-

36 „The phases of the process that in ‘normal’ cases of West Europe have been overcome in centuries-long sequences (from nation-states, through capitalism to democracy) have to be accomplished almost simultaneously in Eastern Europe, in the same way the two components of ‘modern’ political economy – democracy and private property – had been abolished in the October Revolution.“ (Offe, 1991: 873).

dicted but the very fact that it has been placed on the agenda indicates the unsolved dilemma about Russia's self-determination as a "nation-state" or an "empire." The dilemma is the more so complex when taking into account that the term "nation-state" may determine not only a "state of all citizens and the people of the Russian Federation" but also a literally Russian nation-state as an ethnically defined political community.³⁷ While the advocates of Russian ethno-centrism are faced with the fact that ethnicity as a sole criterion of statehood would unavoidably dwindle the territory of the existing state, the official policy promotes the civil principle combined with recognition of the state's multiethnic structure.³⁸ Nevertheless, it is the Russian (*русский*) ethnos that enjoys the status of the "core" and integrative factor of the multiethnic state within the (*поссу́йско́го*) demos, whereas its culture, language, religion and history stand for key elements of the normatively recognized identity of this political community.³⁹ Against the historically changeable background (the actual balance of power in the post-Soviet geopolitical space and international affairs) Russia's fundamental concept of "cultural-civilization identity" can be, inter alia, used as the groundwork for a variety of expansionist-imperialistic projects – from restoration of the Russian Empire, through renewal of the Soviet Union's territorial wholeness to the establishment of a new "Eurasian empire." In the background of these projects – be they realistic or not – is neither exclusively ethnic nor inclusively civilian nationalism but the strong belief that by its very "nature" and "historical reasoning" Russia has been predetermined as an empire rather than a common ("normal") nation-state. Many and most active and influential advocates of "Russia's imperial course" and its "imperial mission" make up a multifarious ideological background compared with which statements by governmental

37 The difference between the adjectives *поссу́йский* and *русский* is lost in translation into Serbian that denotes it just as „Russian.“

38 „In the country with the biggest multiethnic population is is definitely impossible to be identified by one's ethnic or religious affiliation. It is the establishment of a civic identity based on common values, patriotism, civic responsibility and solidarity, respect for the law, and participation in the Motherland's fate without renouncing one's ethnic or religious roots that preconditions the safeguard of the country's unity.“ (Putin, 2013).

39 „Russia, as philosopher Konstantin Leotiev used to put it figuratively, has always developed as a 'flourishing complexity,' a civilization-state strongly united with the Russian people, the Russian language, the Russian culture, the Russian Orthodox Church and other traditional religions.“ (Ibid.).

officials, sincere or not, often sound like models of real-political wisdom and moderation.⁴⁰ Although over the first two post-Soviet decades Russian governments have been mostly preoccupied with elimination of potential threats of domestic separatist movements and strengthening of Russia's influence on its "closest neighborhood," the imperial alternative's ideological impact on the public was not to be undermined. "Many still take that we should seek to expand Russia's borders either under the banner of the 'renewed USSR,' the banner of some newly designed empire or by invoking Russian irredentism for unification of Russia with the territories with large Russian population such as Crimea or North Kazakhstan" (Миллер, 2007: 11). Russia's "getting to its feet" is the basic criterion for fulfillment of these imperial ambitions; many believe that in the first post-Soviet decade Russia was "brought to its knees" and that it was only with Vladimir Putin in power that it began recovering economically and as a state.

If the disintegration of the Soviet state in the early 1990s caused ambivalent feelings among Russia's population – a mixture of regret for the lost status of a big power and satisfaction with "a new beginning" freed from the burden of "imperial periphery" – the consequences of their high expectations that "a shock therapy" for economic reforms would transform the centralized, planned economy into the kingdom of free market and capitalist development in 500 days only, were traumatic. Sudden liberalization of prices, collapse of production facilities, under-the-table privatization and corruption turned Russia into a Third World country ("Upper Volta with missiles") and brought the great majority of citizens to breadline. Even without quoting here economic indicators and social effects of the reforms, it should be taken into account that the reforms were grounded on the assumption that "it is definitely possible to install a new economic system in the same way one installs new software in computer's hardware" (Hedlung, 2005: 274). Such optimistic belief derived from the adopted neoclassic economic theory, based on the omnipotence of the self-regulated market, dominated the economic thought in the early 1990s. "By the postulates of the neoclassic

40 Putin was reiterating that „a return“ to the era of pre-revolutionary Russia was impossible the same as a renewal of the Soviet Union. „Neither in politics nor in the sphere of sovereignty do we wish or aim at renewing the Soviet empire.“ Also, quoting Lav Gumiliov from time to time, he was referring mostly to the „Eurasian alliance“ as an economic community the emergence and functioning of which would be made easier only thanks to historical traditions and cultural characteristic of „Eurasian nations.“

theory transition to capitalism necessitated stabilization of the economy as a whole, privatization and free market setting prices...The road to capitalism was seen as a merely technical problem” (Pejović, 2004: 9–10). Having neglected the so-called transactional expenses, the masterminds of the economic reforms created a system a Russian politicologist, comparing it with the era of Brezhnev’s “stagnation,” described as “a leap from a pot into the fire” – a change from bad to worse! (Gel’man, 2015: 3).⁴¹ As Douglas North said when awarded the Nobel Prize for Economy in 1993, the reformers had not only neglected the time dimension of economic transformations but also the importance of the existence of scores of institutions enabling efficient functioning of the market and encouraging social development.⁴² More precisely, the reformers have overestimated the influence of the new “rules of the game,” while losing sight of the significance of informal norms, the “mental models,” customs and inherited rules of behavior of economic actors, as well as the problems of nonexistent mechanisms for market control. “That means,” says North, “that the transfer of formal political and economic rules from successful Western economies to the Third World countries and Eastern Europe is not a sufficient precondition for smooth economic functioning. Privatization is not a panacea for all bad economic performances.” (North, 1994:365). The advocates for a new, institutionalized economic theory use the outcomes of the Russian transition to exemplify the shortcomings of many economists’ belief that “history and culture are unimportant” and that the same set of market reforms can be successfully implemented, like a technical knowledge, in any society and eventually lead to its development.⁴³ On the other hand, by recognizing the significance of the Soviet legacy and bearing

41 Richard Pipes, who supported Yeltzin, shared this view. „Over the past years Russia has been a great disappointment to all of us expecting that after the collapse of the Soviet regime the country would follow a slow, probably bumpy, but still irrevocable course towards the Western model of development...But after a promising beginning Russia ended up in in a nondescript regime incapable of ensuring not only prosperity and freedom of capitalist democracy to its people but also the fundamental social security of the late communism.“ (Pipes, 1996: 30).

42 (North, 1994: 359–360S).

43 In 1992 Minister Piotr Aven summarized this view saying, „If economy is a science with laws of its own, then all the countries and all the stabilization plans are the same.“ In 1991 Harvard Professor Lawrence Summers told a conference, „Spread the truth – economic laws are like technical ones – the same set of laws is applicable everywhere (Hedlund, 2005: 11).

in mind Russia's economic growth corresponding with Vladimir Putin's coming to power, the reformist "shock therapy" could be seen, despite of all, as a "purgatory" of the transition from the planned to the market economy. True, despite its spectacular growth, the situation of the Russian economy can still not be considered a "heaven" of free market, the rule of law and institutional stability.⁴⁴ The economic growth was mostly based on exploitation of natural resources and global conjuncture at the raw material market, rather than on entrepreneurship, innovation, diversification and modernization of production. Selective implementation of the "the rule of law" measures against unpopular "oligarchs" who had been replaced by new owners or managers of state-run corporations only fueled the insecurity of property rights.⁴⁵

In Russia, economic elites emerge (or disappear) from privileges (or the loss of these privileges) they get from political bigwigs to whom they, in turn, provide support at the political market. The control over the respect for contractual terms has changed hands – from private ("mafia") groupings to security structures governed by political factions rather than to independent judiciary. Although standards of living grew, social inequalities did not lessen when compared to the decade of transition; on the contrary, despite its egalitarian tradition and ideology, today's Russia is the world "leader" in unequal distribution of social wealth.⁴⁶

44 In 1999–2008 during Putin's first presidential term, Russia's economy was among the those with biggest growth in the world. That was diametrically opposite to the late Soviet period, but it did take place mostly thanks to the rise in oil prices. (Hill & Gaddy, 2013: 90).

45 „Although he said that one of his political goals was to dismantle 'oligarchy' and freed himself from the best known or most independent figures of the past era, Putin changed nothing in the functioning of the system. He spared some oligarchs close to him, and distributed a considerable portion of the wealth among new oligarchs, the so-called Putin's pals and 'Eastern Orthodox checkists' (the term itself, though simplified, tells much about the ideology of that circle). As a result, we have centralized economy, poor market competition and a small percentage of small and middle-sized enterprises.“ (Колесников, 2015).

46 Seventy-nine percent of overall wealth is in the ownership of only 1 percent of Russian population; this percentage amounts to 37 in US and 32 in Europe and China. (See: Гонтмахер, 2013). According to other sources (Credit Suisse), in 2013 in Russia, 110 billionaires owned 35 percent of the country's resources, which placed Russia at the top of the list of countries with the biggest level of inequality. (Dawisha, 2014: 27).

The above-mentioned characteristics of the Russian economic system clearly indicate that it has rather departed from the proclaimed ideal of the rule of law and stable institutions backing up a developed market economy. It is much more difficult to denote affirmatively this “hybrid regime” for which the literature usually uses the coinage *crony capitalism*. Paul Krugman said, “Putin’s Russia is an extreme version of crony capitalism, indeed, a kleptocracy in which loyalists get to skim off vast sums for their personal use. It all looked sustainable as long as oil prices stayed high. But now the bubble has burst, and the very corruption that sustained the Putin regime has left Russia in dire straits“ (Krugman, 2014). Though at the beginning of his third term in office Putin was speaking up for “a new model of development” the core of which “are economic freedom, private ownership and competition, modern market economy rather than state capitalism”, it was during his second term that the system of personal ties between biggest businessmen and high governmental officials, and the circles close to them had been established.⁴⁷ However, unlike Yeltsin and his “family” who had been unable of controlling oligarchs, having relied on his cronies from St. Petersburg (for instance, those from the “Lake” cooperative or former KGB colleagues) Putin demonstrated much better management skill. Having strengthened the centralized apparatus (“vertical power”), he restricted the power and independence of local bigwigs and, with his fiscal and taxing policy, ensured larger strata’s participation in redistribution of the oil revenue.

Though he has never stopped advocating “market economy” in his speeches, the importance and the role of the “state” became his major tools for distancing himself from the 1990s as the “times of unruliness” (*смутное время*).⁴⁸ Russia’s renewal as a powerful state (*сильное государство*) has

47 „Over eight years (2000–2008) Putin appointed his longstanding friends and followers highest offices in politics, administration and business, founded or established safe though insignificant niches for his unreliable ‘fellow travelers’ and isolated his potential rivals whose disloyalty and resistance could have posed a threat... He was the only intersection – no one else’s influence could have been compared with that of the main actor“ (Gelman, 2015: 75).

48 „Putin’s program rhetoric focuses on „the state“ as the key word that associates the status of the term ‘market’ in the rhetoric of liberal economists in the early 1990s or, if you like it better, the key word of religious scriptures“ (Gelman, 2015: 76). Alexander Prohanov, founder of the Electoral Club (the think-tank trying to formulate „the ideology of Putinism“) takes that, in this context, the breakup with the rule of Yeltsin

always been – at domestic scene and international arena alike – the main goal of his rule, derived from his interpretation of the Russian political tradition. “Over here, the state, its institutions and structures have always played an extremely important role in the country’s and people’s life. To Russians, a powerful state is not an anomaly, something to be coped with; on the contrary, is a warrant of law and order, and a driving force of all the changes” (Putin, 1999).

Putin had turned down the liberal state concept as “a night watch,” but has not resumed the Soviet model of a partisan state that monopolizes the entire economic and social life. Normatively, Russia is defined as a “*democratic country*.” Unlike the Soviet Union, it has a multi-party system, the governance is formed following on democratic elections, division of power is institutionalized, and the Constitution guarantees political rights and bans any enforced state ideology.⁴⁹

Anyway, Russia’s political system, at least till civilian protests in 2011–12, could be better characterized as “electoral democracy” than restored (Soviet) “totalitarianism.” And yet, many frauds in the elections for the Duma laid bare the “façade character” of the Russian democracy, and strengthened the belief of some circles that the rules of the “political game” were just playing into the hands of “electoral authoritarianism” without meeting any criteria of “free and fair elections.”

Without renouncing democratic legitimacy, the ideologists of the United Russia party developed the concept of “sovereign democracy” as a unique system different from the one “globalist” and “liberal democracy,” by invoking universal human rights and freedoms, was promoting. The merge of “sovereignty” and “democracy” was meant to strengthen Russia’s international standing on the one hand, and, on the other, to facilitate the populist policy providing no ironclad guarantees for individual rights and freedoms, but invoking instead the “the people’s majority will” – the one that is being shaped by the media under the control of the ruling political elite. Beside, this concept was a sort of “dialectic synthesis” of the characteristics of the Soviet and the post-Soviet political epochs. “While the Soviet Union was sovereign

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as „a symbol of Hitlerism“ is crucial. „By researching the sudden replacement of elites, we have concluded that Putin is not Yeltsin’s but Stalin’s heir“ (Проханов, 2014:7).

49 „I am against renewal of any official ideology whatsoever in Russia. There is no place for mandatory civilian unanimity in the democratic Russia“ (Путин, 1999).

but not democratic, and Russia of the 1990s democratic but not sovereign – Putin’s Russia reconciles these two contrapositions in a synthesis predetermined to succeed.” (Laruelle, 2009: 149). This synthesis is based on the postulate about Russia’s specificity – the so-called “spiritual sovereignty” – which is above any politics and economy, and confirms poet Tyuchev’s creed there is no general standard to be applied to Russia. Hence, some advocates of “sovereign democracy” take that the opposition’s clamor for liberal values and democratic procedures rests on misunderstanding of their historical preconditions (the level of social development Russia could attain over time) but also of their fundamentally cultural-civilizational limitations.

“Western values” such as “formal rights,”⁵⁰ are not binding to the state that sees itself as a special “civilization” (*государство-цивилизация*), while those advocating these values either have delusions about their universality or make the “fifth column” financed from abroad and act against the state of their own. In the first case, the minority “seduced” by liberalism can be reeducated (something like the Soviet “ideological work”) to eventually realize the specificities and true values of their own “civilization.” Education and culture are, therefore, notably in the service of ideology in the process of strengthening “spiritual ties” (*духовные скрепы*) that bond the community.⁵¹

The proclaimed goal – “communal unity” – turns democratic institutions into empty shells, given that the concept of “national identity,” as substantially understood, homogenizes the society and makes political parties into various shades of the same color.⁵² The minority opposing the mainstream interpretation of the “national idea” stands for domestic (cultural and political) Otherness, alien to the organically perceived “national being” and, hence,

50 „All the attempts to replace Russian perception of ‘justice’ and ‘fairness’ by purely legal terms are doomed“ (Аверьянов, 2015: 40).

51 „At the beginning of his second term Vladimir Putin was faced with the imperative of creating a more clearly defined ‘ideology’ that would mobilize ‘the majority’ against ‘the minority.’ No wonder that some analysts are speaking about ‘Putinism’ growing before our eyes“ (Малинова, 2014: 119).

52 „The state ideology is all-inclusive and hospitable enough to assemble under the same umbrella all political forces and outlooks supporting the incumbent regime. All others are marginalized – placed either in social niches or even in prisons“ (Колесников, 2015).

is nothing but the “agent” of the West, the major constitutive Otherness of the Russian identity – its “fifth column.”⁵³

The ways of controlling the “fifth column” and the means for its political and social marginalization could be various – from legal restrictions, stronger control over the media, though smear campaigns (“The Satan is in here” – Dugin) to patriotic euphoria inciting liquidation of outstanding “fifth columnists” such as Boris Nemtsov.

Even by skipping a detailed overview and analysis of the post-Soviet Russia’s complex development, one could see that all relevant literature indicates the asymmetry between high expectations and actual outcomes of the “democratic transition.” “Following democratic mobilization of the masses that marked the collapse of the Soviet Union and continued after 1991, a new form of authoritarianism is formed today. Putin’s dictatorship, of course, differs fundamentally from the Soviet, communist version...And nevertheless, Russia has restored the status quo – autocratic regime” (Kotkin 2015). Many authors that agree with such definition of the incumbent political regime differently interpret its emergence. Most of them blame the influence of the “Russian tradition” for the failure of the “democratic transition.” In this sense, “Putinism” shares the fate of Bolshevism that has been interpreted for decades by various elements of Russia’s political and cultural heritage – messianism, autocracy, the predominance of collectivistic ideas and values, underdeveloped society, “national character” prone to despotism, etc. It was Richard Pipes who developed this argument for dependence on tradition; he explained the entire Russian history – from Middle Age Moscovia to disintegration of the Soviet Union – by the continuity of the “patrimonial rule” that makes no difference between political power (*potestas*) and ownership (*dominium*).⁵⁴ Pipes takes that Russian autocrats have blocked the emergence of the institute of private ownership by turning the entire county

53 „The Fifth Column – this stands for people standing openly against the Holy Russia, the Eastern Orthodoxy, the Russian nation, the Russian state and Putin“ (Дугин, 2014). In his apocalyptic picture of the final showdown between Russia and the West, the good and the evil, God and Satan, Dugin also warns against “the sixth column,” even more dangerous than the “fifth” – “These are people who support Putin, and could accept formally the state-building policy and religion, but their motives are other than Russian identity” (Ibid). His appeal to Putin to eliminate scoundrels from within his own ranks” associates the motif of Bolshevik “purges.”

54 (Pipes, 1974: xviii).

into a property of their own. No circumstance of all influencing the course of Russia's history, he argues, better explains why the country's political and economic development turned aside from the course the rest of Europe was following...Unlike in the most West European countries, private ownership capable of restricting the rule of a monarch was unknown in Russia's era of absolutism. (Пайпс, 2000: 212; 236). Having come to power after many failed reforms of absolutism, Bolsheviks renewed and further strengthened the old "patrimonial pattern" – Lenin was treating his enormous country like a his property (Pipes, 1996: 13), while his successor's brutal rule met Russians' deep-rooted need for a strong hand.⁵⁵ When modernization effects of such rule were exhausted and the Soviet Union entered the epoch of "stagnation" in the course of which it lost the race with other super power, democratic reforms, despite privatization and multiparty system, brought about new authoritarianism. Putin is popular exactly because he reestablished the model of rule characteristic for Russia – an autocratic state wherein citizens are freed from responsibility for policy and which needs imaginary foreign enemies to strengthen its artificial unity, argues Pipes. (Pipes, 2004: 15).

Though criticized by many historians, Pipe's concept of "Russian patrimonialism" has been renewed over the past years in the studies by political and economic theoreticians exemplifying the *path-dependency theory* by the course and outcomes of the Russian transition. To put it simply, they take that development of the post-Soviet Russia is "trajectory-dependent" – despite the formally changed "rules of the game," the inertia of social development restores it to the old, well-known "course" the society and the state had been following for long.

Russia is not a *tabula rasa*; hence, social changes, no matter how radically planned, are always passed through a "filter" of accumulated social and historical experience. A revolutionary change is never as revolutionary as its advocates would like it to be, while its characteristics will always be different

55 „The lack of social and national cohesion, the lack of knowledge of civil rights and of any concept of private property, as well as inefficient judiciary – these were major factors that made Russians earn for a strong imperial rule...They relied on the state to protect them one from another. They wanted their rulers strong and brutal, to possess the traits denoted by the Russian term *groznyi* (wrongly translated as terrible), used as an epithet for Tzar Ivan IV to mean someone who is awe-inspiring. Russians have learned from experience that a weak rule – and they saw democracy as such – equals anarchy and lawlessness.“ (Pipes, 2004:10).

from those anticipated, argues North (North, 1994: 366). The approach as such shifts the focus from the research of institutional changes to the search for their inherent “continuity.” “The point of our argument is that, despite looking like radical departures on the surface, in institutional sense, Yeltsin’s and Putin’s regimes were more of manifestations of deeply rooted continuity than changes.” (Hedlund, 2005: 263). Hence, though political and economic institutions in today’s Russia have nothing to do with Weber’s ideal type of “patrimonial rule,” the practice whereby political elite handles economic resources – organized in the “power vertical” with its personalized top and groups of side clientele – makes it possible to define the system by many concepts (political capitalism, patrimonial capitalism, “neo-patrimonialism,” etc.); all of these concepts, though different, imply the elements of continuity with patrimonial tradition (See: Robinson, 2011). Regardless of their consideration of these concepts’ analytical capacities, as well as debates on whether “the legacy of the past” makes the foundation of Russia’s persistent reproduction of political power as means for ensuring economic rent or stands for rational, targeted attitude of political actors facing no institutional obstacles and efficient resistance of “the society,” the advocates of the path-dependency theory are aware of the danger of being accused of rigid historical determinism that – in the final analysis – excludes any possibility for radical social changes.⁵⁶

This is why they have been emphasizing that the societies with *limited access order* such as Russian, where only political factions are privileged to control key economic sectors and participate in the rent, could be, nevertheless, transformed into the competitive *open access order*, though the transformation model is complex and dependent on many factors. On the other hand, if they take that a society’s economic development in itself stands not for a crucial value, transformation from one order into another is quite unnecessary. In that case the “modernization” rhetoric D. Medvedev used during his presidency can be replaced by affirmation of the self-sufficiency of the “Russian course.”

Most influential in today’s Russia are the ideological standpoints postulating its uniqueness – its cultural-civilizational self-sufficiency – that makes

56 Hence, Douglas North says that contrary to the belief in predetermined political and economic developments, societies can opt for alternatives at any stage of development. (North, 1990: 98–90).

it a world of its own, the world not bound by “general standards.” The motives behind these standpoints, however, are different – from those renewing the old Slavophilism relying on the thesis about the uniqueness of the religious (Eastern Orthodox) tradition, through Eurasian aspirations deriving from geopolitical theories, to projects for alternative modernity. The crucial concept of the latter, mostly eclectically structured theoretic-ideological discourses, is the concept of the “West” that stands for a “constitutive Other” of Russian identity narratives. Unlike conventional “westernism” and its early post-Soviet version, embarrassing to Russia as if it were a “backward student” who still has much to learn from his “teacher,” the advocacy for one’s own Otherness enables self-respect and, as Herzen noted, facilitates “Russia’s soul’s painful encounter with the reality.” Resort to tradition following the traumatic disintegration of the (Soviet) state and shock of the “transition” is nothing unexpected but could be rather considered a symptom than a cure. Many problems arise from it, the first being the very determination of the “true tradition” Russia should go back to. “In the context of Russia, it is not that simple to separate the ‘tradition’ that should be the guide, which a much too heavy reliance on Eastern Orthodoxy in a secular and multi-religious state is itself pregnant with adverse consequences” (Малинова, 2014: 119). The attempts to have Slavophilism replaced by its Eurasian counterpart (based on geopolitical argumentation that, positing the kinship between Eastern Orthodoxy and religions of the East, relativizes the exclusivism of the Eastern Orthodoxy) cannot solve the problem of determining a distinct “Russian identity” against the background of other “Eurasian nations” that, inspired by their newly found nationalism, are not exactly ready to accept Russia’s domination. The third standpoint referred to above – “alternative modernity” – has been most expounded within the theories of post-colonialism that criticize the ambitions for the normative universality of the Western model of society and history from the point of view of the experience of the world’s “colonial periphery” and by pointing out to Europe’s particularistic significance try to “provincialize” it (See, Chakrabarti, 2000).

And yet, while the Soviet Union could be argued for as a project building a quite different modernity, superior, by the Soviet interpretation, to the bourgeois-capitalist one, the concept of Russian civilization was mostly born of the reaction to the feeling of inferiority. “The set of ‘traditional values’ on the basis of which Russia has been trying to build its identity is fully determined

by the opposition to the West. While arguing for its civilizational specificity and independence from Western hegemony, it is forced, nevertheless, to act in the normative field determined by Europe's Enlightenment (Морозов, 2014).⁵⁷ Radical attempts to abandon this "normative field" – formulated in the revived religious fundamentalism that denies the concept of contemporary secularism, as well as in Eurasian ideology – are, though popular in public, limited by the imperative for agile development, social and economic, that preconditions the attainment of Russia's ambitions as a global super power. Therefore, Russia's political elite tends towards opting for a "middle way" – towards formulating the "national idea" as a special, national "form" with universal "content."⁵⁸

By the end of his rule Yeltsin has formed a scholarly commission tasked with formulating "a pan-national Russian idea." The results of the commission's work were modest: it published just one analysis of newspaper articles on national self-consciousness, national character, Russia's place and role in the world history, etc. In his continued search for "Russian idea" as means for ensuring social unity and a barrier against cultural hegemony of the West, Putin believed it could be established without an insight into crucial characteristics of national identity.⁵⁹ Therefore, unlike the Bolshevik project oriented toward Utopian future, he used the Russian past as the main resource for formulating the "Russian idea" as a strategic, national signpost. Despite the radical discontinuity of the historical development,⁶⁰ it is believed that "longtime" national characteristics (such as patriotic dedication to the state,

57 „In result, we have fundamental dependency from what we actually renounce – dedication to the object of our hate, to what Americans call *the things we love to hate*“ (УШАКИН, 2015: 177) .

58 Analogous to the definition of the culture of Soviet peoples and nationalities – „national by form, and socialist by content.“

59 „Obviously, our development is not possible without spiritual, cultural and national self-determination – without it, we cannot possibly cope with challenges at home and abroad, and cannot be successful in global competition“ (ПУТИН, 2013).

60 „In order to renew our national consciousness we must integrate all our historical epochs and resume the simple truth that Russia did not emerge either in 1917 or in 1991 but has its unique and unchallengeable history we can count on for strength and the purpose of national development“ (Ibid.)

commitment to its security and full sovereignty, etc.)⁶¹ could be found in the past, and that a set of values based on Eastern Orthodox tradition, family life, collective solidarity, communal responsibility, etc. could be selected from it. The U-turn towards conservativeness became even more visible with Putin's emphasis on the contrast against the liberal "rotten West." "We witness many Euro-Atlantic countries that have chosen the course that denies their roots, including Christian values that make the foundation of the Western civilization. Principles of morality and any national identity are being negated: national, cultural, religious and even gender tenets. We witness the policy that strikes no balance between a family with many children and a homosexual partnership, and between the faith in God and in Satan" (Путин, 2013).

This hardly ends the catalogue of Russia's differences from the "West" – apart from the domains of technology and managerial skills, examples from other spheres of life can be added to it. So, for instance, in a series of articles on globalization (as the rule of the cosmopolitan "financial oligarchy") Putin's close friend and former director of Russian Railroads, engineer and doctor of political sciences Vladimir Yakunin, strongly criticized the Western "consumerist society" that, unlike the Russian, cares not a straw about spiritual values (See: Якунин, 2015).

While arguing for "national capitalism" and Eastern Orthodox spirituality, this founder of the Grand Duke Andrei Foundation never mentioned his real estate in the Moscow District with a 2,000-square-meters country house (true, with a private chapel aside from a special storage for furs and the like); though a public servant, he has been refusing to publicize his annual income (estimated at 15 million dollars), and keeps quiet about his shares in a number of off-shore companies.⁶²

61 „Russia has a fundamental historical continuity that is above all political breaks. These breaks are not seen as significant given that, as is being argued, Russia's 'essence' is not in its political regime – imperial, communist, presidential, etc. – but in its size, place at the international arena, its sphere of influence and feeling of having a global mission“ (Laruelle, 2009: 201).

62 More details about the „Yakunin scandal“ available at (<https://fbk.info/investigations/post/83/>). Yakunin has been bestowed the Golden Medal for Merits of the Republic of Serbia, while his case confirms Krugmann's argument that Putin's plan for closing the capital drain („nationalization of the economic elite) is like locking the door to a granary after all the mice are gone. (Krugmann, 2014).

Though interesting in itself the “Yakunin case” is mentioned here just to illustrate a more general problem facing the advocates of the specificity of the “Russian course” – of the ideologically efficient rhetoric that, defining Russia as diametrically opposite to the “West,” calls for more detailed qualification of its “authenticity” to enable, as a normative project, social development and direct everyday life. The “special course,” as Russian conservatives see it, “a life as it is in Europe, just better: without migrants, homosexuals, European Court of Human Rights and other boring attributes of European civilization” (Морозов, 2014). Unlike the communist epoch, today’s Russia, the same as the entire post-modern era, faces a deficit in “a big story” within which to determine the place of its own and articulate its role in the future. Searching for a “national idea” in the past could eventually result in the belief deputy chief of staff Vyacheslav Volodin summarized as “No Putin, no Russia!”

And yet, radical advocates for the “Russian course” are not exactly happy with the strongly personalized political power as it lacks a messianic component. Alexander Prohanov detects it in Putin’s address to the Valdai Club Session. “With this speech Putin became a preacher of traditional religious values of the entire manhood, and informal leader of all the countries professing monotheism. He became the leader of humanity that opposes the invasion of Hell. Russian messianism in the bosom of which celestial meaning breathes, was once again confirmed by Putin’s foreign policy. Russia has not yet formulated its global spiritual doctrine that will replace the hellish liberalism. A model as such is still ripening in the bosom of the Russian civilization, while the world waits anxiously for this new word of life spoken from the Russian rostrum” (Проханов, 2014: 16).

The sermonic tone of Prohanov’s statement needs not be taken seriously – every culture, the Russian especially, brims with marginal characters eager – with gleam in their eyes and prophetic passion – to share the eternal truth with the rest of the world and reveal it the “secrets” of globally historical significance. And yet, ambitious to develop the whole ideology of the “Fifth Empire”⁶³ this author and publicist (adviser to Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin) assembled in the “Election Club” many figures of influence on Russia’s political elite and public opinion. It suffices to mention just some of them:

63 „The Fourth Red Empire was the empire of the great Stalin. The fifth empire of today is still unfinished and unstable, but gets stronger and stronger – and is connected closely with the name of Putin“ ((Проханов, 2014: 19).

Alexander Dugin (the former member of the marginal pro-fascist movement who grew into the most influential “geo-politician,” adviser to high governmental officials and professor at the Moscow University, often labeled “Putin’s Rasputin”); General Leonid Ivashov (the former high official of the Ministry of Defense); Sergey Glaziev (Putin’s adviser for economic regional integrations); Natalia Narochtniskaya (historian, the president of the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation in Paris); Mikhail Leontyev (the influential TV journalist and the official of the state-run oil company); and Archimandrite Tikhon (the member of the presidential Cultural Council and Putin’s personal spiritual adviser). Names of numbers of influential public figures not in the membership of the Club but advocating similar ideological-political stands could easily be added to the list. How much they actually influence Kremlin’s policy and how much are the government plays on them in occasional ideological campaigns is the open question – the answer to which depends, as things stand, on the estimated priority of Russia’s political elite’s ideological, realpolitik or interest-guided motivation.⁶⁴ And still, regardless of this estimate, the fact remains that this ideologically multifarious “nationalistic-patriotic bloc” (assembling extremists from the right and the left alike – declared Stalinists, advocates of “iron fist,” imperial nationalists, opponents to globalization, critics of liberalism, anti-Semites, etc.), with its visibility in the media and considerably financial resources, articulates major topics of Russia’s public discourse and is far from being just an “excessive” phenomenon at the margins of the society. One should not neglect this “front’s” influence on Serbia; books by its supporters – Alexander Dugin, Natalia Narochtniskaya, Oleg Platonov, Leonid Reshetnikov and others – that have been translated into Serbian testify to the contrary.

One should also bear in mind that perceptions of Russia in Serbia are not only formed by reading the above-mentioned authors but also by their frequent visits, interviews, and speeches at scholarly conferences and official manifestations. Their presence in Serbia finds an echo in the world of

64 According to Lruelle, a general approach to the monitoring of nationalists’ influence on Russia’s foreign policy cannot prove a causality. These nationalists simply provide a discursive *a posteriori* legitimacy to the decisions made independently on them. In major cases nationalistic groups were the means of Russia’s foreign policy rather its driving force. (Laruelle, 2015: 90). Of course, the dynamics of the political life could change this situation in the future: empowered radical group could take over the initiative in outlining foreign policy decisions.

publishing; by relying on them as undeniable authorities many books published in Serbia actually reproduce their theoretical and political stands. In can be concluded, therefore, that, unlike Russia's contemporary fiction presented to Serbia's readership in a diversity of styles and genres, the theoretical and political literature is – with few exceptions – strikingly uniform.

Many are the reasons for the Russian sociopolitical thought influence on Serbia; and Serbia with its manifestly selective reception is a case per se that would, in the final analysis, have more to do with domestic political and cultural circumstances than Russia itself. One of the reasons why Russian authors are so popular over here is the attention they – unlike the official Kremlin – were paying to Serbia in the 1990s, treating it as a sort of “avant-garde” struggling against the “new world order.” Their support to Milošević's policy in Yugoslavia's bloody disintegration was mostly motivated by the circumstances at home – they strongly opposed Yeltsin's “treacherous regime” that, having recognized the existing borders between Soviet republics, renounced the role they took Russia should have played in global politics as the legal successor of the Soviet Union. The grudge of the critics of the Russian transition who were looking up to Milošević's Serbia as a shining example and model of “resistance to global hegemony of the West” was permeated by feelings of humiliation because of the lost status of a super power and the territorial integrity of the once state, rather than by their ideological commitment to the legacy of communism. They kept emphasizing Serbia's importance in the global “geopolitical game” even after Russia, at the beginning of Putin's second term, started treating it again like a “younger brother.” So back in March 2008 Alexander Dugin addressing the audience at the Belgrade's Law School said, “Serbia is in the forefront of Eurasian, Eastern Orthodox and continental principle...Keys to Russian politics are in Serbia” (Дугин, 2008). Such words, flattering to domestic public, are not so often to be heard now – the “key” is in Moscow (again)⁶⁵ while Vladimir

65 While stressing Serbia's role as „avant-garde“ in the above-mentioned address, during the Election Club's visit to Serbia in March 2015 Dugin rather changed his accents, saying, „In our view, Serbia could be not only a bridge but also a stronghold against what the world of globalization has been imposing on us. It is a historical tragedy that the attempt to make it such in the 1990s was late...*Today's conservative U-turn in Russia is a signal to patriotic forces in Serbia*“ (Трибуна, 2015: 20).

Putin, as Serbia's President Nikolić said, would triumph over both of Serbia's presidential candidates in the 2012 elections.⁶⁶

What is in the background of Putin's great popularity and how "deep" it is – or to what extent is it articulated in the rational rather than emotional discourse? Searching for the answer we usually run into "arguments" about the kinship of "Slav brothers" and Russia and Serbia belonging to the specific (Eastern Orthodox) "civilization." And yet, these arguments are not used when it comes to other Slav and/or Eastern Orthodox countries – for instance, when it comes to Bulgaria that is in the EU membership. In the background of this popular narrative about Slav-Eastern Orthodox brotherhood is the tradition of Russian Slavophilism that is, though critical of "Europe," an offspring of European Romanticism. Like its classic counterpart, this "new Slavophilism" is strongly critical of the "West" as its "constitutive Other" but is of almost no avail in formulating an alternative to the modern order. For, unlike communism as a project of alternative modernity, it has been and still is oriented toward imaginary, pre-modern past ("conservative Utopianism" – Walicky) that hardly offers solutions to the problems of today. So, for instance, despite its ideological subtlety, the key Slavophil concept of "togetherness" says little about how economic or legal systems of contemporary societies are to be organized. True, like the old one, the new Slavophilism also wants to see the entire political sphere in the hands of an authoritarian leader who, "having taken everything on his shoulders," unburdens the society of "formal rights and freedoms" for the higher goal of "communal unity." A similar ideological justification of authoritarian and personalized political power of the Slavophil point of view is even more visible in the contemporary "Eurasianism" that relies on natural-scientific, geographic foundation reflected in the form of eternal drama of the ("geopolitical") friction between mainland and maritime states (empires). This fundamental dichotomy frees "Eurasia" from accepting "Western values" marked by "Atlanticism" that by its very definition cannot be applied universally. By denying "cultural colonialism of the West" the advocates of Eurasian cultural and political autochthony are forced either to invoke mere "negative of the West" or leave their standpoint

66 See: Nikolić: „Putin bi na izborima u Srbiji sigurno pobedio Tadića, a mislim – i mene“ (interview of March 1, 2012 at <http://www.fakti.org/serbian-point/nikolic-putin-bi-na-izborima-u-srbiji-sigurno-pobedio-tadica-a-mislim-i-mene>)

in a “semantic void”⁶⁷ when defining their “special course” of development. The first option moves them closer to the extreme right-wing of the West,⁶⁸ whereas the second boils down their “teaching” to the means of justification of authoritarian rule as the key characteristic of “Eurasian civilization.” At the same time, as a Russian analyst put it, their attitude toward the “rules of the game” and the values taken over from the West, associates a symbolic resistance (“kneeling in protest”). Despite ongoing isolationist trends, even the fiercest anti-Westerners would like drive a Mercedes or at least a Toyota, to use *iPhone* or at least Samsung’s smartphone, and would surely want their children and grandchildren to graduate from Oxford or Harvard (Gel’man, 2015: 35).

Theoretical groundlessness of the new Slavophilism or Eurasianism is not crucial for their assessment, since they both are, in the final analysis, “identity discourses” the plausibility and functionality of which primarily depend on the level of theoretical consistency and cognitive value. By meeting the need for redefining a community and strengthening its identity, they provide their followers with cognitive and value-based orientation in the non-transparent and uncertain world. Hence, the popularity of these identity discourses in Russia and their strong reception in Serbia result, above all, from deep identity crises of the two societies having undergone historical “collective traumas” after the collapse of the old socialist form of social life and simultaneous disintegration of complex, multinational state.⁶⁹ Invoking old ideological forms for the sake of articulation of new content of social life is probably best illustrated by the phenomenon Sergey Oushakine describes as “the state of post-socialist aphasia,” the patriotism of despair (See: Oushakine, 2009). Consequences of such patriotism could be tragic, while the criticism of it – in the collection of papers *Alternative Russia (Druga Rusija)* is a modest contribution to better understanding of today’s Russia and its influence on Serbia of today.

