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President Xi visiting Belgrade, May 2024

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IS SERBIA APPROACHING THE END OF ITS EUROPEAN PATH?

The intensive diplomatic activities of the Western international community in the Western Balkans, especially after the “Banjska case”, is aimed at closing the Balkan issue as part of a wider European security framework and preventing any escalation in this very conflict-prone region and another Russian front.

In this sense, one should understand the accelerated admission of Kosovo to the Council of Europe, the resolution on Srebrenica in the United Nations (UN), the opening of

new NATO bases in Romania and Albania, the strengthening of KFOR and EUFOR and, in general, the enhanced monitoring of Serbia in order to prevent any escalation in Kosovo or Bosnia.

Tolerating Serbia, namely its President Aleksandar Vučić, was replaced by the policy which, in essence, profiles Serbia's new international position in the context of the war in Ukraine and its increasingly obvious siding with Russia. This is also reflected in its increasingly intensive involvement in

the “Serbian World” project, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is repeatedly told that the Republic of Srpska will leave it (“parting drew near”).

Serbia perceives the changed stance of the European Union (EU) as an attack on its territorial integrity and sovereignty, the possible change of the Dayton Agreement and the forced integration of defeat into its culture. In response to this, there followed numerous reactions not only by government officials, but also by academics and the Serbian Orthodox Church.(SPC).

And the composition of the newly formed government clearly indicates how Serbia will react to all issues relating to the security of the region. This government will not change the policy towards Kosovo, Bosnia or Montenegro. And like all governments in the past 12 years, it is personified in President Aleksandar Vučić, whose foreign policy will be primarily guided by the current international situation and pressure to which he is exposed.

In his opening speech in the Assembly, Prime Minister Miloš Vučić stated that his government “will be a government of continuity and will pursue a policy based on political independence and military neutrality; full membership in the European Union will remain the goal, whereby traditional friendships will be respected”¹

There are two key challenges that are problematic from the viewpoint of Serbia’s European orientation: one is territorial integrity and sovereignty, that is, its struggle for Kosovo, while the other is related to its foreign policy orientation and priorities. China is mentioned as the most important partner and Russia and the United States as the world’s leading powers, so that it is in

Serbia’s interest “to build the best possible relationships with them”. In this part of the speech, the EU and its two major states, Germany and France, were not mentioned.

Prime Minister Vučić unequivocally indicated that foreign policy challenges would force Serbia to react adequately should Kosovo’s membership in the Council of Europe become certain. In this sense, he stated that “Serbia is the victim of a political answer by one part of the collective West to the situation in Ukraine”²

Thus, it is not a surprise that the two outspoken exponents of Russian interests – Aleksandar Vulin and Nenad Popović – entered the Government, which sent the message that this option is still open. By the way, both of them are under US sanctions and the State Department promptly reacted to their appointment by issuing a statement that the United States are “disappointed” that Vulin and Popović will join the new Serbian Government, and that they will remain under sanctions, because the position of the United States on them is “well known”³.

The relations between Germany and President Vučić have become very strained, because the government in Berlin has increasingly less understanding for Vučić’s authoritarianism, manipulations and false promises. Despite the changed position of Germany (that is, the government of Chancellor Olaf Scholz compared to the one of Angela Merkel), President Vučić often emphasizes that the “partnership with Germany is of utmost importance for Serbia”⁴. Vučić believes that those relations are primarily an expression of the personal stance of the head of

2 Ibid.

3 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-nova-vlada-politika-kosovo/32930949.html>

4 <https://www.sd.rs/vesti/info/aleksandar-vucic-predsednik-srbije-sastanak-peter-bajer-2023-03-09>

1 “Obrana nacionalnih interesa” Politika, 3 May 2024.

dilomacy, Annalena Baerbock, because “it was much easier with Angela Merkel”.

