



CENTAR ZA EVROATLANTSKE STUDIJE - CEAS

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EYES WIDE SHUT

STRENGTHENING OF RUSSIAN SOFT POWER IN SERBIA:

GOALS, INSTRUMENTS, AND EFFECTS



STUDY OF THE CENTER FOR EURO-ATLANTIC STUDIES

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An integral version of this study was published on 9 May 2016, on the anniversary of the victory over fascism in World War II. CEAS dedicates it to the legendary musician, US Army Major, Glenn Miller. His work and life story are valuable examples of the true power of attracting values, policies, and methods that we advocate for ourselves.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the stability of the entire region, it is important that the problems in Macedonia are resolved as soon as possible. I hope that the ideas of "Ukrainisation" of that area will fail, because nobody in the Balkans needs that.

Aleksandar Vučić, Serbian Prime Minister, 16 April 2016

I will strongly oppose any attempt at destabilization in Serbia, the scenarios from Macedonia and Ukraine.

Aleksandar Vučić, Serbian Prime Minister, 26 April 2016

The primary goal of this study is to present to the Serbian public new, undemocratic trends in Kremlin activities, realized through the use of Russian soft power in Serbia. Rather than resistance, the Kremlin has found the doors of Serbian authorities wide open. Similar methods of operation by the Kremlin can be seen in EU member states, as well as in the more distant neighbors of the Russian Federation. The objectives and effects of Kremlin activity, as well as manners of preventing and remedying them have been topics of discussion in the West and elsewhere over the past several years. In contrast to this, in Serbia, which is, due to various circumstances, very fertile ground for Kremlin activities, this topic has not been given adequate attention, even among democratically-minded individuals and structures.

This study in whole, or at least its main conclusions and recommendations, were written with the intention of being read by those in the political West, who are involved in Serbia, the Western Balkans, and Eastern Europe. Many of these actors are also falling into the trap of the increasingly successful and self-fulfilling narrative of "traditionally good Serbian-Russian relations," and using that basis of understanding to assess the processes of stabilization, democratization, and European integration with regards to Serbia. The more the official Belgrade government flirts with the Kremlin, the more the political West lowers its standards in the hopes of attracting Serbia into its orbit. The increasingly autocratic official Belgrade government has been intentionally abusing this pacification and lack of adequate response from the West. This leaves the doors wide open to the growing

influence of the Kremlin's soft power, which shares several goals with the growing autocracy in Belgrade. Throughout this study are several examples that confirm this thesis. The term soft power, or the use of the power of attraction in the fertile ground that the Kremlin has found in Serbia, will not be used in quotation marks in this study.

Generally, the increased interest of the Russian Federation in the Western Balkans, including Serbia, parallels Russian preparations to respond to developments with Euromaidan in Kiev, the war in eastern Ukraine, and the annexation of Crimea. In previous studies, the Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies (CEAS) described Russian activity in Serbia, primarily through forms of hard power.

The aim of this study, therefore, is to present various levels of international relations in which Moscow is undoubtedly an indispensable player in solving pressing global and regional problems, and on that basis to encourage debate on whether Russia is a necessary or advantageous partner. Our intention is to analyze the objectives, methods, and effects of Russian soft power in Serbia, and to some extent, the Western Balkans, and based on these findings, to assess whether they are in line with the public interests of the state of Serbia, those being, stabilization, democratization, economic prosperity, and Euro-Atlantic integration. We further determined that the April 2016 parliamentary elections in Serbia, which were announced during the research for this study, could serve as an additional, relevant parameter in the presentation of the study's conclusions and recommendations. For this reason, the final publication of the study was delayed.

Through the research, we **mapped 109 organizations that promote different aspects of Serbian-Russian relations**, which are not necessarily harmful to Serbia in themselves. Of these, there are: **10 organizations of Russian compatriots, 21 associations of citizens, 6 student organizations, 16 movements with political action, 14 political parties, 8 internet portals, 2 Russian organizations that have offices in Serbia, 16 pro-Kremlin media sources, 6 Russian media sources, 3 Russian foundations, and 5 cultural and educational institutions, as well as 2 internet portals of unknown ownership.**

For the purpose of this study, special works on the historical and economic relations between Serbia and Russia were commissioned. A survey on the perceptions and

preferences of young people in Serbia on the United States, the European Union, and Russia was also conducted.