67 Public opinion researcher Boris Dubin warns against the tautological, semantical emptiness of the claim that all citizens of the Russian Federation share the same values, whereas other values dominate in the West. „Few are those capable of explaining you what traditional Russian values are. What matters is to have them invoked and claim that they are Russian“ (Dubin, 2015: 284).

68 Laruelle, 2015a: 22

69 Erikson, 1976: 153–154

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SRĐAN BARIŠIĆ

THE ROLE OF THE SERBIAN AND RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN SHAPING GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES

Originating from the Byzantine model and being adopted very early in ethnogenesis, Orthodox Christianity among both Serbs and Russians has always been closely linked to the creation of the state, while during numerous severe crises of the state it played a strong integrative role in the preservation of national identity. In both cases, during the period of the atheization of the social system, the public importance of religiousness was marginalized and minimized. However, the process of religious revitalization started with the collapse of both federations at the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century.

As an integral part of social changes in postcommunist societies, the revitalization of religion was primarily carried out through the politicization of religion or, in other words, in the context of the collapsed identity (socialist) framework by reaffirming the old ethnic and confessional patterns with the aim of homogenizing identity within a national framework. The sacralization of national identity has strengthened the power of political elites, while at the same time enabling the long-awaited return of religious elites to the public scene and reinstating at least some of their lost privileges.

During and after the period of blocked transformation, exhaustive identity wandering within both an international and internal state and social frameworks led to numerous social turbulences. It turned out, however, that the democratization of the system has no necessary civic (evidently much overvalued) potential and that the power of conservative (frequently

undervalued) patterns is so strong that at some moments even nationalist elites found them to be unbridled.

The intensive ongoing process of desecularization, which is evident even on the symbols of the officially secular state, calls into question both the real sovereignty of the state itself and its civic character or, in other words, the promoted and guaranteed equality of all citizens. In both cases, the majority Local Orthodox Church represents a regular, important and very influential partner in shaping and defining governmental policies. Sometimes, their interests completely (symphonically) coincide, but in some other cases they are not sufficiently harmonized, although both sides mostly tend to find a solution that can satisfy, at least minimally, both heads (secular and spiritual) of a strong and indivisible national organism (a two-headed eagle), as well as both zones of interest, East and West.

Let us return to spiritual values that have been guiding our spirituality and history. That faith has oriented Serbs towards the East. We should tie our small boat to the big boat of our great Slavic brotherly people to whom we are related by blood and faith. (Patriarch Irinej, November 2012)⁷⁰

During his visit to Mileševa Monastery in the company of Alexander Konuzin, the Russian Ambassador to Serbia, in October 2011, Serbian Patriarch Irinej stated that the Serbian people had “many friends, at least so we thought, yet many of them have sided with those who do not like us and who hate us. (...) We have few friends left, but we have remained with our biggest friend, the Russian people”.⁷¹ Invoking the words of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia about centuries-long spiritual kinship, Ambassador Alexander Konuzin has frequently emphasized that Russian and Serbian cultures represent two strong wings of Slavic civilization and that spiritual ties “feed the history of our relations”.⁷²

In honour of the 4th anniversary of the enthronement of Patriarch Kirill of Russia and All Russia, Serbian Patriarch Irinej served the Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Holy Trinity of the Belgrade Representation of the Russian

70 “Ko je kriv za ubistva i progon?”, *Večernje novosti*, 26 November 2012.

71 “Patrijarh postao najglasnija opozicija”, *Danas*, 18 October 2011.

72 “The interview of Russian Ambassador to Serbia A. Konuzin for *Pravoslavije* magazine, 15 March 2012”, Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Serbia, <http://www.ambasadarusije.rs/sr/vesti/intervju-ambasadora-rusije-u-srbiji-akonuzina-casopisu-pravoslavije-15-mart-2012>.

Orthodox Church. In his address after the service Serbian Patriarch Irinej emphasized that the Russian and Serbian people have a common history, which begins with Saint Sava's entering the monastic order in the Russian monastery on Mount Athos. In the presence of Russian Ambassador Alexander Chepurin, President of the Belgrade City Assembly Aleksandar Antić, author Matija Bećković and numerous citizens, the Patriarch said: "We are geographically and spiritually in Europe, but if our entry into the European community of nations means that we should relinquish our being and soul, our Kosovo and Metohija, then let it be far from us. We should tie our small boat to the big Russian boat sailing into the future."⁷³

The following year, at the same place and on the same occasion, Serbian Patriarch Irinej said that "the Serbian people today should not have any dilemma about which path to take. It was shown by Saint Sava when he chose the path leading to the Russian monastery and the Russian Church." On that occasion, Protopresbyter Vitaly Tarasyev emphasized that for the past five years the spiritual relations between the Serbian and Russian people have been deepened and strengthened, which was "especially contributed by the Serbian Patriarch's visit to Russia in 2013, where he attended the celebration marking the 1025th anniversary of the baptism of Kievan Rus, as well as by Patriarch Kirill's coming to Niš and Podgorica for the ceremony marking the 1700th anniversary of the Edict of Milan."⁷⁴

HISTORIC VISITS

The historic visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Serbia was soon followed by the visit of the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. During his three-day visit to Serbia in mid-November 2014, Patriarch Kirill said that when "a Russian man comes to Serbia, he truly feels at home", and that "the common faith, common culture, common close historical ties, the common blood spilled in the name

73 Liturgy in Honour of Patriarch Kirill, Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Serbia, <http://www.ambasadarusije.rs/sr/vesti/liturgija-u-cast-patrijarha-kirila>.

74 "Liturgija u čast ruskog patrijarha, medalja Krkobabiću", *Večernje novosti*, 2 February 2014, <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/drustvo/aktuelno.290.html:476355-Milana-Krkobabica-odlikovala-Ruska-crkva>.

of common victories – all this unites our peoples”. In his speeches, the Russian Patriarch spoke about historical ties between Russia and Serbia since the times of Saint Sava who took monastic vows in the Russian monastery on Mount Athos, as well as about the burning issues: “In more recent times – when you were bombed – we were also with the Serbian people with our hearts, and we are now together going through what the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija is experiencing. We are helping with what we can and however much we can, and we hope that justice and peace will ultimately come to Kosovo and Metohija”. Serbian Patriarch Irinej also pointed to the unbreakable bond of the two entities: “We are two brotherly peoples, with the same blood and religion. Our relations have always been brotherly. Our hopes have always been directed to Russia, both imperial and contemporary Russia, and she would always come when we needed it most.”⁷⁵

During his meeting with Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić, Patriarch Kirill also said that Russia and Serbia “are linked by history, religion and blood”, while the host stressed that Christianity is faced with great challenges and that the Serbian Orthodox Church has great support in the Russian Orthodox Church and Serbia in the Russian Federation.

According to the statement issued by the Serbian Government Media Office, during their meeting Prime Minister Vučić and Patriarch Kirill talked about the improvement of cooperation between the two Churches and the two states; Prime Minister expressed his gratitude to Patriarch Kirill for the Russian Government’s donation intended, as ordered by President Putin, for the completion of the interior decoration of Saint Sava’s Cathedral.

At the Rectorate of the University of Belgrade, at the proposal of the Academic Council of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Rector Vladimir Bumbaširević conferred on Patriarch Kirill the Diploma of Honorary Doctor of Belgrade University for his extraordinary contribution to the development of higher theological education and the improvement of scientific thinking in the field of systemic theology.⁷⁶ Within his tight schedule, Patriarch Kirill also consecrated the Russian Necropolis, a historical memorial complex at

75 “Patrijarh Kiril u Beogradu”, *RTS*, 14 November 2014, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/Dru%C5%A1tvo/1750647/Patrijarh+Kiril+u+Beogradu.html>.

76 “Patrijarh Kiril u Beogradu”, *RTS*, 14 November 2014, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/Dru%C5%A1tvo/1750647/Patrijarh+Kiril+u+Beogradu.html>.

the Belgrade New Cemetery.⁷⁷ On this occasion, he said that “exactly one hundred years ago the Serbian people found itself on the verge of slavery and destruction, and Emperor Nicholas II made the fateful decision to enter the First World War”.⁷⁸

The joint Divine Liturgy served by Patriarch Kirill and Patriarch Irinej was attended by the Serbian President, Ministers Nikola Selaković and Velimir Ilić, Advisor to Serbian President Oliver Antić, as well as Vojislav Šešelj, the leader of the Serbian Radical Party, which attracted special public attention. Although it was announced, Patriarch Kirill did not visit Kosovo and Metohija because, as was stated by the Russian Orthodox Church, there was no security guarantee. Thus, the visit of the Russian Patriarch ended with the ceremonial unveiling of the monument to Russian Emperor Nicholas II Romanov, which was consecrated by him.⁷⁹

This was the Russian Patriarch’s second visit to Serbia. Last year, Patriarch Kirill came to Niš to attend the ceremony marking the 1700th anniversary of the Edict of Milan. His visit to Belgrade was announced as the return visit after Patriarch Irinej had visited Russia as well as a regular inter-Church visit during which there would be talk not only about the most important issues of the Christian world, but also about all other issues concerning the life of the two Churches. In an interview given for one Belgrade’s daily newspaper during his visit, Patriarch Kirill said that Moscow knows that it has friends among top-level Serbian politicians and that it was moved by the way in which Serbian citizens greeted Putin during the military parade organized the previous month.⁸⁰ Just the timing and relevance of the visits of the Russian top profane and secular representatives point to the further

77 The Russian Necropolis consists of the Monument to Russian Soldiers Fallen in the First World War, the Iveron Chapel and four plots where Russian refugees were buried. The Russian cemetery in Belgrade was founded in the 1920s, when the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes provided refuge to several tens of thousands of Russian émigrés.

78 Gazprom Neft Company was one of the initiators of the project involving the renovation of the Russian Necropolis in Belgrade. In 2009, it earmarked about €300.000 for the reconstruction of its central part. “Kiril osveštao Ruski nekropolj”, *B92*, 15 November 2014, http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2014&mm=11&dd=15&nav_id=924223.

79 “Kiril: Rus u Srbiji oseća se kao kod svoje kuće”, *Kurir*, 15 November 2014.

80 “Putina zabrinjava sudbina Srbije”, *Naše novine*, 15–16 Novembar 2014.

strengthening of the relations between the two states and their Churches. Here a strong ethno-confessional identification in both systems especially gains in importance.

Patriarch Kirill's previous visit to Niš was marked by numerous debates about whether this visit would be materialized should the Serbian Orthodox Church invite the head of the Roman Catholic Church. Due to its institutional and organizational power, the Russian Orthodox Church is extremely influential in the Orthodox world and its influence is especially evident in the Serbian Patriarchate. In view of the fact that the Church, both in Russia and Serbia, is very closely linked to government politics, the linking of these two visits resemble a symphonic action rather than a mere coincidence.

It should also be noted that the historic joint tactical antiterrorist exercise of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the Serbian Army (codenamed SREM 2014) started on the first day of Patriarch Kirill's visit to the Serbian capital.

The mentioned renewal of the necropolis and unveiling of the monument to Russian Emperor Nicholas II Romanov form part of the year-long marking of the 100th anniversary of the First World War, as well as the further affirmation of Orthodoxy as the source of soldiers' morale and motivation in Serbia. In addition, on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the Romanov Dynasty, the exhibition "Four Centuries of the House of Romanov – Awakening of Memories" was opened in the crypt of the Memorial Cathedral of Saint Sava. That year, Serbia also marked for the first time 17 July, the day of martyrdom and glorification of Saint Nicholas II, his family and fellow sufferers, with a Hierarchical Liturgy.

SAINT SAVA'S CATHEDRAL

At the ceremonial session of the Assembly of the Society for the Construction of Saint Sava's Cathedral, held on the occasion of its 120th anniversary, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić said that the Cathedral is our Noah's Ark in which we seek salvation from historical deluges, world wars, golgothas and temptations. Describing this sacral building as the metaphor of our existence, hope, existence and survival, the measure of our Christian commitment, human response to the elevation of a nation and its homeland, and our very essence, the President also pointed out that wall frescoes would be painted

thanks to Russia, so that the Cathedral would be the Serbian-Russian legacy of togetherness and harmony. On that occasion, Russian Ambassador Alexander Chepurin said that the peculiar “calling card” of Belgrade would be the great symbol of Orthodox faith in the Balkans and the Serbian state, and that Russia would do its best to have the work on the interior decoration of the Cathedral successfully completed.⁸¹

During his meeting with Lyubov Nikolaevna Glebova, Director of Russia’s Federal Agency Rossotrudnichestvo, the Serbian President expressed his satisfaction that she was appointed by Russian President Vladimir Putin to be directly in charge of the mosaic decoration in the Cathedral because this would be the best guarantee that the work would be efficiently completed. On this occasion, it was also confirmed that the Russian company Gazprom Neft would donate three million euros for the work on the Cathedral.⁸²

Over the past few years, the finishing work in Saint Sava’s Cathedral has become an evident form of intensive cooperation between Russia and Serbia or, more precisely, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church. After the meeting of the Serbian delegation with the head of the Russian Orthodox Church’s diplomacy, Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev) of Volokolamsk in Moscow in September 2011, it was proposed that the Russians finance, produce and lay mosaic floor tiles at Saint Sava’s Cathedral. According to the preliminary estimate, the project would cost €30–40 million and would be realized with the participation of the Russian state and Russian Orthodox Church. After the return visit to Serbia in early 2012, Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev confirmed the readiness of the Russian Orthodox Church to help ensure the continuation of the work, so that 17,000 sq.m. would be covered with mosaic tiles.⁸³

Finally, at the international competition for the painting of Saint Sava’s Cathedral, pursuant to the decision of the Moscow-based competition commission, co-chaired by Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić and Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Littoral, the winning project was the one worth

81 “Nikolić: Hram Svetoga Save je naša Nojeva barka“, *Blic*, 14 December 2015, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/nikolic-hram-svetog-save-je-nasa-nojeva-barka/439rvj6>.

82 “Nikolić: zahvalnost Rusiji za pomoć u izgradnji Hrama Svetog Save“, *Blic*, 13 November 2015, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/nikolic-zahvalnost-rusiji-za-pomoc-u-izgradnji-hrama-svetog-save/my99zgc>.

83 “Uskoro izrada mozaika u Hramu Svetog Save“, *Danas*, 13 January 2012.

about €30 million, which would be financed by the Russian Government's donation and realized by 300 Russians and Belarusians.

According to Dragomir Acović, the former chief architect in charge of the Church's interior decoration, the cost is realistic since the area in question is about 1.7 hectares. Asked why Serbian icon painters were not hired he answered that we have icon painters, but have no money: "The Russians have offered a donation provided that the chief artist and project manager are Russians".⁸⁴

THE HOLY FIRE

The Holy Fire was brought to Serbia for the first time after Patriarch German thanks to the funds that support the Russian Orthodox Church. The Holy Fire from Christ's tomb in Jerusalem was transferred to Belgrade on Holy and Great Saturday in 2014, accompanied by a large state and church delegation. The welcome ceremony, including the Serbian Army Guard, was organized at Saint Sava's Cathedral.

The Holy Fire was transferred to Serbia with the support of the three Patriarchates: Jerusalem, Russian and Serbian, while the participation of the Serbian delegation in the Easter festivities in Jerusalem was organized by the Fund of All-Laudible Apostle Andrew the First-Called from Moscow and the Centre of National Glory from St Petersburg. The event was organized by the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Government Office for Kosovo and Metohija, and Medija centar Nogina i Kurinoja – Ruski ekspres from Belgrade. The transfer of the Holy Fire from Jerusalem to Belgrade on a special flight was organized by the Fund of Saint Basil the Great, established by Konstantin Malofeev.⁸⁵

84 "Canetov ikonopisac oslikava i Hram Svetog Save", *Blic*, 9 October 2014, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/canetov-ikonopisac-oslikava-i-hram-svetog-save/sf3nbm8>.

85 "Rusi i SPC Blagodatni Oganj iz Jerusalima donose u Beograd, Banjaluku, Gračanicu, na Cetinje...", *Balkans Press*, <http://www.balkanspress.com/index.php/magazin/duhovnost/2616-rusi-i-spc-blagodatni-oganj-iz-jerusalima-donose-u-beograd-banjaluku-gracanicu-na-cetinje#>. Some media have written that the controversial billionaire Malofeev is close to Putin and there are also indications that he finances separatists in Eastern Ukraine directly by his firms, through the foundations that financed the transfer of the Holy Fire to Serbia.

From Belgrade the Holy Fire will be transferred to Orthodox churches in Serbia and Kosovo and Metohija, and then to Podgorica, Trebinje, Banjaluka and Pakrac. In addition to the Holy Fire, two Honourable Crosses were also transferred: one for the Monastery Church of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist in Jasenovac and the other for the Church of Christ's Resurrection in Prebilovci.

According to religion analyst Živica Tucić, "this seemed like an attempt at national homogenization. An emphasis that the Church is the one that keeps all lands populated by Orthodox Serbs together."⁸⁶ All this irresistibly resembles the content of Patriarch Pavle's letter to Lord Carrington in 1991, or the Appeal to the Serbian People and the World Public of the Bishops' Conference of the Serbian Orthodox Church held 1995, as well as the transfer of Prince Lazar's relics just before the outbreak of a civil war in the former Yugoslavia.

DECORATIONS

In early February 2012, the Russian Ambassador to Belgrade, Alexander Konuzin, was decorated with the Order of Saint Sava of the First Degree at the Patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church.⁸⁷ It should be noted that this highest decoration of the Serbian Orthodox Church was also awarded in 2008 to then Russian Ambassador Alexander Alexeev.⁸⁸

During his visit to Serbia in March 2011, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was also awarded with the same decoration by the Serbian Orthodox Church at Saint Sava's Cathedral as a token of deep gratitude for love towards the Serbian Orthodox Church and invaluable support to an attempt to preserve Kosovo and Metohija within Serbia. The highest decoration of the Serbian Orthodox Church was awarded to Putin by the Decree of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church as early as 2007, at the proposal of the then Serbian Patriarch Pavle.⁸⁹

The highest decoration of the Serbian Orthodox Church was also awarded to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Patriarch Alexei II of

86 "Sveti oganj stigao na ruski pogon", *RSE*, 15 April 2015, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/sveti-oganj-stigao-na-ruski-pogon/26957808.html>.

87 "Konuzinu orden SPC", *Kurir*, 4 February 2012.

88 "I 'crkvena diplomatija' je između Kosova i EU", *Politika*, 8 February 2012.

89 "Putinu u hramu na Vračaru uručen Orden Svetog Save", *Press*, 24 March 2011.

Moscow and All Russia, writer and Nobel Prize winner Alexander Isayevich Solzhenitsyn, Mayor of Moscow Yuri Luzhkov, Sergei Kuzhugetovich Shoygu, Russian Minister for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters, and Army General, as well as Boris Igorevich Kostenko, Managing Director of the world's largest Orthodox TV station, TV Spas in Moscow.

Serbian Patriarch Irinej decorated Leonid Reshetnikov, Director of the Russian Institute for Strategic Research, with the Order of Holy Emperor Constantine for his "selfless efforts and commitment towards the strengthening of the relations between the Serbian and Russian peoples",⁹⁰ while Metropolitan Amfilohije decorated Russian film actor and director Nikolai Petrovich Burlaev with the Order of Saint Peter of Cetinje for his "immeasurable contribution to the affirmation and preservation of pan-Slavic culture and the testimony of Christian truth and love towards Serbian and other Slavic peoples."⁹¹

The head of the Serbian Orthodox Church handed to Aleksandar Antić, President of the Municipal Assembly of Belgrade, the Order of the Venerable Seraphom of Sarov with which he was decorated by Russian Patriarch Kirill as a token of gratitude for his assistance to the Russian community in the renewal of the Russian Necropolis at the Belgrade New Cemetery.⁹² During his visit to Belgrade, Patriarch Kirill personally awarded Nenad Popović, President of the Russian Necropolis Foundation, with the same decoration for his involvement in the renewal of the memorial complex.⁹³ Milan Krkobabić, the former Deputy Mayor of Belgrade, was also decorated for his "efforts

90 "Patrijarh Irinej uručio orden Rešetnikovu", *RTS*, 29 April 2014, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/Dru%C5%A1tvo/1586111/Patrijarh+Irinej+uru%C4%8Dio+orden+Re%C5%A1etnikovu.html>.

91 "Amfilohije: Orden Sv. Petra Cetinjskog za vjernost jedinovernjoj, jedinokrvnoj i jedinojezičnoj Rusiji", *Analitika*, 9 July 2015, <http://portalanalitika.me/clanak/193828/amfilohije-orden-sv-petra-cetinjskog-za-vjernost-jedinovernjoj-jedinokrvnoj-i-jedinojezicnoj-rusiji>.

92 "Liturgy in Honour of Patriarch Kirill", Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Serbia, <http://www.ambasadarusije.rs/sr/vesti/liturgija-u-cast-patrijarha-kirila>, *Večernje novosti*, 10 February 2013.

93 "Nenadu Popoviću orden Prepodobnog Serafima Sarovskog", *Blic*, 15 November 2014, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/nenadu-popovicu-orden-prepodobnog-serafima-sarovskog/ct308jk>.

and love towards the Russian people”, embodied in the renewal of the Russian necropolis.⁹⁴

Milan Dodik, President of the Republic of Srpska, and film director Emir Kusturica were awarded the Order of the Holy Emperor Nicholas for their merits in the strengthening of friendly and close relations between the Russian and Serbian peoples, and making a great contribution to the two Orthodox Churches. This decoration was awarded by Igor Evgenievich Smikov, the head of the Orthodox Military Mission and advisor to the First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad,⁹⁵ while on some other occasion, as the head of the Russian Parliamentary Centre and the head of the Orthodox Military Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church Aboard, which visited Serbia at the invitation of Serbian Patriarch Irinej, Smikov awarded a medal to Dušan Bajatović, General Manager of the Public Enterprise Srbijagas, for the fight against terrorism and great contribution to the strengthening of brotherly relations between Russian and Serbian peoples.⁹⁶

The head of the Orthodox Mission for the Revival of Spiritual Values of Russian People, Igor Evgenievich Smikov, and the coordinator of the Federation of Orthodox Fraternities of the Russian Orthodox Church, Yuri Ageshcheyev, decorated Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Littoral with the Order of the Holy Emperor Nicholas for his long-standing ardent efforts to the glory of the Orthodox Church and on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the House of Romanov in Russia.⁹⁷

94 “Liturgija u čast ruskog patrijarha, medalja Krkobabiću”, *Večernje novosti*, 2 February 2014, <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/drustvo/aktuelno.290.html:476355-Milana-Krkobabica-odlikovala-Ruska-crkva>.

95 “Dodik i Kusturica odlikovani ordenom Svetog cara Nikolaja”, *Blic*, 31 May 2014, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/republika-srpska/dodik-i-kusturica-odlikovani-ordenom-svetog-cara-nikolaja/f81915n>.

96 “Bajatoviću ruski orden za borbu protiv terorizma”, *Blic*, 13 April 2014, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/bajatovicu-ruski-orden-za-borbu-protiv-terorizma/8zf80dd>.

97 “U slavu pravoslavne crkve: Amfilohiju orden Svetog cara Nikolaja Romanova”, *Kurir*, 3 February 2014, <http://www.kurir.rs/u-slavu-pravoslavne-crkve-amfilohiju-orden-svetog-cara-nikolaja-romanova-clanak-1212065>.

KOSOVO

Already in the first years of his mandate, Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill called on the West to help preserve the security of Serbs and their sanctities in Kosovo and Metohija. He appealed to the West to apply the same standard to Orthodox sanctities in Kosovo and Metohija as to its own cultural and historical monuments, and expressed his concern over the destiny of Serbs and everything that is going on in the southern Serbian province.⁹⁸

In an exclusive interview with the Moscow-based correspondent of a Belgrade newspaper, Patriarch Kirill has stated that the Serbs living in Kosovo and Metohija have become the hostages of a big geopolitical game and that this is the question of impermissible injustice, that is, a double standard and the lies of the “policy that declares its commitment to the ideals of humanism and the protection of human rights, while at the same closing its eyes before the inferno created by extremists with the support of their foreign sponsors”. Emphasizing that the Russian Federation provides significant assistance to Kosovo Serbs by allocating the funds for the restoration of churches in Kosovo through the UNESCO, Kirill has also stated that the Moscow Patriarchate is continuously supporting the stance of the Serbian Orthodox Church on the status of Kosovo. He has also recalled the international significance of the activities of his predecessor Patriarch Alexei II aimed at protecting the Serbian population in the province, and how he also devoted a significant part of his speech to this issue before the European Parliament in Strasbourg in 2007. Pointing to the significance of Serbian sanctities in Kosovo and Metohija for Orthodox legacy in Europe, Patriarch Kirill has also spoken about the specific measures of support to Kosovo monasteries stressing that the Russian Orthodox Church has always shown and will show solidarity with Kosovo Serbs.⁹⁹

At the meeting with the Serbian Patriarch in Moscow, Patriarch Kirill has repeated that the Russian Orthodox Church agrees with the views of the Serbian Orthodox Church: “We unconditionally support the just stance of the

98 “Ruski patrijarh zabrinut za Kosovo”, *Večernje novosti*, 1 September 2009, <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/politika/aktuelno.289.html:249877-Ruski-patrijarh-zabrinut-za-Kosovo>.

99 “Ruski patrijarh: Srbi su žrtve velikih igara”, *Večernje novosti*, 28 January 2012, <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/aktuelno.290.html:364013-Ruski-patrijarh-Srbi-su-zrtve-velikih-igara>.

Serbian Orthodox Church concerning Kosovo and Metohija, and we will also remain in dialogue with the leaders of Russia and other countries with the aim of defending the views we share with the Serbian Orthodox Church.¹⁰⁰ The first official visit of Patriarch Irinej to Russia, which took place amidst the disagreement of the Serbian Orthodox Church over the official governmental policy concerning the signing of the Brussels Agreement, will be remembered for Patriarch Irinej's criticism of Serbian officials. He later distanced himself from it. Namely, according to the media, during his meeting with Patriarch Kirill, Patriarch Irinej stated that the Serbian leadership was "under the influence of the West", but that the "Church is doing its best to link their consciousness to the powerful Russian history and the Russian Church". During the meeting at the Russian Patriarchate in Moscow, he sought the assistance of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian authorities in preserving Kosovo and Metohija.¹⁰¹

Within a comprehensive diplomatic campaign against Kosovo's entry into the UNESCO, in which all available resources were used, the appeal of Nenad Popović, the President of the Serbian People's Party, to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Kirill stands out. Namely, he appeals to them to help Serbia protect the spiritual and historical heritage of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The analogy used in this appeal is indicative: "Just as the Russian people are now endangered on their historical soil, in Ukraine, the Serbian people are endangered in the territory that has been the centre of their spirituality for centuries". He also states that the Serbian people are "aware that they have no greater friend than Russia."¹⁰²

The distance towards the European Union or, more exactly, Serbia's integration process, which is persistently demonstrated by the Serbian Orthodox Church, is smaller relative to Euro-Atlantic integration, that is, NATO membership. The first distance is primarily based on the thesis that Serbia has to

100 "Patrijarh Irinej traži pomoć ruskog patrijarha za Kosovo", *Kurir*, 17 July 2013, <http://www.kurir.rs/patrijarh-irinej-trazi-pomoc-ruskog-patrijarha-za-kosovo-clanak-895527>.

101 "Poglavari srpske i ruske crkve kritikovali vlast u Beogradu", *Politika*, 17 July 2013, <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Drustvo/Poglavari-SPC-i-RPC-kritikuju-srpsko-rukovodstvo-zbog-Kosova.lt.html>.

102 "Nenad Popović moli Putina i Kirila da spreče prijem Kosova u Unesko", *Blic*, 13 October 2015, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/nenad-popovic-moli-putina-i-kirila-da-sprece-prijem-kosova-u-unesko/2mwdxn9>.

sacrifice Kosovo and Metohija in order to become a EU member, while the second distance is based on the view that the NATO is the direct instigator and executor of all external pressure on Serbian identity: the status of Kosovo and Metohija, bombardment in 1999, etc.

Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Littoral is one of the most vocal critics of Euro-Atlantic integration in the Serbian Orthodox Church; on the occasion of the consecration of the restored Church of the Holy Trinity at Blatina near Kolašin, the Metropolitan said that the NATO is the “Fourth Reich, that is, the continuation of fascism and the wish to dominate the whole world”. In his opinion, it is good that the region integrates with Europe, but not as a part of the NATO.¹⁰³ Metropolitan Amfilohije repeated several times that he supported Montenegro’s entry into Europe, but not its NATO membership. He holds that, as a EU member, Montenegro should help abolish the NATO.¹⁰⁴

Like the Russian Federation, the Russian Orthodox Church also has a strikingly reserved attitude towards the NATO. During his meeting with Serbian Justice Minister Nikola Selaković in Moscow, Patriarch Kirill expressed his “concern over the situation in Montenegro and its path to the NATO. (...) We see that the people object NATO membership and that their protests are thwarted.” Stating that there are now very few genuinely sovereign states in Europe and that states which preserved their sovereignty to a significant degree endure pressure and a negative attitude by the European majority, he emphasized that Russia today is a fully sovereign state and that it uses its sovereignty to protect itself and its friends.¹⁰⁵

Naturally, such a stance should be considered in the context of Russia’s return to the international stage, which is especially evident in its rivalry, like in the Cold War period, with the West concerning the Syrian issue, war in Ukraine, as well as the zones of interest in the Balkans. Isn’t it true that, during a debate over the resolution on Serbia, the statement or probably warning by a Polish deputy to the European Parliament that “Serbia will plunge into Russia’s zone of influence if we don’t open the door it it”, more openly

103 “Amfilohije: NATO je „četvrti rajh””, *Naše novine*, 1 July 2013.

104 “Vlast forsira crnogorstvo”, *Danas*, 4 January 2011.

105 “Patrijarh ruski Kiril zabrinut zbog Crne Gore”, *Mondo/Agencije*, 31 December 2015, <http://mondo.rs/a862023/Info/Ex-Yu/Patrijarh-Kiril-Brinem-zbog-stanja-u-Crnoj-Gori.html>.

articulated the fact that by possibly being surrounded by NATO members, Serbia may find itself in the position of a Russian outpost in the Balkans.¹⁰⁶

There is no doubt that the identity-related issue of Kosovo and Metohija creates a basis for the clash of opinions on Serbia's alternative integration processes – just as Kosovo has no alternative, the EU and NATO definitely have. This can be illustrated by the statement made by Bishop Filaret of Mileševa, the head of the Mileševa see until recently, at the decoration ceremony for Interior Minister Ivica Dačić at the monastery of Mileševa, that nobody would set Serbia and Russia against each other. He also stated that some say: “Europe, Europe, and it has taken away our heart – Kosovo and Metohija!” and then shouted: “We want Russia, long live Russia”.¹⁰⁷

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH – SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH – MONTENEGRIN ORTHODOX CHURCH – MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

In the mentioned interview, Patriarch Kirill also talked about the position of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro, pointing out that “history shows that attempts of any political forces to put pressure on the Church in order to change her canonical order do not bring anything good”. A little later, the Russian Orthodox Church expressed declaratively its opinion on the status of the canonically unrecognized Montenegrin Orthodox Church: “All Orthodox Churches consider Montenegro to be part of the canonical territory of the Serbian Patriarchate and this generally shared Orthodox conviction should be respected.”¹⁰⁸ A year earlier, Metropolitan Hilarion, the head of Russian church diplomacy, said in Podgorica that Montenegro is a multi-confessional state with the majority Orthodox population and one canonically

106 “EU: Ako se Srbija ne okrene Zapadu ostaće ruska ispostava okružena NATO”, *Vestinet*, 12 March 2015, <http://www.vestinet.rs/tema-dana/eu-ako-se-srbija-ne-okrene-zapadu-ostace-ruska-ispostava-okruzena-nato>.

107 “Patrijarh: Irinej: Hvala majci Rusiji”, *Kurir*, 7 October 2011.

108 “Ruski patrijarh: Srbi su žrtve velikih igara”, *Večernje novosti*, 28 January 2012, <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/aktuelno.290.html:364013-Ruski-patrijarh-Srbi-su-zrtve-velikih-igara>.

recognized Church with Metropolitan Amfilohije at its head, which naturally provoked protest from local authorities.¹⁰⁹

Serbian media reported on the “proposal for consideration” which, at one time, was presented by Metropolitan Hilarion to Serbian Patriarch Irinej during his visit to Belgrade. Its aim was to ease tension with the Montenegrin state and among its Orthodox believers. It anticipated the greater autonomy of the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral or, more exactly, “confederal status” within the Serbian Orthodox Church. Referring to the policy and practice of the Russian Orthodox Church after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the current status of the Orthodox Churches in Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Baltic countries, as well as in Japan and China, which still function within the Russian Orthodox Church, he advanced this idea as being “pragmatic”. As could be expected, the Serbian Patriarchate showed great restraint towards this “proposal” from a high representative of the Russian Orthodox Church.¹¹⁰

During Patriarch Kirill’s visit to Belgrade, Archpriest Igor, the Secretary of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations, qualified the Montenegrin Orthodox Church as a “marginal organization and the striking example of a schism caused by political factors”.¹¹¹

The official policy of Podgorica towards to Russia largely explains the resolute stance of the Russian Orthodox Church on the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro, but also prompted very harsh reactions from Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Littoral, who even cursed Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanović because of such policy: “May he who is not loyal to the same-language and same-blood Russia, have the live flesh fall off him, may he be cursed thrice, and three thousand times by me. This is what St Peter of Cetinje left to his Montenegrins, and it would be good if the current Prime Minister of Montenegro read these words at the time when he, for the first time in history, introduced sanctions against

109 “Cetinje i Kosovo otežu posetu Kirila Srpskoj crkvi”, *Balkan magazin*, 5 December 2012, <http://www.balkanmagazin.net/religija/cid153-53058/cetinje-i-kosovo-otezu-posetu-kirila-srpskoj-crkvi>.

110 “Ruska crkva predlaže ‘konfederalni status’ za Crnogorsku mitropoliju”, *Danas*, 24 July 2011, http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/politika/ruska_crkva_predlaze_konfederalni_status_za_crnogorsku_mitropoliju.56.html?news_id=220124.

111 “Patrijarh Kiril neće posetiti Kosovo”, *Blic*, 13 November 2014, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/patrijarh-kiril-neze-posetiti-kosovo/fkm9j15>.

Russia.”¹¹² He also criticized the Montenegrin authorities because of their decision to impose sanctions against Russia, during the church ceremony led by him, together with the bishops and priests of the Serbian and Orthodox Orthodox Churches, marking the end of the Days of St Basil of Ostrog. He said that in this way the authorities are ”adding a cinder for the burning of people alive in Odessa”.¹¹³

As already emphasized by Archpriest Igor, the Russian Orthodox Church has always supported the unity of the Serbian Orthodox Church and is doing its best to converge the views of the Macedonian and Serbian sides, so that they find a compromise solution for the status of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.¹¹⁴

After his visit to Skopje and meeting with the head of the canonically unrecognized Macedonian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Stefan, Macedonian President Djordje Ivanov and Jovan Vraniškovski, Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopje, Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev of Volokolamsk said that Moscow is willing to mediate between Belgrade and Skopje, but the Serbian side does not want to resume negotiations until Archbishop Jovan is released from prison. According to him, the Russian Orthodox Church cannot unilaterally recognize the Macedonian Orthodox Church; it is necessary to reach an all-Orthodox solution and, to this end, the Moscow Patriarchate offers to be a mediator.¹¹⁵

This visit provoked numerous controversies in Macedonia and many people were suspicious over Metropolitan Hilarion’s intentions and possibilities. As the solution requested by the Macedonian side, autocephaly is something more than Skopje’s possible “self-government” vis-à-vis Belgrade or, more exactly, the relationship like the one between Moscow and Kiev, Moldova, Estonia and Latvia. According to this model, the Macedonian Orthodox Church would have the widest possible degree of autonomy, but the choice of its head would have to be confirmed by Belgrade’s Patriarch.

112 “Dabogda ti živo meso otpadalo!”, *Kurir*, 30 April – 2 May 2014.

113 “Amfilohije falsifikovao izjavu Karla Bilta?”, *Naše novine*, 16 May 2014.

114 “Patrijarh Kiril neće posetiti Kosovo”, *Blic*, 13 November 2014, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/patrijarh-kiril-neze-posetiti-kosovo/fkm9j15>.

115 “Ruska crkva želi da posreduje između SPC i nepriznate MPC”, *Danas*, 5 January 2015, http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/svet/globus/ruska_crkva_zeli_da_posreduje_izmedju_spc_i_nepriznate_mpc.12.html?news_id=295231.

Archbishop Jovan was released on parole immediately after Metropolitan Hilarion's visit to Skopje. However, he immediately provoked the Macedonian secular and spiritual authorities by saying that the Macedonian Orthodox Church is a "political invention aimed at securing the identity of the Macedonian people".¹¹⁶ The Serbian Orthodox Church insists on the withdrawal of charges against 18 bishops, monks and believers brought before Macedonian courts, and considers this move as the zero point of negotiations or, in other words, a clear sign that Skopje is willing to reach a compromise with the Serbian Orthodox Church.

CONSERVATIVE BLOC

The pro-Russian conservative bloc in Serbia relativizes the official orientation towards the European Union and emphasizes internal identity conflicts. It is comprised of a wide range of institutions, organizations, interest groups and individuals, from the Serbian Orthodox Church, through some political parties and movements, and citizens' associations, to the parts of academic and cultural elites and media. Their close relations with Russia are quite evident and are often emphasized to the point of identification. There are also well-founded indications that a good part of such a trend is directly or indirectly financed by Russia, although there are no reliable data on this support due to its non-transparency.

For example, in its election programme the Dveri movement calls for halting the "disastrous path to the EU" and points to the significance of turning to Russia and Eurasian integration. Explaining that "our reckoning with Russia is better and more honest than that with the European Union!", the authors of this programme elaborate on this stance in the following way: "Not only because the Russians have never bombed us and because we are close spiritually, historically and culturally, but because common sense tells us that Russia is in Serbia's best interest!"¹¹⁷ It must be noted that during his recent visit to Moscow Boško Obradović, President of the Serbian Dveri movement,

116 "Makedonija: sloboda za vernike, pa pomirenje", *Večernje novosti*, 13 July 2015, www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/drustvo/aktuelno.290.html:557223-Makedonija-Sloboda-za-vernike-pa-pomirenje.