Serbia’s behaviour cannot be understood without taking into account Russia’s role and influence, as well as its false promises, which boil down to the opinion that “Russia will win in Ukraine” and that this will be a “new chance for Serbia to defend its own sovereignty”. At the same time, it is suggested that this does not mean that Serbia will return Kosovo, but certainly means giving more weight to the Serbian state.⁵

Reacting to the Western diplomatic initiatives and activities, President Vučić announced “difficult days” awaiting Serbia. And, at the extraordinary session of the Serbian Government (4 April 2024), he requested the formation of teams for “coordinating all forces”, which should include the Government, the Assembly and the President. Preventing the passing of a resolution on the Srebrenica genocide in the UN General Assembly is one of the tasks that Vučić set before himself and the Government. Thus, he said: “We will try to fight as much as possible, while at the same time showing respect for the victims that occurred”.⁶ The other diplomatic task is to prevent Kosovo’s membership in the Council of Europe.

REACTIONS OF PART OF THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

The Serbian elite, including a significant part of the academic community, supports President Vučić’s foreign policy orientation, especially when it comes to leaning towards Russia and China. This is perceived as geostrategically important for Serbia and,

in a way, resembles the non-alignment of Yugoslavia.

However, the increasing US and EU pressure on Serbia to resolve the Kosovo issue is met with great resistance from that part of the elite, since such a possibility is treacherous and devastating. It especially points out that the decision of the Council of Ministers to include the Brussels and Ohrid Agreements in the accession negotiations as Serbia’s valid obligation which, in its opinion, will definitely put an end to one stage of its game with the European Union.⁷

On that occasion, the Round Table titled “Kosovo and Metohija – Between Occupation and (High) Treason” was held. Its main topics included the consequences of the Brussels Agreement, Ohrid Annex and Franco-German Proposal. This gathering brought together political activists, lawyers and university law professors who agreed that the criminal proceedings against Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić should be initiated due, as they said, to his contribution to this territory becoming a sovereign and independent state.⁸ Professor Dr Vesna Rakić Vodinelić emphasized that “Vučić committed several criminal acts: he accepted capitulation, disclosed state secrets, abused his official position and violated the Constitution. Today, Kosovo is both a de facto and de jure independent state. The Kosovo issue should not have ended with lying the Kosovo Serbs all the time”⁹.

The anti-European sentiment is reinforced by media campaigns that are extremely anti-European and primarily directed against Germany, which is perceived as the main leader of the EU’s changed attitude towards

5 Jevgenij Primakov, “Rusija pobedjuje i to je šansa za Srbiju”, Pečat. 5 April 2024.

6 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-vucic-kosovo-savet-evrope-srebrenica-genocid/32891273.html>

7 “Putovanje nakraj evropskog puta”, Pečat, 26 April 2024.

8 <https://www.radiostoplus.com/okrugli-sto-o-kosovu-protiv-vucica-pokrenuti-krivicni-postupak/>

9 Ibid.

Serbia and, naturally, as one of the initiators of the Srebrenica resolution. The more favourable attitude towards the United States is emphasized for several reasons. Namely, regardless of the fact that the United States are the main pillar of the current Western policy in the Balkans, President Vučić counts on the change in the White House, which can be used to interpret his delay in implementing the Brussels and Ohrid Agreements.

THE RESOLUTION ON SREBRENICA

The Srebrenica genocide has probably been the most dramatic topic of debate for the Serbian elite in its attempt to deny the genocide. It is admitted that it was a "terrible crime", but not a genocide. In order to "prove" this thesis, they have hired certain international experts, such as Israeli expert Gideon Greif, an expert on the Holocaust, who has signed a report claiming that there was no genocide.¹⁰

The United Kingdom already initiated such an initiative (2016) in the UN Security Council, but its adoption was blocked by Russia. Thus, a new initiative on the resolution on Srebrenica was launched in the UN General Assembly where there is no veto possibility.

Serbia launched a diplomatic offensive, forming a special diplomatic team with an

¹⁰ The commission headed by Greif, namely "the Independent International Commission Investigating the Suffering of All Peoples in the Srebrenica Region Between 1992 and 1995," which was set up by the Government of the Republic of Srpska, claims that no more than 3,500 Bosniaks and 2,000 Serbs perished in Srebrenica. Despite the international rulings, the authors of this research hold that there was no genocide in Srebrenica. Greif's participation in this report was met with condemnations by numerous international experts, while German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier cancelled award to Greif.

aim to achieve the postponement or withdrawal of the resolution, while at the same time flooding the domestic public with the false information about how this resolution intends to declare the Serbian people genocidal. Since Germany and Rwanda are the official initiators of this resolution, Belgrade's anger fell on Germany. It was already turned in that direction, because Germany is the most active advocate of the current policy towards Serbia, especially after the "Banjska case".