In addition, we intensely followed and monitored the growing body of literature, in particular the analyses of prominent think tanks and liberal experts, which detail the nature of the Kremlin regime and the channels of operation of Russian soft power. We furthermore conducted dozens of interviews with relevant domestic and international actors.

Due to possible differences in definitions of soft power and the means and instruments of its implementation, this study includes an extensive passage that chronologically lists the key events in Serbian–Russian relations in recent years.

Conclusions and recommendations were made on the basis of the aforementioned analysis.

In short, we believe that Serbia is sliding towards autocracy right before the eyes of the political West, which lacks an appropriate response. It is in the interest of the democratically-oriented citizens of Serbia to stand in the way of the aforementioned policy, which is guided only by the interest of the current Serbian government to remain in power. This government, the general public in Serbia, and the political West must be clear in assessing whether Serbia is moving towards democracy or autocracy, and what role Russia's growing and undemocratic soft power plays in this transition.

In the following paragraphs, these conclusions will be further elaborated on and analyzed in context. There is a noticeable, increasing trend in the number of organizations that advocate for the direct cooperation of Serbia with Russia, and the abandonment of the proclaimed path of Serbia towards the European Union. They have gained an unusual reputation, disproportionately large media space, and are slowly but surely become a “legitimate other party” in public debate.

The first openly pro–Kremlin structures that are not cultural centers or different forms registered in the Republic of Serbia, and which formally act by applying the methods of soft power, were founded in North Kosovo immediately after its declaration of independence in

2008. They became very active in 2012 during the demonstrations on the so-called “barricades.” There are indications that at that point, they already had the logistical support of the so-called Serbian–Russian Humanitarian Center in Niš. Their upsurge in other parts of Serbia as well started around 2008, and gained strength with the beginning of negotiations on the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina under the auspices of the EU in early 2013. The number of their activities in Serbia increased drastically in 2015 when it became clear that Serbia would begin formal negotiations with the EU, and when the intention of stronger cooperation with NATO within the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) was disclosed.

The replacement of democracy with autocracy, under the current Russian model, is the main goal of Russian soft power in Serbia and in the region. Other goals are the reduction of support for European integration and the discrediting of the very concept of enlargement. Instruments of Russian soft power operate similarly within the EU, undermining the union’s action and its fundamental principles. This has long been a mainstream topic in the EU, but has gone unnoticed in Serbia.. In addition to the weakening of the EU and the transatlantic partnership, another aim of Russian soft power in Europe is to demonstrate to the Russian general public that the modern, democratic system and other components of Western soft power do not represent the only attractive model of governance. Other countries in Russia’s wider environment, primarily the, “Slavic and Orthodox brothers who have not yet become part of a separate civilization that is the response to the Western civilization,” are gravitating to these counter-Western models. The official Moscow government explains that the attraction of Western soft power in the former Warsaw Pact countries, or among the “Slavic brothers” who embarked on the path of Euro–Atlantic integration in the 1990s, was due to a lack of competition. At the time, there was no adequate alternative – a strong Russia.

In addition to the devaluation of democratic procedures and denying support to European integration, the particular priorities of Russian soft power in Serbia and the region involve slowing down or stopping the process of normalizing relations between Belgrade and Pristina, as well as the complete relativization and suspension of the process of transitional justice.

The issue of NATO enlargement in the Balkans, and especially the question of relations between Serbia and NATO, is both the goal and the means of Russian soft power in the region. By means of frantic propaganda and the defamation of the protagonists of this policy, Russian soft power seeks to prevent the relationship between Serbia and NATO from being discussed on a rational basis, such as on assessments of security threats and challenges to which Serbia is exposed, and options for an individual response or entering functional partnerships that truly act as a political–military alliance with command structure, equipment, procedures, and standards.

The main methods of operation of Russian soft power in Serbia are: increasingly intensive bilateral relations at the highest level, strengthening of cooperation between the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) and the Russian Orthodox Church (RPC), propaganda that spreads through an increasing number of media outlets, development of a new structure for a stronger influence through the policy of compatriots, and an intensive increase in the number of other instruments of Russian soft power, such as associations of citizens, student organizations, and political movements.