117 "Za savez sa Rusijom", Dveri, <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr/program/izborni-program/4948-za-savez-sa-rusijom.html>.

pointed out that "Serbia is Russia's western border" and thus it is necessary to increase Russia's presence in the Balkans.¹¹⁸

The SNP 1389 movement points out that, "in contrast to pro-Western political parties in Serbia", its third basic aim is to advocate "other forms of global integration, primarily cooperation with the Russian Federation and other BRICS countries".¹¹⁹

If we continue our research, we will come across SNP Naši which created a portal on Eurasian integration to spread all significant information about the Eurasian Union, namely the Eurasian geopolitical bloc and Eurasian integration in Serbia. This organization proudly emphasizes that it is "the first political organization in the world, outside the Russian Federation, to develop and publicize a political programme for Eurasian integration and did it before Vladimir Putin's announcement of Eurasian integration as the Kremlin's official strategy in the daily newspaper *Izvestina* in October 2011." It is a question of the document titled "Serbia's First Political Programme of Eurasian Integration".¹²⁰

The provision of support to the pro-Russian forces in the conflict in Ukraine was very popular. Thus, the followers of Srbski Obraz participated in the Cross Procession for the suffering Russian people in Ukraine, which took place in Belgrade on 11 May 2014,¹²¹ while the Fatherland Alliance of the Serbian Radical Party, Obraz and Naši staged a protest in front of the EU Delegation in Belgrade under the slogan "Stop the Killing of Russian Children in Donetsk, Lugansk and Slavyansk".¹²² SNP 1389 was also expressing deep solidarity with the suffering of "our brotherly nation in eastern Europe"

118 "Srbija je zapadna granica Rusije", Dveri, 2 October 2015, <http://www.dverisrpske.com/sr/dveri-na-delu/7178-srbija-je-zapadna-granica-rusije.html>.

119 "Osnovni ciljevi SNP 1389", SNP 1389, 30 August 2010, http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=264&Itemid=85.

120 "Lansiran informativni servis o evroazijskim integracijama '+Evroazija+Srbij+'", SNP Naši, 18 March 2014, <http://nasisrbija.org/index.php/2014/03/18/lansiran-informativni-servis-o-evroazijskim-integracijama-evroazijasrbija/>.

121 "Krsni hod podrške ruskom narodu", Srbski Obraz, 11 May 2014, <http://www.obraz.rs/?p=1265>.

122 "Održan protest protiv zločina NATO-kijevske hunte", Srbski Obraz, 13 June 2014, <http://www.obraz.rs/?p=1356>.

and was wholeheartedly supporting “brothers and sisters fighting against the biggest evils of today”.¹²³

While primarily condemning Montenegro’s foreign policy, SNP Naši appealed to Serbian citizens to boycott Montenegrin summer resorts so as not to “finance the traitorous regime of Milo Djukanović and his satraps campaigning against the interests of the Serbian and Russian peoples.” SNP Naši points out that “Montenegro’s official policy is not only anti-Serbian, but is also anti-Russian, and the Government has openly sided with the centuries-long enemies of the Serbian people, which was especially evident from its recognition of the false state of Kosovo to the imposition of sanctions against the Russian Federation”.¹²⁴

After the cancellation of the announced Pride Parade in Belgrade, in early October 2013, Srbski Obraz, SNP Naši, SS Zavetnici, the Movement for Serbia and the Orthodox Family launched an “action for the salvation of our children and the future”, that is, the campaign to collect signatures from citizens for the adoption of the law banning LGBT (“same-sex and unnatural”) propaganda directed at under-age persons. According to the organizers of this action, such a law has recently been enacted in Russia and “has already begun producing results”.¹²⁵ The campaign was carried out under the slogan: “We wish the law banning same-sex, transsexual, bisexual and pedophilic propaganda directed at children and youth – like in brotherly Russia!”¹²⁶

INSTEAD OF THE CONCLUSION

In 2013, Serbia and Russia concluded a strategic agreement on mutual cooperation, which implies economic and political cooperation, as well as the coordination of international relations. Strong intergovernmental relations

123 “Podrška narodu Donjecke republike, SNP 1389”, 5 June 2014, http://www.snp1389.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=878:2014-06-05-13-15-09&catid=36:vesti.

124 “SNP Naši: Poziv na bojkot crnogorskog primorja”, SNP Naši, 10 May 2014, <http://nasisrbija.org/index.php/2014/05/10/snp-nasi-poziv-na-bojkot-crnogorskog-primorja/>.

125 “Peticija ‘Narod protiv LGBT propagande’”, Srbski Obraz, 8 October 2013, <http://www.obraz.rs/?p=485>.

126 “Potpišite peticiju (Narod protiv LGBT propagande)”, Srbski Obraz, 16 October 2013, <http://www.obraz.rs/?p=491>.

are especially pronounced at the presidential level, that is, between Vladimir Putin and Tomislav Nikolić. Also, Serbia did not agree to pursue the European Union's foreign policy toward Ukraine. As for economic cooperation, it should be pointed to Serbia's energy dependence on the Russian sources of supply, controlling stake of Russian companies in the Serbian state-owned oil company – NIS, share of Russian capital in infrastructure projects, etc. Russia's appearance on the international stage as the protector of Serbia and Serbian national interests – which was recently manifested by its use of the veto power to block the draft resolution on Srebrenica, and was additionally strengthened by stressing "traditional values" and taking a critical stance on European integration and, in particular, US foreign policy and NATO – contributes in large measure towards maintaining the high reputation of the "eastern brothers", "major military power", Moscow, Russia and, in particular, President Putin among the Serbian population. Although the pro-Russian sentiment of the population has no articulated political option in its representative bodies, excluding the current Serbian President, it is strikingly present in public discourse, which is predominantly traditional and relies on Orthodoxy, Byzantine legacy, common enemies, mutual historical assistance and the like.

Sharing the same, majority and privileged status in their home countries and very similar, symphonic relationship with "secular" authorities, as well as long-standing mutual cooperation since their first institutional forms, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church have much in common. According to Ernst Benz, in both Orthodox Churches one can particularly observe two interlinked "weaknesses" or "dangers": a change in the balance between state and church (harmony and symphony) and a change in the balance between ecumenical and national church consciousness (nationalism, phyletism).¹²⁷ A strong ethno-confessional identification, which is dominant both in Russia and Serbia, forms part of the transformation process of both systems in which the revitalization of religion, from utter atheization to desecularization, has been carried out through the politicization of religion, religionization of politics and sacralization of identity. Both local churches derive legitimacy and authority from their historical role in the preservation of national identity, as well as mass (ethno-confessional) identity (statistical) support from the homogenized population. The relationship between

127 Benc, Ernst (1991), "Veličina i slabost pravoslavlja", in: Đorđević, Dragoljub (ed.), *Pravoslavlje između neba i zemlje*, Niš: Gradina.

political and religious elites aimed at strengthening power, on one side, and returning to the public scene and reinstating privileges, on the other, has been attractive and acceptable to both of them.

The development of the philosophical and theological concept of “just” war, which can be recognized within both Churches, has primarily served for the spiritual legitimization of the formation and homogenization of nation states after the collapse of a federal framework, as well as the preservation of the current jurisdictions and return of the former ones, extending beyond the newly established national frameworks. In proportion to one’s international influence, especially within a regional framework, as well as institutional and economic power, the effects of that concept differ and reflect the military and economic power of the state rather than the spiritual power of the church. The blessing of military interventions is characteristic of the heads of both Churches, but a “just” war for one of them has the function of a “preemptive” war and for the other one – the function of a “defence” war”.

The question concerning the non(-)adoption of the new calendar, which is common to both Churches, as well as a similar problem with schisms, that is, with the Macedonian and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches, will most likely be placed on the agenda of the announced Pan-Orthodox Conference in 2016. The other items on the agenda will be ecumenism and dialogue with other Christian churches, especially the relationship with the Vatican, which was the dominant theme in relations between the two churches on several occasions. As is well known, insofar as the potential visit of the Pope is concerned (it was even announced at a moment), the stance of the Russian Orthodox Church on this issue is very important for the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Moscow Patriarchate considers itself the “Third Rome” and, in principle, is very cautious in rapprochement with the Vatican, accusing it of proselytism. According to information from the Serbian Orthodox Church, the opportunity that the Pope visits Serbia on the occasion of marking the anniversary of the Edict of Milan in 2013 was missed just because Patriarch Kirill was explicitly against it.¹²⁸

128 “Papa daleko od Beograda”, *Novosti*, 2 July 2014.

II

RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER

DR. JELICA KURJAK

“SOFT POWER” IN THE SERVICE OF FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The changes in the globe’s geopolitical map by the end of the 20th century – tending toward its further reconstruction – were, and still are, so deep and comprehensive that they generated quite a novel paradigm in the value system as known and recognized by states after the WWII and even several decades and centuries before.

One of the most radical changes with biggest consequences was the end of the bipolar world. The East-West divide emanating the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact and the United States with its NATO implied not only decades of living on the verge of conflicts but also two value systems, two economic systems and two options of political development. As evident fifty years later, conflicts could have been avoided even without those two bulky economic developments. While the Western world was making giant’s steps towards post-industrial and then information society, the Eastern part was more and more lagging behind under the pressure of ever growing arms-race expenses; and, eventually, in late 1980 it gave up, unwillingly but inevitably and said it wanted to change the state of affairs. The consequences were not only a dismantled system and ideology as such but, above all, disintegration of a super power and the empire symbolizing it – the Soviet Union.

In a historically short period of time an entire legacy of almost one century – the legacy of Soviets, socialism or communism – dispersed but not to be replaced by a planned, well-thought-out and recognizable ideology. Disappearance of the communist ideology as a guiding star left a void the consequences of which reach till this very day.

Instead of an expected cooperation resting on new foundations of mutual trust, a new world emerged, the world dominated by a single value system

that was based and still is on consumerism. The Eastern part of the globe – above all Russia as a newly emerged state in the territory of Euro-Asia – was offered the primitive accumulation of capital in its most brutal form with rampant consumerism as the lifestyle of its new strata. And as the “father of Perestroika,” Alexander Nikolaevich Yakovlev put it, “the West taught us quickly how to spend but not how to work.” Soon his statement will turn out as fatal to the Russian society and the country’s fate over the initial years of the new world order, throughout 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century.

Consumerism became a new ideology. The attempt of the Russian Orthodox Church to fill the void with the “safeguard of the Russian soul” failed against new Russian reality. Russia lost “the old” and failed to find “the new,” and failed to find a link between its “golden” and “silver” century and today, as many had been looking up for; for, like always in its modern history, Russia was freezing in its tracks whenever faced with the question, “Who are we?”

After 2006–08, by the end of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin’s second term in office, the situation began changing. Along with gradual economic stabilization due to a multitude of oil-gas arrangements with Western European and other big energy consumers, Russia’s political – and also a part of the intellectual elite close to the centers of political and economic power – started emphasizing, more and more, that Russia should turn back to its roots and original values of its civilization.

Even then many analysts were warning that Russia was “sliding” towards *déjà vu*. Namely, many associated the methods used at home, and even more at the international arena, with the period of the so-called real socialism, the period of big stagnation in the second half of the 20th century. Time will tell that these analysts were partially right, but will also tell another fact: Russia’s thorough global methodology promoting its historical, cultural, linguistic, artistic and other values. So the so-called soft power became one of Russia’s major, recognizable strategies for the outside world.

Russia’s foreign-policy image was burdened – and still is considerably – by stereotypes about the Soviet state being an aggressive, savage country far from European civilization. On the other hand, some take that Russia is a part of European civilization but take it with a grain of salt: despite its

undisputable originality, they argue, Russia has copied to a great extent the big (of the “big”) Europe.

According to some sources,¹²⁹ the pattern in which Russia is being perceived dates back to the end of 15th and the beginning of the 16th century when the young and newly liberated Russian state refused to integrate into the Western, Catholic Europe under conditions unacceptable to it as subjugation. Sigmund von Herberstein, the member of the Holy Seat's futile mission to the court of Vasily III, wrote in the report titled “Description of Moscow” – that became a bestseller in the Western Europe of the time – that Russians were a savage nation, their piety equaled heresy, characterizing their respect for the governance as slavish psychology. Poland, constantly in war with the ever stronger Russian state of the time, developed the ideology picturing Russia as a savage and aggressive country. Director of the NGO “Russian World” Vyacheslav Nikonov says that since that time the “anti-Russian paradigm” has become a part of the Christian civilization's mentality.¹³⁰

Things should not be generalized as there are other parts of the globe apart from the West: speaking in figures, the West implies less than 40 out of 193 UN member-states. No doubt, not all the countries in the world share these “anti-Russian” feelings as seen by most of Russian analysts and authors of the phenomenon of “soft power.” However, statistics indicate that Russia is not exactly reputed even beyond the West. So, according to the survey the *Pew Research Center* conducted, in 2014 anti-Russian feelings grew in most countries included in the research: almost 44 percent of citizens from 44 countries did not have high opinion about Russia, while 34 percent did. In 2014 too, BBC Department “Glob Scan” conducted a similar survey according to which Russia was the 13th country on the scale of 17 taken for a sample. Accordingly, 45 percent of interviewees spoke negatively about Russia and 31 percent positively. Findings of the analysis of Russia's “soft power” conducted by the British leading center – the Institute of Management – in tandem with the analytical magazine *Monocle*, showed that in 2014 was not among the first 25 countries on the list; Russia was 22nd on the list by Simon Anholt's country brand index in 2013, and ranked 16th by Future Brand's country brand index 2014; the Good Country Index sent Russia down to

129 Aleksandr Naumov, portal „Perspektivy“, „Myagkaya sila“ i vnešnepolitičeskij imidž Rossijskoy Federacii“, April 9, 2015

130 V Nikonov, „Rossia: vyzovi i vozmožnosti//Strategiya Rossii, 2015, No. 1, p. 26–27.

95th place on the list; finally, the Global Peace Index measuring 162 countries ranked Russia 152nd whereby proclaiming it one of 11 “most dangerous” countries.¹³¹ True, those ordering surveys and those interpreting their findings actually determine conclusions. In this context one can question the findings of any survey, including the above-mentioned ones. However, there are factual indicators that are beyond dispute: according to international organizations dealing with cultural investments, but Russia’s statistics too, only 1.5 percent of all investments made all over the world went to Russia. This can be compared with US getting 34 percent of overall investment, EU 23 percent, and Japan and China 12 percent.¹³² This just illustrates why it is that Russia is not as attractive as one should expect it to be. For, when a country invests in its culture in the general sense of the term, it means that it has economic resources and that, in turn, means that it is more attractive to some other international actors and institutions – which eventually strengthen its international standing.

Harvard Professor George Nye defined the term “soft power” as the ability of a country to attain its international goals without force or coercion but by invoking sympathies of other and thus persuading them to do what it wants; this ability, he argues, is irreplaceable attribute of each country aspiring to good standing in global or regional policy.¹³³ At present US, EU member-states and China rank top with their „soft powers.“ Other countries are also trying to incorporate it into their foreign policies.

Although it allocated considerable resources to the implementation of „soft power,“ Russia lags behind its partners.

Russia could have drawn lessons from the Soviet Union’s considerable “soft power” potential but did not once the latter disintegrated. It was as late as in 2012 that President Putin spoke out about “soft power” at the

131 Videti: Country brand Index Report 2014–2015, <http://www.slideshare.net/massimoclementini/brand.index-2014-2015-report>; Indeks nacionalnyh brendov Anholta 2012–2013, <http://www.gfk.com/new-and-events/press-room/press-releases/pages/nation-brand-index-2013-latest-findings.aspx>; Reiting nacionalnih brendov po Indeksu stranovyh brendov 2014/2015 (Future Brand), <http://www.futurebrand.com/cbi/2014/thankyou/3935/cbi2014-4654222230#download-form>; Oficialnyj sajt meydunarodnogo issledovatel'skogo proekta „Indeks horoših stran“ (The Good Country Index), // <http://www.goocountry.org/overall>.

132 <http://gtmarket.ru/ratings/research-and-development-expenditure/info>

133 J.S. Nye, „Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics“, N.Y., 2004.

ambassadorial conference.¹³⁴ The 2013 foreign policy plan of the Russian Federation defined the term “soft power” as “a complex instrument for solving foreign policy tasks that leans on citizens’ associations, information-communication, humanitarian and other methods and technologies alternative to conventional diplomacy.” The document recognized “soft power” as “an inseparable element of today’s international policy.”¹³⁵

Ever since embedding the term “soft power” in its practical foreign policy, the Russian political and economic elites have been working hard on institutionalized instruments to promote their advantages all over the world of today. Today some of public policy institutions tasked with strengthening the country’s “soft power” are as follows:

- Governmental institutions, mostly the Foreign Ministry with its Information Department and the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Diaspora and International Humanitarian Cooperation;
- NGOs, civil society organizations, think-tanks such as “Russian World” Foundation, Foundation for the Support and Protection of Rights of Fellow Countrymen in Other Countries, Foundation for the Support to Social (Popular) Diplomacy “A. M. Gorchakova,” the non-commercial organization “Russian Council for International Affairs,” the Palace of the Russian Federation, etc.;
- TV channels “RT” and “Russia-RTR” and others, International News Agency “Russia Today,” the “Russian Gazette” project, Foreign Ministry’s and other governmental agencies’ internet resources, etc. Notably important is the TV channel “RT” that broadcasts news in English, Spanish and Arab languages and has been most successful up to now.

134 Speaking of the new contours of the country’s foreign policy in the summer of 2012, President Putin said, „Our diplomacy has already mastered – let me say perfectly – all traditional methods of international performance. However, we should now devote thought to the use of new technologies such as the so-called soft power.“ Foreign Minister Lavrov addressed the same issue at this conference. <http://www.kremlin.ru/news/15902>; E. Studneva, „MID i Obschestvennaya palata Rossii obsudili resursy „myagkoi silx“, December 13, 2011, *Meždunarodnaya zizn*, <http://interaffairs.ru/red.php?item=8129>

135 *Koncepciya vnešnei politiki Rossijskoj Federacii*, Ministerstvo innostranyh del Rossijskoj Federacii, <http://www.mid.ru/brp-4nsf/6D84DDEDEDBF7DA644257B16051BF7F>

In 2013 “RT” confirmed its status of the biggest source of information at the international video hosting and ranged as the top video channel with one billion watchers at You Tube;

- Major universities (M.V. Lomonosov, RUDN, etc.);
- and Russian Orthodox Church and other religious institutions, mostly Islamic.

The above-mentioned and other “soft power” institutions in Russia are after building the country’s good image at the international arena, and its geo-political standing especially in the parts of the world considered as special spheres of interest.

Despite its rather successful “soft power” implementation, today’s Russia is facing scores of domestic problems that can hardly make the country of such capacity feel good. Some of these problems are:

- a) Russia’s foreign policy concept has not yet developed a complex strategy for “soft power” and Russia’s clear-cut positioning beyond home borders. According to J.S. Nye’s definition of “soft power,” it could be said that Russia has failed to achieve the results it had been after in three spheres: culture, political values and foreign policy. On the other hand, one must admit that its “soft power” has been most successful in the promotion of the values of Russian civilization and culture. That’s a recognizable constant with a long track-record and attitude toward it has been defined in many parts of the world. Russia has not established a clear mechanism of coordination of various agencies that would contribute to its international image comprehensively, systematically and in a modern way by presenting domestic and international success stories. Much of it all is being done partially.
- b) Institutions and elements of “soft power” making Russia more attractive at the international scene are scarce in the country itself. Many mechanisms from the earlier era have been abandoned, while new ones have either not been established or have not proved to be competitive enough.
- c) As of lately, along with escalation of the Ukrainian conflict in 2014, emerged a serious deficit in ideas for overcoming negative stereotypes about Russia. As it turned out after EU sanctions imposed on it, Russia has not been paying sufficient attention to branding the country as

a whole, as well as in regions. Poor knowledge about Russia's domestic attainments in various fields is notable.

- d) Efficient use of "soft power" for the country's better positioning at the international arena implies coordinated activity of many elements of the society rather than of governmental agencies alone. Deficit cooperation between governmental agencies and non-governmental sector, civil society structures and mass media is evident in Russia proper. The Russian establishment does not pay enough attention to today's most important mass media and other forms of electronic communication.
- e) Russia's foreign policy does not use enough the advantages of public diplomacy. Specialists to deal with targeted foreign audiences in their mother tongues are scarce. The communication as such should be dynamic, diversified, clear and educational.

All these shortcomings are evident in Russia's slowly changing image. Therefore, the longstanding stereotypes about Russia still have the upper hand. This was obvious in the spring of 2014 when Crimea was annexed to Russia: many countries promptly interpreted it as Russia's restoration of "hard power," they abundantly referred to while condemning its actions.

Russia certainly has huge resources that can, and should, make it possible for it to improve its foreign policy image. Above all, there is its historical-cultural heritage: in literature, theater, ballet, painting, cinematography, technology and science, and then the legacy of coexistence of peoples and their cultures, interreligious dialogue over centuries, and after all its enormous territory, rich nature and natural resources. Not everyone is aware of the complexity of Russian being, which should be strongly popularized to ensure a better standing in global affairs. Further on, there are millions in the Russian Diaspora in emigration after the October Revolution and, later, after the disintegration of USSR, millions who speak Russian, look after their tradition and cherish memories of their motherland. All of them stand for a major segment of "soft power." For its part, Russia does not cooperate systematically and systemically with the Diaspora: its fragmented work with it calls for a new approach and considerable investment. Then, there is Russia's system of higher education held in high esteem in a considerable part of the globe (mostly in Central Asia but also in Eastern and Central Europe) and the influence of the "Russian school" on African and Latin American states that is not to be neglected. Russia's religious potential is also crucial

to the implementation of “soft power.” This particularly refers to its Eastern Orthodox Church and “church diplomacy.” The Russian Orthodox Church is in intensive communication with all Eastern Orthodox churches abroad and assists many Eastern Orthodox believers all over the world. Other religions also have the potential for building a better image for Russia – Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. This element is more and more significant in the “soft power” concept; for, the communist ideology vaporized following on decades of the atheist state, while the freedom of religion emerged as a new opportunity for counting on one’s own resources. All the churches, especially the Eastern Orthodox one, are after strengthening their position in this newly liberated space. And not to be undermined speaking of Russia’s geo-political standing in international affairs is its status of a nuclear and energy power, a “cosmic state,” a permanent member of the UNSC and active participant in the newly established international organizations such as Euro-Asian Alliance and BRICS.

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Despite all of its undeniable potential for implementation of “soft power” in the service of geo-strategic standing in international affairs and despite the fact that Russia has been making much better use of its resources to resume its repute and establish a new one, some moments of today’s international constellation still make it lag behind the process and prevent its foreign policy from bringing the country closer to the rest of the world or at least to the part of the world it is interested in.

It was only after disintegration of the Soviet state in early 1990s that Russia emerged at the global arena as a new factor of international relations. It was not easy for Russia, burdened with economic underdevelopment, isolation and ideological exclusiveness, to elbow its way through the world that has radically changed in less than thirty years. The search for a new identity was a long and demanding process calling for new people and new methods, new organizations, etc. A state preoccupied with itself and its survival can hardly – let alone successfully – focus on its international standing in parallel. However, one must admit that, from historical perspective, Russia managed to restore itself in almost no time and pursue its own course of development (following on a brief period when it was solely looking up to the attainments

of Western civilization). In the first decade of the new millennium Russia's options boiled down to the dilemma – how to prosper against the international background but be the master of one's fate? As a big and self-sufficient state Russia chose to go back to its own values. That meant that the strategy for mixing the values of the Russia before the revolution and those of the Soviet Russia. This new-old approach leaned and still does on a strong state. Economically strengthened Russia steered for resuming its repute, position and influence on its “close neighborhood” – i.e. the countries emerging for the Soviet Union – to start with and then on other countries. Its membership of G7 and other organizations of the world's most developed countries determined it as a big power doing its best to influence the contemporary world on equal footing with others.

Many had qualms about Russia's comeback, some were surprised and others faced with the dilemma about how to treat it. The energy crisis breaking out when Russia denied gas supplies to Ukraine – affecting other European consumers as well in the winter 2007–8 – signaled first Russia's unlimited means for the use of “soft power.” This signal warned many to reconsider their relations with it. Soon EU changed its energy policy imposing new rules of the game on this domain. Boosted and economically stronger Russia decided to establish and strengthen institutionalized ties in the region of Central Asia and with countries with advantages and problems similar to its – China, India, Brazil and South Africa. The Ukrainian crisis was the third and decisive moment in Russia's new global positioning. The crisis changed Western countries' attitude towards Russia, but the attitude of neighboring countries as well. The fear of Russia's uncontrolled behavior in international relations – mostly the fear of the possibility of its resort to arms in settling disputes – emerged once again. The fear arose from still fresh memories of the period of bipolar world. Many interpreted Russia's action as “soft power” being replaced by “hard power.”

It remains to be seen what course Russia will be pursuing to determine itself at the international arena. The experience in the use of “soft power” in the service of geostrategic positioning has shown so far that Russia had neglected the economic factor. Namely, US are the country most experienced and successful in “soft power” implementation at the international arena. The States' success is mostly based on economic supply and domination. Why is it so? Modern society is the consumer society; there will be buyers for anything

supplied in nice packages in the society ruled by financial capital. The logic is quite a simple one: money can buy everything. If Russia really wants to present itself in a new way – and be successful in it – it must spare no expense; assuming, of course, that it has already developed a strategy and mechanisms for the purpose. This annuls not the significance of putting the advantages of Russian culture, language, religion, history, etc, as elements of “soft power” to good use. These already well-known elements are basic premises; and practice has proved that only economy could be a driving force.

DR MILIVOJ BEŠLIN

A "NEW" HISTORY FOR A NEW IDENTITY

Interpretations Of Yugoslavia In Prorussian Media as
the Platform for Nationalistic Homogenization in Serbia

During the last few years, after the violent suppression of civil protests claiming election irregularities (2011) and Vladimir Putin's election to the presidency for a second term (2012), Russia's external expansion became more open than before. Its aggression against Georgia (2008) was followed by an armed attack on sovereign Ukraine as well as military intervention in Syria. Insufficiently effective sanctions imposed by Western countries due to Russia's aggressive war against its southern neighbour, although the inviolability of its borders was guaranteed by Russia itself under an international agreement concluded in Budapest (2014), and the annexation of Crimea (2014), a part of the internationally recognized Ukrainian territory, have reinforced the Cold War tendencies in the world, especially in Europe.¹³⁶ Due to its foreign policy disorientation, Serbia has found itself amid political dispute between the insecure Western world and Vladimir Putin's imperial autocracy. Russia's soft power and efforts to destabilize Serbia and turn it away from the insufficiently accepted European agenda have also been reflected in the fact that Russia has put a lot of effort and money into launching dozens of media, portals, foundations, civic associations and non-governmental organizations in order to strengthen anti-Western sentiment in Serbia and boost nationalist, xenophobic and pro-Russian tendencies.¹³⁷ This specific intelligence-

136 Boris Varga, *Farbanje demokratije*, Belgrade, 2013; *Ibid.*, *Evropa posle Majdana*, Novi Sad, 2015.

137 "Soft power" is a peaceful means of achieving desired objectives, which is used by the great powers. It is based on three essential resources: a country's culture, political values and foreign policy. The term "soft power" was coined by Joseph S. Nye, Jr.

media offensive launched on Serbia by the Russian authorities has been based not only on Belgrade's unclear and ambivalent position on the West-Russia dichotomy, but even more so on the distinctly pro-Putin and anti-Western orientation of almost all leading print media in Serbia (excluding *Danas* daily newspaper and several liberal weekly magazines – *Vreme*, *NIN*, *Novi magazin*, which have no wide circulation).¹³⁸ Apart from Russia, Chinese soft power in Serbia is also on the rise. Despite being less aggressive and depoliticized only at first glance, the expansion of China's soft power is reflected in the establishment of Confucius Institutes for the promotion of the Chinese language and culture. So far, two outlets for the expansion of Chinese soft power in Serbia have been opened – at the Philological Faculty in Belgrade and the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad.¹³⁹

The media, economic and other forms of Russian expansion in Serbia rely on “fertile ground“ not only in contemporaneity, but also on the dominant historical tendency having its roots in the 19th century. The prevalent cultural and ideological matrix of anti-Western and anti-liberal sentiments

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 (1937), Professor at Harvard University and former Dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. From 1977 to 1979, he served as Deputy to the Under-Secretary of State for Security Assistance, Science and Technology, and chaired the National Security Council Group on Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons. From 1993 to 1994, Nye was chairman of the National Intelligence Council. In 1994 and 1995, he served as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. He was also the American representative on the United Nations Advisory Committee on Disarmament Affairs (1989–1993). Joseph Nye is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Academy of Diplomacy and the British Academy. He is an honorary fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, and a Theodore Roosevelt Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. He is the recipient of the Woodrow Wilson Award from Princeton University, the Charles Merriam Award from the American Political Science Association and the Distinguished Scholar Award by the International Studies Association, as well as France's Palmes Academiques. He has taught as a visiting professor in Geneva, Ottawa, London and Oxford, and has conducted research in Europe, East Africa and Central America. His well-known book *The Future of Power* was published in Belgrade in 2012.

138 “Ruska meka moć u ekspanziji”, *Helsinški bilten* No. 120, October 2015.

139 As early as 2007, Chinese leader Hu Jintao said at the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China said that China should increase its investment in the development of its sophisticated power. Since then, China has considerably augmented its investment in a peculiar “charm offensive“ and has opened several hundred Confucian Institutes throughout the world; http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/dzozef_naj_zasto_je_slaba_meka_moc_kine/24455990.html.

in Serbia has inevitably implied: nationalism as the only tradition and governing ideological paradigm; anti-Westernism reflected not only in resistance to Western values, but also in the tendency not to repeat the Western path of development; collectivism instead of individualism; collective freedom from “the other“ instead of individual freedoms of citizens; authoritarianism instead of strengthening institutions; the negation of the rule of law; a people’s state instead of a modern one; a state-controlled economy instead of a market one; Russophilia versus Westernism; the tendency toward national emancipation and all-Serbian unity instead of developing a real state; sacrificing individual freedom for collective freedom, etc.¹⁴⁰

The Moscow authorities have devoted special attention and resources to creating the images of Russia and the West by means of numerous media in Serbia into which substantial funds have evidently been invested. The opening of Belgrade’s office of the *Russian Institute for Strategic Research* (RISS) has been especially significant for the expansion of Russian propaganda activities in Serbia. The opening of the office of this organization has been welcomed with joy by the Pro-Russian public, with the oxymoronic explanation of the nationalist and anti-Western *Politika* daily that “Putin’s first NGO has arrived in Serbia“.¹⁴¹ The head of Belgrade’s office of this organization, formed under Vladimir Putin’ patronage and recognizable due to aggressive and controversial statements made by its Moscow Director Leonid Reshetnikov, is historian Dr Nikita Bondarev. His praiseworthy doctoral dissertation on Tito’s Moscow years now seems incompatible with his political activity just as the high scientific achievements of this dissertation can hardly be associated with his mentor – Elena Guskova, known for her extreme and obscure propaganda in favour of the Milosevic regime.¹⁴² An important event staged by Putin’s “institute“ in Serbia was the conference “Russia’s Soft Power in Serbia“, which was held in mid-November 2014. On that occasion, the speech was also delivered by its Moscow Director Leonid Reshetnikov who stated without using euphemisms that “Orthodoxy is a separate civilization

140 Latinka Perović, *Dominantna i neželjena elita. Beleške o intelektualnoj i političkoj eliti u Srbiji XX-XXI vek*, Belgrade, 2015, pp. 15–28; Milan Subotić, *Tumači ruske ideje*, Belgrade, 2001.

141 <http://www.vaseljenska.com/vesti/prva-putinova-nvo-u-srbiji/> (*Politika*, 23 October 2013).

142 Nikita Bondarev, *Misterija Tito. Moskovske godine 1935–1937*, Belgrade, 2013.

embodying the highest values and represents an alternative to the American-Western concept of consumer ‘Europeanism’, which has reduced people to simple material beings instead of enriching them spiritually. Therefore, the objective and mission of Orthodox peoples are to spread their Orthodox concept.” While speaking about soft power in the Balkans, Reshetnikov reiterated that “Russians, Georgians, Bulgarians, Serbs and Greeks constitute a separate civilization – although we do not realize that– and that we should fight for our understanding of the world”. Proceeding from the premise that the West intends to “destroy” Serbs and Russians, he also stated that the reason should be sought in the fact that “we are an alternative civilization. China is not a civilization; it is the power that emulates the West. We will do our best to have Serbia and Russia carry on the flame given to us in Constantinople and this is why they want to destroy us“. “The Byzantine influence came to Russia through Serbia. The same is true of the Cyrillic script. Why you in Belgrade do not write in Cyrillic – you brought the Cyrillic script to Russia – and you yourselves reject it“, said the former member of the Soviet intelligence service, interpreting historical processes in a *creative* way.¹⁴³ Prior to this event, at the launching of his book “Returning to Russia“ in Belgrade, Reshetnikov made the apocalyptic statement that “Serbia will disappear without Russia, it will cease to exist!” “Serbia has always been a proud, independent and heroic country, and freedom and independence are defended in struggle. Therefore, I wish you to be successful in that struggle and come out as a winner“, said this former intelligence officer and head of an umbrella Russian organization in charge of external expansion and propaganda in April 2014. However, he did not specify what struggle should be carried out by Serbia and against whom.¹⁴⁴

Soon after his appointment as head of the RISS for Serbia, Nikita Bondarev identified Serbia’s crucial enemies: Yugoslavism and Titoism.¹⁴⁵ He explained the methodology of Russian soft power expansion: “Russian

143 “Dometi našminkane moći”, *NIN*, 7 January 2016; <http://www.nspm.rs/politicki-zivot/meka-moc-rusije-u-srbiji-mogucnosti-i-perspektive.html?alphabet=l>.

144 <http://www.fakti.org/srpski-duh/citaliste/resetnjikov-srbija-ce-bez-rusije-nestati-nece-postojati>.

145 On controversial history-based policies pursued by Putin’s Russia see: Nikolaj Kuposov, “Istorijska politika za vreme Putina“, in: *Druga Rusija*, Milan Subotić (ed.), Belgrade, 2015, pp. 125–151.

experts, scientists, political scientists and historians will come to Belgrade to deliver lectures and hold seminars". He identified "lie" as the crucial problem in Russian-Serbian relations. According to him, the lie that the Red Army was "doing nothing else but killing and raping" in the Balkans, was instilled in "the mass consciousness of Serbs by Titoist propaganda after 1948" about which a special book, *Crimes Under the Guise of Socialism* (Zločini pod plaštom socijalizma), was published. After Tito's reconciliation with the Soviet Union, this book, which Bondarev regards as "totally untrue", was removed from libraries. However, he holds that "the misconception about the indecent behaviour of Soviet troops in Yugoslavia has remained in the people's memory". He has also said that he contemplates publishing this book with critical commentary: "Here it is what Titoist propaganda says and this is what actually happened (according to archival materials)". Abusing his profession as a historian and speaking exclusively as the head of an umbrella Russian propaganda institution in Serbia, he summarized the interest of his country in Serbia: "I can tell you both as the RISS representative and expert on Tito that Serbia will have no future unless it eradicates Titoism and Yugoslavism. Serbia needs a homogeneous nation state which Serbs did not have in their more recent history and not *proletarian internationalism and the brotherhood and unity of the peoples of Yugoslavia*. Serbs should stop being Yugoslavs and gratefully think of Tito who did whatever he could to deprive Serbs of their national identity".¹⁴⁶

It is indicative how many historical inaccuracies can be found in only several sentences said by N. Bondarev in an attempt to create a "new" and "homogeneous" Serbian identity. First of all, the mentioned book did not have any influence on historiography or collective consciousness because it was physically destroyed. Thus, it is absolutely unknown to historians and the general public in Yugoslavia. On the contrary, throughout the period of socialist Yugoslavia any critical survey of the conduct of the Red Army during its stay in Yugoslavia was tabooed. The decreed memory interprets Soviets only as liberators who should be remembered with gratitude.¹⁴⁷ As for other argu-

146 <http://www.vaseljenska.com/vesti/nikita-bondarev-srbiji-nema-buducnosti-dok-ne-iskoreni-titoizam-jugoslovenstvo/>.

147 Olga Manojlović Pintar, *Arheologija sećanja. Spomenici i identiteti u Srbiji 1918–1988*, Belgrade, 2014, and Hajke Karge, *Sećanje u kamenu – okamenjeno sećanje*, Belgrade, 2014.

ments, including long-vanished “proletarian internationalism“ and “brotherhood and unity“, it is absurd even to talk about them in Serbia. Bondarev’s claim that during Tito’s life Serbs were denied their national identity – is an absolute historical fake. On the contrary, historian Bondarev should know that the second Yugoslavia had been constituted on the basis of the idea of both national and social emancipation, and that Serbs, as a nation, had not only been affirmed, but had also been included as the first constituent of the new Yugoslavia established in Jajce in 1943.¹⁴⁸ Historian Bondarev most likely knows this fact because it provides a basis for scientific historiographic knowledge about Yugoslavia. However, he was evidently dominated by political utilitarianism, which is not devoid of the grossest historical abuses, falsehoods and fakes, in carrying out the policy of the Russian state whose official he is.

In accordance with such aims and cognitive-manipulative framework, a large number of existing Russian propaganda services in Serbia as well as numerous new ones, which have quite frequently been launched over the past years, with the common characteristic – a far-right, nationalist, xenophobic and anti-Western sentiments – have elaborated the mentioned fakes and ahistorical theses of the RISS in Serbia.