The mentioned diplomatic campaign relies heavily on the support of Russia, China and the Global South countries. Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has stated that "the resolution cannot ensure national reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It can only increase the divide in that country and the Balkans as a whole". She has also pointed out that the document carries an obviously anti-Serbia charge, although it does not directly accuse the Serbian people and that it should be withdrawn.¹¹

Sergey Lavrov has stated that "they want to subdue the Serbs because they are too resolute and independent and this is why they are trying to push through a resolution on Srebrenica", which is "factually an ultimatum to Belgrade".¹²

Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of the Security Council of Russia, stated at the Security Forum in St Petersburg that "Germany is trying to push through a resolution on genocide in Srebrenica. It is incredible that the initiative comes from a country that exterminated tens of million peoples during the

¹¹ <https://www.kosovo-online.com/vesti/politika/zaharova-nacrt-rezolucije-o-genocidu-u-srebrenici-antisrpski-4-5-2024>

¹² <https://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/612853/Lavrov-Nastojeda-slome-Srbe-jer-su-previse-svojeglavi-i-samostalnizato-guraju-rezoluciju-o-Srebrenici>

Second World War and committed countless crimes against humanity that do not fall under the statute of limitations".¹³

The media campaign focused on Germany's role in initiating this resolution with the thesis that, given its past, it has no moral right to be someone's judge. Aleksandar Vučić warned that "Of all the countries in the world Germany is the one that declares the Serbian people genocidal".¹⁴

During his guest appearance in the United Nations in New York, President Vučić said the following about the resolution on Srebrenica: "We managed to complicate the matter, but we are aware that we cannot win. America raises a eyebrow and others jump to vote. But, let me be fair, they were not the ringleaders. The main role was taken by the Germans and they are the ones who directly lead the campaign in the United Nations and outside them together with all their partners".¹⁵

The Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) has taken the same stance as President Vučić. Thus, Patriarch Porfirije used the Easter Epistle to confirm the stance that the West wants to declare the Serbian people genocidal. The head of the Serbian Orthodox Church also pointed to the attempts at historical revisionism, whereby the Serbian people, the victim of multiple genocides and ethnic cleansing, would be the perpetrator of genocide. Therefore, as he said, "we strongly raise our voice and point to the absolute untruth and the attempt of

unprecedented historical revisionism according to which the Serbian people, the victim of multiple genocides and ethnic cleansing, is declared the perpetrator of genocide by simple inversion".¹⁶

Apart from focusing on Germany during the campaign, the main goal was to present the resolution on Srebrenica as the West's intention to declare the Serbian people genocidal, revise the Dayton Agreement, abolish the Republic of Srpska and request war reparations from Serbia.

At the US request, the Security Council also reviewed the report on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Christian Schmidt, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (OHR). In his report, Schmidt criticized, among other things, the President of the Republic of Srpska, Milorad Dodik, accusing him of secessionist rhetoric which, as he called it, undermines the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, collapses the Dayton Agreement and threatens stability and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He warned that he was particularly concerned about the joint statement signed by the ruling parties in the Republic of Srpska (RS) in which it is stated that the state property belongs to the entities, which looks like an action plan for secession.¹⁷

The Chairperson of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Željka Cvijanović, left the hall as did the Russian and Chinese Ambassadors claiming that Schmidt was not legitimately elected.

13 <https://www.sd.rs/sr/vesti/info/nikolaj-patrusevo-rezoluciji-o-navodnom-genocidu-u-srebrenici-2024-04-25>

14 "Zlonamerna kanonada", Pečat, 5 April 2024

15 "Aleksandar Vučić: Borimo se uzdignute glave za KiM i Srpsku", Politika, 26 April 2024.