One interesting aspect of the situation involves the spreading of Russian influence through culture. One gets the impression that in Serbia, there are not sufficient opportunities for the public to become acquainted with the achievements of modern Russian production. The question is to what extent Russian pop culture, television production, and even sports events are competitive and attractive compared with those coming from the political West. In Serbia, the protagonists of the importance of strengthening ties between Serbia and Russia mostly insist on (pre)Soviet achievements of Russian culture and the cultural and spiritual achievements of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Especially interesting is the issue of how many young people in Serbia who are currently engaged in the instruments of Russian soft power have an understanding of modern Russia, its economy, demographics, position in the international community, contemporary culture, and, in particular, social stratification and decadence of transitional Moscow that is, for example, described by Peter Pomerantsev in his book *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*.

The publicly available program documents of the organizations analyzed in this study for the most part do not explicitly advocate for the division of power, rule of law, respect for individual and collective freedoms, human rights, and secularism. Most of them advocate for the suspension of Serbia's European integration or are strongly Eurosceptic. At the same time, they are extremely nationalistic. Although, according to these groups' statements, young people are very often their most numerous members, these organizations are formally predominantly conservative, while, in practice showing certain confusion and hypocrisy. These structures often advocate for the introduction of sovereign and arbitrary "nationally responsible" politics. They also support the choice of Russia as the most important political and economic partner, and they bring back into the public space the division of citizens into patriots and traitors. Although often anti-modernization and anti-globalization, almost all have multiple profiles on social networks, based in the political West. Their meetings, which are mostly led by retired military officials, rarely include those of differing opinions. The members themselves rarely respond to invitations to participate in meetings organized by other civil society actors, who advocate for open society, due to a lack of willingness to exchange ideas in a democratic environment. The exceptions are "media duels," which these groups require as they provide visibility and legitimacy, as well as sharp, sometimes verbally violent, and factually incorrect confrontations on social networks.

Again, it is important to emphasize the circumstances in which Russian soft power, in order to achieve its objectives in Serbia, has been successfully animating young citizens, among which it perverts the concepts of non-violent methods of change of authoritarian regimes, civil society, human rights, transitional justice, and other positive democratic achievements that Serbia has slowly, painfully, and at a high price been adopting in the period from October 2000 until a few years ago. The diminishing of the scope of the changes from October 5th has been joined in the campaign by parties of formally pro-European orientation, which lost their power in the October 5th changes, and which have all, in the past four years, successfully (for them) returned to power. They will probably constitute that power after the April elections, which makes the whole situation even more dangerous.

As shown in the CEA–IPSOS survey on the perceptions and preferences of young people of Serbia on the US, EU, and Russia, that was commissioned for the purpose of this study, a great amount of confusion and damage has already been achieved. Young generations, with high unemployment, have a superficial perception of the concepts of human rights, rule of law, media freedom, the importance of the separation of powers, and the like. They do not recognize the connection between a good, modern, democratically structured political system and long-term economic, social, and political stability in a democratic environment. Although they clearly recognize where, for example, healthcare and education are better – in the political West.

In the life choices of young people (ages 18 to 35), “Western countries” (the EU and US) evidently dominate over Russia. The West dominates in terms of their choices in the fields of entertainment and culture, the choice of country in which they would want to work, to be educated, to receive healthcare, to live (where they would want to move), and the model of the country by which they would build Serbia. As many as 70 percent chose the “Western” model as the model for building Serbia (59 percent chose the EU member states, and 11 percent the USA), and 27 percent chose Russia. The general image of the EU member states and the US is also much more positive than the image of Russia. Most young people evaluate that in the EU and US, there is a greater standard of living, use of alternative energy sources, freedom of the media, and respect for human rights.

However, it is evident that there is a conflict between the rational and irrational, obviously fed by the fact that young people are poorly informed. Despite the predominantly positive attitudes towards the Western models of life, young people have positive expectations from the assumed alliance with Russia. Most of them support the presence of Russian military bases in Serbia (57%) and support Russian foreign policy (64%). Most of them believe that the alliance with Russia would improve employment opportunities, travel and education, inflow of foreign investment, political stability in the country and the region, even democratization of the country, and improve the image of Serbia in the world.