This year, on 29 November, the anniversary of founding the federal Yugoslav state, the new star of Russian media activities in Serbia, the portal *Sputnik*, selected, as its central text, the article dedicated to the foundation of the state with the headline “The Greatest Serbian Mistake“. The remainder of the headline reads: “From the Historical AVNOJ to the Loss of Kosovo“. The message of the headline is quite clear – Yugoslavia is responsible for the loss of Kosovo and not Serbia or Serbian nationalism. The author of the Russian information-propaganda portal *Sputnik* intentionally fails to distinguish between the ideology of nationalism and national identity, and says that “despite the fact that during Yugoslavia’s existence Serbs were accused of Greater Serbia aspirations and life based on the Kosovo myth“, they were loyal to the “AVNOJ legacy“. This preposterous creation laid on a wrong foundation, Yugoslavia, in which Serbs “lost everything“, could survive thanks to “foreign loans and state repression“, writes *Sputnik*. However, the only “source“ used by the author to acquire knowledge about the past is the song of Bosnian Serb musician Nenad Janković (Nele Karajlić) which, according to this portal, resembles the real history of Yugoslavia like “two peas in a

148 Branko Petranović, Slobodan Nešović, *AVNOJ i revolucija*, Belgrade, 1983.

pod“.¹⁴⁹ As held by Russian propagandists, Serbs “lost everything“ in the longest period of peace in its modern history, in the period of the fastest and most profound modernization and urbanization, in the period when the state was industrialized, its population was largely freed from poverty and illiteracy, universal health care was introduced, the social composition of population was incomparably improved, woman ceased to be treated as an under-age child, and cultural development reached its highest point in modern times. However, *Sputnik's* theses are not new. They represent the elaboration of the theses advanced by the author and politician Dobrica Ćosić about winners in war and losers in peace.¹⁵⁰

According to the Russian portal *Sputnik*, apart from Yugoslavia, Serbs also “embraced“ communism “as if salvation only lies in it“. In addition, on the mentioned date “the monarchy was forcefully abolished“ and the republic was created. However, the author consciously overlooks the fact that the Serbian Karadjordjević monarchy was forcefully established in 1903, after the assassinations committed during the May Coup, while the republic was introduced after the referendum where the citizens expressed their will. All those who did not agree with the mentioned processes, or had a different opinion, writes the Russian portal, were “either killed on time or expelled after 1945“. All others were silenced, says the author citing his “historical source“, namely the song of musician Janković (Karajlić). Having learned history from songs, the *Sputnik* author could conclude that in Yugoslavia “the true history was suppressed“, citing the example of Serbia which actually did not exist in Yugoslavia, since it was “the only republic having the provinces after the famous AVNOJ session as well as the republics within it following the adoption of the hideous 1974 Constitution“, alluding to the autonomy of Vojvodina and Kosovo. For the Russian propagandist, the constitution of Serbia, as the largest federal unit of the new Yugoslavia in 1945, is evidently too complex¹⁵¹, since it has not been depicted in trash music. Hence the surprisingly senseless

149 <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/komentari/20151129/1101432449/Najveca-srpska-zabluda-istorijski-AVNOJ-Kosovo.html>.

150 Dobrica Ćosić, *Stvarno i moguće*, Rijeka, 1982.

151 Dragoljub Petrović, *Konstituisanje federalne Srbije*, Belgrade, 1988.

argument about the nonexistence of Serbia in Yugoslavia.¹⁵² But after all, says *Sputnik*, if “brotherhood and unity“ had been so strong, a brother would not have turned against his own brother, like in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which ended up with 100,000 deaths, thus imputing the Bosnian genocide to Yugoslavia, which can only be included in the balance sheet of post-Yugoslav history and attributed to the ideology of nationalism, which first destroyed Yugoslavia and then committed the historical *magnum crimen* against Bosnia.¹⁵³ Finally, *Sputnik’s* very interpretation is in the service of an insufficiently intelligent and transparent justification of Serbian nationalism due to its major role in post-Yugoslav wars.¹⁵⁴

Assuming the encounter with the collective memories of some readers who may recognize the corrupt nationalist successors of the former Yugoslavia in *Sputnik’s* interpretation, the author underlines the following: “Only the one who did not live in these lands over the past 25 years, or did not follow the news about all events taking place during that period, can speak about nostalgia and some good times from the Vardar to Mount Triglav. Many books have been written about the destiny of those who lost their youth in the years and in the state prior to the 1990s, believing in the mirage of socialism. For the beginning, according to *Sputnik*, younger readers can read *When Pumpkin Blossomed* (Kada su cvetale tikve), not accidentally the fiction novel by the pro-Russian oriented Cominform supporter Dragoslav Mihailović. “And regardless of what the children and grandchildren of communism say today, how much they emphasize that one could safely sleep in any park and how much they speak about women’s and workers’ rights – all this existed to some extent but was, in essence, great trickery.“ *Sputnik* also informs us that “living with each other was enforced instead of having us live next to each other”. For the central Russian propaganda portal in Serbia the metaphor of Yugoslavia is “the Serb who does not, nor does he want to look at himself in the mirror“,

152 <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/komentari/20151129/1101432449/Najveca-srpska-zabluda-istorijski-AVNOJ-Kosovo.html>.

153 Mirsad Tokača, *Bosanska knjiga mrtvih*, 1–4, Sarajevo, 2012.

154 Despite the defensive stance of Russia’s official policy and media services concerning the political legacy of the Slobodan Milošević regime in Serbia, it should be noted that throughout the 1990s official Russia followed the Western policy towards the Balkans and participated in its creation. Russia was a member of the Contact Group and approved all resolutions on the Balkan crisis brought by the UN Security Council during the 1990s.

since he “lost himself“ in Yugoslavia as “the greatest Serbian mistake”.¹⁵⁵ For Russian propaganda in Serbia and Serbian nationalism as Putin’s main ally in the Balkans, in the magnificent and “glorious“ pre-Yugoslav past, which nobody remembers, so that it can be “invented“, there were no illiterate people, poverty, hunger, permanent wars and killings, no repressive Radical Party regime, short life expectancy, mass children’s deaths, country without roads, life without a bed, lack of real schools and universities, or citizens without freedom. Russian propagandists pretend that in socialist Yugoslavia there were no economic growth, largest-scale and most intensive modernization, industrialization, adequate living standards, mass and free studies, minimal corruption, free health care, social housing, cultural prestige abroad, historically incomparable unprovincialism, enviable international reputation. All these claims are actually due to the fact that the dissolution of the Eastern bloc effectively started after the historical NO to Stalinist attacks in 1948, which was supported by a considerable number of then Yugoslav politicians. It will culminate in the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), unification of Europe and collapse of Soviet totalitarianism, which Vladimir Putin mentioned a number of times as the “greatest geopolitical tragedy of the 20th century“.¹⁵⁶

On the same day, 29 November 2015, when *Sputnik* had this impressionist showdown with Yugoslavia, which was absolutely not based on historical facts, the top news with a photograph on another pro-Russian, right-wing portal, *Nova srpska politička misao* (NSPM), was that “on this day in Jajce, at the Second Session of the AVNOJ, the communists ‘divided Yugoslavia into six republics’ and invented ‘artificial nations’.“ In the opinion of the unknown NSPM author, “all this laid the foundation for a new war and new collapse of the country, which occurred forty five years later when the republics and nations invented and established at Jajce spearheaded the war against Yugoslavia, wishing to achieve independence.”¹⁵⁷ NSPM did not mention what had happened during those forty five years. However, there is an evident

155 <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/komentari/20151129/1101432449/Najveca-srpska-zabluda-istorijski-AVNOJ-Kosovo.html>.

156 <http://www.newsweek.rs/svet/58850-putin-obama-rusija-amerika-ujedinjenenacije-un.html>.

157 <http://www.nspm.rs/hronika/na-danasnji-dan-umrli-prota-mateja-nenadovic-i-marija-terezija-okonceno-je-zasedanje-podgoricke-skupstine-rodjen-dusan-radovic-odrzano-drugo-zasedanje-avnoj-a-na-brdu-kadinjaca-izginuo-je-radnicki-bataljon-ukinuta-monarhija-i-sva-prava-kralja-petr>.

attempt to attribute to the history of the second Yugoslavia something belonging to the history of its nationalist successor states. It is also necessary to keep reminding the public that Yugoslavia was not an indivisible whole; instead it was established pursuant to the AVNOJ decisions in 1943, on the basis of the expression of views by the representatives of all constituent peoples (Serbs, Croats, Macedonians, Slovenes and Montenegrins) that they wish to live together but also to enjoy their own national freedom. Therefore, Yugoslavia was constituted as a federal state.¹⁵⁸ The unknown author also failed to master the basics of the history of 19th and 20th century Europe because he ignores the thesis widely accepted in social sciences that all nations are modern categories and “artificial“. As political creations, they represent 19th and 20th century constructs and derivatives.¹⁵⁹

Another exponent of pro-Russian nationalist thought in Serbia, the portal *Vidovdan* editor has recently published an article entitled “Are We Serbs Normal?“ in the right-wing newspaper *Večernje novosti*, protesting against the photograph of Yugoslav President Tito at the entrance to Kombank Arena where the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting was taking place. Calling Tito a dictator, the pro-Russian analyst calls this act “masochism“. Making a paradigmatic analogy, he points out that present-day Russia does not display Stalin’s photos although, if these two autocrats are compared, “Russia has many more reasons to remember Stalin in a positive light“. This is a peculiar historical novum, since the entire world historiography considers Stalin as one of the 20th century worst tyrants and creator of the infamous “gulag empire“, and counts millions of his victims.¹⁶⁰ According to this author, Stalin has great

158 Janko Pleterski, *Nacije, Jugoslavija, revolucija*, Belgrade, 1985.

159 Benedikt Anderson, *Nacija: zamišljena zajednica*, Belgrade, 1998; Dominik Šnaper, *Zajednica građana – o modernoj ideji nacije*, Sremski Karlovci, Novi Sad, 1996; Ričard Dženkins, *Etnicitet u novom ključu*, Belgrade, 2001; Filip Putinja, Žoslin Stref-Fenar, *Teorije o etnicitetu*, Belgrade, 1997; Erik Hobsbaum, *Nacije i nacionalizam od 1780. Program, mit, stvarnost*, Belgrade, 1996; Dominik Šnaper, „Demokratska nacija i etnički nacionalizam“, *Treći program* No. 109, 110 – I/II – 1997, Hans Ulrich Veler, *Nacionalizam, istorija – forme – posledice*, Novi Sad, 2002; Patrick Geary, *Mit o nacijama*, Novi Sad, 2007; Tomas Hilan Eriksen, *Etnicitet i nacionalizam*, Belgrade, 2004, Erik Hobsbaum, Terens Rejnđer (ed.), *Izmišljanje tradicije*, Belgrade, 2002.

160 Fuad Muhić, *Staljinizam. Teorijski pogled na jedan fenomen*, Sarajevo, 1981; Hana Arent, *Izvori totalitarizma*, Belgrade, 1998; Jean Elleinstein, *Historija staljinskog fenomena*, Zagreb, 1980; Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment*, Oxford, 1991; Roj Medvedev, *Za sud istorije o Staljinu i staljinizmu*, Belgrade, 2012.

merits for the Soviet victory in World War II, which should suggest that Tito does not deserve any merit for the Yugoslav victory over fascism?! In order to corroborate such an amount of historical “novelties”, the analyst of the pro-Russian portal *Vidovdan* also prepared Tito’s balance sheet – “two artificial nations created at the expense of Serbs”, “forced assimilation of Catholic Serbs in Dubrovnik and Dalmatia, and Orthodox Serbs in northwestern Macedonia. Distorted republic borders, not to mention the division of Serbia into three parts, which culminated in the adoption of the 1974 Constitution”.¹⁶¹ Tito “caused more harm to the Serbian people over 40 years than Turks over 400 years”, seizing Kosovo from Serbia and giving it to Albanians, says this analyst, unburdened in the documentary and bookish sense, who has not yet revealed the scientific claim that all nations are “imagined communities” and artificial creations, and that those which prove unviable do not exist in reality. It would be unnecessary to polemicize about hate speech and Tito’s alleged “seizure” of Kosovo from Serbia if the mentioned province, which formed part of Serbia and was an element of Yugoslav federalism, was lastingly emancipated from Serbia at the time of Slobodan Milošević, which was formalized at the time of Vojislav Koštunica – the two nationalist and pro-Russian Serbian leaders.

Similar and much more radical claims and interpretations concerning the issue of Yugoslavia can also be found in other media wishing for Russian expansion in Serbia: *Standard*, *Fakti*, *Fond strateške kulture*, *Geopolitika*, *Vaseljenska*, *Pečat*, *Vidovdan*, *Srbinfo*, etc. Here mention must also be made of mainstream, pro-government media, as well as more radical and openly pro-fascist portals and blogs, which should not be quoted for understandable reasons.

* * *

Russian media and their outlets in Belgrade have also radically revised historiographical interpretations concerning the history of World War II in Yugoslavia in the process of promoting a “new” history and new Serbian identity. On 4 June 2015, the main topic of *R Magazin*, the organ of official Moscow in Belgrade, published as a supplement to *Nedeljnik*, a moderate

161 <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/politika/aktuelno.289.html:579766-Drago-mir-Andjelkovic-Sta-ce-Tito-u-Areni>.

right-wing daily magazine, was: “How Russian Science Looks at Chetniks and Draža Mihailović”. Its very subheading points to a radical reinterpretation of the hitherto views: “Russian experts explain the real relationship between the Chetniks and the Red Army, and the significance of the recent rehabilitation of Draža Mihailović for Russia and Serbia“. From the Soviet era to the present day, “the position of many Russian scientists on this issue was absolutely unambiguous: the Soviet Union saved the world from Nazism, while its allies in Yugoslavia were Tito’s partisans, who fought bravely not only against Nazis, but also against collaborationists and local nationalists of all hues, including both Ustashas and Chetniks“, writes *R Magazin*.¹⁶² Since Putin’s Russia considers the victory over Nazi Germany as one of the main pillars of its contemporary identity, it has postured itself as the main guardian of the memory of the anti-fascist struggle in World War II, opposing resolutely all revisionist efforts in Eastern Europe.¹⁶³ However, the rehabilitation of Draža Mihailović’s Chetnik collaboration movement is an exception.¹⁶⁴ As explained by *R Magazin*, “Leading Russian historians specializing in the Balkans supported the rehabilitation of Draža Mihailović and called on the followers of both sides to normalize their relations and overcome this long-standing rift in Serbian society”. It is also interesting to point to the inconsistency of Russian propaganda and science placed in the service of the regime and external expansion, since they did not support no other anti-communist movement in Europe, including the Polish Armia Krajowa (Home Army), which was directly subordinated to the Allies. From the current Russian perspective, Chetniks are a “specific phenomenon”, since “there was no anti-Russian sentiment among them. On the contrary, many in Draža’s midst were the open sympathizers of the Soviet Union and socialists, so that their wish to cooperate with the Russian Red Army should not surprise anyone. In that sense, the position of Russian historians is not controversial; on the contrary, it is

162 “R magazin” no. 2 June 2015. in: *Nedeljnik*, Belgrade, 4 June 2015.

163 Boris Varga, *Evropa posle Majdana*, Novi Sad, 2015.

164 More details on the Chetnik movement as the subject of revisionist history-based policies see in: Milivoj Bešlin, „Četnički pokret Draže Mihailovića – najfrekventniji objekat istorijskog revizionizma u Srbiji“, in: *Politička upotreba prošlosti. O istorijskom revizionizmu na postjugoslovenskom prostoru*, editors: M. Samardžić, M. Bešlin, S. Milošević, Novi Sad, 2013, pp. 83–142.

quite logical”.¹⁶⁵ Thus, it follows that, according to the current nonhistorical Russian propaganda interpretation, the dividing line in World War II is not the attitude towards fascism and Hitler due to which Chetnik collaboration is irrelevant; instead, the dividing line is the attitude towards Soviets. Russia’s aim is to “overcome historical controversies in Serbian society”, which should be done in a similar way like in Russia.¹⁶⁶ The already mentioned head of the Belgrade office of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies also wrote the text: “Rehabilitation is Positive”. According to him, for Russian politicians and historians, whom he put on the same plane and gave them the same assignment, “it is most important not to repeat propagandistic fabrications and ideological stereotypes, which Soviet scientists had used, since they had been coming from Yugoslavia until the 1990s”. In this way, he has not only banalized the entire Soviet historiography, but has told a flagrant untruth, since Soviets have never relied on Yugoslav sources, especially since 1948. They have conducted their own research for decades. Other Russian historians also contributed to this issue of *R Magazine* in order to justify the changed course of Russian policy and inconsistency concerning their support to one case of (Serbian) historical revisionism in Europe.¹⁶⁷ So, one historian writes that “Chetnik squads never fought against Russian troops”, while another one claims that Draža’s crucial problem was “his excessive trust in the West”. According to these state-sponsored Russian historians, the Chetniks’ destiny was not predetermined by collaboration, crimes against civilians and ruthless fight against the anti-fascist partisan movement, but “Draža Mihailović’s poor geopolitical awareness and excessive trust in the Western Allies and the

165 “R magazin”, no. 2, June 2015, in: *Nedeljnik*, Belgrade, 4 June 2015.

166 Russia also tried to realize its controversial history-based policy model and so-called “national reconciliation”, as well as the further expansion of its influence in Serbia by erecting the monument to the last emperor of the Romanov dynasty – Nicholas II in the centre of Belgrade, on the plateau next to the building of Serbia’s highest legislative body. The monument was unveiled by the Serbian President, in the presence of Russian Patriarch Kiril and the Russian Ambassador to Serbia, on 16 November 2014. The monument is the gift of the Russian Historical Society. On this occasion, the Russian Patriarch made a historically absolutely unfounded statement, most likely prepared for the Serbian public, that Nicholas II “sacrificed his crown, empire and life for the sake of Serbia’s salvation”. <http://www.ambasadarusije.rs/sr/vesti/osvesten-spomениk-caru-nikolaju-ii>.

167 “R magazin”, no. 2 June 2015, in: *Nedeljnik*, Belgrade, 4 June 2015.

Soviet Union in the first years of the war”.¹⁶⁸ It is hard to imagine any better examples of ahistoricity in historical science and the observation of the past events through the eyes of their contemporaries.

In accordance with the mentioned views, Nikita Bondarev said on the occasion of a military parade staged in honour of the Russian President’s visit and the anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade from fascism (2014) that the Chetnik flags should also be carried during winners’ military parade. According to Bondarov, idyllic cooperation between the Red Army and Chetniks was spoiled by partisans who “simply requested from the Soviet command not to maintain friendly relations with the Chetniks: Chetniks are coming to you, this means that they should be shot in the forehead”. In this unsubstantiated construction, Bondarev overlooked amnesty given to Chetniks by the new Yugoslav authorities.¹⁶⁹

However, the absurd Russian revision of Yugoslav history culminated in Nikita Bondarev’s statement that Draža Mihailović’s rehabilitation is “just” and that Serbian citizens should be “enlightened” as to who he was. Ignoring the fact that the history of the Chetnik movement has been thoroughly researched and written, and that no new milestone document has surfaced over the past years, he has said for the Russian portal *Sputnik* that it is the matter of “restoring historical justice” and that Mihailović was surrounded by “much more people with left-wing views than Tito”.¹⁷⁰ The inclusion of *Sputnik* in the dispute in Serbia over Milan Nedić’s rehabilitation is at par with the previous statement. Deviating here from the established practice of so-called fighters against revisionism and the resurrection of fascism in Europe,¹⁷¹ Russian propaganda activities in Serbia have taken an opposite direction. The relativization of Nedić’s racist and antisemitic activities is evident. Moreover,

168 <http://www.nspm.rs/hronika/nikita-bondarev-smatam-da-zastave-cetnika-takodje-treba-da-budu-na-vojnoj-paradi.html?alphabet=1#yvComment115688>.

169 Milan Radanović, *Kazna i zločin: odgovornost za ratne zločine (1941–1944) i vojni gubici snaga kolaboracije u Srbiji (1944–1945)*, Belgrade, 2015.

170 <http://www.nspm.rs/hronika/nikita-bondarev-rehabilitacija-dragoljuba-mihailovica-je-pravedna-o-njemu-se-u-srbiji-ne-zna-dovoljno.html?alphabet=1>.

171 The inconsistency and double standard of the official Kremlin and its propagandists, who have usurped the right to be the exclusive guardian of antifascist traditions, are substantiated by the fact that, with few exceptions, “Putin’s parties” (pro-Kremlin forces in the EU) include just far-right and neofascist parties. See: Boris Varga, “Putin i desničarska internacionala”, in: *Evropa posle Majdana*, Novi Sad, 2015, pp. 61–68.

it has been concluded that “the formation of his government was in compliance with international law”, thus ignoring the existence of the legal Government of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in London, which was recognized by the entire anti-fascist coalition. According to the *Sputnik* collocutors Milan Nedić’s decision to enter into the service of the fascist occupiers was “honourable and good”.¹⁷² Thus, in substance, the major Russian propaganda medium in Serbia supported the darkest ideas of right-wing extremists in these lands.

* * *

If we proceed from the fact that the Soviet Union was the first advocate of Yugoslavia’s breakup immediately after the rift with Stalin in 1948, its current perception in Russian propaganda should not be surprising.¹⁷³ After the reconciliation of Tito and Khrushchev, the efforts and aspirations towards the breakup of Yugoslavia started to subside, primarily in the hope that Yugoslavia would gradually and evolutively return to its *camp*. The mentioned Soviet expectations were given a heavy blow by the deposition of the conservative Yugoslav Vice-President Aleksandar Ranković on Brioni in 1966. Since then, the Soviet (Russian) policy towards Yugoslavia was led by the desire to break up Yugoslavia as soon as possible, so that the Soviets could take the greater, eastern part of the country, while Slovenia and Croatia would turn to the West.¹⁷⁴ It is up to historians to carry out research on the true extent of Russia’s influence on the events taking place in the 1980s, when the destruction of Yugoslavia was operationalized. The aim of the analyzed Russian propaganda activities, which unambiguously coincide with Milošević’s wartime propaganda, and which abuse and forge contemporary history in a very rude manner, is to instigate conflicts and intolerance in the region, as well as further nationalistic homogenization of Serbs. Binding Serbia to its nationalist past that has never been lived through in the interpretations of its 20th

172 <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/intervju/20151222/1101986080/Nedic-decenijaska-kontroverza-srpske-istorije.html>.

173 Dragan Bogetić, „Drugi jugoslovensko-sovjetski sukob 1958. i koncept aktivne miroljubive koegzistencije“, *Istorija 20. veka*, no. 2, Belgrade, 2004; Milivoj Bešlin, „Odnosi Jugoslavije i Sovjetskog Saveza 1968: između nužnosti saradnje i principa slobode“, *Istraživanja Filozofskog fakulteta* no. 22, Novi Sad, 2011, pp. 351–368.

174 Milivoj Bešlin, *Pokušaj modernizacije u Srbiji 1968–1972. Između „revolucionarnog kursa“ i reformskih težnji*, Novi Sad, 2014. (PhD dissertation manuscript)

century history, is aimed at justifying aggressive wars in the 20th century and creating a “new“ Serb identity, which should be even more anti-Western, Russophilic and antagonistic vis-à-vis its neighbours and the entire region. The West – Russia dichotomy in Serbia, like in Europe, has not been artificially caused, nor does it primarily concern geopolitical interests. It is a question of the different ways of understanding the rule of law, plural society, autonomy of institutions, individualism, human rights, media freedom, critical thought and the like. In a word, it is the question of society wishing to develop itself. The interpretative framework of (pro-)Russian propaganda in Serbia aims, above all else, at transplanting the form of autocracy and supremacy of state over society and individuals, that is, the essential characteristics of the Russian system, into Serbia.

The mentioned historical interpretations of Russian propaganda in Serbia would keep Serbia in the state of a *frozen conflict* with the entire region, giving hope to Serbian nationalism for historical revenge for its defeat in the wars of the 1990s. Russia’s open pressures on Montenegro, media spinning and insults on account of the Montenegrin leadership, in addition to brutally open support to Milorad Dodik’s separatist regime towards the further destabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina, testify in favour of the fact that Russia could use its loyal nationalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro to create the Balkan “Abkhazias“ or „South Ossetias“ (the breakaway Georgian regions), just as it used pro-Russian rebels in Ukraine to form the so-called Novorossia from the breakaway territories. With the mentioned political propaganda, the Kremlin regime is preparing the platform for a new conflict in the Balkans, and historical experience has shown that an armed conflict in south-eastern Europe is Russia’s proven method to assert itself as a regional power without any risk. The opening of new conflicts in the Balkans, attempts to create *frozen conflicts* or the prevention of settling the existing ones (Kosovo) would provide the scope for Russia’s long-term influence and destabilization and blackmailing of Europe. There is no doubt that the mentioned aims are also the way to enable Moscow to distance itself from the further consequences of its aggression against Ukraine and additionally decompose the fragile European Union. Even if the Russian imperial aims can be expected, the question that remains for further analyses is – what motivates the considerable parts of the Serbian intellectual, political, ecclesiastical and media elites to push their society to the front line of the still ongoing

Cold War between Western democracies and Russian autocracy?! The issue of their motives, from ideological to financial, should become the topic of independent research whose results will certainly be interesting. Viewed in that context, the propagandistic historical interpretations of the 20th century in Russian and pro-Russian media in Serbia have fulfilled a significant part of their assignment, if not a complete formation of a new, *homogeneous* Serbian identity. Namely, it is an unquestionable fact that any attempt to interpret Yugoslavia on a rational and documentary basis is relativized and *a priori* disputed as being biased against Serbs.

Sonja Biserko, Seška Stanojlović

RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER EXPANDS

Serbia's political elite has always relied on Russia, and in the 1990s looked forward to its support to the wars it waged. However, Russia's assistance to Serbia turned trite after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Milošević's backing of the coup to depose Mikhail Gorbachev. Until Boris Yeltsin's withdrawal Russia had usually stood by the Contact Group's policies. The situation changed once Vladimir Putin came to power taking a different attitude towards the West. His new strategy for Russia's resuming its big-power role implied its growing presence in the Balkans. At the Munich Conference in 2007 he hinted on his strategy mostly based Russia's energy power, which was crucial to Balkan states dependent on Russia's energy supplies.

Against the background of changed international relations and its growing ambitions to become an influential actor of the international arena, Russia started developing the instruments of public diplomacy to strengthen its soft power. However, the effects were marginal since it relied on old Soviet mechanisms that were in discord with modern times of informatics.

In 2005 Russia launched a number of project addressing global public, including campaigning for Winter Olympics in 2014 and founding of the Russia Today broadcasting news in English. Putin also established the Russian Peace Fund to promote Russia's culture and language by the model of the British Council, Goethe Institute and the like.¹⁷⁵

In 2008 Dimitri Medvedev founded the Federal Agency of the Union of Independent States. The Voice of Russia, the world's oldest radio station, replaced its management in 2010 with a view of modernization. In 2010 Medvedev also founded the "Gorchakov" Fund for the Support to Public Diplomacy and the Russian Council for International Relations. Russia then adopted

175 http://ruskarec.ru/opinion/2015/10/04/chvrst-stav-o-mekoj-sili-rusije_479425.

a new concept of international with the annual budget for international assistance amounting to 500 million USD.¹⁷⁶

Annexation of Crimea and escalation of the Ukrainian conflict in 2014 tensed the relations between Russia and the Western hemisphere (including sanctions against Russia), which created the context wherein (dis)information were major tools. In 2014–15, aware of its mass media power, Russia is prioritizing “alternative media” and “alternative interpretations of events.”

By demonstrating its latest version of “hard power” in Syria (after Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2013) – which marked its disturbing comeback – Russia also proved its understanding of the importance of “soft power” as an efficient mechanism of global influence. Here it made the biggest progress the media sphere confronting the globalization of the CNN model the West has been using to spread its influence.

Less than 24 hours after the onset of air raids in Syria, a Russian media outlet launched a web portal in five languages (Russian, English, French, German and Ukrainian) publicizing the news about the operation. Russia’s Defense Ministry is doing the same at its website, including daily releases by military officials. All this is meant to contend reports by the Western media and officials suspicious about Russia’s plans for the Middle East.

Though the effects of Russia’s media strategy are still limited, the information available at its portals and published by other media houses are growingly quoted. Unlike in the Soviet era, Russia’s strategy banks on professional reporters whose propaganda power rests on relevant news that are, however, so interpreted as to “protect national interests.”

Obviously, Russia’s focus on the soft power is as modern as that of the West. And no doubt that, despite all initial limitations, Russia will be occupying this sphere more and more, especially in the Balkans.

Director General of the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISI) Leonid Reshetnikov says, “It is for sure that the Serbian regime is under the US control.” Today’s Russia hardly supports its allies in Balkan countries, he stresses, adding that his country should establish a steady dialogue with students, scientists, politicians, businessmen and artists in these countries.¹⁷⁷

176 Ibid.

177 <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Politika/563342/Putinov-analiticar-Vlast-u-Srbiji-je-pod-kontrolom-Amerike>

THE EFFECTS OF RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER IN SERBIA AND THE BALKANS

As a major strategic point of Kremlin's policy for Europe, Serbia seems to be a most welcome experimental station of Russia's growing power, the more so since Russia has already positioned itself in it. Political relations between the two countries are very good – especially between the two presidents, Putin and Nikolić – testified, inter alia, by Belgrade's refusal to follow EU's policy for Ukraine (Serbia being the only candidate for EU accession not imposing sanctions on Russia); economic relations are also high on the agenda – Serbia depends on Russia's energy supplies, its oil industry is in Russian ownership, Russia is involved in infrastructural projects such as modernization of railroads, etc.¹⁷⁸

Besides, there are pro-Russian sentiments of the majority of Serbia's citizens – that are probably most important from the standpoint of the soft power doctrine. Although oriented towards EU, formally and existentially, Serbia still vacillates about its geostrategic choice.¹⁷⁹ Because of the influential pro-Russian, conservative bloc – from the Serb Orthodox Church, through many non-parliamentary parties such as DSS, Third Serbia, Serb People's Party, etc., to most scientific, cultural and journalistic circles – many analysts speak of “Russianization of the Serb nation.”¹⁸⁰

As for Russian analysts, they argue that Serbia-Russian cooperation rests on “the once paradigm” that can hardly cope with modern challenges. This paradigm is marked by “traditional discourse” its elements being Eastern Orthodoxy, Byzantium heritage, Slavism and mutual assistance throughout history.¹⁸¹

However, Russian analysts and observers of the Balkans usually argue that “the Balkans can neither be viewed out of geopolitical context nor the

178 In 2013 Serbia and Russia signed a strategic agreement on economic and political cooperation, and coordination of mutual relations.

179 „Divided between Europe where it belongs geographically and civilizationally, and Russia it sees emotionally as an older brother and protector, Serbia looks like Buridan's ass that would starve to death between two equally alluring bundles of hay,“ Blic, May 24, 2015.

180 Danas, April 17, 2015.

181 Geopolitika, Septembar 2015.

final resolution of the Balkan question can be prognosticated until the ultimate change of the entire political map of the world.”¹⁸² According to Jelena Guskova, the solution of the Balkan question depends on Russia to a large extent. Russia has been passive till 2007 but is now most actively involved in the Balkan question, in the matter of Kosovo to put it precisely, she says.¹⁸³

The West has a clear-cut objective – “it is after changing the vector of Republika Srpska and its ties with Serbia and Russia, and making it fully dependent on the West,” says an official analyst, adding that the use of the term “genocide” is meant to establish a legal foundation for interventions in other strategically important areas in the world.¹⁸⁴

Montenegro is also in the focus of Russian propaganda considering its probable membership of NATO by the end of 2016. This could easily chill bilateral relations, say Russian commentators. They also expect Montenegro’s stronger anti-Russian rhetoric. In the matter of foreign policy Russia should not address Podgorica but the North Atlantic Alliance in Brussels, they argue.¹⁸⁵ Here one should also take into consideration Russia’s media offensive in Montenegro and the Russian Orthodox Church’s influence on the Serb Orthodox Church in Montenegro and Serbia alike.

Dušan Reljić of the German Institute of International Policy and Security in Brussels takes that Moscow would not stand in the way of anyone’s membership of EU but would be trying by all means to prevent Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro from joining NATO.¹⁸⁶

RUSSIA’S MEDIA OFFENSIVE

Speaking of soft power in general, Russia made a U-turn in 2014 by placing the media at its priority list. Three of its traditional media houses – Russia Today, RIA News Agency and Voice of Russia – were placed under the same

182 Ibid.

183 Ibid.

184 Geopolitika, August 2015.

185 Darja Basova is an analyst for the Moscow State University of International Relations.

186 <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Politika/512353/Reljic-Nema-opasnosti-od-pojacanog-uticaja-Moskve-na-Balkan>

umbrella, the Russia Today /RT/conglomerate.¹⁸⁷ The audience addressed in English, Spanish and Arab totals one billion people. Some domestic reporters take that such concentration of experienced professionals is most effective.¹⁸⁸

In Serbia Russia's media giant is known as Sputnik. Apart from a web portal, this RT branch has been broadcasting regularly 30-minute radio programs three times a day since the late 2014. For the time being Sputnik's newscasts under the slogan "We speak about things others are hushing up" are aired by Belgrade's RTV Studio B and several local radio stations. The plan about a TV program has not been realized yet.

According to Russian sources Russia has been trying in vain for almost ten year to buy at least one of Serbia's TV stations.¹⁸⁹ It is still trying in the ongoing process of media privatization in line with the latest media legislation. Though Russian investors wanted to buy the once emblematic TV B92 the station was sold to a Greek investor together with the TV Prva. Some sources say that three Russian companies had been interested in buying the popular Belgrade's Studio B which was, nevertheless, sold to a domestic buyer. The Serb authorities have been preventing Russian companies from positioning themselves at Serbia's media arena, argues Nikita Bondarov of the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies.¹⁹⁰

On the other hand, Russia's "mindset" is entrenched in a number of Serbia's media outlets. This especially refers to tabloids but also to high-circulation dailies such as *Vecernje Novosti* and *Politika*.¹⁹¹ The *Pecat* weekly and

187 The attempt to establish the conglomerate under its original Russian name at global scene failed; this is why it is known by its name in English, Russia Today.

188 "In my view, Russia Today is a by far better version of CNN. Its reporters are more handsome and more convincing than their CNN colleagues, and the issues they address more interesting and to the point. For, Russia minds no expense for their work," says columnist Ruža Ćirković, *Danas*, September 28, 2015.

189 *Nedeljnik*, Septembar 2015.

190 *Ibid.* sto. „The fact is that the opposition to Russian presence comes from the high-level despite the great number of Russophiles in Serbia," argues Bondarov.

191 Some speculate that Russian capital was invested in the shares of Serbia's oldest daily, *Politika*, a company registered in Moscow bought several years ago (although

the Geopolitika magazine are the most prominent mouthpieces of Russia's stances and opponents of Serbia's movement towards EU.

Speaking of successful media projects in Serbia Russian commentators refer to the web portal "Russia beyond the Headlines" in addition to Sputnik. The portal (attracting the attention of over one-quarter of million visitors) also publicizes special supplements to Geopolitika and Nedeljnik (which has been engaging Russian authors to address some topics as of recently).

OTHER FORMS OF ACTIVISM

Serbia's pro-European orientation has never been questioned officially since 2000. In the first transition years the great majority of citizens have also supported this orientation. However, over the past years citizens' preference of the EU has been on the downward curve: according to the latest public opinion poll conducted by the governmental Office of European Integration it spiraled to some 40 percent.

Indicatively, this downward curve coincides with the period (since 2012) in which not a single Euro-skeptic or anti-European party to advocate a change in the country's strategic orientation and its closer ties with Russia is represented in the parliament. On the other hand, findings of the latest survey conducted by the Serb New Political Thought show that as many as 61 percent of citizens favor alliance with Moscow.¹⁹²

Though without parliamentary representation, such disposition of the majority of Serbia's citizens dominates the public discourse. Affinity for Moscow – the same as the affinity for EU – oscillates but rockets whenever Russia and President Putin present themselves at the international arena as "protectors" of Serbia and its alleged national interests. This happened when Russia vetoed the resolution marking the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide in the UNSC in July 2015.

Russia's presence in Serbia's public and cultural life is most visible in the attendance of Russian intellectuals at various conferences (mostly addressing geostrategic and historical topics).

at the time of the transaction the word had it that the buyer was domestic businessman Miodrag Bogičević).

192 Politika, August 1, 2015.

Russian analysts of Serbia-Russia relationship remind that, unlike the practice of the Western countries, Russia's soft power is not "framed" by non-governmental organizations. Whether and to what extent some right-wing organizations are being financed by Russia is not so transparent that one could draw definite conclusions. In fact, apart from Sputnik, only the "Balkan Express" media center has been active over the past year: it takes the pride in having organized the premiere of the "Sunstroke" movie attended by Belgrade's frequent guest, director Nikita Mikhalkov, assisted in the transport of "The Blessed Flame" to Belgrade and initiated the visit by Jevgeniy Primakov.

Russian analysts also speak of a paradox: though the absolute majority of citizens, they say, have sympathies for Russia, Russia still "has not a single non-governmental organization to operate steadily and with a plan in Serbia." Since there is probably no need for such an organization, concludes the same author, "our crucial soft power at this point is in the undisputed authority of President Putin among citizens."

A number of political parties and movements are "on Russia's side." Serb Radical Party tops this lengthy list to be followed by Democratic Party of Serbia, Dveri, Statehood Movement, Serb People's Party, Nasi, Third Serbia, etc. The indications that most of them are being funded by Moscow are well-founded.¹⁹³ However, one cannot tell this for sure since the possible financial assistance is non-transparent.

Their closeness to Russia and its stance is more than obvious. For instance, during his visit to Moscow Boško Obradović, the leader of the Serb Movement "Dveri," said, "Serbia is Russia's border to the West."¹⁹⁴

193 Predsident of Democratic Party of Serbia Sanda Rašković Ivić je, most probably bearing in mind this perception, claimed upon her return from Moscow that she got „not a single Euro or ruble for her party.“ *Politika*, August 1, 2015.

194 *Večernje novosti*, October 2, 2015.

HUMANITARIAN CENTER IN NIŠ

The information about the Russian humanitarian center – established in Niš years ago – is scarce. At the time it was founded some speculated that it was the embryo of Russia’s intelligence base to counteract the American Bondstil base in Kosovo.¹⁹⁵

Domestic officials claim that the Regional Humanitarian Center is just humanitarian in character and undermines in no way other mechanisms of assistance in natural and other disasters.¹⁹⁶ The Center was most efficient in helping and saving citizens in the 2014 floods affecting Obrenovac.

In the summer of 2015 yet another “humanitarian” arrived to Serbia: Yevgeny Primakov, the grandson and namesake of the former Russian premier, opened a branch of his Russian Humanitarian Mission /RHM/ in Belgrade. He was received (and blessed) by Serb Patriarch Irinej. “With the blessing from two patriarchs – of the Serb and the Russian churches – RHM will be helping the threatened citizens in South Serbia,” he said on the occasion.¹⁹⁷

In the lengthy interview with Serbia’s highest-circulation daily, Primakov said that RHM project was among the latest blessed by his grandfather who, he explained, “fully understood the significance of soft power, especially for a country such as Russia.” “This was exactly what granddad saw as RHM role...He used to recommend regions where to start with the mission. He said, ‘It is most important to operate in the Balkans, it is most important to work in Serbia.’”¹⁹⁸

RHM’s actual work in Serbia is still an unknown.¹⁹⁹ So far the organization has just once assisted the refugees from the Middle East in Preševo.