16 <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/uskrsnja-poslanica-patrijarha-porfirija/>

17 <https://n1info.rs/region/smit-podneo-izvestaj-savetu-bezbednosti-un-o-bih-cvijanovic-napustila-salu/>

KOSOVO: AN INEXHAUSTIBLE SOURCE FOR THE HOMOGENIZATION OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE

There are two important events related to Kosovo: the support of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for Kosovo's admission to the Council of Europe and the discussion on Kosovo in the UN Security Council.

The admission of Kosovo to the Council of Europe, the procedure of which is ongoing, caused numerous reactions from Belgrade, including the government representatives, media and parts of the opposition and the civil sector, claiming that Kosovo is not a state, but a part of the territory of Serbia and therefore it cannot be admitted to the Council of Europe.

The members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted by a two-thirds majority the report of Dora Bakoyannis by which the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe is recommended to accept Kosovo's application for membership in that organization (131 members out of 171 present voted for the report; 29 were against it and 11 abstained from voting). The Serbian delegation submitted 10 amendments to the Draft Opinion on Pristina's Membership in the Council of Europe, opposing the admission of Kosovo to this European organization, but all amendments were rejected.

Belgrade's reactions were stormy, especially because Dora Bakoyannis is from Greece which is considered a friendly country and has not recognized Kosovo. Ivica Dačić, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that this was "a day of shame in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, because for the first time in history the membership of something which is not a state

was recommended and which does not meet the basic requirements in the domain of human rights and freedoms.¹⁸ Dačić also stated in a written document that "for eleven years now, Pristina has been refusing to form the community of Serb municipalities, and is implementing a policy of terror against the Serb people and that of ethnic cleansing."¹⁹ President Vučić also joined him in insults, saying that everything Bokoyannis said in the Council of Europe is a lie and a shame. He emphasized again that "this game" (regarding the resolution on Srebrenica) in the UN General Assembly was led by the Germans and joined by the Americans.²⁰

In an interview with Voice of America, President Vučić pointed out that "it is about the overall pressure on Serbia and the Serbian people, primarily because of our military neutrality, our attitude towards the conflict in Ukraine and Serbia's position that it condemns the attack against a sovereign country, but does not join the sanctions against Russia. The third reason is that the Western countries feel a lot of pressure due to the advancement of Russian forces and the uncertainty of how the war will end, and is pressured by possible future policies from Moscow, which will be based on what is often called the 'Kosovo precedent'". He also said that it is about taking that argument "out of the hands of President Vladimir Putin".²¹

In the meantime, it was decided not to put Kosovo on the agenda of the ministerial meeting in May. The President of the

18 <https://www.glasamerike.net/a/kosovo-prijem-savet-evrope-srbija-diplomatija/7571773.html>

19 Ibid.

20 <https://www.novosti.rs/c/vesti/politika/1358465/laz-sve-sto-govorila-dora-bakojani-vucic-dva-puta-sam-prihvatao-razgovore-njom-svaki-put-otkazani>

21 <https://www.glasamerike.net/a/predsednik-srbije-aleksandar-vucic-teska-pozicija-kosovo-savet-evrope/7549305.html>

European Stability Initiative, Gerald Knaus, has already announced the blockade, stating that the two countries that are Kosovo's allies – France and Germany – also support it and asked Prime Minister Kurti to take tangible steps to form the community of Serb municipalities as a requirement for Kosovo's membership in the Council of Europe.²²

This is evidently the result of President Vučić's organized campaign claiming that Kosovo's potential membership in the Council of Europe (CE) is the "most important topic" for Serbia due to which he also announced a "strong, responsible and serious" reaction.²³ However, this is also due to the fact that the key international actors once again made concessions to Vučić in the hope that he would still fulfil his obligations in due time.

The situation in Kosovo is still tense. The Kosovars are afraid that the "Banjska case" will be repeated and constantly warn of the presence of the Serbian army near the Kosovo border. The Kosovo Government published a report on "Banjska" in which it presented very detailed data about the background of the incident, including the one about a cache of weapons which evidently belongs to the Serbian army. Serbia has not yet come out with any report on the incident, nor has it prosecuted the participants, not even those who took on responsibility like Milan Radoičić. Belgrade claims that it was a legitimate rebellion of the Serbs in northern Kosovo due to discrimination against them by Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti. The defamation and dehumanization of Kurti

aims to shift the responsibility for the failed dialogue to the Kosovo Government.