195 According to the Washington Center for Strategic and International Studies, Moscow was after establishing its base there.

196 For instance, this includes the European Mechanism of Civilian Protection Serbia is supposed to join in the process of its accession to EU. .

197 Politika, July 29, 2015.

198 Ibid.

199 Danas, July 31, 2015

THE "EQUIDISTANCE" POLICY

Serbia's leadership has reached a consensus on the "equidistance" policy for Brussels and Moscow – implying the movement towards EU on the one hand, and good relations with Kremlin on the other. The President, the Premier and the Foreign Minister have been referring to it in the same way in all their public addresses.

However, in 2014 all of a sudden creaks appeared in Kremlin's attitude towards Serbia's leadership. Evidently, President Nikolić's keeps in touch with Russian President Putin by far more intensively than "Serbia's No. 1," Premier Vučić. The Russian media – under Putin's control – have been most critical about Vučić, actually critical without precedent so far. Though formally prompted by Moscow's grudge against the Serbian Premier's cooperation with Tony Blair, the British former prime minister, many thought that the real motive for this criticism in the media was Vučić's steady communication with the US, especially Vice-President Joseph Biden.²⁰⁰

According to some papers quoting diplomatic sources, Biden told Vučić, during the latter visit to the States, that he was aware of "he has been getting on Russians' nerves very much."²⁰¹

There is no telling whether or not this is true. Also, one cannot say for sure, who it is Russian commentators have in mind when claiming that "Russian presence in Serbia is being opposed from a very high level."²⁰²

Back in April Russia's Premier Dmitry Medvedev invited officially Serbia's Premier to Moscow. Journalists enquiring the Premier's Office about the visit's timing were told it "was not scheduled for this year."²⁰³ Things changed in August 2015: the Office released that the Premier would pay an official visit to Moscow in October.

The EU criteria for candidate-countries are growingly perceived in Serbia as blackmailing and sealing the Balkans off. This is why many take that

200 „Moscow dreads that Belgrade is taking a U-turn to the West, and what motivated this assault in the media were agreements reached the Premier and the US Vice-President on American gas supplies to Serbia.“ Blic, February 23, 2015.

201 Danas, September 19–20, 2015.

202 Nedeljnik, September 2015.

203 Danas, June 15, 2015.

Russia, no matter how far away it is and without a well-planned concept of alliance, is much closer to Serbia than EU.²⁰⁴

CONCLUSION

Russia's soft power has not yet reached the level wherefrom it could dominate Western mechanisms with long tradition. Besides, Russia has not yet clearly defined its foreign policy, acting mostly by impulse from the outside rather than by its own initiatives. It is mostly focused on gaining prestige in East-West maneuvering.

One should expect Russia's soft power to grow stronger and stronger, and much better planned. In the absence of the West's presence it might found a bigger echo among citizens of Serbia.

The incumbent regime's inability to pursue with necessary reforms will be more and more playing into the hands of Russia. Serb Progressive Party / SNS/ will most probably split along this line.

European values should be promoted more and with more imagination the more so since they protect interests of each and every individual. The issue here is not about the side Serbia might take but about the necessity of political and other reforms ensuring a stable and prosperous society.

204 Pečat, December 21, 2014.

III

SERBIA, EU, EAST

DR BORIS VARGA

BELGRADE AND KIEV BETWEEN BRUSSELS AND MOSCOW

ABSTRACT: Using a comparative analysis of media and interviews, the author investigates the geopolitical position of Belgrade and Kiev in Europe, whereby the relations between the EU and Russia under conditions of Ukrainian crisis have fallen almost to the Cold War level. The research is focused on Serbia and its foreign policy, and the paper is divided into five chapters: (1) The Ukrainian Crisis and Russia, (2) The Ukrainian Crisis and Serbia, (3) Serbia Between the European Union and the Eurasian Union, (4) Conclusions and (5) Recommendations.

The research is concerned with the course of events in Europe after the Ukrainian crisis, leading to the division into two political and economic blocs – the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union – and their influence on the region of countries in transition, including Serbia and Ukraine. The author concludes that Belgrade and Kiev must be more resolute in implementing their reforms and integrating into Euro-Atlantic structures if they do not wish to remain isolated or left to the influence of the growing power of the authoritarian states like Russia and China. This can also happen if Brussels ends its EU integration programmes for transition countries.

KEYWORDS: EU, Serbia, Ukraine, Russia, international relations, Ukrainian crisis, Syrian crisis.

Over the past years, Europe has become an “unsafe home“. The possible exit of the United Kingdom from the EU, Greece’s debt, migrant crisis and, in particular, the effects of the terrorist attack in Paris have been shaking the old continent. In the close proximity to the EU there are two ongoing destructive wars – in Ukraine and Syria, and the West and Russia are involved (either directly or indirectly) in both conflicts. Under such volatile political circumstances, the relations between the United States and EU, on one side, and Russia, on the other, are undergoing dramatic shifts – from hostility, like in the Cold War, to search from an allied platform for the destruction of the Islamic State in the Near East.

Serbia has found itself weak and unprepared to deal with such a complex geopolitical situation. Official Belgrade is trying to pursue the policy of “both the EU and Russia“. Some will say that its balancing act between the two confronted blocs is pragmatic policy. According to others, however, Serbia’s non-commitment will lead to isolationism over the medium term. However, it is becoming increasingly evident that in real fact Belgrade has no specified and though-out long-term foreign policy taking into account the new situation in Europe. Instead, due to its economic situation Serbia is trying to balance between the two sides on an ad hoc basis, and benefit from both of them. What are the effects of such a policy and can it be pursued over a longer period of time?

What are the EU-Russia relations on the old continent and is Europe threatened by the erection of a new long-standing iron curtain? What is the position of Serbia and Ukraine in a divided and unstable Europe? These are the questions to which this research will try to answer.

I THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS AND RUSSIA

After the Maidan Revolution²⁰⁵, Ukraine completely oriented its foreign policy towards the EU. Russia annexed Crimea and started a “hybrid war“ in Donbas. The West stood up for the territorial integrity of Ukraine. However,

205 In this paper we will call the protests and violent conflicts at Independence Square, that is, Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kiev, in Ukraine, which lasted from 21 November 2013 to 22 February 2014, “Maidan”, “Euromaidan” or “Revolution of Dignity” (Ukr. *Революція гідності*) as they are called by the world’s and Ukrainian media (Ukr. *Революція гідності*).

the Syrian crisis is threatening to divert the attention of the international public from the Ukrainian crisis, thus threatening to leave Ukraine to fall under greater influence from Putin's Russia. The peace agreement, commonly referred to as "Minsk-2", failed to "freeze" the conflict in Ukraine, which is not currently in the focus of the West's or Russia's interest.

War and a "Market War"

According to the United Nations data, from the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine – from mid-April 2014 to November 2015 – more than nine thousand soldiers and civilians (on both sides) lost their lives. After the signing of the so-called "Minsk-2" peace agreement, during the ceasefire until mid-November, 211 civilians were killed, which means that the conflict is still going on.²⁰⁶ In fact, the conflict has not stopped and the sides blame each other for the occasional opening of fire and ceasefire violations. The conflict in Donbas is far from being "frozen", like the one in Pridnestrovie in Moldova or Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan.

In 2015, according to various data²⁰⁷, due to armed conflicts, turmoils and the threat of humanitarian crisis, about one million civilians were internally displaced in the territory of Ukraine (from Crimea and Donbas)²⁰⁸, while another 600,000 refugees fled from the country and went mainly to Russia.

Since the very beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, the United Nations have proved unable to settle it. It is a question of the status quo position of the countries with veto power in the UN Security Council – the United States

206 http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/politics/2015/09/150908_un_donbas_report_she (accessed on 10 December 2015); http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news_in_brief/2015/12/151209_hk_un_donbas_victims (accessed on 10 December 2015).

207 According to the United Nations data, about 1.3 million civilians were displaced until the end of May 2015, while according to the Ukrainian Government's data more than one million civilians were displaced until the end of November. The calculation problem stems from the registration of displaced persons, as well as the continuous movement of civilians due to the changeable situation in the Donbas region.

208 <http://unhcr.org.ua/en/2011-08-26-06-58-56/news-archive/2-uncategorised/1293-vnutrishno-peremishcheni-osobi> (accessed on 10 December 2015); <http://www.mns.gov.ua/news/34232.html> (accessed on 20 December 2015)

and EU countries, on one side, and Russia, on the other. In this crisis the OSCE proved to be the only international organization that can mediate in peace talks with the support of the so-called “Normandy Four“, and monitor the implementation of the peace agreement, especially the withdrawal of heavy artillery from the demarcation line. It is hoped that the OSCE will play a very significant role in the monitoring and procedural control of elections – which is one of the requirements of the peace negotiations – in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) and Lugansk People’s Republic (LPR)²⁰⁹, where neither Kiev nor rebels trust each other that voting will be “fair and honest“.

The “Normandy format“ Ukraine peace negotiations include the European actors – Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia, and were initiated in Normandy in June 2014, at the time of marking the 70th anniversary of opening the second front in World War II. In September 2014, the representatives of Ukraine, Russia and the so-called DPR and LPR, with the OSCE acting as mediator, signed the 12-point Minsk peace agreement, or figuratively called “Minsk-1“. In late 2014 and early 2015, after the renewal of an armed conflict, the new peace agreement, “Minsk-2“, was signed with the support of the “Normandy Four“ in early February²¹⁰ (Varga 2015: 159–161).

Amid the annexation of Crimea and the fiercest conflicts in its eastern part, Ukraine concluded the crucial agreements for its EU integration. The political part of the Association Agreement with the EU was signed in late March 2014 and its economic part in June the same year. In April 2015, at the Ukraine-EU summit in Kiev it was decided that the Agreement on a Free Trade Area between the EU and Ukraine would come into force on 1 January 2016. Such an European integration agenda could follow the escalation of violence in the Donbas region.

In mid-December 2015, the European Commission concluded that Kiev met all visa liberalization requirements. It is up to the heads of the EU countries to decide when the visa-free regime for Ukraine would come into force.

209 In further text the abbreviations DPR and LPR will be used.

210 The crisis escalated to such a degree that before the peace-related meeting German Chancellor Angela Merkel went to the Kremlin for the first time after the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine; the Ukrainian, Russian and French Presidents, as well as the German Chancellor spent about 16 hours harmonizing the declaration among themselves.

Like in the case of the Western Balkans, all this would most likely give an additional impulse to Euro-enthusiasm, especially among ordinary Ukrainian citizens, students and business and cultural elites.²¹¹

At the same time, the West and Russia began the so-called war of sanctions. The West imposed sanctions against Russia immediately after the annexation of Crimea. From March 2014 until the end of September 2015 three stages of wide-range sanctions were implemented, affecting specifically Russia's financial and energy sectors. The requirement for their removal is Russia's full observance of the Minsk peace agreement.²¹² Over time, the issue of Crimea annexation has been pushed into the background, which is interpreted as a kind of tacit approval or, more exactly, "coming to terms" with this fact even in the West.

However, the sanctions and fall in oil prices especially affected Russia due to a decline in the value of the ruble by about half and the country's plunging into a deep recession. The effects of this "market war" were also felt throughout the Eurasian Union (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia), which began operating as a single market area in early 2015. During 2014, the Kyrgyzstani som lost more than 17 per cent of its value, so that the National Bank of Kyrgyzstan spent more than 460 million dollars on its rescue. The Central Bank of Kazakhstan also spent significant amounts of money to protect its currency, the tenge, after it lost almost 20 per cent of its value. Belarus introduced a 30 per cent fee on the purchase of all foreign currencies in order to halt the demand for dollars, while President Alexander Lukashenko replaced the head of the Central Bank of Belarus (Varga 2015: 125–130).

The specificity of Ukraine's "post-Maidan" transition is the appointment of foreign citizens to the top positions in the executive branch of power.²¹³ It is a question of the key sectors such as finance, economy, health and police. These foreign citizens have come from the United States, Georgia, Lithuania as well as Russia. There is no doubt that Georgia's former President Mikhail

211 <http://www.euointegration.com.ua/news/2015/12/18/7042459/> (accessed on 20 December 2015).

212 http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news_in_brief/2015/10/151022_dk_eurocommission_russian_banks (accessed on 10 December 2015).

213 http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/politics/2014/12/141202_new_ministers_government_profile_vc (accessed on 10 December 2015).

Saakashvili attracts the greatest attention. He has been appointed Governor of the Odessa Region. His Deputy is Russian opposition activist Maria Gaidar, the daughter of the late Russian politician and economist Yegor Gaidar.²¹⁴ Whereas some consider the involvement of foreign persons from the post-socialist republics in Ukrainian politics as the populist move of the President Poroshenko's Government, others hold that Ukraine has become a new centre of the post-Soviet transition and model which, should it prove successful, can also be applied to other post-socialist republics.²¹⁵

A Shift to the West

Apart from its territorial destabilization, Ukraine's financial and economic stability is also highly sensitive. At the beginning of 2015, Ukraine's foreign debt amounted to 126 billion dollars, or nearly 110 per cent of the country's gross domestic product. Over the past years, such a financial situation has threatened to push Ukraine into default, that is, bankruptcy. In August 2015, foreign creditors decided to restructure and write off a part of Ukraine's foreign debt, so that the final settlement date was postponed until 2027. Otherwise, it is practiced that a part of debt is written off only after the declaration of default, thus formalizing the country's inability of paying off outstanding debt.²¹⁶

Shifts have been made not only in the West-Russia relations. Moscow has also made several moves which, at least for a short time, have relaxed international tensions over Kiev. First, a more favourable market gas price for Ukraine has been formed through the mediation of Brussels. This has previously been a political issue. Russia has also decided to postpone the collection of Ukraine's debt arising from the credit worth three billion dollars. However, this credit and the method of its repayment later became the object of a dispute between Moscow and Kiev whose settlement is expected

214 http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news_in_brief/2015/07/150716_she_saakashvili_advisor (accessed on 10 December 2015).

215 <http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/povelja%20dec%2015.pdf> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

216 <http://www.bank.gov.ua/doccatalog/document?id=71174> (accessed on 10 December 2015);

<http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/povelja%20dec%2015.pdf> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

in court.²¹⁷ In December 2013, the former Azarov Government and President Yanukovich obtained credit from Russia in exchange for “giving up” the signing of the EU Association Agreement. The total amount of credit had to be 15 billion dollars.

However, in its “market war” with the EU, Russia still treats Ukraine as an “enemy”. As of 1 January 2016, Moscow imposed a market embargo against Kiev because it was the date when the Free Trade Agreement signed by Ukraine with Brussels had to come into force. In September 2015, President Petro Poroshenko signed the decree on symmetric sanctions against Russia. Kiev is actively preparing itself to switch to the Western market and, according to Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, from 2013 to 2015 Kiev succeeded in reducing the volume of its trade with Russia almost thrice, from 35 to 12.5 per cent.²¹⁸

As a response to the annexation of Crimea, civic activists, mostly Crimean Tatars, launched a market and energy blockade of the peninsula. In September 2015, roads were blocked, so that the delivery of goods was halted. In late September, energy supplies to Crimea were disrupted for two weeks, which especially irritated Moscow.²¹⁹

The social picture of Ukraine is worse than in other post-socialist countries in transition which remained outside the EU. Like the Russian ruble, the Ukrainian hryvnia lost half of its value. According to the data of the State Statistical Office, from the outbreak of the conflict until April 2015, inflation rose to almost 46 per cent. Unemployment in Ukraine has reached the highest level since the declaration of the country’s independence. The official statistics show that the unemployment rate is about 9 per cent (of the active population). However, independent sources point out that the rate is twice as high – up to 18 per cent. Unemployment hits especially young people – more

217 http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news_in_brief/2015/02/150204_vs_gazprom_gas_price (accessed on 10 December 2015), http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news_in_brief/2015/11/151116_rl_putin_debt (accessed on 10 December 2015).

218 http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/business/2015/11/151118_russia_ukraine_embargo_vs (accessed on 10 December 2015).

219 http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/politics/2015/11/151123_crimea_electricity_vc (accessed on 20 December 2015).

than 23 per cent are jobless.²²⁰ The reforms carried out by the Kiev Government are “very slow“, while one of the greatest transitional challenges is posed by corruption.

During his visit to Kiev, US Vice-President Joseph Biden said that Washington was greatly supporting the Ukrainians and expressed a restrained satisfaction at the country’s economic stabilization after its precipitous decline in 2014. He also said that the main enemy of the Ukrainian state and its democracy was corruption and that the fight against it was a prerequisite for further US support.²²¹

Tycoons, Volunteers and Conflicts

The annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donbas region have significantly influenced a influence in Ukraine’s political arena. The early parliamentary elections in October 2014 considerably strengthened the pro-European and nationalist political parties led by President Petro Poroshenko and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk. A wide and rather heterogeneous coalition was formed with Yatsenyuk’s People’s Front and the Petro Poroshenko Bloc at its head. It also included the Self-Reliance Party, which is actually led by the incumbent mayor of Lviv Andriy Sadovyi, Yulia Tymoshenko’s party Batkivshchyna (Fatherland) and the Radical Party led by the controversial Oleh Lyashko. The once ruling Party of Regions led by Viktor Yanukovich was split into several, mostly less influential political parties (Varga 2015: 161–162).

The Ukrainian local elections that took place in October 2015 formalized the new lines of political division and confrontations within the “revolutionary“ post-Maidan bloc. Political scandals, like fighting in the Ukrainian parliament in December 2015, raise the question whether the ruling coalition, like in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution was split between the two major political forces, whose centres are at the top of the executive branch

220 <http://ua-ekonomist.com/9464-grivnya-vzhe-vtrtila-polovinu-svoyeyi-vartost.html> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/press_review/2015/11/151102_ukr_press_she (accessed on 10 December 2015).

221 http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/politics/2015/12/151208_biden_post_factum_sx (accessed on 10 December 2015).

of government – between President Petro Poroshenko and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyk. Let us recall that the pro-European coalition also split after the Orange Revolution in 2005, while oligarchic business interests rallied behind the political actors – Yulia Tymoshenko, on one side, and Viktor Yushchenko, on the other. In 2010, the conflicts between “orangists” brought Yanukovich back to power.

Apart from political differences, there are evidently differences between the two most influential oligarchs in post-Maidan Ukraine – Petro Poroshenko and Igor Kolomoisky. The controversial businessman and former governor of the Dnepropetrovsk region, Igor Kolomoisky, is largely credited for preventing the escalation of the war in Lugansk and Donetsk to the neighbouring regions in eastern Ukraine. During 2014, Kolomoisky supported local volunteer forces, which rapidly thwarted the rebellions of the local population and its arming by pro-Russian rebels and Russia itself. At the same time, however, this Ukrainian tycoon used all privileges of exploiting state-owned energy companies for the needs of his enterprises and the enterprises of his partners.

In March 2015, the state took over control of Ukraine’s largest oil and gas company Ukrnafta, which was run by shareholders from Kolomoisky’s business circles. This provoked tension between him and the executive branch of power after which President Poroshenko signed the decree on Kolomoisky’s dismissal from his position as governor.²²² Changes in Ukrnafta and other energy companies were accompanied by loud scandals involving armed men connected to Kolomoisky. This only points to the fact that in the new post-Maidan political circumstances, Ukrainian tycoons are trying to position themselves, or retain their hitherto status. Therefore, it will not be easy to deoligarchize Ukrainian politics, that is, to break the link between the state and tycoons, especially if the latter are “armed”.

In late October 2015, Gennady Korban, a controversial businessman and Kolomoisky’s close ally and former deputy when the latter held the position of governor, was arrested. The Ukrainian State Security Service detained Korban on suspicion of involvement in organized crime.²²³ According to the

222 http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/politics/2015/03/150325_kolomoisky_poroshenko_resignation_ak (assessed on 10 December 2015).

223 <http://www.dw.com/uk/%D1%81%D0%B1%D1%83-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B1%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BB%D>

Ukrainian Association of Patriots (UKROP), the party founded by Korban and Kolomoisky, the arrest was arranged by the political forces of Ukrainian President Poroshenko.

The “private armies“ controlled by Ukrainian tycoons pose a potential danger not only because of the further strengthening of the oligarchic influence on Ukraine’s politics. Namely, under certain circumstances, the heterogeneous “army“ of Ukrainian defenders may also stand up against Kiev itself. The post-Soviet experience in the Caucasus has shown that during the 1990s paramilitary forces and military fractions were used to stage military coups in Georgia and Azerbaijan. In 2003, three years after the “Bulldozer Revolution“ in Serbia, the highest-ranking officers of the Special Operations Unit assassinated the first democratically elected Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić. The question that still remains is whether Kiev controls volunteer battalions linked to organized crime and can they have influence on the political and security situation in Ukraine?

After the parliamentary elections in October 2014, the war commanders of various volunteer units (Aidar, Azov, Donbas, Right Sector) entered parliament, so that in a way the Ukrainian political scene has become militarized. Although the Minsk peace agreement stipulates the dismantling of autonomous volunteer units, the Right Sector first did not quite agree to be integrated into regular Ukrainian forces. Such a situation created the danger of having uncontrolled armed groups which, like some members of the Aidar battalion, allegedly committed various criminal acts (Varga 2015: 148).

In July 2015, the political and paramilitary Ukrainian ultranationalist organization Right Sector staged a rally in the centre of Kiev, whereby it raised the question of confidence in the government. The Right Sector requested the cancellation of the Minsk peace agreement, declaration of a state of war in eastern Ukraine and legalization of volunteer battalions. In the summer of 2015, additional tension was caused by clashes between Right Sector members and Ukrainian security forces in the city of Mukachevo, in

0%B8-%D0%B2-%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%85-%D1%81
%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%86%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%8
6%D1%96%D1%97/a-18818500 (accessed on 10 December 2015).

the area bordering the EU, in which at least three persons were killed and a number of people were wounded.²²⁴

The implementation of the Minsk Peace Agreement has also divided the ruling coalition. Under the Agreement, the separatist regions of Donetsk and Lugansk have to be granted special status or, more exactly, autonomy. It also stipulates that these changes should be made as part of the broader process of Ukraine's decentralization, regulated by the Constitution. Voting on the constitutional changes in the Ukrainian parliament at the end of August 2015 triggered violent protests, mostly by right-wing organizations and, in particular, the Svoboda (Freedom) party. Clashes erupted outside the parliament at the time of voting. One grenade was thrown, more than one hundred security officers were injured and three of them were killed.²²⁵

The most sensitive issue due to which mass protests against Yanukovich erupted at Maidan square in late 2013 was Ukrainian democracy. According to democratization theory, it is almost impossible to introduce democracy into a country in which some more important actor makes considerable investments so as to resort to violence or foreign intervention with the aim of seceding from the country. In this case, such an actor in the territory of Ukraine is – Russia (Linc-Stepan 1998: 18–20). In other words, if Ukraine focuses its political and security capacities on the fight against separatism, there is a great risk of adverse effects on its democracy or, more precisely, the rule of law, civil liberties, freedom of speech and the like.

224 <http://www.dw.com/uk/%D1%83-%D0%BC%D1%83%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%BC%D1%83-%D0%B2%D1%96%D0%B4%D0%B1%D1%83%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%8C-%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%80-%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D1%96%D0%BB%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D1%94-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%B3%D0%B8%D0%B1%D0%BB%D1%96-%D1%96-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1-%96/a-18579156> (accessed on 10 December 2015)

225 <http://www.dw.com/uk/%D0%B7%D0%BC%D1%96%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%B4%D0%BE-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%82%D1%83%D1%86%D1%96%D1%97-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%83%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8F-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%82%D0%BB%D1%96-%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%85-%D1%81%D1%83%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%BE%D0%BA/a-18684340> (accessed on 10 December 2015); <http://www.radiosvoboda.org/content/news/27220382.html> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

The somewhat “accepted” annexation of Crimea amid the Syrian crisis, unstable peace in the eastern part of the country and hoping for internal divisions and conflicts in Ukraine, could represent Moscow’s geopolitical superiority in the conflict in this country. At the press conference held in mid-December 2015, Putin openly said that Russia was present in Donbas (“there are people dealing with military issues, among other things”),²²⁶ which can be understood as a symmetric response to the West, which is training and equipping the Ukrainian army. The politically and economically destabilized Ukraine with the population of about 40 million can pose a greater problem for the EU than for Russia.

There is no doubt that, in an attempt to “upgrade” the Eurasian Union, Putin’s Russia will not allow Ukraine to become a stable, prosperous and democratic country in the Western sphere of interest. At the same time, Moscow must “ritually” show to the post-Soviet states what can be expected if they refuse to cooperate with the Eurasian Union and try to “defect” to the other side. Accordingly, Ukraine faces the years of living insecurely and dangerously, with a very fragile democracy and absolutely uncertain perspective of EU integration.

226 http://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/politics/2015/12/151217_putin_presser_ukraine_sx (accessed on 20 December 2015).

II THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE AND SERBIA

Official Belgrade has an ambidextrous stance on the Ukrainian crisis. On one side, Serbia supports the territorial integrity of Ukraine or, in other words, does not recognize the annexation of Crimea because Kiev supports the preservation of Kosovo within Serbian borders. On the other side, Serbia refuses to support EU sanctions against Russia, so that in a way Belgrade tolerates Moscow's expansionist policy in eastern Ukraine.

A Change of Image

Over the years, Serbian media, especially tabloids, have depicted Kiev as Russia's "enemy", Ukraine as an inferior state and Ukrainians as an "artificial"²²⁷ nation wishing to distance itself from its Russian roots.

In Serbia's media space Ukraine had the most positive image at the time of the Orange Revolution in 2004. The situation was similar to that at the time of the 5 October Revolution in Serbia – a nonviolent struggle against the "dictator" and stolen elections. In that period, a number of analysts considered "election-related (colour) revolutions" as Serbia's political "export brand", while the former activists of the Serbian youth movement Otpor (Resistance) travelled to Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries to advise their civic activists (Varga 2012: 210–269).

Serbia also used to follow Ukrainian popular culture (Ruslana) and sports (football player Shevchenko and boxer Klitschko, trainer Lobanovsky). What has happened in Serbia over a period of ten years that the public opinion and tone in media coverage have changed so much vis-à-vis pro-European Ukraine? Why is Serbia willing to say "yes" to the "Orange Revolution" and "no" to Euro-Maidan?

Serbia views the events at Kiev's Maidan through the prism of the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Although official Belgrade is very restrained over the Ukrainian crisis, a great part of the Serbian public views Ukraine as Croatia in the early 1990s. Thus, the thesis on a nationalist "Serbian Yugoslavia" or a country in which "all Serbs will live in one state", namely "Greater Serbia", can be projected onto Serbia's stance on the crisis in Ukraine.

227 <http://www.magazin-tabloid.com/casopis/?id=06&br=327&cl=35> (accessed on 20 December 2015).

Like Moscow after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Belgrade has also accumulated the military arsenal of the former socialist federation due to which it was able to control about 30 per cent of the Croatian territory and about two-thirds of Bosnia and Herzegovina²²⁸. The Croatian city of Vukovar was under siege for 87 days and Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for 44 months.

The renowned London-based Ukrainian journalist, Bogdan Dziupin, compares the situation in Crimea with the Yugoslav crisis in the early 1990s on his Facebook page“:

“Milošević ‘defended’ ethnic Serbs and wanted ‘Greater Serbia’. Croats lost a large part of their territory for a shorter period, but Tudjman gathered the security forces and liquidated the ‘Republic of Srpska Krajina’ and other enclaves. Croatia is now a member of the European Union with the preserved and internationally recognized borders. Putin does not want Ukraine to be like Croatia. Rather, he wants it to be fragmented like the B&H confederation in which local leaders control small enclaves as they wish”.²²⁹

Using the Republic of Srpska Krajina in Croatia as a model, Moscow created the Novorossiia project, comprising the self-proclaimed DPR and LPR²³⁰. Under the influence of Russian propaganda, in Serbia’s information and public space the opinion prevails that the responsibility for the Ukrainian crisis lies with the West which, to say the least, supported the “people’s request” for Yanukovich’s demise, which is often called the “coup”²³¹. Consequently, there is a very simplified political interpretation: on one side, the West wishes to harm Russia and its interests, while on the other side, Moscow is trying to preserve the national interests of Orthodox Russians and Serbs.

In such a media atmosphere it was not very difficult to recruit volunteers in Serbia to fight alongside separatists in Donbas. However, parallel to

228 In further text the abbreviation B&H will be used.

229 <http://krytyka.com/ua/articles/chomu-v-serbii-ne-sprymayut-evromaydan> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

230 In mid-May 2014, pseudo-referendums on the independence of the DPR and LPR were held. The representatives of these two separatist republics signed the agreement on unification into a common pseudo-state artefact, the so-called Confederate Union of People’s Republics, that is, Novorossiia. These self-proclaimed territories also asked for accession to the Russian Federation and international recognition.

231 <http://www.nspm.rs/savremeni-svet/ukrajina-i-venecuela-%E2%80%93-dve-strane-iste-medalje.html?alphabet=1> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

recruitment for supporting the “Russian world“ and Orthodoxy in Ukraine, volunteers from southern Serbia were recruited to fight in Syria and Iraq. In this connection, at the beginning of July 2014, the deputy club of the Social Democratic Party of Serbia submitted to the Serbian Parliament its Proposal for Amending the Criminal Code under which the participation of Serbian citizens in foreign wars should be considered a crime. Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić stated that “Serbia does not participate in such conflicts” and that it “pursues a responsible policy”, so that it keeps track of all persons returning from Syria, Iraq and Ukraine and monitors their activities at home. In Ukraine, according to Vučić, Serbian citizens fight on both sides; more than 90 per cent of them are mercenaries and work for all more important intelligence services, earning from 1,200 to 6,000 dollars a month (Varga 2015: 74–75).

Serbian society is largely traditional and strongly influenced by patriarchal values; it is “burdened“ by the past and deeply entrenched myths that still persist. A large part of the population hold that the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague is unfair and biased against Serbs. NATO intervention against Serbian security forces in B&H in 1995 and bombing of FR Yugoslavia in 1999, coupled with the unilateral proclamation of Kosovo’s independence, exerted influence on a large part of the Serbian community to develop mistrust not only toward the West, but also toward liberal democracy as a system of the Western pattern.

Over the past years, support to Serbia’s entry into NATO has been about 10 per cent, while accession to the EU is supported by half of respondents, with periodical oscillations. However, many of them do not view the country’s accession to the EU as the adoption of democratic principles and values, but rather as financial support to Serbia from various European institutions and funds.

A considerable number of people in Serbia hold that they are the victims of the NATO aggression and the West, so that the annexation of Crimea has awakened their avenging spirit and provided the reason for reconsidering the causes and consequences of the wars in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. It is important to note that Russian President Vladimir Putin is very popular in Serbia. He was even awarded honorary citizenship in more than ten cities and municipalities (Varga 2013a: 40).

In Serbia, Russophilia is synonymous with anti-Westernism and Euro-scepticism rather than with a genuine cherishing of the traditional common values of the two peoples. Namely, in “post-Maidan Europe” in which the spheres of interest have already been rather clearly delineated, Serbia belongs to the Western sphere of interest and the possible “political Russophilia” of its Government can represent a geopolitical trend toward isolationism rather than real rapprochement with Moscow.

Russian Soft Power in Serbia

Vladimir Putin’s first press conference devoted to the Ukrainian crisis in March 2014 divided Serbian media into those which support the Kremlin’s policy and those which understand the position of post-revolutionary Kiev, or simple covered the events in a balanced way. The number of the latter media was considerably smaller.

Since the very beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, the Serbian media have carefully covered its development. At the very beginning of Euromaidan, Serbian media were covering the events in a superficial yet balanced way. Ukraine attracted their attention after the Russian annexation of Crimea, when a great number of them were uncritically supporting Russia despite the country’s declarative commitment to the path to the EU. This was so until the moment when Putin made an analogy between Crimea and Kosovo which was the signal for some media to be restrained.

After President Putin’s press conference in early March 2014, in particular, Serbian media began to compare the Ukrainian crisis with the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and speculate about the possible renewal of the Cold War.

Here is what was written by Serbian media at that time:

In the introductory column of *Nedeljnik*, its editor-in-chief Veljko Lalić writes that he and other editorial staff members “anxiously” followed Putin’s Moscow address. Lalić holds that “if someone should be afraid of the Ukrainian crisis except Ukrainians, it is Serbs who have paid the highest price in the whirlwinds of all world conflicts”.

At the same time, the responsible editor of *Novi magazin* weekly, Milo-rad Ivanović, poses the question: “And where are we?”, and answers: “While the whole world expresses its opinion – taking sides either with Kiev or with

Moscow – Belgrade and other regional capitals keep quite, which can be interpreted in two ways”. According to Ivanović, Serbia has either “turned towards itself” over the decades, or Belgrade has politically matured and, for change, does not wish to be involved in at least one world conflict.” The editor of *Novi magazin* weekly concludes: “I would rather bet on a specific type of autism that may spare us the trouble”.

The columnist of the same weekly, Momčilo Pantelić, interprets the “dilemmas” of official Belgrade in the following way: “In Ukraine our [Serbian] two foreign policy priorities have clashed”. The first is Serbia’s aspiration towards EU integration due to which the “transitional government in Kiev [actually] overthrew the existing regime in an attempt to separate the country from Russian domination”. Pantelić argues that this is disputed by Moscow, which is “Belgrade’s main support in its prevention that Kosovo’s separation from Serbia is internationally sealed”.

Five volunteers from the Chetnik movement, who went to Crimea to “defend Orthodox fraternity”, attracted a great deal of media attention in Serbia. Wearing folklore paraphernalia, the Chetniks were talking to the media about their experience in fighting in Kosovo in 1999 and about being prepared to send more volunteers to Ukraine should the armed conflict be intensified.

Most Serbian media emphasized that “Ukrainian extremist and nationalist organizations” also participated in the victory of the Euromaidan movement, commenting on their influence and significance in various ways. While the public broadcasting service was mostly covering the Euromaidan events, Serbian daily newspapers were mostly describing all those events as the “victory of radical Ukrainian extremists”. Most Serbian tabloids – which lead in terms of their number and circulation, so that their influence cannot be neglected – were spreading the pro-Russian influence and avidly criticizing Maidan.

The highest-circulation tabloids in Serbia were condemning the “coup” in Kiev and were mostly justifying the military intervention and annexation of Crimea. The following are the typical headlines on the front page of Serbian tabloids from that period: “World War III Threatens”, “Vladimir Putin: Crimea Must Have the Same Rights as Kosovo”, “Neo-Nazi Groups Roaming Kiev!” (*Kurir*, 5 March 2014), “He would defend us, too: Had Putin ruled in 1999, NATO would not have attacked Serbia” (*Informer*, 6 March 2014). In a

number of tabloids the headlines implied that Putin had Serbian roots: “Russia’s Historical Victory in Crimea: Putin Is a Serb” (*Informer*, 5. mart 2014).

Probably one of the most avid critics of Ukraine’s Euromaidan among cultural figures was Emir Kusturica. In the article entitled “Bandera Is OK, Putin Is not Cool”, which was published in *Politika* daily in early March 2014, Kusturica discusses somewhat philosophically who the “fascists” in the Ukrainian crisis are. He denounces Western interference in the Ukrainian crisis and asks “how to interpret the truth that the greatest anti-Nazi fighters in World War II have become the ‘greatest enemies of democracy?’” The renowned film director concludes: “Because democracy keeps fascism as an option within its framework”.

In recent years, Russia has begun using soft power as a foreign policy tool like Western countries, and it also uses it to exert influence on Serbia and the Western Balkans. As a soft power method Moscow most often uses mass media (*Russia Today*), foundations (Russkiy Mir and Gorchakov) and various non-governmental organizations. According to the study “Russia’s Soft Power Expands”²³² by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, the Kremlin views Serbia as a major strategic point of its policy for Europe and seems to be a most welcome “experimental station” for a successful manifestation of Russia’s growing power. In addition, there are pro-Russian sentiments of the majority of Serbian citizens – which are probably most important from the standpoint of the soft power doctrine. Serbia’s specificity lies in the fact that Russia has great supporters among its political parties (such as the Democratic Party of Serbia, Serbian Radical Party, Third Serbia, Dveri), scientific and cultural elites, and media. Since late 2014, *Sputnik* news agency, the *Russia Today* branch, has been operating in Serbia. Apart from a web portal, *Sputnik* regularly broadcasts 30-minute radio programmes three times a day. They are aired by Belgrade’s *RTV Studio B* and several local radio stations (Niš, Novi Sad, Aranđelovac, Požarevac, Kruševac). There are also non-governmental organizations, such as the Balkan Express media centre, which organize the guest appearances of Russian authors in Serbia, or the Russian Humanitarian Mission in Serbia, a Russian organization that provides various types of assistance to local health centres, and improves the quality of education for

232 <http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/HB-Br120.pdf> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

children and youth²³³. The *Geopolitika* and *Pečat* magazines, published in Serbia, are oriented towards popularizing the idea of the Eurasian Union, while the Eurasian Communication Centre was ceremonially opened in Belgrade, on 18 March 2014. In late 2013, the state-sponsored Russian Institute for Strategic Studies opened its representation in Belgrade.²³⁴ According to the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Russia's soft power has not yet reached the level from which it could dominate Western mechanisms with a long tradition. However, it should be expected that it will certainly grow stronger and stronger and be increasingly better planned. In the absence of the West's presence it should not be ruled out that Russia's soft power has an increasingly bigger echo among the citizens of Serbia.

Russia's great support provided to Serbia on the international plane, after its prevention of the proclamation of Kosovo's independence in the UN Security Council, was its use of veto power to block the British resolution on Srebrenica on 8 July 2015, marking the 20th anniversary of the genocide. Prior to that Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić sent a letter to Russian leader Vladimir Putin asking him to veto this resolution. Britain changed the draft resolution on Srebrenica three times in an attempt to bring it closer to the draft proposed by Russia. The British draft resolution stated that the "acceptance of the tragic events at Srebrenica as genocide is a prerequisite for reconciliation" in the region.²³⁵ Ten member countries voted in favour of the resolution, four were restrained (China, Venezuela, Angola and Nigeria), while Russia was against it. One day later, on 9 July, the members of the European Parliament adopted a resolution on Srebrenica which strongly condemns the crime at Srebrenica and defines the crime as genocide in accordance with the judgements of the International Criminal Tribunal for the

233 <http://www.studiob.rs/info/vest.php?id=123646> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

234 <http://ceas-serbia.org/root/index.php/sr/prenosimo/1744-predstavništvo-ruskog-instituta-za-strateska-istrazivanja-risi-ciji-je-osnivač-sef-ruske-federacije-otvoreno-u-beogradu> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

235 <http://www.predsednik.rs/lat/pres-centar/vesti/zahvalnost-predsednika-rusije-vladimira-putina-na-pismima-predsednika-srbije> (accessed on 20 December 2015); <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33430951> (accessed on 20 December 2015).