The UN Security Council discussed the six-month report of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at its session on 22 April. Serbia was represented by President Aleksandar Vučić and Kosovo by its President Vjosa Osmani – who exchanged accusations regarding the causes and consequences of the pressure on Kosovo Serbs. The report was presented by the head of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Caroline Ziadeh, who stated that "unfortunately, the level of mistrust between the communities remains high and this must be dealt with".²⁴

President Vučić claimed that the Serbs are victims, that they are terrorized and that the world powers are unfair towards the Serbs, but he did not bother to present any evidence about this. As for the Banjska incident, which was a wake-up call for the West when it comes to security in the Balkans, Vučić repeated that those "events were not the cause, but the consequence" of Albin Kurri's repression and persecution of civilians. He said that Serbia would not allow that tragedy to be used as an alibi for the persecution of Serbs or to divert attention from it.²⁵ This position of Belgrade, despite the requests from the EU and the US to prosecute the case, also testifies that impunity has become Serbia's behaviour standard and that Belgrade does not intend to adapt to the EU's demands.

22 <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/politika/knaus-nekoliko-drzava-se-sprema-da-blokira-glasanje-za-prijem-kosova-u-savet-evrope-medju-njima-i-francuska-i-nemacka/>

23 <https://www.glasamerike.net/a/predsednik-srbije-aleksandar-vucic-teska-pozicija-kosovo-savet-evrope/7549305.html>

24 <https://www.glasamerike.net/a/kosovo-srbija-savet-bezbednosti-sednica/7578165.html>

25 Ibid.

THE ANNIVERSARY OF NATO INTERVENTION

By accident, there was overlap among three important events which are treated by the authorities in Belgrade as pressure “on the country and the people”: the resolution on Srebrenica, Kosovo’s admission to the Council of Europe and the anniversary of NATO intervention (1999), which also revealed Serbia’s position and attitude towards Russia.

Serbia regularly marks the anniversary of NATO intervention, but not with the pomp that was “installed” by Russia in 2013, after the Progressives came to power. Namely, through its own media in Serbia (Sputnik, Russia Today, Balkan and numerous multi-hour audio broadcasts) it conducts an anti-NATO campaign on a daily basis, emphasizing its illegal nature and destruction of the international legal order, because it serves as a cover for its own actions in the neighbouring countries. Kosovo is the strongest argument for its activities in Serbia, because it supposedly protects its territorial integrity. The jubilee 25th anniversary was especially raised to a higher level, in the light of all diplomatic actions undertaken by the Western community in connection with the situation in the Western Balkans. Russia used this opportunity to include it in its war policy towards the West with an aim to defame it as a destroyer of the international order established after World War II and, in that sense, being indirectly responsible for the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Moscow even demanded that a UN Security Council’s session be held on 24 March (2024) on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was rejected. On this occasion, the Russian Duma adopted the text stating that both houses of the Federal Assembly of Russia call on the United Nations, international parliamentary organizations and foreign parliaments

to condemn the military operation of NATO countries against Yugoslavia, oppose the attempts to change the historical truth about the tragic events of 1999 which is, as it is pointed out, in the interest of the collective West, as well as to take measures to call the NATO member countries to account due to their responsibility for the aggression against the FRY under international law.²⁶

The statements by domestic and Russian politicians were primarily aimed at mobilizing the Serbs’ emotions against the West, which allegedly continued to enslave Serbia even after the aggression in 1999. Thus, Nikola Selaković, the then Minister of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs, pointed out that the aggression stopped in June 1999, but “it was followed by the ethnic cleansing of our southern province, which began with the arrival of international peacekeeping forces; this also includes the pogrom of March 2004, the staged departure of Montenegro from the joint state in 2006 and Kosovo’s self-proclamation of the so-called independence in 2008, as well as everything else they are doing to us today”.²⁷