Former Yugoslavia and the International Court of Justice.²³⁶ The Ukrainian crisis was not the only one that pointed to the weakness of the UN Security Council and a decline in its reputation. The resolution on Srebrenica also revealed ideological divisions due to which even the judgements of the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague are disputed, and that the paradigm of the post-World War II world order is now facing a great crisis.

III SERBIA BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE EURASIAN UNION

After the “5 October Revolution“ and the phase of post-communist isolation, Serbia embarked on the process of democratic transition and EU integration. However, the assassination of the Serbian Prime Minister in 2003 and the consequences of the wars of the 1990s, influenced a shift in the vector of Serbia’s foreign policy towards the East or, better said, Russia. This was also contributed by a change in the overall geopolitical situation in Eurasia and, in particular, the rise of Putin’s Russia.

Three Phases of Serbia’s Foreign Policy – Vector East

In order to facilitate the understanding of Serbia’s contemporary foreign policy and, in particular, its two-vectoriness – towards the West and towards Russia – we have divided the development of the foreign policy of post-Cold War Serbia (FR Yugoslavia) into three periods, or three phases. The *first phase* covers the period after the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia²³⁷ and the creation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,²³⁸ which was carrying out an aggression against neighbouring Croatia at the time of its proclamation, in April 1992. Six months later, at its session on 19 September 1992, the UN Security Council made the decision that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia could not continue the membership of the former Yugoslavia

236 http://www.b92.net/info/dokumenti/index.php?nav_id=1013685 (accessed on 20 December 2015).

237 In further text the abbreviation SFRY will be used.

238 In further text the abbreviations FR Yugoslavia and FRY will be used.

(SFRY) in the world organization.²³⁹ Belgrade did not accept such a solution, so that FR Yugoslavia, which was under UN sanctions, remained outside this crucial international organization until the fall of Slobodan Milošević and his regime (October 2000).

The *second phase* of Serbia's foreign policy, within the federal state, began on 1 November 2000, when FR Yugoslavia was admitted to UN membership²⁴⁰ and this phase actually lasted until the dissolution of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro²⁴¹ in mid-2006. This was a very difficult transitional period for both countries, because the state union was mostly ineffective, both internally and externally. The state still did not recover from the wars of the 1990s nor did it break with the past. It still did not establish cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague which, on that period, posed the greatest obstacle to its progress towards EU integration. Prime Minister Đinđić was assassinated in March 2003, while S&M was admitted to the Council of Europe as late as 3 April that same year.

The *third phase* begins after the dissolution of S&M, following the referendum on Montenegro's independence on 21 May 2006, after which Podgorica proclaimed its independence. This phase is marked by the resolution of Kosovo's final status and the proclamation of the independence of this former Serbian province on 17 February 2008. In fact, this third period marks the beginning of Serbia's active foreign policy, which produces positive results in terms of EU integration as well as rapprochement with Russia. Regional cooperation began to develop after the signing of the Central European Free Trade Agreement – CEFTA (in December 2006).²⁴² Serbia signed the Framework Agreement on Accession to NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme in December 2006 and then the EU Stabilization and Association Agreement

239 <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/47/a47r001.htm> (accessed on 20 December 2015); <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/11/02/world/a-different-yugoslavia-8-years-later-takes-its-seat-at-the-un.html> (accessed on 20 December 2015).

240 <http://www.mfa.gov.rs/sr/index.php/spoljna-politika/multilateral/un?lang=lat> (accessed on 20 December 2015).

241 The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (in further text the abbreviation S&M will be used) was formed by the Constitutional Charter of Serbia and Montenegro, which came into force on 4 February 2003.

242 <http://www.cefta.int/> (accessed on 20 December 2015).

in April 2006. It was granted EU candidate status in March 2012. However, during the same period, Serbia also concluded a number of interstate agreements with the Russian Federation and participated in its foreign policy projects, involving energy and security.

Just in this third phase of the development of Serbia's foreign policy, Belgrade established rather close ties with the Russian Federation. Serbia depends on Moscow's geopolitical interests in many respects, probably even more than in the Cold War period when both countries had socialist (communist) systems. These ties are especially evident in the following spheres: the Kosovo issue, energy security, NATO enlargement and neutrality, free trade and credit support.

First of all, Serbia's foreign policy is linked to Russia's veto power in the UN Security Council through the blocking of Kosovo's statehood. In 2008, the Serbian Government decided that its policy priorities would be the preservation of the country's territorial integrity and EU integration, so that without Russia's support one of them – Kosovo's *de jure* preservation – could not be realized. Almost parallel to the debates over the status of Kosovo in the UN Security Council, in late December 2008, the Serbian Government sold a 51 per cent stake in the state-owned oil company NIS (Naftna industrija Srbije) to Gazprom at a very unfavourable price, under the relevant agreement.²⁴³

As for energy security, Serbia relies almost completely on Russia. The continuity of such an "alternativeless" energy policy was contributed by all Serbian governments after the "5 October changes". The basis for Serbia's ties to Russia's energy lobby was created by the conclusion of the energy agreement initiated by Serbian President Boris Tadić and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Moscow at the end of 2008. The energy agreement consisted of three segments: the privatization of NIS, construction of the South Stream gas pipeline through the Serbian territory and completion of a regional gas storage facility at Banatski Dvor. Under this agreement it was also planned to construct the South Stream gas pipeline from Russia, across the Black Sea, through Bulgaria and Serbia, to Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, Italy and other EU countries. Belgrade instilled great hopes in this international energy project which had to ensure the security of its supply and stabilize the deliveries of that energy product through Serbia. Belgrade reckoned that it would not

243 At the price of 400 million euros and investments worth at least 500 million euros.

only become a transit country and receive revenues from gas transit taxes²⁴⁴, but would also be the energy hub through which gas would be transported to the region and western part of the EU, thus enabling Serbia to assume a much more important geopolitical role in Europe's energy security. Naturally, as a Russian ally in the first place.

In August 2009, exceeding his presidential powers, Serbian President Boris Tadić presented the “four pillars of Serbia's foreign policy“: the United States, the EU, Russia and China. Although Serbia has no foreign policy strategy, President Tadić held that the “four pillars of foreign policy“ would be Belgrade's foreign policy doctrine, based on market and investments.²⁴⁵ Such a lucrative approach created a two-vector foreign policy, which ultimately turned into balancing between Brussels and Moscow, and became the constant of all Serbian governments until 2015. Despite its official commitment to EU integration, the Serbian Government, which was formed in 2014, continued to pursue the foreign policy of “both EU and Russia“.²⁴⁶

The cancellation of the South Stream project in December 2014 or, more exactly, its redirection to Turkey largely weakened Belgrade's strategic ties with Moscow. The Ukrainian crisis, Russia's open entry into the war in Syria, as well as the disputes between Russia and Turkey over interventions in the Near East²⁴⁷ have additionally complicated the already tense security and

244 According to the estimate of the Serbian authorities, about 200 million euros annually.

245 <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/Politika/123751/%C4%8Cetiri+stuba+srpske+spoljne+politike.html> (accessed on 10 December 2015); <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Tema-nedelje/Strategija-spoljne-politike-Srbije/Cetiri-stuba-su-realnost-a-ne-nas-izbor.sr.html> (accessed on 1 May 2015).

246 <http://www.novosti.rs/%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8/%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BD%D0%B0/%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0.393.html:523771-%D0%92%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B8%D1%9B-%D0%95%D0%A3-%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B5-%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B6%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%B0-%D0%BE%D0%B4-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%81-%D0%B4%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%BE-%D0%9A%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE> (accessed on 10 December 2015); <http://www.dnevnik.rs/politika/vucic-niko-ne-trazi-da-srbija-prizna-kosovo> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

247 Turkey's downing of a Russian Su-24 warplane, which intervened in Syria, in early December 2014. Link: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34912581>

energy situation in South East Europe, which is also called “energy war“ (Varga 2013a: 129–138).

Although it is absolutely loyal to the Russian energy interests in the Balkans, the fact is that Serbia does not pay to Gazprom quite a “brotherly“ price for natural gas. And the gas price is one of the post-Soviet geopolitical levers of power and identifiers of a country’s closeness with Russia. Serbia pays to Gazprom the “European price“ for 1,000 cu.m. of gas.²⁴⁸ Over the past years, Ukraine and Moldova, which have intensified the process of EU integration, have been paying a similar price, while the price for Moscow’s post-Soviet political allies is significantly lower (Varga 2013a: 176–178). The gas price could also be a lever in rapprochement between Belgrade and Moscow in the future.

Trade, Credits

Since the period of the Slobodan Milošević regime, that is, since August 2000, Serbia has had the Free Trade Agreement with the Russian Federation, which is considered preferential because only the former Soviet republics have concluded such agreements. In late July 2011, the Serbian and Russian Governments signed the Protocol on Amendments to the Free Trade Agreement stipulating the liberalization of mutual trade in additional products, thus allegedly completing the process of harmonizing Serbia’s trade with the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. This means that Serbia has not only a free trade deal with the EU, but also with the Eurasian Economic Union, which was established in January 2015.

According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Russia is one of Belgrade’s six major foreign trade partners, so that its Free Trade Agreement with this country could be considered prospective. During the period 2009–2014, Russia was mostly Serbia’s 4th–6th largest importer of its goods. At the same time, Russia was Serbia’s 1st–3rd largest exporter of its goods. An

(accessed on 20 December 2015).

248 In 2011–2012, Serbia was paying to Gazprom European gas prices between 478 and 545 dollars per 1,000 cu.m. Gazprom and Srbijagas did not make the gas price affordable from 2012 to 2014. As it is known, Serbia was buying gas at the price of 350 dollars in 2014 and that the price of natural gas is falling. Link: <http://ekonomskvesti.com/srbija/rusija-nam-prodaje-gas-po-ceni-od-350-dolara/> (accessed on 20 December 2015).

adverse balance of Serbia's trade with Russia, which has amounted to about one billion dollars (or more) over the past years, shows that the imports of energy products dominate in trade between the two countries. A more detailed analysis of the relevant statistical data gives a somewhat different picture. Serbia exports its products much more to EU countries (Germany, Italy and Romania), as well as CEFTA countries (B&H and Montenegro) (Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Serbia, 2012–2015).

During the visit of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to Serbia at the end of October 2009, it was agreed on the provision of credit support to Belgrade amounting to one billion dollars – 800 million dollars for the modernization of Serbian railways and 200 million dollars for budget deficit financing. Credit for the modernization of Serbian railways has never been used due to the “lack of project documentation“, while the Serbian Government has also offered a similar project to China – the modernization of the Belgrade-Budapest railway line.²⁴⁹

The fact that the Serbian government representatives regard Moscow as the potential source of “political credit“, which is granted to the post-Soviet states, is also corroborated by the statements of Serbian top officials, such as the leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia, Ivica Dačić, who stood up against Serbia's cooperation with the International Monetary Fund a number of times during the election campaign in 2012, although the alarming budget deficit could reach up to 3 billion euros. If we follow the experience of Belarus and Kyrgyzstan with Russia's credit – should Russian credit be an alternative to the International Monetary Fund – Moscow could be interested in Serbia's large state-owned companies such as Telekom and EPS (Electric Power Industry of Serbia), as well as the remaining 30 per cent state-owned package of NIS shares, or the Serbian arms industry, whose 2011 profits amounted to few hundred thousand dollars, but is now faced with market and collection-related problems, as well as in some other large state-owned companies (Galenika, Railways, etc.) (Varga 2013a: 175–181).

Serbian officials have thought that Russia's sanctions against the EU could create new opportunities for agricultural and food producers. However,

249 http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/ekonomija/nespremna-dokumentacija-koci-ruski-kredit_194045.html (accessed on 10 December 2015);

http://www.zeleznicesrbije.com/system/sr-latin/home/newsplus/viewsingle/_params/newsplus_news_id/68616.html (accessed on 10 December 2015).

a question of principle has also imposed itself. Is it possible that Belgrade pursues EU integration policy, while at the same time closely cooperating with the Russian Federation amid strained relations between the EU and Russia in the context of the Ukrainian crisis?

In August 2014, commenting on the sanctions imposed by Brussels and Moscow against each other, the Minister of Internal and Foreign Trade, Rasim Ljajić, said for *Tanjug* that Serbia “is not happy with this situation and wishes that the EU and Russian Federation normalize their relations as soon as possible“. He also said that the current situation creates an opportunity which “one should certainly try to use”.

Ljajić held that this was an opportunity for Serbian agriculture and food industry representatives to “remain on the market of more than 170 million people, including the whole Customs Union [comprising Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan], over a long term“. Serbian Minister of Internal and Foreign Trade also held that Serbia did not sufficiently use the Free Trade Agreement with the Russian Federation, although exports to its market, especially food, significantly increased from early 2014 onwards (Varga 2015: 78–79).

Professor Predrag Simić from the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade has said for *BBC Ukraine* that the Russian market is less important for Serbia than the European market, but is very important for farmers. According to him, Serbia is “not seating on two stools as much” as it is “trying to walk on a tightrope“ or, in other words, to be neutral like some European countries, such as Switzerland, bearing in mind the risk of worsening its relations with both sides.

According to Professor Simić, “Belgrade’s policy is an attempt to be neutral in a conflict in which Serbia has its interests on both sides [the European Union and Russia]. To the extent it is in Serbia’s interest to open the first chapters in its negotiations on EU membership, its interests are linked to Russia, primarily due to the fact that Russia is its main and only gas supplier“ (Varga 2015: 77–79).

If the level of international relations is judged by the number of (independent) visits of top state officials to Belgrade, Moscow is far ahead of the United States and European Union. Since 2000, Vladimir Putin – who has not only held the highest positions in the country (Russian President and Prime Minister), but also personifies the geopolitical power of contemporary

Russia – has paid three official visits to Belgrade.²⁵⁰ As Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev visited Serbia in 2009 (on 20 October). This can point to the fact that Serbia and its geopolitical position in the Western Balkans are very important to Russia.

Other most influential Western leaders who visited Belgrade during the same period included US Vice-President Joseph Biden (20 May 2009) and German Chancellor Angela Merkel (8 July 2015). Judging by the visits of the world's most influential Western and Russian leaders, regardless of whether the Serbian Government was led by the Democratic Party or Serbian Progressive Party, Boris Tadić or Aleksandar Vučić, both political coalitions equally balanced between the two worlds. Even one year after the proclamation of Kosovo's independence the ruling coalition led by the Democratic Party hosted the American Vice-President and Russian President in Belgrade.

Russian Security Architecture and the Eurasian Union

The Ukrainian crisis has taken the old continent back to the security home which is very similar to that at the time of the Cold War. After the annexation of Crimea, the West and NATO suspended cooperation with Russia. Cooperation with Moscow was also frozen at the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly as well as with the G8. Since then, tensions have been increasing alongside the borders of the EU and Russia and both sides organize military exercises. Serbia participates in military exercises both with NATO and Russia.

Since Putin assumed the presidency, Russia's point of discord between Russia and the United States, in particular, has been focused on NATO's expansion to the East and the building of the Western anti-missile shield in South East Europe. In this period, the NATO was joined by another nine former socialist republics, one-time Soviet military allies²⁵¹. The last NATO enlargement took place in the Balkans in 2009, with the entry of Croatia and

250 Putin visited Belgrade for the first time as the Russian President Putin on 16 June 2001, as the Prime Minister on 23 March 2011 and again as the Russian President on 16 October 2014, when he attended the military parade marking the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade.

251 In 2004, the NATO was joined by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia and in 2009 by Albania and Croatia.

Albania. Despite Moscow's negative reactions to NATO's expansion to the former socialist republics, Montenegro was invited to join it on 2 December 2015. This process was accompanied by divisions in the Montenegrin society and violent protests in its capital Podgorica.²⁵²

Russia reacts especially negatively to the installation of the US and EU missile defence system near its borders, in Poland and Romania, and announces a similar countermeasure.

Russia also proposed a new special agreement on global European security, but the response of the Western partners was very restrained. Moscow also announced the creation of a "new European security architecture" on several occasions. Although it is not completely known what this "architecture" should represent, it would certainly anticipate the halting of NATO's expansion, expansion of military neutrality to transition countries and greater European defence integration, including the restricted US presence on the old continent. In a way, Serbia indirectly participates in this "new Russian architecture in Europe" by proclaiming its neutrality in the Parliament, adopting the Resolution on Kosovo and Metohija in late December 2007 (Varga 2015: 133–153).

Another step towards Russia's "security architecture" was the formation of the Serbian-Russian humanitarian centre in Niš, which is intended to react in emergency situations caused by natural disasters – fire, floods and earthquakes – and officially began to operate on 25 April 2012. The plans for its formation were first announced by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. In October 2009, the agreement on its formation was signed by Dačić and Shoigu. According to Serbian government representatives, the "Serbian-Russian Centre should provide humanitarian assistance and a rapid response to emergency situations in the territory of Serbia and other Balkan countries if they call for assistance. It is predicted that, due to climate change in the region and South East Europe, various emergency situations may occur, including floods, landslides and earthquakes. Therefore, it is necessary to be prepared for such challenges" (Varga 2013b: 102–103).²⁵³

252 <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-montenegro-protests-idUSKCN0SI0TN20151024> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

253 http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2011&mm=10&dd=19&nav_category=11&nav_id=550586 (accessed on 10 December 2015).

Belgrade made another step towards the East almost simultaneously with its rapprochement with the West. One week before the signing of the Brussels Agreement between the Serbian and Kosovo Governments, on 13 April 2013, the Serbian parliamentary delegation was admitted to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Collective Security Treaty Organization in the capacity of observer²⁵⁴. The CSTO is a Russia-led military alliance that includes some former Soviet republics. The Collective Security Treaty Organization is also called “Eastern NATO” and its members are close to Russia’s security policy: Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (Varga 2015: 49–50).

In March 2015, *Danas* wrote that the number of Serbia’s military exercises with Russia was still much smaller in comparison with the number of those conducted with NATO members. That same year, 22 military exercises were conducted with Western partners and two with Russia. However, according to this newspaper, the media are attracted by the data on the circumstances under which Serbia organizes military exercises. Namely, the first exercises in the history of the two countries were agreed and conducted amid the Ukrainian crisis and deterioration of the EU-Russia relations, in November 2014. Public attention was also attracted by the fact that the information on the military exercises was kept secret and disclosed by the Russian Ministry of Defence. The military exercise with Russia was conducted less than a month after the military parade marking the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade at which Russian President Vladimir Putin was the only high-ranked foreign guest. In November 2013, Serbia and Russia concluded the agreement on military and military-technical cooperation stipulating the exchange of experiences and cooperation in peace-keeping operations, as well as the development of relations in the sphere of cartography, medicine and military education.²⁵⁵

254 In further text the abbreviation CSTO will be used (Rus. *Организация договора о коллективной безопасности*, ОДКБ); <http://www.vesti.rs/Politika/Srbija-postala-posmatrac-u-Parlamentarnoj-skupstini-ODKB.html> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

255 http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/politika/dve_vojne_vezbe_sa_rusijom_22_sa_nato_.56.html?news_id=298806 (accessed on 10 December 2015); <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/drustvo/aktuelno.290.html:518160-Zajednicka-vojna-vezba-Srbije-i-Rusije-u-novembru> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

Over the past twenty years, contemporary Serbian political elites have not only “balanced” between West and East, but have also been “fickle-minded” in making the strategic choice of partners. On 16 March 2014, on the same day when Crimea voted “at gunpoint” at the referendum on secession from Ukraine, the Serbian Progressive Party won almost 50 per cent of the vote at early parliamentary elections. It is comprised of the former long-standing and closest associates of the leader of the Serbian Radical Party, Vojislav Šešelj, who is awaiting the verdict in war crimes trial at the Hague Tribunal. The politician with the highest rating in Serbia and its Prime Minister since 2014, Aleksandar Vučić, is the former secretary general and deputy of the Serbian Radical Party. He was appointed Minister of Information in the Serbian Government of National Unity in March 1998 and signed the Public Information Law, which will be remembered for the imposition of draconian penalties on media and the closing down of several newspapers.²⁵⁶ On the eve of the NATO bombing of FR Yugoslavia, in 1998/1999, these former Serbian Radicals, who have been in power in Serbia since 2012, launched the initiative for Serbia’s, that is, FR Yugoslavia’s joining the quasi-state artefact – Russia-Belarus State Union.

In the post-Cold War world, following the example of Tito’s Yugoslavia, Belgrade is unsuccessfully trying to maintain a balance, or is even completely turning away from the West. Namely, in the second half of the 20th century, the SFRY was very close with the North Atlantic Alliance, which was even prepared to intervene in the case of Soviet aggression. Through the Balkan Pact, Yugoslavia became a *de facto* but not *de iure* NATO member. Such a scheme was made that in the event of an attack the NATO members would protect a communist country. Consequently, the NATO indirectly gave guarantees to Yugoslavia in the event of a Soviet attack on it.²⁵⁷

However, under conditions of the Ukrainian crisis and strained EU-Russia relations, Serbia was given an opportunity – during its one-year chairmanship of the OSCE (December 2014–15) – to demonstrate its political and value commitments to democracy as well as its impartiality in the Ukrainian conflict on the international plane. Most key participants at the closing meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Belgrade in early December 2015 expressed

256 *Dnevni telegraf, Evropljanin and Naša Borba.*

257 <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=930836&print=yes> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

positive reactions to Serbia's chairmanship of this organization, including US State Secretary John Kerry and Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Serbia's OSCE chairmanship was also positively evaluated by the "warring" sides – Russia and Ukraine, that is, Foreign Ministers Sergei Lavrov and Pavel Klimkin. According to the OSCE international representatives in Bosnia, Serbia has shown that it can play an "extremely active and positive role" in B&H as well as in the observance of the Dayton Accords.²⁵⁸

However, it did not go unnoticed that in April 2015, during Serbia's OSCE chairmanship, the representative of the OSCE Mission to Serbia expressed his concern over the campaign against the Serbian Ombudsman institution and Ombudsman Saša Janković. Such a stance provoked a violent reaction from Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić.²⁵⁹

Since Aleksandar Vučić assumed the position of Prime Minister, Serbia has been developing a specific transitional regime that is characteristic of the region. Although according to *Freedom House* Serbia has been regarded as a hybrid regime or electoral democracy for a longer period,²⁶⁰ over the past years a set of internal and external circumstances has influenced a significant change in the quality of democracy for the worse. In Serbia the status of press freedom has worsened.²⁶¹ The influence of the partocratic environ-

258 <http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=217729> (accessed on 20 December 2015);

<http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/mur-izuzetno-pozitivna-uloga-srbije-tokom-predsedavanja-oebs/0d599ne> (accessed on 20 December 2015).

259 <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/oebs-izrazio-zabrinutost-zbog-kampanje-protiv-ombudsmana/8q2c5er> (accessed on 20 December 2015); <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/dacic-zacudjuje-saopstenje-oebs-o-jankovicu/5mz3eb2> (accessed on 20 December 2015).

260 According to the *Freedom in the World* report for 2015, which gives the results for 2014, *Freedom House* evaluates Serbia as a "free" country, that is, electoral democracy, with rather high scores for political rights and civil liberties. Link: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/01152015_FIW_2015_final.pdf (accessed on 20 December 2015).

261 According to the report of *Freedom House Freedom of the Press* for 2015, that is, 2014, Serbia ranks 83rd on the list of 195 countries, and is evaluated as "partly free". According to *Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index* for 2015, Serbia is ranked 67th on the list of 180 countries. Links: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FreedomofthePress_2015_FINAL.pdf (accessed on 20 December 2015); <https://index.rsf.org/#!/> (accessed on 20 December 2015).

ment on media, which was created at the time of the ruling coalition led by the Democratic Party, has culminated in the mandate of the Serbian Progressive Party.²⁶² The media are dominated by the image of Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, mainstream media reporting is not critical, while tabloids are the source of defamation and everything else that is contrary to the journalistic code of ethics. As for the level of corruption, Serbia was ranked 78th on the list of 174 countries in 2014.²⁶³

In such circumstances, the popularity of Aleksandar Vučić and the SPP is constantly increasing. The public opinion poll conducted by Faktor Plus agency in November 2015 shows that the Prime Minister is supported by 58 per cent of citizens, while the SPP is supported by almost 52 per cent of respondents. According to this poll, the electoral threshold is also exceeded by the Socialist Party of Serbia (almost 9 per cent), Bojan Pajtić's Democratic Party (6.5 per cent) and Serbian Radical Party (slightly above 6 per cent).²⁶⁴ This means that Serbia's political party scene is almost alternativeless and dominated by a single party, that is, the SPP. Such a regime could soon embark on the Russian transition path towards authoritarianism, following the example of Putin, especially if the EU integration process is halted.

Such a popularity of one man in the executive branch, who governs using populist methods, namely traditionalist and conservative rhetoric, demonstrates the specific trend of political leaders in this part of Europe, both in EU candidate countries and in some EU member countries. Turkish President Rejep Tayyip Erdogan enjoys huge popularity and has an absolute majority in the Parliament. The following politicians rule in the region using populist methods over a longer period of time, controlling the media and political area: Milorad Dodik in the Republic of Srpska within B&H, Milo Djukanović in Montenegro and Nikola Gruevski in Macedonia. Their colleagues from the EU – Viktor Orban in Hungary and Jaroslav Kaczynski in Poland do not lag behind them. This is a corrosive trend in democracy in South East Europe amid a complex crisis. Western countries tolerate such

262 In further text the abbreviation SPP will be used.

263 https://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/?gclid=CjwKEAiAtf6zBRDS0oCLrL37gFUSJACr2JYbFP-r9UdMDOxbRXWwXnn8eaUzFXkTDYESWUEdlbSuNxoCPALw_wc (accessed on 20 December 2015).

264 http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/politika/naprednjaci_i_dalje_najpopularniji_.56.html?news_id=312099&action=print (accessed on 20 December 2015).

an erosion of democracy for the sake of political stability in the region²⁶⁵, while Vučić's autocratic position following the Brussels Agreement resembles Milošević's position after becoming the guarantor of peace by signing the Dayton Accords in many respects.

Russia's Own Democracy and a New Union

During the early 1990s, after the fall of communism, the Russian Federation committed itself to establishing a democratic legal society with a Western-type market economy (Фурман, 2007: 234). Two decades later, Russia consolidated an authoritarian regime departing significantly from the selected model. According to the research on the regime status in the world, conducted by *Freedom House Nations in Transit* and *Economist Intelligence Unit*, the Russian Federation has had a consolidated authoritarian regime even since 2009 and this trend began abruptly to spread to the post-Soviet space after the suppression of "colour revolutions" in Uzbekistan or, more exactly, after bloody conflicts in the city of Andijan (2005) (*Freedom House Nations in Transit 2012*) (*Economist Intelligence Unit 2011*). A drift from democracy occurred just in the period of President-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Even before military intervention in Ukraine, organizations studying political regimes were warning Western governments that Putin was strengthening a populist authoritarian regime in Russia, which violates human rights, manipulates elections, misuses administrative resources, marginalizes the opposition and puts pressure on media and civic organizations. Amid the Ukrainian crisis, two weeks after the signing of the Minsk-2 Peace Agreement, the leader of the Russian opposition, Boris Nemtsov, was gunned down in central Moscow.²⁶⁶ It was almost impossible to assassinate Russia's key opposition figure, who openly criticized Russian intervention in Ukraine, without the knowledge of the Putin-led regime.

265 <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/miroslava-milenovic-populizam-vuciceve-vlade-umesto-borbe-protiv-korupcije/27300233.html> (accessed on 20 December 2015).

266 http://www.bbc.com/russian/rolling_news/2015/02/150227_rn_nemtsov_dead (accessed on 10 December 2015).

Russia allegedly develops the so-called sovereign democracy, which is unknown in the Western regime typology. Thus, it is held that the use of this term is only an attempt to hide the fact from Russian voters that the existing regime, established a rather long time ago, is opposite to the one to which Moscow committed itself in the early 1990s, which is the only legitimate democratic regime in the world. “Sovereign democracy” is based on the prevention of the West’s interference in the politics of other countries, and allegedly on a specific type of democracy relying on the leader’s authority and national unity, without democratic pluralism in the Western sense of the word (Hassner 2008: 5–15).

Considering its five-point election programme for the 2012 presidential election, Putin’s greatest foreign policy project in his current six-year term in office, is the integration of the post-Soviet space into the Eurasian Economic Union in three stages, which is already underway. The first stage was, above all else, the formation of the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan in 2011.²⁶⁷ The second stage involved the creation of a Common Economic Area, which started to operate on 1 January 2012. It implies the free flow of goods, services and labour between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and the self-proclaimed state of Abkhazia also showed interest in joining it. Until the Maidan protest, Ukraine was in a geopolitical dilemma – the EU or the integration initiated by Russia.

The third stage was the formation of the Eurasian Union. It started on 1 January 2015, when the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, also known in the media as the Eurasian Union, became effective. During the previous years, it was signed by the following former Soviet republics: the Russian Federation, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. According to Putin’s strategy, the Eurasian Economic Union was designed to “open a new epoch of the relations in the post-Soviet space” or, in other words, to be transformed into the confederation of states, integrated into a common political, economic, military, customs, humanitarian and cultural space. Apart from the existing basis of the Customs Union and Common Economic Space, the Eurasian Union will rely on the already formed post-Soviet unions, such as

267 http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2011/11/111118_eurasian_union_declaration.shtml (accessed on 10 December 2015).

the Eurasian Economic Union²⁶⁸ and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union this has been Russia's tightest integration initiative, anticipating a single market of goods, services, capital and labour for more than 170 million consumers, with the total gross domestic product of about 4.5 trillion dollars (Varga 2015: 125–130).

In the past, various integration structures and organizations were also created in the territory of the former Soviet Union, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, CSTO, Eurasian Economic Union and Customs Union, but for the first time since the end of the Cold War the post-Soviet countries have a common international legal personality.

The only exception is the creation of a single pharmaceutical market planned for 2016, single electric power market for 2019 and single oil and gas market only after a decade. In other words, the formation of the Eurasian Union is not only Moscow's largest integration project after the collapse of the Soviet Union (which Putin considers one of the greatest geopolitical tragedies in the 20th century), but also the highest "political bid" for the current Russian President. Therefore, it can be said that if the Eurasian Economic Union fails to "take off", this could "cost" the Russian ruling elite its credibility, as well as to permanently destabilize the Russian "traditional" area of geopolitical interests, which has already been considerably "truncated" over the past two and a half decades.

Apart from financial problems such as the mentioned fall in the value of national currencies (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), there are also political differences among the leaders of the Eurasian Union. Allegedly, they have no unique "vision" of the development of this union. Whereas Russia holds that the Eurasian Economic Union should be further developed in order to assume suprastate powers, thus creating a common currency, security forces and the parliament, the other post-Soviet leaders who, unlike Putin and Medvedev, belong mostly to the first generation of post-communist leaders, dismiss such possibilities.

The fact that there is no common market policy among the members of the Eurasian Economic Union is also evidenced by the refusal of Minsk and Astana to impose an embargo on imports from EU countries, Norway and

268 Rus. *Евразийское экономическое сообщество*, ЕврАзЭС.

the United States, which Russia imposed as a symmetric response to Western sanctions, in August 2014.

And while Putin plans to include Tajikistan in the Eurasian Union, which would become the economically “weakest link“, one of the strongest initiators of the Eurasian Union, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev supports the survival of the Customs Union and inclusion of Turkey in it. Kyrgyzstan violates the rules of the World Trade Organization, mostly in trade with China, while Armenia does not want to renounce an open market with Nagorno-Karabakh – the unrecognized Azerbaijani territory that was occupied with Yerevan’s help in the early 1990s – which creates the problem of border stability.

In the second half of 2014, one could often hear the statements of Russian top officials that Russia and the Eurasian Union were still prepared to further develop their plans on the formation of a free trade area with the European Union. However, Moscow strongly opposes the development of such an area by Ukraine and Moldova with Brussels if it is bypassed.

Apart from the rather inefficient organization of the United Nations where the Security Council members mostly draw red lines and most frequently establish the status quo between the USA and EU, on one side, and Russia and China, on the other, Moscow sees the settlement of the crisis in Europe after the Ukrainian revolution, in the strengthening of the OSCE and formation of a single free economic area “from Lisbon or Dublin to Vladivostok“. This is mostly the area of Eurasia, without the dominant US participation in the dialogue.

Over the past years, the Kremlin has seen a much more optimistic direction of Russian foreign policy in a shift toward a rising Asia and, according to President Putin’s Foreign Policy Advisor Sergei Karaganov – “Russia’s geopolitical and economic alternative for the first time in its history”. “The current differences with the West are becoming a strong argument in favour of Russia’s both economic and political reorientation to the East”, Karaganov says. For this dialogue Moscow especially counts on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization²⁶⁹. Since the very beginning of the Syrian crisis, Putin has been better understood by his Eastern partners, especially China. Moscow and Beijing share the views on the danger of the spread of Islamic extremism to

269 In further text the abbreviation SCO will be used (Rus. *Шанхайская организация сотрудничества, ШОС*).

Central Asia and consider the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to be crucial in this respect (Varga 2015: 133–153).

As for the Eurasian continent and Western Europe–China relations, Beijing is developing its own programme – the “New Silk Road“ passing through the territory that is also considered by Russia to be its area of geopolitical interests. The programme anticipates the building of land and waterborne routes that will economically link China with the western parts of Eurasia and Africa. Among others, the “New Silk Road“ also passes through the former Soviet republics in Central Asia (Kazakhstan), northern Iran, Syria, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic and Germany.²⁷⁰ The key question for the continent is what relations Russia’s Eurasian Union and China’s “New Silk Road“ will have – will they be partners, competitors or enemies?

Risks of Sitting on Two Stools

Serbia’s balancing between the EU and Russia is not a new experience in the transition world of post-Soviet republics. In fact, Ukraine used the term “two vectors“ for such a long-term foreign policy, which was actually conducted by Kiev after the declaration of its independence in 1991 until the Maidan protests in early 2014.

Since the 1990s already, Russia has also been the opponent of NATO’s expansion to the East and former socialist bloc countries, while the Baltic republics’ entry into the North Atlantic Alliance was understood by Moscow as the West’s direct challenge and “enmity”. However, the contradiction lies in the fact that Russia has never reacted explicitly negatively to the expansion of the European Union or, more exactly, its market and political influence. Moreover, during the past years, until the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, Brussels and Moscow carried out negotiations on the potential abolition of the visa regime for the citizens of the Russian Federation as well as on free trade. Russia has also become a member of the World Trade Organization.

The scent of an oncoming “storm” could be smelled as early as the summer of 2013, only half year before Ukraine was supposed to sign the Association Agreement, which forms part of the European Union’s policy and “Eastern Partnership“ programme, and has already been implemented by Brussels vis-à-vis

270 <http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/chinas-new-silk-road-vision-revealed/> (accessed on 10 December 2015).

the former Soviet republics – Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Belarus and Azerbaijan (the last two had no European Atlantic ambitions) – since 2008.

The Association Agreement stipulates above all the formation of a free trade area and visa-free regime between the post-Soviet republic and the EU. Ukraine was among the first former Soviet republics which had to sign the Agreement. At the same time, the calls to Kiev from Russia to join the Customs Union were growing louder, especially after Putin's reelection to his third presidential term in 2012.

In early 2013, Brussels stated for the first time that Kiev could not participate in the projects of the two market unions – European and Eurasian. It became clear that Yanukovich's plans to "sit on two stools" were hardly feasible.

Russia announced that it would consider gas prices and the imposition of a customs duty should Ukraine sign the Association Agreement with the EU. As early as 2012, Russia banned imports from major Ukrainian cheese producers and in mid-2013 it also banned imports of some chocolate products. Although the ban was explained by the deterioration of standards, Kiev interpreted it as a "political move". Russia's tolerance of the programmes such as the "Eastern Partnership" and Association of the Former Post-Soviet Countries with the EU was slowly dwindling.

In September 2013, Armenia – which had to sign the same Association Agreement with the EU, together with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova – quite suddenly shifted its geopolitical orientation towards Russia, justifying its move by opting for entry into the Eurasian Economic Union.

At that time already it became evident that Moscow would not so easily let the important post-Soviet state of Ukraine integrate with the EU, especially bearing in mind that President Viktor Yanukovich and Prime Minister Mykola Azarov were considered pro-Russian politicians and enjoyed great support from Russia.

In November 2013, Yanukovich or, more exactly, the Ukrainian Government did not sign the Association Agreement with the EU to the astonishment of many Ukrainians, especially those being Europe-oriented. The Ukrainian President then complained that he was under pressure from Russia and sought financial assistance from both the West and Moscow. This triggered mass protests, the fear of a part of the population that Ukraine would turn to Moscow and well-known events – street clashes in Kiev, Yanukovich's deposition, annexation of Crimea, war in eastern Ukraine, sanctions...

Serbia's prolonged balancing between the EU and Russia could create a similar situation. Especially if the European Union plunges into crisis and is forced to suspend the process of EU enlargement, or if the influence of the United States in that part of Europe declines. In such circumstances, the Western Balkans and non-EU countries might become of interest not only to the West, but also to Russia and influential Asian countries.

IV CONCLUSION

After the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, Europe was divided into two political and economic blocs – the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union. Russia's renunciation of democracy and its aggressive expansion in international relations point out that over a longer period the relations between Brussels and Moscow will remain "cold" to say the least.

The Eurasian Union reflects Putin's nostalgia for the Soviet Union and he has invested in it his own political legacy and reputation. Russia's direct entry into the Syrian conflict as secured its return to the international arena and Russian President Putin is ready to make geopolitical moves that will enable him to have influence in Russia's zone of traditional interests (Ukraine, the Caucasus, Central Asia), in Europe (the Balkans, the EU) and in its "wider" neighbourhood (the Near East). Russia will try to reduce US influence on the old continent and seek rapprochement with China. However, these ambitions are too high for the country whose rise has been based on the exploitation of raw materials. Thus, authoritarianism and militarism will serve Russia to compensate for the lack of economic and political power.

The complex international situation amid the worsening of the Syrian crisis has created a number of contradictions in the relations between the West (USA and EU) and Russia, while Serbia and Ukraine, as countries in transition, found themselves torn between the two opposing sides. Serbia has declared its foreign policy direction and has clear-cut chances for EU integration, but in its society and politics there are pronounced anti-Westernism and new Russophilia. in its society and politics. Ukraine is distinctly committed to EU inegration and since the "Orange Revolution" and Euromaidan protests, in particular, significant steps have been taken in that direction. However, the prospects for Kiev's full-fledged EU membership are very vague, while Moscow reacts negatively to the continuation of Ukraine's Euro-European

integration. Russia is ready for a direct military intervention if the West tries to integrate Ukraine into the EU and NATO without its consent. The West is not prepared for direct confrontation with Moscow for the sake of Ukraine. Sanctions against Russia have produced results, but in a way the West has closed its eyes to the annexation of Crimea.

Russian aggression strongly pushed Ukraine's foreign policy toward the EU. On the other hand, aggression against the neighbouring countries and provinces (Croatia, B&H, Kosovo) during the 1990s pushed Serbia (FR Yugoslavia) into isolationism and provided conditions for positioning its foreign policy vis-à-vis Russia. However, after the Maidan revolution the spheres of interest in Europe became clearly delineated and Serbia belongs to the West's sphere of influence.

Despite this fact, under conditions of the Ukrainian crisis, Belgrade's foreign policy represents balancing between the EU and Russia or, in other words, the policy of "sitting on two stools" in an attempt to benefit politically and economically both from Brussels and Moscow. In this connection, Belgrade has no specific foreign policy strategy; it is rather a question of spontaneous diplomatic oscillations full of contradictions. Official Belgrade has an ambidextrous attitude towards the Ukrainian crisis. On one side, Serbia supports the territorial integrity of Ukraine and does not recognize the annexation of Crimea, because Kiev supports Kosovo within Serbian borders. On the other side, Serbia refuses to support EU sanctions against Russia, so that in a way it tolerates Moscow's expansionist policy in eastern Ukraine.

The relationship between Belgrade and Moscow is closer than in the Cold War period. This closeness is mostly demonstrated in preventing the proclamation of Kosovo's independence. Serbia is also completely dependent on Russian energy. Belgrade is aware, but does not speak loudly about the fact that a great turning point in its relations with the Russian Federation will happen once Serbia finds itself at the EU door, since it will have to reconsider its Free Trade Agreement with Russia, recognize Kosovo and join the NATO.

In Serbia there is a noticeable new wave of "political Russophilia", which is the result of anti-Western sentiments, declining Western power and rise of Putin's Russia. Russia's influence on Serbia can be strengthened if Belgrade's European integration perspective dwindles in a way, or if the US influence in this part of Europe declines. In such circumstances, Serbia can expect the transition of the regime towards authoritarianism, similar to that

of Russia, which is already noticeable in Aleksandar Vučić's populist rule. Russian credits, reduced gas prices, investments of Russia or the Eurasian Union in Serbia and, in particular, the improvement of trade under a free trade arrangement with the Eurasian Union could also strengthen Belgrade's relations with Moscow.

In Serbia Russia's soft power has not yet reached the level from which it could dominate Western mechanisms with a long tradition. However, one should expect Russia's soft power to grow stronger and stronger and be much better planned. In the absence of the West's presence it might find a bigger echo among Serbian citizens.

However, it is practically impossible that Serbia, surrounded by EU and NATO members, develops its relations with the Eurasian Economic Union as an alternative to Euro-Atlantic integration. Such moves can represent a geopolitical trend toward isolationism rather than a real rapprochement with Moscow.

Nevertheless, instigating anti-Western sentiment in the Serbian society over a long term could divide Serbia in civilizational terms into those who are ready to integrate into the EU and NATO and those who are explicitly against integration. Such internal divisions in Serbia might trigger a much deeper crisis, like that in Ukraine.

Ukraine not only has vague EU integration prospects, but is also internally very vulnerable. It is a post-Soviet state with a population of 40 million, with a very fragile economy and the political system influenced by oligarchs (tycoons). Apart from territorial destabilization, corruption is the greatest enemy of the Ukrainian state and democracy. National feelings, which often evolve into radical and aggressive nationalist outbursts, threaten to divide the Ukrainian society and cause conflicts within it, not to mention security threats faced by Georgia and Azerbaijan due to military coups, as well as Serbia in which the members of the Special Operations Unit assassinated Prime Minister Đinđić.

Therefore, Serbia and Ukraine should be more resolute in conducting the reforms required by Brussels in order to converge towards the EU as much as possible. In the opposite, they will remain isolated or left to the influence of authoritarian Russia. Isolation in Europe means a return to local authoritarianism. Namely, amid a complex crisis in the EU there is a noticeable democratic deficit trend in South East Europe, embodied in populist national leaders. Western countries tolerate such an erosion of democracy for the sake of political stability in the region. Such regimes could easily set

out on the path of Russian transition, following Putin's example – the path to populist authoritarianism.

In the post-Maidan period, the EU countries were unprepared for Moscow's military reaction. They were also unprepared for the annexation of Crimea and "hybrid war" in Donbas. The West held that Russia only opposed the integration of the former socialist republics into the NATO, but not the EU "Eastern Partnership" programme. The scenario according to which the EU suspends its enlargement in the Western Balkans for a longer period and abandons its integration plans for Ukraine due to its poorly conducted reforms, is not optimistic but is not unrealistic.

The reason may also be the crisis in the EU over the past years (the threats of Brexit and Grexit, migrant crisis, war against terrorism), as well as threats that radical nationalist and conservative forces in the member countries may reshape its future appearance and relations within it. However, crises – from constitutional to economic – are nothing new for the EU, especially since the period of new enlargements, as well as its functioning in a complex environment to a degree, have become almost a "natural" situation in the European Union, bearing in mind the complex historical circumstances of its development. Restricting the influence of the authoritarian neighbourhood (Russia and China) and achieving stability in the Muslim countries in the Mediterranean region – pose the future challenges for the EU. Therefore, the future process of integrating transition countries into the EU will be very complex and difficult.

Russia is aware of the fact that NATO enlargement is also a sensitive issue for the Serbian nationalist political elites in the Balkans, so that it will also use this thesis in undermining the EU integration process of Serbia, B&H and Montenegro. Despite contradictions, Moscow claims that it does not have anything against the integration of the Western Balkans into the EU.

There is no doubt that Putin's Russia will not allow Ukraine to become a stable, prosperous and democratic state in the Western sphere of interest. At the same time, Russia must "ritually" demonstrated to the post-Soviet countries what will happen to those who refuse to cooperate with the Eurasian Union and try to "defect" to the other side.

Political "game" between the West and Russia (the war of sanctions, sabre rattling) could trigger the wave of a new economic and military-political crisis which could have much more serious consequences for the region. The

crisis could affect not only Russia and the newly formed Eurasian Economic Union, but also the fragile post-soviet economies, thus instigating political discontent, nationalism, religious extremism and separatism in the countries in transition.

V RECOMMENDATIONS

Short recommendations for overcoming existing contradictions in the Brussels-Belgrade-Kiev-Moscow relations

- If it wishes to integrate into the EU in the foreseeable future, Serbia must stop balancing between Brussels and Moscow, and consistently follow the European Union's foreign policy.
- If Serbia continues its balancing act, it will most likely be faced with isolationism, which implies an internal crisis (i.e. political and economic crisis, and social divisions), as well as the increasing Russian influence.
- Ukraine must more resolutely conduct its reforms and fight against corruption in order to integrate into the EU as much as possible.
- Kiev must contain the outbursts of radical nationalism, which primarily pose a threat to the state.
- The EU should not neglect Ukraine due to Syria because, without Brussels, it is impossible to pacify Donbas and continue to exert pressure on Moscow to begin new negotiations on the Crimea status.
- The European Union should not suspend the process of its enlargement in the Western Balkans, since these countries will embark on the process of transition to authoritarianism.
- The European Union should give Ukraine a clear perspective of EU integration.
- The EU must restrict the influence of the authoritarian neighbours, Russia and China, and establish stability in the Muslim countries in the Mediterranean region.
- Brussels should not allow Russia to block the further realization of the EU "Eastern Partnership" programme.
- Brussels should not allow Russia to transform the Eurasian Economic Union into a new authoritarian Soviet Union.

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DIMITRIJE BOAROV

MORE POLITICS THAN BUSINESS

Economic Relations Between Serbia and the Russian Federation

ABSTRACT: The paper deals with economic relations between Serbia and Russia in the early 21st century in the context of the "European path" designated by Serbian politics and traditional "political friendship" between Serbian and Russian peoples on the Slavic and Orthodox basis. The main hypothesis is that, in essence, economic relations between Russia and Serbia are of marginal significance not only for the Russian Federation, but also for the Republic of Serbia, and that they provide almost no basis for the expansion of cooperation between the two countries or, more precisely, do not offer any realistic perspective in which Serbia's economic cooperation with Russia would be an alternative to its inclusion in the European Union.

A SHORT HISTORY OF ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND SERBIA

Although the interest of Imperial Russia in the Balkans can be clearly identified only in the early 19th century and although St Petersburg's interference in the political affairs on the soil of present-day Serbia can be observed only at the end of the First Serbian Uprising (1804–1812) and after the Congress of Vienna (1815) and the Second Serbian Uprising (1815), this empire entered Serbia's economic history after the Russian-Ottoman Wars (and the Treaty of Edirne, which was signed in 1828).

Namely, as written by Milorad Nedeljković²⁷¹, the first permanent national debt of the then autonomous Principality of Serbia (within the

271 Dr Milorad Nedeljković, *Istorija srpskih državnih dugova*, Belgrade, 1909, p. 8.

Ottoman Empire) was secretly contracted by Prince Mihailo's Government in Russia (1867) and this fact was little known over the next ten years. This loan of 200,000 imperial ducats (in two tranches), which was valued at about 2.35 million dinars according to a later assessment, was "political in character". Therefore, its terms were favourable – the exchange rate at par, 6 per cent interest and 2 per cent annual amortization until the final loan repayment date (the repayment period was 24 years). At that time, again according to a later assessment (the dinar, as the national currency, still did not exist and all transactions were carried out in more than 40 currencies), the annual budget of the Principality of Serbia amounted to only about 20 million dinars.

After the mentioned decade, when the new Serbian-Turkish war broke out (1876), the question that imposed itself was where to find money for its financing. Thus, the Government was provided with a general authorization to seek 24 million dinars. Since that year's "war cooperation" was entirely prepared with Russia, this country was asked again to grant a loan. This time, however, the Russians only agreed to provide the war assistance of 150,000 imperial ducats and sell Serbian bonds on their financial market. On this basis, they advanced the amount of one million dinars. According to a later report, in which there is no exact money flow dynamics, it can be seen that during a period of five years (instead of 12) only Serbian bonds worth 5.3 million dinars were sold in Russia. It should also be pointed out that it turned out that the issue price of this loan was 79.80 per cent (at the nominally favourable interest rate of 6 per cent), although the agreed rate was at par.

On the basis of all this, Serbia realized that "political loans" were not cheap and that its government should borrow money at a below par rate of interest in the countries that have money or, in other words, in Western Europe. Thus, only in the period from 1880 to 1905, Serbia contracted ten or so loans in Western Europe totalling 362 million dinars. Otherwise, until the second half of the 19th century, Serbia and then the Kingdom of Yugoslavia did not get any government loan from Russia or the Soviet Union (USSR). Moreover, there was practically no more serious trade between the two countries. Even when Russia declared war on Austria-Hungary in 1914 in order to protect Serbia, among other things, the Kingdom of Serbia did not get war loans from it. Instead, war loans were granted by France and Britain (and finally the United States).

After the Second World War, when Tito's partisans and communists came to power in Yugoslavia, it was widely expected that Serbia as well as Yugoslavia as a whole would embark on the post-war revolutionary reconstruction and, in particular, socialist industrialization with ample support from Stalin's Soviet Union. As early as 1945, however, it became evident what mechanism the Russian communist state planned in order to economically tie the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia (DFY) into its sphere of interest as well. That was the system of "joint enterprises".

If we leave aside the fact that, while passing through the territory of the DFY in 1944–1945, the Red Army usurped the right to supply itself freely from the local population and local food reserves, and even to "propagandize" a part of requisitioned food as its assistance to the Yugoslav National Liberation Army (the well-known "Zrenjanin case"), we will see that the then Soviet Union actually had no resources for economic assistance to Yugoslavia. Namely, it soon turned out that a more serious challenge to the relations between the two countries (than the mentioned false propaganda) was posed by the Russian intention to establish joint inter-state enterprises in the key infrastructure sectors, allegedly on a parity basis. In fact, after the establishment of such enterprises, the Russian side behaved almost as the "occupier's administration", which caused big conflicts with the domestic self-conscious "partisan nomenclature".

An even greater problem lied in the fact that in the preparation of the First Five-Year Plan (1945–1950) Tito's government not only emulated Lenin's "electrification and industrialization", but also counted in large measure on abundant Russian financial and commodity-related investments in the development of the domestic heavy industry, which was given priority in the otherwise agricultural country. However, in 1948, after the well-known rift between Tito and Stalin and the adoption of the Cominform Resolution, this Yugoslav Five-Year Plan (which was otherwise economically unrealistic) simply remained without Russian investments, pursuant to Stalin's unilateral decision, so that fiscal and parafiscal pressure on Yugoslav peasantry and agriculture had to be increased to an intolerable degree.

The normalization of economic relations began only after the normalization of the inter-state and inter-party relations between the USSR and the FPRY in 1955 (Khrushchev's well-known visit to Belgrade). However, FPR Yugoslavia concluded a special agreement with the Council for Mutual

Economic Assistance (CMEA), as the main instrument of Soviet economic cooperation with socialist bloc countries and control over them, as late as 19 September 1964.

The specificity of this agreement (Yugoslavia was granted “associate member status” in the CMEA) lied in the fact that the recommendations and decisions of the CMEA bodies touching upon Yugoslavia’s interests had to be accepted by Yugoslav representatives in these bodies and become effective only upon their approval by the Yugoslav government (or the relevant competent Yugoslav body). In addition, special inter-state mixed committees were formed with all CMEA member countries. The main field of cooperation was trade. The agreement had some positive effects, so that already between 1963 and 1964, for example, SFR Yugoslavia’s trade with CMEA countries increased from US \$211 to 308 million in value terms, while its later volume was even larger.²⁷² However, the main problem of such trade lied in the method of mutual payments. Since neither side had convertible currency, the “clearing payment” system, practiced among permanent CMEA member countries, was adopted.

Simply said, under this system CMEA member countries agreed each year on a “commodity and financial framework” for mutual trade, based on practically “agreed-upon prices”, which had to be balanced by import/export items. So, for example, Yugoslav enterprises exporting their goods to the Soviet Union had to report their deliveries to the National Bank of Yugoslavia and immediately collect payment in dinars from it. On the other hand, enterprises importing Russian goods had to pay for them in dinars to the central bank as well. This system was especially skilfully used by the Republic of Serbia and these profitable transactions actually created a basis for the emergence of famous Belgrade’s re-export firms – Genex and Inex, which managed to incorporate almost the entire Serbian light industry (especially textile, footwear and furniture industries), as well as goods acquired or sold throughout the world, into their clearing-based export transactions. On the import side, trade was dominated by Russian crude oil and arms (especially warplanes for the Yugoslav National Army and passenger planes for Avio-genex Air Charter Company).

In the 1970s and 1980s the SFRY began to continuously record surpluses in the clearing balancing of its trade with the Soviet Union. Such surpluses,

²⁷² *Vojna enciklopedija*, Vol. 8, p. 539.

which sometimes exceeded US \$1 billion annually, were covered by printing dinars without clear backing, thus becoming the permanent cause of high inflation in the SFRY (i.e. disrupted balance between commodity and monetary funds). For example, during the last years of the existence of SFR Yugoslavia, in 1990 and 1991, Serbia's exports to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) amounted to 13.4 and 15.7 billion dinars respectively. At the same time, imports amounted to 11.8 and 12.5 billion dinars respectively. Otherwise, Serbia's exports to the CIS amounted to 18–22 per cent of its total exports, while its imports from the CIS amounted to 13–15 per cent of its total imports, whereby it continuously recorded significant deficits in its total foreign trade (at the same time, its imports from the CIS recorded "surpluses").²⁷³

In fact, the "agreed-upon exchange rate" of the "clearing dollar" per US dollar was never a "market-determined exchange rate", so that "whittling down" a surplus or deficit always depended on political decisions – made by both Moscow and Belgrade as well as at the inter-republic level within the SFRY which, in the latter case, instigated inter-ethnic quarrels. When the former Yugoslavia's last prime minister, Ante Marković, tried (in 1989) to bring the mentioned large inflationary hotbed under control and transform the system of payments between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, Milošević's top officials labelled his intention as an "anti-Serb conspiracy".

One "leap into the future" will indirectly show what "surplus" in trading with the CIS was the object of succession after the collapse of the SFRY, when the newly created states had to "divide" the property and debts of the former Yugoslav state. Namely, as late as 26 April 2007, Belgrade signed the agreement with the Russian Federation concerning the regulation of the old Russian clearing debt (Serbian surplus) amounting to US \$288.5 million, which was apportioned to Serbia under the succession arrangement (nearly 40 per cent of the former Yugoslavia's total "surplus"). The Russian side agreed that US \$188 million should be used to cover a part of the new Serbian gas debt and US \$100 million to revitalize the Djerdap 1 Hydroelectric Power Plant. The remainder of US \$0.5 million should be used to import nuclear equipment for the Vinča Nuclear Research Institute. As far as the author of this text knows, the above mentioned agreement has never been realized.

273 Statistički godišnjak Srbije 1992, Belgrade, 1993, p. 337.

The 1990s were marked by the well-known breakup of both the Soviet Union and the federal Yugoslav state. In 1992, the UN Security Council imposed economic and political sanctions against the Serbia and Montenegro union (FRY), while the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which succeeded the Soviet Union, was rapidly plunging into massive economic crisis and legal chaos. These two circumstances reduced mutual trade to a large extent, but it is difficult to monitor and show the real volume of this trade. In addition, the FRY was breaking sanctions through “eligible” businessmen or, more exactly, their firms in Cyprus and Russia, so that it was not clear where imported goods were actually coming from; on the other hand, Serbian “tycoons” – together with Russian “oligarchs” – were selling off Soviet reserves and resources (especially metals) at bargain prices across Europe and thus amassed wealth. Therefore, the data provided by the Republican Statistical Office that Serbia’s exports to the Russian Federation amounted to only 798 million dinars in 1999 and to 1,467 million dinars in 2000, and that its 1999 and 2000 imports amounted to 2,321 and 4,791 million dinars respectively, should be taken with a grain of salt.²⁷⁴ Namely, this would mean that mutual trade was at the same level as Serbia’s trade with Macedonia, for example, which points to the conclusion that the statistics do not give even an approximate picture of actual mutual trade.

THE CASE OF BRAĆA KARIĆ (BK)

During the 1990s, that is, the mentioned “decade of anarchy” in Serbia and Russia, Serbian tycoons and Russian oligarchs jointly engaged in numerous speculative operations. Here is the example of how “business was done” by Braća Karić (Karić Brothers) that rose to economic and political prominence in Serbia during the Milošević regime (Bogoljub Karić was even a minister in Mirko Marjanović’s “government of directors”).²⁷⁵

During the period of UN sanctions, like the majority of the new rich in Serbia, BK turned to the few “Orthodox countries” which were publicly violating the UN embargo against the FRY, or were secretly sabotaging it. In

274 Statistički godišnjak Srbije, Beograd 2001, str. c 253.

275 For more details see the article: Dimitrije Boarov, *Braća Karić, između Rusije i Srbije – korišćenje tranzicione konfuzije*, published in the geopolitical magazine *Limes plus*, 1, 2005, Hesperia, pp. 129–136.

that sense, Cyprus and Russia became their favourite countries. In the early 1990s, apart from several trading and construction firms, BK also founded AKA Banka in Moscow. It most frequently used this bank for a specific conversion of Yugoslav dinars into foreign currency. For example, here is the case of the Novi Sad-based Kulska Banka. At the beginning, in the FRY, this bank mostly dealt with “hot money“. At one moment in the early 1990s, it disposed of a significant amount of dinars and asked BK to sell it foreign currency, proposing a very favourable exchange rate. Bogoljub Karić offered the following arrangement: he will buy dinars for about US \$3.5 million through AKA Banka in Moscow, but Kulska Banka will be obliged to immediately deposit this foreign currency in that bank for a period of five years. So, Karić obtained dinars right away and Kulska Banka had the contract on a fixed-time deposit in foreign currency at AKA Banka in Moscow. However, after five years, when the new director of Kulska Banka – who succeeded in establishing banking operations on a legal basis – asked AKA Banka to pay out this deposit – he was taken by surprise. In this Moscow-based bank he was shown a forged contract (the page containing the amount of credit and the maturity date of the fixed-time deposit was changed) and offered a settlement instead of going to trial. Under the settlement, AKA Banka would immediately pay out the deposit that was about five times smaller. Since the new director of Kulska Banka turned down such an offer, the case went on trial in Moscow. The trial dragged on until the bankruptcy of AKA Banka at the end of 2004. In the meantime, BK withdraw money from AKA Banka and its creditors were left out in the cold.

Otherwise, AKA Banka was conceived, most likely in agreement with Milošević’s ministers, as a bank with two basic aims: to gradually take over all mutual payments arising from Russian-Serbian trade from the inter-state Yugoslav-Russian Exim Bank (later Vexim Bank, after its privatization) – in order to mitigate the problems faced by official Russia due to breaking a trade and financial embargo against the Milošević regime, as well as to financially support the BK construction projects in Russia and the newly established states surrounding it (i.e. the former Soviet republics).

The first aim – to become the basic bank for cross-border payments – was achieved to a relatively minor degree, because this idea clashed with other interest lobbies in Belgrade and Moscow. Moreover, as far as we know, Milošević did not deposit any more serious amount of the country’s foreign

exchange reserves with this bank – as was probably expected by BK. It was only after the collapse of the Milošević regime that the new governor of the National Bank of Yugoslavia (NBY), Mlađan Dinkić, deposited a part of the country's foreign exchange reserves with Vexim Bank in Moscow. The legality of this operation is still disputed because at that time the Serbian tycoons Miodrag Kostić, Vojin Lazarević and others were also the “co-owners“ of this bank.

As far as we know, the BK attempt to trade in agricultural products, metals and other commodities, which were very cheap in this big country at the turn of the 1980s to 1990s, was not successful, but one of its Moscow-based companies, BK Trade, was conveniently used to serve as the founder of Belgrade's Mobtel, a mobile phone company, in 1994. Mobtel was founded as a joint-stock company by BK and the Public Enterprise PTT Srbija.

Namely, under the mysterious contract on founding Mobtel, which was concluded in Cyprus on 15 April 1994, the Moscow-based Braća Karić-BK Trade System was obliged to immediately put US \$1 million in cash and US \$65.35 million worth equipment into the initial capital of the joint-stock mobile phone company founded together with PE PTT Srbija, totalling US \$130 million. Thus, it acquired a controlling interest of 51 per cent in the new company and monopoly concession to operate on the Serbian market over a period of 20 years. BK gave Mobtel US \$1 million in cash. However, it has never been determined what BK might have given in cash to other people who had to “push“ this unusual contract through the then Milošević system (which literally prohibited private or foreign ownership exceeding 50 per cent in enterprises providing public services).

As for the BK stake in Mobtel which included the agreed equipment, according to Zoran Marković (the former owner of Belgrade's Bel Pagette that was over by BK by a manoeuvre through Canada and was the object of a long-standing lawsuit, which was finally mysteriously closed), it was a question of Russia's obsolete GSM equipment that it did not want to build into its systems and was allegedly worth less than US \$5 million (another mysterious question is how much this equipment actually cost). It was later claimed, on the basis of the Ericsson invoices, that BK contributed to the joint venture with the equipment worth US \$17 million (although these invoices do not reveal another interesting possibility – BK was granted commodity credit by this firm under the previously concluded concession contract). However, it is possible that its value was “increased“ to the required amount of US \$65 million by forging sales

and customs documents. Until 2004, Mobtel allegedly did not earn any profit, so that its co-owner, state-owned firm PE PTT (Postal Service), did not receive any dividend, although it was visible to the naked eye that the number of its subscribers was increasing at the rate of about 100,000 per month. In short, this case was investigated by several state commissions; the last commission, which was appointed by the Koštunica Government, found out in August 2004 that BK actually had a 41.77 per cent stake in Mobtel's initial capital and not 51 per cent, so that the state was actually the majority owner of this lucrative company.

It is interesting to note that the case of Mobtel was brought by BK itself before the international court of arbitration in Zurich. At first, in late 2003, BK probably hoped that it would prove its 51 per cent ownership without any problem. However, it was wrong. In early 2005, feeling probably that the FRY could still prove in Zurich that its Russian subsidiary BK Trade failed to execute the memorandum of association and that the state had a lion's share in this Belgrade-based mobile phone company, BK found the partners – again in Russia – who would take over BK Trade, that is, Belgrade-based Mobtel, thus putting Serbia before a *fait accompli*. In fact, they hurried to be the sellers of a majority stake which, naturally, always fetches a higher price than a minority stake in any company. Thus, on 4 March 2005, BK announced that it sold BK Trade to the Russian mega-company Alfa Group (the capital of this company was estimated at 3.2 billion dollars). The price of this transaction with the Russian buyer has never been publicized.

The most exposed person from Alfa Group in this deal was Gleb Fetisov, Chairman of Alfa Telecom (the company forming part of the Alfa Group consortium), the man who was ranked 42nd with the capital of US \$850 million by the Russian magazine *Finans* listing the richest people in Russia. It was a question of an economist specialized in banking. Apart from business, he also engaged in politics and was elected member of the Federation Council from the Voronezh Region in 2001. In this political body he was the Deputy Chairman of the Finance Committee.

As late as 2006, Mlađan Dinkić, the then Minister of Finance in the Koštunica Government, cut this Serbian-Russian rashomniad and, with the assistance of a Viennese broker, sold this company to the Norwegian telecom company Telenor for about US \$1.6 billion, while the lawsuit against Bogoljub Karić is still dragging on. In the meantime, he is allegedly doing business in the Russian Federation.

This “case study” is only an illustration of numerous examples how some Serbian transitional winners had a safe basis in Russia for their business activities in Serbia at the turn of the 20th to 21st century (Mišković, Drakulić, Grujić, Nenad Popović, Lazarević and others).

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE FRY AND RUSSIAN FEDERATION, 2000

The last assistance provided to the Milošević regime by the Russian Federation was the Free Trade Agreement, which was concluded in August 2000, only one month before Milošević's fall from power. Under the Agreement, customs duties were abolished for about 99 per cent of traded products provided, under a general provision, that at least 51 per cent of their components are of domestic origin. The significance of this trade arrangement cannot be disputed, although it will later turn out that the Russian side retained rather large voluntaristic powers to interpret its content. Moreover, this document was not ratified by the Russian Parliament. Although it was supplemented in 2009 and 2011, cars, tractors, trucks and other vehicles are still excluded. This especially affects the Kragujevac car factory Fiat Serbia, which cannot obtain a licence even for the modest export of 5,000 cars a year.

At the time when the Agreement was concluded, trade between Russia and the FRY was at a very low level. In 2000, the total volume of mutual trade was valued at about US \$390 million; the FRY exports to Russia amounted to only US \$85.7 million, while its imports from Russia amounted to US \$304.7 million. After the conclusion of the Agreement, already in 2001, imports from Russia doubled (their value increased to US \$664.9 million), but exports declined to only US \$79.5 million. Serbian politicians kept emphasizing that the Free Trade Agreement with Russia can also encourage West European investors to invest in Serbia, but such a thesis had little relevance, since the European Union also had a favourable agreement with the Russian Federation on very low or non-existent customs duties (which was the inertia of Yeltsin's “grand opening“ of Russia to Europe).

After 2003, when it crossed the limit of US \$1 billion in both directions, the total volume of Serbia's trade with Russia became almost stagnant in physical terms (US \$1,149 million in both directions). In essence, an increase in mutual trade was caused by the global upward trend in crude oil and gas

prices. Truly, between 2003 and 2007, the FRY/Serbia's exports increased from US \$126.6 to 451.5 million but, in terms of their total value, they could not be compared with an increase in the imports from US \$1,023.3 million to US \$ 2,625.9 million (i.e. an increase in the FRY/Serbia's trade deficit from US \$896.7 to 2,173.4 million). In 2007, Russia topped the list of importers to Serbia; its deliveries worth US \$2,520.5 million in 2007 (increased by 17.6 per cent compared to 2006), whereby 77 per cent of Serbian imports accounted for oil (43 per cent) and gas (34 per cent) for which the amount of about US \$1.96 billion dollars was paid. Therefore, Serbia did not differ much from other countries in the region as well as the majority of other European countries. This was also very important for Serbia at that time because Russia was its fifth most important export partner. In 2007, its exports amounted to US \$451.5 million (compared to 2006, this was a 43.7 per cent increase). However, it must also be borne in mind that, at that time, its exports to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro were twice as large.

According to the data provided by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, when we compare the structure of trade between Serbia and the Russian Federation in 2007 with the structure of trade between Serbia and the Soviet Union, we can observe very few changes on Serbia's import side (energy products and metals) and major changes on its export side. Namely, the share of Serbia's consumer goods exports to the Russian market declined from 30 per cent to only 6.5 percent, while raw materials and intermediate goods exports increased strongly at the expense of machinery and equipment exports (whose share declined from 40 per cent in the past to only 20 per cent). This could also be confirmed by the sequence of Serbia's exports. The top 10 exports included floor covers, paper and cardboard, drugs, fresh apples, parquet flooring blocks, copper conductors, fabrics, rolling machines and cranes.

It must also be borne in mind that this was the period of a strong increase in the FRY/Serbia trade with the world. So, due to an increase in the prices of energy products until 2007, the value of trade with Russia increased to US \$3,077.4 million. However, its volume was six times lower than the volume of Serbia's trade with EU countries. It was also lower than Serbia's total volume of trade with the newly established states in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, although the Russian market had about 140 million consumers and the former Yugoslav market about 10 million.

*Trade between Serbia and the Russian Federation
(In millions of US dollars)*

YEAR	EXPORTS Z	IMPORTS	TOTAL	BALANCE
1990	1,197.1	1,063.4	2,260.5	+133.7
1991	823.0	675.7	1,498.7	+147.3
1996	156.3	214.8	371.1	-58.5
1997	176.3	439.5	615.8	-263.2
1998	152.1	520.8	672.9	-368.7
1999	72.9	211.2	284.1	-138.3
2000	85.7	304.7	390.4	-219.0
2001	79.5	664.9	744.4	-585.4
2002	90.7	777.2	867.9	-686.5
2003	126.6	1,023.3	1,149.9	-896.7
2004	157.7	1,401.1	1,558.8	-1,243.4
2005	225.8	1,655.7	1,881.5	-1,429.9
2006	314.1	2,142.8	2,456.9	-1,828.7
2007	451.5	2,625.9	3,077.4	-2,174.4
2008	553.0	3,488.7	4,041.7	-2,935.7
2009	349.8	1,982.9	2,332.7	-1,633.1
2010	534.7	2,157.1	2,691.8	-1,622.4
2011	795.7	2,665.9	3,461.6	-1,870.2
2012	871.400	1,847.900	2,719.300	-976.5
2013	1,065.154	1,969.257	3,034.411	-904.103
2014	1,032.458	2,374.376	3,406.834	-1,341.918
2015	726.268	1,803.289	2,529.557	-1,077.021

(Data of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, based on the Customs Administration's report)

At the end of this summary review of trade between Serbia and Russia it should be noted that, from 2001 to 2014, Serbian exports to Russia increased about 11 times, while during the same period its total exports increased about

9 times (from US \$1.7 to 15 billion).²⁷⁶ This means that trade with Russia was increasing at a somewhat faster pace, but it included products which are, as a rule, traded in dollars and whose prices (due to a rise in exports as well as for other reasons) were increasing faster than other prices on the world market. Over the past years, this situation has radically changed.

If the structure of Serbian trade with the rest of the world is observed in general, it can be found out that Serbia's major partners are EU countries, which account for about 55 per cent of total trade; they are followed by CEFTA countries (about 17 per cent) and then Russia (about 10 per cent, but this share is not declining). However, it cannot be denied that Russia is Serbia's significant trading partner: last year it ranked 5th on the export side and 3rd on the import side.

As for foreign investments in Serbia, which were very large during the period 2002–2007, it must be noted that Russia was strikingly absent from major projects and that its firms did not show any more significant interest in the privatization of socially-owned enterprises in Serbia. During the mentioned period, Russia invested only about US \$300 million in Serbia and ranked only 11th among foreign investors. For example, during the same period, small Slovenia invested about US \$1.4 billion in Serbia, while not much larger Austria ranked 1st among foreign investors in Serbia – its investments amounted to over US \$2 billion. It is interesting to note that, during the mentioned period, Serbian enterprises invested about US \$450 million (Sintelon from Bačka Palanka and Hemofarm from Vršac). Thus, their investments were worth one third more than the amount invested by Russia.²⁷⁷

Under such economic circumstances, at the end of 2007, Serbia and Russia began talks about a large inter-state energy deal. To put it simply, Serbia had practically no reason to increase its energy dependence on Russia, but some traditional and, more recently, political reasons acted in favour of Russian strategic interests. It was allegedly necessary to ensure Russia's policy of "defending" Serbia against the announced proclamation of Kosovo's independence – which was evidently agreed at the time of the "cohabitation" of the Serbian Prime Minister, Dr Vojislav Koštunica, and Serbian President Boris Tadić.

276 Novi magazin, 25 February 2016.

277 Bulletin of the European Movement, 25 March 2008.

RUSSIA'S ENERGY "PACKAGE DEAL" OF 2008

For the public, the talks about the conclusion of the inter-state “energy deal” started in early October 2007, when Belgrade was visited by the team of the top managers of the Russian state-run mega company Gazprom, led by its Chief Executive Sergey Miller. This team was separately received by both Prime Minister Koštunica and President Tadić. In Belgrade, Miller not only announced that Gazprom would almost completely take over the Serbian oil industry, but also sent a signal to Western Europe that his company would not give up its strategy of being directly present on the markets it supplies with gas and oil despite the fact that, one month earlier, the EU Executive Commission announced that it would not allow maintaining and creating energy monopolies over everything, that is, the import, processing, transport and distribution of raw materials, in its territory and, to that end, issued the binding EU instruction. Literally speaking, Miller emphasized just the opposite principle in Belgrade and said the following for Radio Television of Serbia (on 9 October): “During our visit to Belgrade we will consider a set of projects, including the new South Stream gas pipeline that would run towards Europe through Serbia, as well as our participation in the privatization of NIS (Serbia’s state-owned oil company). We have also talked about Gazprom’s participation in building underground gas storage facilities in Banatski Dvor. In Gazprom’s opinion, all segments of cooperation should be considered as a single complex project, since gas production, transport, processing and storage supplement each other. After all, this is the matter of Serbia’s energy balance, which implies Gazprom’s large new investments in gas transport, NIS modernization and underground storage facilities. Consequently, the issue of NIS privatization and our decision on the route of the South Stream gas pipeline coincided temporally because, apart from the route through Serbia, the neighbouring countries also propose other routes. Until 2013 or 2014, it would be possible to put the South Stream pipeline into operation, restore the NIS capacity and store about 80,000 cubic metres of gas in the Banatski Dvor underground storage facility. In our opinion, all forms of our business cooperation are an integral part of a complex project. In other words, we hold that our participation in the privatization of NIS forms part of our strategic cooperation with Serbia.”

Soon afterwards, it was leaked that Gazprom Neft (a Gazprom subsidiary) offered only US \$400 million to purchase a 51 per cent stake in NIS,

although the total capital of this company was estimated at US \$3–5 billion (the price offered was even lower than the “book value“ of NIS). This caused quite a stir in the Serbian government as well as among the public. In his December 2007 letter to the Prime Minister, Mlađan Dinkić, then Minister of Finance in Koštunica’s Government, called this offer “humiliating for Serbia“ and pointed out that the Croatian oil company INA had sold 25 per cent of its capital to the Hungarian oil company Mol for €525 million. He also pointed out that the investment of €500 million, promised by Gazprom Neft for the development of NIS over the 4-year period, was lower than the estimated NIS profit during the same period. At that moment, only Serbia’s crude oil production of about 720,000 tons per year was valued at US \$450 million (US \$90 per barrel).²⁷⁸

The Russian proposal, presented to Prime Minister Koštunica and President Tadić, arrived shortly before the presidential election scheduled for January 2008. When President Tadić received less votes in the first round than his rival Tomislav Nikolić, the then member of the Serbian Radical Party, it seems that it was decided that the Russian “package deal” should be hastily adopted. Thus, between two rounds of voting, on 25 January 2008, the two sides concluded the Inter-Governmental Agreement on Energy Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Serbia (for a period of 30 years) and the Protocol on the Basic Terms of the Russian State-Run Company Gazprom Neft’s Acquisition of NIS. Their formal signing in Moscow was attended by the top-level state delegations – the domestic one was led by Russian President Vladimir Putin, accompanied by the candidate for his successor Dmitry Medvedev, while the Serbian one was led by Serbian President Boris Tadić and Prime Minister Dr Vojislav Koštunica.²⁷⁹ All those present evaluated this strategic document as being mutually beneficial. Thereafter, in the second round, President Tadić won a second term in office.

278 Vreme, 8 January 2008.

279 As for this agreement, which is very unfavourable for Serbia, there are also some other interpretations. Namely, in view of the fact that the talks about this oil and gas deal started during the Milošević regime, that is, Mirko Marjanović’s Government, and continued during Koštunica’s Government, one should not rule out the possibility that President Tadić was under great pressure to agree to this “inherited“ arrangement.

Unfortunately, this “framework agreement“ between Russia and Serbia was immediately published, so that everyone who wanted to read it on the Serbian Government website could observe that it looked more like Serbia’s “energy capitulation“ than a partnership agreement. Namely, it was agreed that Serbia should give its territory for the gas pipeline and gas storage facility in Banatski Dvor to Russia, and sell it a majority stake in NIS for €400 million. As a minority owner of oil and gas facilities, the Serbian Government will practically have no exclusive rights over the oil and gas companies to be established or sold in its territory (such companies will have extraterritorial status).