On that occasion, President Vučić said: “You can cut our air, but we will not give you our freedom, because we love Serbia and will not willingly agree that you take Kosovo and Metohija from us and allow our Serbia to disappear”.²⁸

Russian President Vladimir Putin also stated that the “bombing of Yugoslavia is a great tragedy” and assessed that “the West’s actions were inadmissible and basically started

26 <https://www.rts.rs/lat/vesti/svet/5393802/ruska-duma-usvojila-tekst-o-25-godisnjici-nato-bombardovanja-sr-jugoslavije.html>

27 <https://rt.rs/srbija-i-balkan/85140-grdelica-nato-agresija-selakovic/>

28 <https://kossev.info/vucic-godisnjica-bombardovanje-komadanje-srbije-cuvamo-teritoriju/>

a war in Europe". He added that Serbia has always been spiritually close to Russia and has been its reliable ally for centuries, which Moscow remembers.²⁹

Vladimir Chizhov, Russian Senator and First Deputy Chair of the Federation Council Committee on Defence and Security, reveals that the leaders of the Alliance told him at the end of the bombing that "the Serbs did not want to surrender at all and that they no longer knew what to do" and "even contemplated bombing them for the second time".³⁰

At a briefing, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharchova stated that "the West demands that Serbia forget the NATO bombing in 1999 and the cold-blooded murder of more than 2,500 of its citizens, including 89 children, the destroyed infrastructure as well as the losses amounting to several billion dollars".³¹

The main message of all commemorations, statements by politicians and Serbian media regarding Kosovo and Metohija was that "it is still not over" because "Kosovo was, is and will be – Serbian".

THE VISIT OF PRESIDENT XI

The two-day visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Serbia is another indicator in the series that Serbia, with such an orientation, will never become a member of the EU which, in essence, it does not wish. This does not mean that Serbia will officially give up the mantra that it is "on the European path" until it becomes a security risk (like

the "Banjska case"), which means that it has a free hand to continue balancing.

Before coming to Belgrade, President Xi addressed the Serbian citizens in an author text, which was published on the front page of Politika daily, that China is "ready to build the China-Serbia community with a shared future in the new era together with its Serbian friends". He did not miss the opportunity to mention that "25 years ago, the flagrant bombing of the Chinese Embassy in the FRY killed three Chinese journalists" and that "this must never be forgotten and that China will never allow this historical tragedy to be repeated" (although he personally did not visit the site of suffering of Chinese citizens and the Embassy).³²

That was certainly a message to the West, because both the Russian and Chinese theses boil down to the fact that NATO is the greatest threat to the world. Xi's visit was primarily intended to further divide the EU through France and President Macron, thus weakening its efforts to oppose China's destructive intentions. Unfortunately, the outcome in Serbia and Hungary was much more successful.

A joint document with the complicated name "Statement on Deepening and Raising the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and Building a Serbia-China Community with a Shared Future in the New Era" was also signed. This also means that Serbia is not ready, or does not hurry to join the EU and that it suits it to have the status of a candidate country and significant economic and financial benefits.

In essence, when it comes to Serbia, this visit had an anti-Western and anti-NATO message.

29 <https://www.novosti.rs/planeta/svet/1348471/putin-povodom-25-godisnjice-nato-agresije-ruski-predsednik-poslao-snaznu-poruku-srbima>

30 <https://lat.rt.rs/srbija-i-balkan/82474-ruski-senator-bombardovanje-jugoslavija/>

31 <https://lat.rt.rs/rusija/87392-zaharova-srbija-bombardovanje-rts-nato-licemerje/>

32 "Neka svetlost čeličnog prijateljstva zasija na put saradnje Kine i Srbije", Politika, 7 May 2024.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Serbia has not shown the political will to implement the reforms that will result in the creation of a democratic society. All domestic and foreign analyses testify about unfavourable election conditions, media un freedoms, corruption, the rise of authoritarianism and essentially non-liberal values which, by the nature of things, characterize all authoritarian regimes, such as those of Russia and China.

Research by the International Republican Institute shows that support for membership in the European Union in Serbia has dropped to 40 percent, while Russia is considered the biggest partner; the United States are a threat, while the pro-Russian sentiment in Serbia poses a challenge to the entire region.