As for the South Stream project, it was anticipated that contractors for the construction of the gas pipeline in the Serbian territory would be selected by the company that will be established and be responsible for its construction and exploitation. The Russian side (Gazprom or one of its daughter companies) will have a 51 per cent stake in such a company and full control over its management. At the same time, the Serbian Government will “grant favourable tariff and tax treatment“ to this company (Article 11). It is also stipulated (Article 12) that the “Serbian side shall consider the possibility of exempting the materials, services and works necessary for the realization of the project are exempted from value added tax until they become cost-effective“.

On their return to Belgrade, the Serbian politicians persistently emphasized that, thanks to the South Stream pipeline, Serbia would earn €200 million in transit taxes each year. This should mean that the mentioned company would have to earn the profit of €400 million from gas transit through Serbia (49 per cent of which would go to the Serbian side). This would mean that at least 400–500 billion cubic metres of gas should pass through Serbia each year – which is absolutely unrealistic or, better said, fantastic, since this quantity would be at the level of Russia’s total annual production (transit fee per 1,000 cubic metres per 100 km is usually about one euro). Realistically speaking, it is highly unlikely that Serbia would not have the annual revenue of €20 million from this company.

On the other hand, the majority ownership of NIS should enable Gazprom Neft to obtain 700,000–1.3 million tons of crude oil each year, the “frozen“ mineral rent of 3 per cent, the market consuming oil products, based on the processing of four million tons of crude oil, two refineries with the total processing capacity of about 7.5 million tons of crude oil, 497 petrol stations throughout Serbia, three big administrative buildings, 16 per cent stake in

Pančevo's Petrohemija, 43 per cent of the shares of the newspaper publishing and printing company Politika, 49 per cent ownership in the Pinki Sports Centre, 38 per cent ownership in Hyatt Hotel in Belgrade, and 11 hotels and resorts in Serbia and Montenegro.²⁸⁰

The mentioned Moscow Agreement of January 2008 was contractually effectuated in December of the same year. The Russians purchased the majority of the shares of NIS and Banatski Dvor gas storage facility; they did not enter Srbijagas, but imposed a mediator for gas imports – the Belgrade-based joint venture company Srbijagas in which they soon acquired a 75 per cent ownership by shady manoeuvring.

As it is known, NIS in Russian hands began to operate at a profit, due primarily to a continuous increase in crude oil prices on the world market and its comprehensive restructuring – in two years, the number of employed was reduced from about 11,000 to 4,800. During 2013, for example, this company earned the profit of even 51 billion dinars (about €450 million). However, due to the fact that, in the meantime, Serbia's stake in the ownership of NIS was reduced to 29 per cent, Serbia did not benefit much from this fact, all the more so because its representatives in the NIS bodies had no courage to dispute the decision to distribute only half of the profit to shareholders (consequently, the state of Serbia received only a third of the half of the profit). Otherwise, Item 8.1.3 of the sales contract between Serbia and Gazprom Neft stipulates that "during a period of four years, as of the date of conclusion of this transfer, the buyer shall continuously ensure the distribution of NIS dividends each fiscal year to the amount not lower than 15 per cent of the available net profit per year". The NIS management justified the above mentioned distribution of 2013 profit by the fact that during that year the company invested 57 billion dinars in the modernization of Pančevo Refinery. NIS General Director Kiril Kravchenko emphasized that during the past five years, since the purchase of NIS, Gazprom Neft invested €2 billion in this company and, according to plan, another €1.5 billion would be invested in the next three years.²⁸¹ This plan probably will not be realized because the 2015 profit of NIS dropped to only 14.6 billion dinars, showing a further downward trend.²⁸²

280 Vreme, 31 January 2008.

281 Vreme, 10 April 2014.

282 Danas, 25 February 2016.

As for other projects envisaged under the energy deal between Serbia and Russia, it should be noted that Russia cancelled the South Stream project in the summer of 2015 and Serbia still has no clear natural gas supply strategy if Gazprom really stops delivering gas to Europe through Ukraine in 2019. On the other hand, the negotiations on the extension of the gas storage facility in Banatski Dvor and the construction of some storage facilities in Banat started only at the end of 2015. Otherwise, during the period 2008–2014, Gazprom supplied Serbia with very expensive natural gas at the price higher than US \$500 per 1,000 cubic metres and in 2015 this price was lowered to somewhat over US \$300 per 1,000 cubic metres (Serbia did not have almost any benefit from the “energy deal”). The high expectations that, thanks to this inter-state “energy deal, Gazprom would ensure the coming of a number of other Russian companies to Serbia, have not been fulfilled.

According to the information of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, between 2003 and 2014, Russian investments totalled about US \$3 billion. Apart from NIS, the Russian company Lukoil is also present on the Serbian oil product market. In 2003, it purchased Beopetrol and invested about US \$300 million in the reconstruction of its distribution network. Mention should also be made of Yugorosgaz which invested in several distribution pipelines in southern Serbia. It is interesting to note that Gazprom has rejected (and is still rejecting) to take over a complete gas line in Serbia, which also includes Petrohemija Pančevo and Methanol and Acetic Acid Complex (MSK) Kikinda, because it considers them to be unprofitable.

Altogether, the presence of Russian firms in the Serbian industry is small. One Ural company purchased the Majdanpek Copper Pipe Factory for US \$35 million, while the Russian Red Triangle Company purchased the Niš Rubber Tube Factory Vulkan for €3.5 million. Interform from St Petersburg purchased a majority stake in the Vapeks Polyurethane Foam Factory in Čačak.

The Serbian financial sector was entered by Sberbank of Russia (in 2012) and VTB Bank which, in 2013, purchased the shares of the Bank of Moscow – Belgrade; as early as 2011, the Russian insurance company SOGAZ, with its branch SOGAZ Serbia began to operate (but without larger transactions). It should be noted that Sberbank did not start well and that in 2014 and 2015 it had to dismiss many of its employees in Serbia – as soon as its credit lines with London banks were closed at the end of 2014.

Apart from the energy sector, the largest Russian investment was the purchase of a 71.2 per cent stake in Putnik Travel Agency for €41 millions; the investor is Russia's Metropol Group.

Finally, one should not lose sight of the loan granted by Russian Railways within the Russian government loan of US \$800 million for the reconstruction of some railways in Serbia in 2015–2016.

CURRENT PROBLEMS IN TRADE BETWEEN SERBIA AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

After the imposition of trade and financial sanctions against the Russian Federation by the European Union, United States and some other major countries at the end of 2014 (due to the Ukraine crisis), which caused various economic problems in Russia, especially because these sanctions were followed by a precipitous fall in crude oil and gas prices on the world market (by about 70 per cent during 12 months) – trade between Serbia and Russia also faced a crisis, although Serbia did not support these sanctions.

According to the information on mutual economic cooperation in 2015, which was provided by the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, “trade between the two countries (that year) was marked by exchange rate fluctuations and a fall in the value of the ruble from late September 2014 to late January 2015 and from mid-August to mid-September and until the end of 2015, as well as in early 2016, which directly caused the uncertainty of collection, aggravated planning and thus led to a significant decrease in both exports and imports.”

During 2015, Serbian exports to the Russian Federation decreased by 29.7 per cent (compared to 2014). Total Serbian exports to Russia amounted to only US \$726,268 million. Annual imports also decreased by 24 per cent, so that total imports from Russia amounted to US \$1,803.3 million dollars that year. Consequently, total trade decreased from US \$3,406 million (in 2014) to US \$2,529 million (in 2015), thus declining by nearly US \$900 million.

When sanctions were imposed against the Russian Federation, the story went that this would be a chance for the Serbian food industry and agriculture to improve their position on this large market. However, this was not realized to a more significant extent. The fact that food exports are still modest can be illustrated by the 2014 data. For example, Serbian food exports

to Bosnia and Herzegovina amounted to US \$463 million, to Romania US \$372 million and to the Russian Federation (ranked 3rd in volume terms) US \$307 million. It should also be borne in mind that total Russian food imports amounted to more than US \$40 billion and that total Serbian food exports in 2014 amounted to US \$2,747 million.

The problems concerning Serbian food exports to the Russian Federation already start with the distance of 2,000 km from that market due to which these exports are burdened by high transport costs. Second, according to Petar Matijević, a large meat producer, competition on the Russian food market is still very tough, so that Serbian pork exports cannot be profitable. On that market, the pork price of 130 dinars per kilo live weight (somewhat higher than one euro per kilo) is too high relative to Chinese and Polish prices.²⁸³ However, Klemens Tenis, the owner of large cattle farms in Germany, still intends to export Serbian meat to Russia and thus invest €380 million in Serbian farms. The third problem, not less important, is that on its way to Russia Serbian food exports must pass the sanitary control of EU countries, etc.

SUMMARY

Over the past decades the Russian market has become significant for Serbian producers and consumers, but it hardly offers any advantage relative to the EU market, especially due to the uncertainty of domicile currency (ruble), uncertain direction of Russian economic policy and heavy dependence of the Russian Federation on the export of only few products (crude oil and gas) and several basic raw materials. Political declarations, the alleged traditional friendship of the Serbian and Russian peoples and other “pan-Slavic mutualities“ have not rationalized economic relations between Serbia and the Russian Federation, nor will they be rationalized in the future. Therefore, it is necessary to take this fact into account while projecting the future of economic cooperation between the two countries.

283 Dnevnik, 6–7 januar 2016.

Petar Popović

SERBIAN-RUSSIAN JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE

Belgrade not Ready to Turn Its Back on
Moscow in the Defence Sector

In the autumn of 2016, Serbian and Russian special army units will conduct their third joint tactical exercise. The first exercise was held in 2014, with the epicentre in Srem, at the Nikinci military training ground. The second exercise was conducted in the Novorossiysk zone in Russia, in 2015, and also included Belarusian military units. This year's military exercise, which has already been announced, but the precise date has not been given, will be conducted again in Serbia. However, the location of the expected exercise is still unknown.

Other details about the upcoming military exercise are still unavailable to the public except for information that its actors will be anti-terrorist units.

As announced by the media, the upcoming military exercise will be dedicated to "peace-keeping mission simulation". According to the Serbian Ministry of Defence, the reason for conducting this exercise is to "improve the operational and functional capabilities" of the Serbian Army. The last information about this exercise dealt with the visit of a "delegation of Russian paratroopers" to Belgrade in early February in order to make necessary preparations. Otherwise, the "joint tactical exercise of the two countries' special forces" forms "part of a concerted plan for (Serbia's) bilateral military cooperation with the Russian Federation in 2016", as was announced by the Ministry of Defence and carried by the press under the heading *Between the Pillars of the European Union, Russia, the United States and China*.²⁸⁴

The military exercise codenamed "Srem 2014" was conducted in mid-November that year, at the Nikinci military training ground, with the

²⁸⁴ Između stubova EU, Rusije, SAD i Kine, *Blic*, 8 February 2016.

participation of “more than 400 members of Russian and Serbian airborne assault forces”²⁸⁵). Insofar as Serbia is concerned, it was “the first time ever that an airborne assault with the use of armoured vehicles was demonstrated”. The thematic assignment of the exercise was defined as “a hostage rescue operation, destruction of a terrorist base and medical evacuation of the wounded”. The exercise relied mostly on Russian as well as Serbian materiel, transport aircraft Il-76s and An-27s, MiG fighter jets, and Mi-8 and Gazela helicopters, along with armoured vehicles BMD-2, BTR and BOV, as well as artillery and infantry weapons.

The event *per se* was not a routine one, but Belgrade did not insist on publicity. On the contrary, the then Defence Minister, Bratislav Gašić, reminded the public that “Serbia has signed agreements on military-technical cooperation with more than 60 countries”, so that military exercises, like the first larger one with Russia, are important for testing the Serbian Army’s capabilities. Otherwise, “Serbia is a militarily neutral country that determines its international relations in line with the four pillars – the European Union, Russia, the United States and China”, Gašić said.

The Minister dismissed the objections that “the exercise was secretly organized and conducted”. He said that the exercise was held according to the plan of military exercises for 2014.

Compared to brief press releases, the “Nikinci” military exercise was presented in much greater detail on some Internet platforms and was regarded as “the largest-ever Russian-Serbian military exercise in history”.²⁸⁶ According to these sources, “Srem 2014” represented “the largest assault of Russian materiel and manpower in this territory after the initiative of taking over Priština’s Slatina airport in 1999”. The Russian military contingent came on board six Il-76MD transport planes. Two Russian unmanned aerial vehicles (a Granat and a paramotor) were also transported.

UNDER THE SLOGAN ON BROTHERHOOD

If the “Srem 2014” military exercise was intended, as its name implies, to affirm not so much its site as Serbia’s position between the “pillars of the

285 Beta, 14 November 2014.

286 <http://tangosix.rs/2014/10/11/srem-2014-pocela-najveca-rusko-srpska-vojnavezba-u-istoriji/>.

European Union, Russia, the United States and China”, the codename of the same event staged next year, “Slavic Brotherhood 2015”, expressed something more than that – it alluded to the mutual closeness of its participants, which was “confirmed by history”.

This time Belarus also took part in the exercise whose content, despite still being principled (“anti-terrorist”), was slightly more specific: “anti-government elements in a fictitious country, together with regular enemy forces, undertake terrorist attacks and attempt the provocations of government forces... The joint command responds by undertaking an anti-terrorist operation; it destroys illegal armed groups and restores order and the rule of law.”²⁸⁷

In the context of Russia’s defence doctrine, it is not difficult to recognize, in the concept of the exercise, the “response” to an attempt to forcibly take over power in the country through sabotage made by an external “force”. According to this doctrine, there is no difference between an externally organized coup and aggression, so that Russia has the right to respond with “all necessary means”.

The exercise was conducted near Novorossiysk from 2 to 5 September. The Ministry of Defence informed that Serbia was represented by the members of the Serbian Army 7th Brigade, while the exercise was hosted by the 7th Guards Airborne-Assault (Mountain) Division. It is also named the “Cherkassy”/“Cossack” Division, while seven of its members have been awarded the Hero of Russia title for distinguished services during real-world military operations in Chechnya, during the South Ossetia crisis and operation against Georgia (2008). It involved a total of 700 personnel – one reinforced battalion of the 7th Guards Airborne-Assault (Mountain) Division on behalf of Russia and one 7th Brigade company on behalf of Serbia.

As emphasized by the Serbian Ministry of Defence, it is a question of the representatives of the Serbian special forces who have already participated in such exercises with foreign military units, and have undergone training in France and the United States. The basic aim of joint military exercises and training with members of foreign armed forces is, above all, to improve the operational and functional capabilities of our army.²⁸⁸

287 RTS, 2 September 2015.

288 MOD press release, September 2015.

CONTROVERSY OVER COMMITMENT

It is still unknown how the 2016 Serbian-Russian joint military exercise has been conceived. However, although more detailed information about the upcoming event is not available, the very scheduling of the exercise provoked controversy. Or, to be more precise, it gave rise to an old question – is Serbia's military neutrality possible under conditions of exacerbated relations between the West and Russia? Or, in other words, has the time come for Belgrade to take a side?

This “old question” has also been actualized due to Serbia's traditional reliance on Russian weapons for the renewal of its army's weapons, as well as its reflexive turn to Russia whenever an emergency need for them arises. One example of Belgrade's turn to Moscow was its reaction to the news that Croatia “is in negotiations with Norway to buy a missile defence system”. Thus, Serbia sought to acquire such a system from Russia. On the instruction of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister in charge of defence industry, Dmitry Rogozin, visited Belgrade in order to “study and assess the Serbian needs”.²⁸⁹

The Serbian political parties, which represent the constituency, do not have a single answer to the question of military neutrality, while in their fight over votes they sometimes differ among themselves only whether they take a “pro-NATO” or “pro-Russian” stance. While balancing between the “four pillars”, the Government tries to depoliticize the issue of military cooperation. Thus, it passes on this issue to the defence sector, which is not authorized to “select” armies because it is responsible for training,

“In 2016, like in the previous period, the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Army will plan international military cooperation activities, as well as joint exercises and training will all partners with whom they cooperate”, the daily newspaper *Danas* was told by the Ministry of Defence. “The basic aim of joint military exercises and training with members of foreign armed forces is, above all, to improve the operational and functional systems of our armed forces. The Serbian Army is neutral and cooperates with more than 60 countries”.

289 <http://taš.ru/en/defence>.

For now, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić stands out from an attitude of neutrality and demonstrates open sympathy toward one of Serbia's "four pillars", that is, Russia. Nikolić is cited in *Danas* as saying the following: "Serbia remains devoted to Russia; that is the stance of the people, while we politicians exist for the sake of people, not the other way around". This newspaper also writes that Nikolić expects "the EU to return to cooperation with Russia, since that is in their common interest". However, the Serbian President does not decide on military neutrality, or accession to one side or another. This ball is in the hands of the government and, for the time being, Belgrade stands by its word. It does not write off any of its pillars, especially not the Moscow one.

Sonja Biserko

RUSSIA AND NATO: A TEST OF STRENGTH OVER MONTENEGRO

Russia's reaction to Montenegro's decision to join NATO was more than negative. It has strengthened its position in Montenegro ever since the latter was invited to the membership of NATO so as to put across a message to the West, but to Serbia as well should it opt for such a course of action.

The official Podgorica and Premier Milo Djukanović see NATO's invitation as Montenegro's huge achievement and recognition of its reforms. Djukanović calls it a large step for regional, European and even global security, the one that will also speed up Montenegro's accession to EU.²⁹⁰ He specifically argues that Montenegro's membership of NATO is the most efficient and rational way of ensuring a significant inflow of investment – a major stimulus for Montenegro's economy. For him, NATO's invitation stands for a historical event, almost as important as the outcome of the 2006 referendum on independence: Montenegro has been invited to the exclusive club of countries symbolizing the best values of today's civilization.²⁹¹

The fact that Montenegro's opposition has been instrumentalized and serious turmoil over the NATO's invitation caused should not be underestimated: the developments threaten to destabilize not only Montenegro but also the entire region. Having asked a vote of confidence from the parliament Premier Djukanović managed to put the ball in the opposition's court. He suggested a reshuffle of the government and accepted all the requests of the Positive Montenegro: and all this in the function of the upcoming election campaign.

Russia's support to Montenegrin opposition found an echo in Serbia's pro-Russian circles, which are not to be neglected. In Serbia, the West-Russia

290 http://ruskarec.ru/politics/2015/12/18/milo-djukanovic-smetaju-mi-kritike-ruskih-politicara_552655

291 <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/344548/Brisel-Crna-Gora-pozvana-u-NATO>

dichotomy is neither artificial nor just in the service of geopolitical interests. Historian Milivoj Bešlin says it has to do with different concepts of the rule of law, social plurality, institutions, individualism, human rights, media freedoms and critical thought. It has to do with the ambition to transport to Serbia a certain type of autocracy and the state's supremacy over the society and an individual. On the other hand, he says, Russia itself has been interested in the Balkans for the past two centuries – the region where, without taking any risk, it could prove itself as a truly big and not just a regional power. Therefore, not a single politician in Serbia, the incumbent Premier included, could ignore this context. And this context now determines his rational foreign policy moves.²⁹²

Russia's reaction to Montenegro's membership of NATO should be viewed in the context of its overall policy, mostly in the security sector. Russia takes that the global security system should be redefined: for it, NATO makes sense no more and new solutions should be searched for. Since the disintegration of the Warsaw bloc, Russia has been trying to impose OSCE as a new security forum. Sergey Karaganov, the dean of the Faculty of Global Economy and International Policy, says it is more than obvious that the system of Europe's security has failed. Based on the West's domination, he argues, this system was unacceptable to the great majority of Russia's elites. Karganov himself used to be in the membership of OSCE's "group of sages" tasked with suggesting "a joint project" for renewal of European security. This group hardly attained anything at all. He says that OSCE has been prevented from growing into an efficient mechanism for the post-cold-war security system. However, once the war broke out in Ukraine, he adds, OSCE was most successful in coordinating the peace mission and as such could continue acting as a forum of dialogue and a crisis center.²⁹³

Moscow's strong reaction to NATO's invitation to Montenegro show that it has renewed its imperial and revanchist ambitions. Everything indicates that it will not give up Montenegro as its interest sphere just like that. Over the past two decades it has developed a large net of influence on many Montenegrin institutions; last year's request for stationing Russian warships in

292 http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/politika/precutkuje_se_da_srbija_ima_veci_izvoz_na_kosovo_nego_u_rusiju.56.html?news_id=312750#sthash.4RNi925q.dpuf

293 http://ruskarec.ru/opinion/2016/01/14/ne-treba-se-radovati-pre-vremena_559499

the Bar Harbor was a part of Russia's strong campaign for positioning itself in the Mediterranean.

President of the Defense Committee of the Russian Senate Victor Ozerov confirmed the above by saying, "Montenegro is becoming now a potential threat to Russia's security." Montenegro's membership of NATO, he added, "will disable many programs Russia has been implementing there, including the technical-military cooperation." Moscow takes that NATO initiative is gradually undermining whatever remained of Russia's influence in the Balkans: it expands further US axis to the East, the axis that is already allocating its troops and resources in Baltic republics, Poland, Bulgaria and Rumania.²⁹⁴

When two years ago Montenegro announced its plan for the membership of NATO, Russian Ambassador to Serbia Alexander Chepurin was so much angered that he told a conference in Belgrade that "like everywhere else there are also monkeys in politics." He called Montenegro's plan "a monkey business."²⁹⁵ And his counterpart in Podgorica at the time, Jacob Gerasimov, warned openly that Russia would be forced to reconsider its relationship with Montenegro once the latter joined NATO.²⁹⁶

Unlike the official Podgorica's restrained response to statements as such, Savo Kentera of the Atlantic Council of Montenegro said that Russia should realize that Montenegro was not its province and would never be, since Montenegro had already charted its course – it would join NATO membership. "Russia could do absolutely nothing about it or influence on it, and 'Russian boot' will not step in Montenegro," he said.²⁹⁷

Expert in geopolitics Blagoje Grahovac characterized Russia's warning at the time as a most aggressive geopolitical story Russia has been telling especially to Balkan countries.²⁹⁸

Montenegro's option for Euro-Atlantic integration is faced with serious challenges. Once again (after the referendum on independence) Montenegro is at the crossroad of its democratic development. Opponents to its

294 <http://www.nspm.rs/srbija-i-nato/crna-gora-u-nato-poslednji-antiruski-potez.html>

295 <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/reakcije-na-ispad-cepurina-rvcrna-gora-pripada-eu-i-nato/25183370.html>

296 Ibid.

297 Ibid.

298 Ibid.

membership of NATO are louder and louder, more and more aggressive and growingly manipulative.

MONTENEGRIN OPPOSITION INSTRUMENTALIZED

A part of Montenegrin opposition – but the civil sector and the media as well – has been trying for long to disqualify Djukanović’s rule but with almost no avail. Some opposition parties are extremely pro-Russian (Serbian parties) and close to the pro-Russian bloc in Serbia (DSS, Dveri, Serbian Orthodox Church, Academia and newspapers such as Politika, Vecernje novosti, Geopolitika, Pecat and many others). NATO’s invitation to Montenegro unified the opposition in the interest of Russia. The Serbian Orthodox Church / SPC/ and Metropolitan Amfilohije are the fiercest opponents of NATO on the one hand, and fervent advocates for Russia on the other. “What is NATO that bombarded us, then snatched our Kosovo and Metohija, and today wages a civil war in Ukraine thus continuing what Hitler started?” says Amfilohije.²⁹⁹

Russia strengthened its support to the Montenegrin opposition to undermine Montenegro’s membership of NATO. Oppositionists are going often to Moscow where they are being received by highest Russian officials. Premier Djukanović says that the opposition makes no bones about its ties with Moscow; as for Moscow, it never denied it. It supports the protests the opposition has been staging with an eye to the country’s destabilization and ouster of its incumbent regime. Without Moscow’s support the opposition would hardly been so loud and persistent in its demands for so long.³⁰⁰

The opposition intensified its protests after NATO’s invitation. In an interview with the *Russian Word* magazine Premier Djukanović said, “The Montenegrin opposition is being supported by some Russian state-run media, certain politicians, MPs and some domestic institutions that openly boast about their ties with Kremlin. They are openly supporting the protests meant to destabilize legal institutions and oust the democratically elected

299 <http://www.newsweek.rs/region/67331-amfilohije-o-pozivu-crne-gore-u-nato-kaoda-su-prihvatili-hitlera-1941-godine.html>

300 http://ruskarec.ru/politics/2015/12/18/milo-djukanovic-smetaju-mi-kritike-ruskih-politicara_552655

government by revolutionary means. For many reasons Russia is the last country Montenegro would expect something like this from.”³⁰¹

Oppositionists are protesting clearly against Montenegro’s membership of NATO and calling for a referendum on the issue. Voices calling for a Balkan alliance based on neutrality are growing louder and louder. President of the Democratic People’s Party Milan Knežević says, “The plan of anti-NATO activities our party adopted promotes an alliance between Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia that would be founded on neutrality. This alliance would ask UN SC to guarantee its neutrality and that would be the best answer to all the challenges and possible conflicts in the Balkans.”³⁰²

Tchetnik Duke Andrija Mandić, the actual leader of the pro-Russian opposition and his New Serbian Democracy party /NSD/ argues against Montenegro’s membership of NATO saying, “That alliance launched a criminal aggression against FRY and its policy directly aims against our millennial patroness, Russia, snatches the territory of the sisterly Serbia, and continually threatens world peace.” A decision on the membership of NATO, he stresses, can only be made at a “fair and just referendum,” whereas “the Montenegrin puppet government leads us towards a morbid and unsustainable situation of being in alliance with Turkey and Albania, and in direct confrontation with Russia and Serbia. Such a situation, apart from associating high treason, borders on political lunacy as wants citizens of Montenegro to accept Turkey and Albania as allies, and be in confrontation with Russia and Serbia.”³⁰³

Reminding of historical ties with Russia, Mandić points out that Djukanović, like every other Montenegrin, should be grateful to Russia for keeping Montenegro alive for three hundred years by supporting it military and politically. “It was thanks to Russia that Montenegro was internationally recognized at the Berlin Congress in 1878; everyone was grateful to Russia at the time,” he says.³⁰⁴

The Democratic Front – the opposition alliance – invited Russian Vice-President Dmitri Rogozin to visit Montenegro. However, Rogozin is on the

301 Ibid.

302 <http://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/dnp-za-savez-balkanskih-drzava-zasnovan-na-vojnoj-neutralnosti-871384>

303 <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/ulazak-u-nato-gasi-snove-o-velikoj-srbiji>

304 http://ruskarec.ru/politics/2015/12/23/u-crnoj-gori-ce-pobediti-zlo-ako-rusija-nista-ne-preduzme_554283

list of Russian citizens denied entry to Montenegro according to the government's decision to respect EU's sanctions against Russia. In many of his earlier statements Rogozin was threatening Montenegro for opting for the membership of NATO.³⁰⁵

MOSCOW'S REACTIONS

Moscow responded strongly to Djukanović's statements about Russia and Montenegro following EU policy for sanctions against it. It was notably disappointed with Djukanović's visit to US and his meeting with Vice-President Joseph Biden; it called it politically "hostile" and "contrary to the traditional friendship between the peoples of our two countries."

President of the Russian Duma Sergey Narikashkin told the delegation of the Democratic Front that Moscow was "deeply disappointed with Montenegro for having imposed sanctions against Russia" and could hardly understand Montenegrin officials the more so since their country had been bombarded by "their future allies."³⁰⁶

Russia even announced that it would put an end to all projects with Montenegro. The most dangerous message it has put across to Montenegro was the one about "Montenegro being a legitimate target of Russian nuclear weapons once it joins NATO."³⁰⁷

First Vice-President of the Russian Duma Leonid Kalashnikov said that much could be said about "Montenegrin sovereignty" as it was more than clear that the "so-called Euro-Atlantic integrations" were conducted by US. "Americans are exerting pressure on all countries – on their European and NATO partners and especially on those with well-balanced stands about NATO enlargement. This has been escalating problems and rising tensions between Russia and European countries in all discussions about the anyway tough issues in the Balkans."³⁰⁸ Security-related solutions to Montenegro, he said, should take into consideration the stands of all interested parties, Rus-

305 <http://rs.n1info.com/a133753/Svet/Region/Rogozin-ne-moze-u-Crnu-Goru.html>

306 <http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/348353/Predsednik-Dume-sa-liderima-crnogorske-opozicije>

307 <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/ulazak-u-nato-gasi-snove-o-velikoj-srbiji>

308 <http://www.kurir.rs/planeta/rusi-odgovorili-na-bilbord-u-podgorici-poruka-ruskom-ambasadoru-necivilizovana-i-nepismena-clanak-1879773>

sia included. “This is the only approach that guarantees Montenegro’s sovereignty, prosperity and standing in the Balkans.”³⁰⁹

Most serious of all in warning Montenegro was Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov who said that its joining NATO was “an artificial decision” that would not ensure security to the Alliance. According to him, the membership of NATO was nothing Montenegrins were after, especially when denied the right to have their say at a referendum. He also accused NATO of manipulating small countries and creating “ungrounded atmosphere of fear of Russia.”³¹⁰

Moscow’s *Komserant* newspaper calls the reaction of many Russian politicians and “patriotic” experts to NATO’s invitation to Montenegro “absurd and irresponsible,” arguing that no other countries on its way to NATO had ever been faced with Russia’s discriminatory actions.³¹¹

RUSSIA’S MESSAGES TO SERBIA

Relations between Russia and Serbia have intensified in all spheres over the past two or three years. Nikita Bondarov of the Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies says, “Serbia is certainly in Russia’s sphere of interest” as testified by ever closer relations between the two countries. He also speaks of some problems in the military cooperation between Serbia and Russia caused by Serbia’s developed cooperation with NATO. “Serbia’s neutrality is far from being something favorable, it is simply unsustainable,” he says. “Political neutrality – or, to put it precisely, deliberate refraining from the struggle against Islamic terrorism and extremism – will reduce Serbia to a Belgrade pashalik: a neutral Belgrade pashalik.”³¹²

During his recent visit to Belgrade Vice-Premier Dmitri Rogozin said Serbia should act with caution while adjusting its foreign policy to EU “as it everything could turn into Cologne No. 2.”³¹³ Referring to massive demonstrations migrants have staged in Germany, he says that one should be on one’s

309 Ibid.

310

<http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/lavrov-crnogorci-nisu-zaboravili-nato-bombe/s1cm1vv>

311 <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/344548/Brisel-Crna-Gora-pozvana-u-NATO>

312 http://lat.ruskarec.ru/blogovi/hocemo_rusle/2016/01/17/neutralnost-na-balkanu-ni-studena-ni-vruca_559971

313 Migrants attacking women in Cologne during Christmas holidays.

guard as “newcomers will be seeing themselves as bosses, while women will be afraid of going out.”³¹⁴

Commenting on the news about Croatia’s plan to buy American rockets, Petar Iskenderov of the Russian Academy of Sciences says, “Giving up neutrality and joining NATO immediately turns Serbia into a toy of foreign interests.”³¹⁵ He warns Premier Vučić that his electorate will be posing him questions about national security on the eve of the elections since rockets in Croatia are a provocation to Serbia forcing its leadership to respond adequately.³¹⁶

The Russian *Komeserant* has already informed its readership about Serbia wanting to buy Russian arms. Vice-Premier Rogozin said that Russia would consider carefully Serbia’s request.³¹⁷

President of the Duma Committee of International Relations Aleksey Konstantinovich takes that Russia’s global influence is growing and announces serious changes in Europe’s policy. For him, Serbia looks like some exception in Europe for being the only country that denied to impose sanctions on Russia – and that will be its advantage once sanctions are lifted. Unsuccessful isolation of Russia, he says, opens the avenues to closer relations with Serbia. He even takes that pipeline projects are not dead and buried – they will be revived once Brussels changes its attitude toward Russia.³¹⁸

Russia manipulates Serbia’s position and its sitting on two chairs. On the one hand it praises it for reframing from sanctions against Russia and, on the other, warns it that it could not possibly trade in two free trade zone – Russian and EU’s.³¹⁹

SERBIA STILL AMBIVALENT

The official Belgrade has not taken a clear stand on Russia and its activities in the Balkans, the more so the President’s and the Premier’s views are

314 http://ruskarec.ru/news/2016/01/14/iskenderov-hrvatska-kupuje-americke-rakete-ko-provocira-srbiju_559435

315 Ibid.

316 Ibid.

317 Ibid.

318 <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/342494/Srbija-je-za-Putina-prioritetna-drzava>

319 Ibid.

rather different – declaratively at least. Russia has been supporting President Nikolić's anti-European stands and sees him as a partner in the obstruction of Serbia's movement towards EU. After initial accession chapters were opened the President has been belittling openly the government's pro-European course. His appeal to SPC (Serbian Orthodox Church) to have its say about the Chapter 35 /Kosovo/ and "interfere in governmental affairs" is directed against EU.³²⁰

Premier Vučić keeps saying that Serbia has opted for European integration and at the same time remained in good relations with Russia. Everything boils down to the ambivalent stand, "both Russia and EU," which varies depending on international developments. During his last visit to Russia Premier Vučić was emphasizing that Russia was one of Serbia's three biggest trade partners, and that both sides were furthering their cooperation in construction industry, agriculture and, of course, arms industry. Reminding of the fact that Serbia was among the few in Europe refusing to impose sanctions against Russia, he said that it was important to pursue such policy along with the policy of neutrality.³²¹

Nikita Bondarov stresses that relations between Russia and Serbia have intensified over the past two-three years. "Not with a single post-socialist country of Central and Southeast Europe has Russia been developing relations so intensively like with Serbia," he says. Thanks to economic sanctions imposed against Serbia in 1990s large facilities for infrastructural investment in energy supplies, oil, gas and chemical industry, metallurgy, mining and transport remained available, he says, explaining that once Russia recovered from "democratization shock" and market reforms – in mid-2000s – Russian businessmen had areas for investment in Serbia.³²²

Serbs see Putin as the only European politician who would not accept a mono-polar world and American hegemony, and who fights Islamic terrorism actively and with success, says Bondarov.³²³

320 <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/nikolic-treba-odmah-da-se-suocimo-sa-poglavljem-35-o-kosovu/h05sbr2>

321 <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/vucic-u-moskvi-vazno-da-srbija-i-rusija-imaju-ciste-odnose/4rcxfts>

322 http://lat.ruskarec.ru/blogovi/hocemo_rusle/2016/01/17/neutralnost-nabalkanu-ni-studena-ni-vruca_559971

323 Ibid.

Serbia's pro-Russian media keep pointing out that Russia has not bombarded Serbia, imposed sanctions against it or recognized Kosovo. They speak of the Serbian government's servility to Western powers. One cannot tell yet whether at this point Serbia's Russophilia prefers "the mother Russia" over Putin or the other way round, or, perhaps, is more inspired by the hatred for Western democrats. However, the latter is certainly perceived as some line of national dignity not to be crossed.

President of the Serbian People's Party /SNP/ Nenad Popović takes that two decades after Yugoslavia's tragic disintegration the idea about a non-bloc alliance in the Balkans is sensible anew, and that at this point some conditions for a project are already there 1) Serbia's neutrality affixed at the level of the parliament; 2) Bosnia-Herzegovina outside NATO thanks to RS veto; 3) Macedonia outside NATO on account of Greece's opposition; and 4) increasing support to the project of a permanently neutral Montenegro.³²⁴

Popović compliments Russia's political and diplomatic performance in the Balkans: "Russia supports Macedonia's territorial integrity, Montenegro's independence, Bosnia-Herzegovina's sovereignty but also the integrity of both entities, and does not recognize unitarily proclaimed independence of the fake state of Kosovo."³²⁵ In his view, Russia should assist a non-bloc constitution of the Balkans, establishment of new institutions and empowerment of the existing ones for cooperation with the Russian Federation, "what EU and NATO have already been doing most aggressively."³²⁶

The pro-Russian bloc also believes that with Russia's assistance Serbia would improve its geo-political standing, bad and humiliating at present. With its present borders, they argue, Serbia is one of 44 countries all over the world that have no access to the sea, and such landlocked states are seen as geo-politically handicapped. Milomir Stanić of the Institute of Political Studies says that ensuring Serbia access to the sea remains a crucial geo-political and geo-economic task. Alleged realists and ideologists would only logically call it Utopia, he argues, but they should be reminded of the fact that the Balkans is synonymous to geo-political changeability.³²⁷

324 http://ruskarec.ru/politics/2016/01/27/balkanski-savez-neutralnih-drzava-u-21-veku_562933

325 Ibid.

326 Ibid.

327 Geopolitika, February 2016.

For centuries the West has been trying to reduce Serbia's power to "a harmless level." One of the methods it uses is blocking Serbia's maritime participation and orientation. Montenegro's, a historically Serbian land's, separation from Serbia following a dubious referendum, openly supported by the West, testifies of the importance the West attaches to preventing Serbia's access to the sea, he says.³²⁸

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An all-inclusive security, political and economic framework, to be established as soon as possible, preconditions stabilization of the Balkans. It is crucial to place the entire region under one umbrella so as to prevent it from being split between several spheres of interest big powers would be competing over.

By supporting a referendum in RS and denying Montenegro the right for the membership of NATO, Russia is realizing its goals for destabilization of the Balkans.

Negotiations with Montenegro, therefore, should be over as soon as possible so as to avoid the country's destabilization Russia and certain circles in Serbia and Montenegro had been working hard on, hand in hand.

Membership of NATO is most important to post-conflict societies as it prevents tensions and conflicts. In this context, membership of EU is crucial.

Montenegro's membership of NATO rounds off the Balkan region. Integration into EU of all countries of the region should be sped up to put an end to regressive trends of turning up to Russia. Incapable, irresponsible, corrupt and authoritarian leaders are already asking Russia to support them – and Russia only gladly obliges them.

For Russia, Serbia is a major point. This was evident in its undiplomatic reaction to Montenegro's membership of NATO. All its reactions and threats were addressed to Serbia to a large extent. Bearing in mind Serbia's still uncertain orientation toward Euro-Atlantic integration, the latter should be sped up institutionally.

328 Ibid.

Ukrainian and migrant crises laid bare the fragility of the Western policy for the Balkans. This also calls for the region's closer ties with Euro-Atlantic institutions, and implies the West's stronger economic involvement in it.

Given that the region is incapable of meeting all the criteria for EU accession in the short run, it is necessary to make such arrangements that would tie it to EU and, at the same time, enable EU to continually monitor reforms in Balkan countries