Despite a lot of evidence that Serbia is not essentially oriented towards Euro-Atlantic integration and the West's somewhat changed attitude towards it after the "Banjaska incident", the West still believes that Vučić, although a nationalist, is the only one who can explain to the Serbs that Kosovo is irretrievably lost.

Such a degree of tolerance of the EU and the US towards him also comes from the realization that the opposition is not an alternative, especially after the collapse of the Serbia Against Violence coalition regarding the 2 June elections. It is also perceived as nationalistic and provincial, so that the opinion prevails that President Vučić is still their negotiating partner.

Serbia will continue with its policy of undermining Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Montenegro, which is essentially a systematic rounding up of the "Serbian World", that is, a revision of the defeat of the 1990s. This is in line with the revisionist policy of Russia which wholeheartedly supports the "Serbian World" project.

The West's somewhat changed policy towards Serbia is not sufficient, because President Vučić still pursues a balancing policy. This is best illustrated by the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping. Although short and in passing, it sent a crucial message that China is Serbia's important economic and political pillar.

In recent months, President Vučić has affirmed the relations with Russia, China, Hungary and other authoritarian countries, which leaves little room for belief that Serbia is moving towards the West. His behaviour in the United Nations, that is, his threats that the resolution on Srebrenica will worsen the relations in the region and possibly lead to a conflict and prevent reconciliation is mere intimidation, because Serbia has been the main disruptive and destabilizing factor for decades.

The tactic of low-intensity destabilization of the Balkans hinders all neighbours in all aspects – from political, through economic, to security ones – which greatly damages the economic development and Euro-Atlantic aspirations of all surrounding countries. The international Western community is not sufficiently consistent in its policy towards Serbia, although it has all the necessary information about the current regime and its intentions in the region.

Belgrade has repeatedly stated that it will not implement the Brussels and Ohrid Agreements, which are considered by the US and EU to be legally binding.

Belgrade is not interested in the creation of the community of Serbian municipalities, but its constant insistence on it serves for the demonization of the Kosovo Government as rigid and Stalinist, which was also joined by the opposition, the media and the non-governmental sector of Kosovo, as well as the Western community. Kosovo serves to homogenize the Serbian people, which has multiple functions due to the upcoming elections in June and the maintenance of tensions that should demonstrate that Serbs and Albanians cannot live together. In essence, this policy imposes the only solution – the division of Kosovo.

Belgrade perceives the postponement of Kosovo's admission to the Council of Europe as the victory of its diplomatic activities, whereby the message is sent to the region that Belgrade is still tolerated.

The international community in Kosovo as well as the Kosovo government should open the Kosovo and European perspective to the Serb community, especially the one in the north, by integrating it more seriously into economic and social projects. Therefore, it is necessary to form a special fund, which will weaken Belgrade's influence on which it is financially dependent.

When it comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative should be supported in his efforts to prevent further secessionist intentions of the Republic of Srpska and make the European future of Bosnia and Herzegovina concrete and not just leave it at the level of statements and promises. Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have the potential to carry out the necessary reforms by itself, not only due to the obstructions by the Republic of Srpska.

Montenegro has been left on the sidelines, although the destructive influence of Belgrade, which acts through the Serbian Orthodox Church, its current government and pro-Serbian and pro-Russian political parties. The disintegration of Montenegrin society is being carried out at such a speed that almost all pro-European efforts have been thwarted. Only NATO membership is the guarantee of the existence of that state, but this is not enough in view of the fact that there are also an inherent internal weakness and insufficient reaction of the internal pro-Montenegrin forces.

The West's attitude towards Serbia and, in particular, President Vučić is complex, often contradictory, and also lenient. If the resolution on Srebrenica is not adopted in the United Nations, while Kosovo's admission to the Council of Europe has already been postponed, it will be a great victory for President Vučić on the international level and an indication that the relations with the West will be seriously changed. We should not lose sight of the fact that Belgrade expects the change of the president in the White House, shift in the European Parliament to the right and Russia's victory in Ukraine, which represents the path to the affirmation of its positions on the internal and external levels.