The increasingly long trend of decline in support for Serbia's European integration, which is a necessary but insufficient precondition for stabilization and democratization, is the result of a joint operation of Russian soft power and domestic supposedly pro-EU

politicians. These politicians increasingly often and more sharply criticize the EU, perverting the integration process by lying to citizens about the mechanisms and conditions of integration, while almost exclusively praising Russia. Public opinion in Serbia is predominantly formed top-down, and thus the objectively big challenges that the EU and the world face have little influence, compared to the two aforementioned factors.

Serbia has actually been under the perfect storm for four years. A synergy has been created between direct Russian and domestic anti-democratic and anti-EU interests. As noted above, the current interest of the official Moscow government in the region is to stop the processes of stabilization and democratization, which are implemented through the EU integration of the Western Balkan countries and the strengthening of their cooperation with NATO. Moscow's goal is also, by interrupting the integration of the region, to weaken and discredit the EU and NATO, and therefore enhance cooperation with Russia as the alternative. Moscow is doing this partly for domestic reasons, in order to demonstrate that current Russian politics are not completely isolated in Europe, as it has the support of Slavic and/or Orthodox "brothers" in the Balkans.

However, elements of the ruling structure in Serbia do not really want European integration, partly due to their essentially authoritarian nature, and partly out of fear of losing income from corruption, monopolies in business operations with the state and public companies, and control of the security and judiciary system, which are controlled by the party in power rather than being democratically controlled. EU integration would hinder, if not abolish, all of these. In addition, some in the security system and other parts of the state and society see the continuation of EU integration as a danger, as it may lead to the continuation of trials for war crimes. In Serbia, these particular interests are protected by telling the West and the voters that there is an intention of the EU integration. This brings international support and votes for the idea of more investments and generally better standards of living. However, they would have to be slowed down or sacrificed because Serbia would never impose sanctions on Russia, which is also represented by the same politicians as the key foreign policy partner. At the same time, as we have already pointed out, Serbian high officials do not refrain from increasingly frequent rough critiques of the policy of the EU or its member states. They persistently repeat mantras about the EU

conditioning Serbia, neglecting the fact that EU integration is not an obligation, but the democratically expressed will of the people.

As the key argument for this excuse, a self-fulfilling prophecy is being created and intensively promoted about the “traditionally good Serbian-Russian relations.” This is already taking hold in the public perception, despite the falsehoods regarding its inevitability as the key pillar of a strong foreign policy and Serbia’s survival in a harsh global world exclusively due to the protection of Putin’s authoritarian, non-democratic Russia. It is worrying that the newly-created narrative is being taken for granted also among Western players dealing with Serbia and the region.

In parallel to this, the amount of economic exchange and grants that Serbia has allegedly received from Russia is being exaggerated. In addition, the level of energy dependency on Russia and the issue of energy efficiency and diversification are not being addressed as a priority, as no other alternatives are being sought. The drop in oil prices in global markets and the effects of the sanctions imposed on Russia over the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine are hardly being addressed, either by the officials or the media. The local economy is presented as better than it is, while the expectations of international financial institutions are being implemented sporadically.

We must bear in mind that Serbia already once in recent history incorrectly chose the path of self-deception, refusal to come to terms with the need for democratization, enthusiastic support for autocracy, nationalism, corruption, particracy, devaluation of independent institutions, suppression of freedoms, false re-traditionalization, and other identity confusions. The political establishment currently in power is discrediting all of the good achievements of the October 5th changes, which have at least brought Serbia to the right track. The present dangerous effects of Russian soft power in Serbia would not be of this magnitude if they were also not being enabled by the ruling structures in Serbia. They must be urgently addressed and stopped.

Russian soft power is a perverted concept of Western soft power. It is very much tempting in Serbia, where it is not imposed by force, but by means of infrequent, illegitimate, corrupt methods or by acting in the grey legal zone. Tired citizens of a country in transition, as

Serbia is, with no long-term experience of living in a democracy, which would demonstrate all of its advantages to them in practice, are exposed to furious propaganda and relativization of almost everything around them, as well as the false illusion of modernization and the freedom of choice. They do not have to be forced, but they voluntarily surrender their civic duties and freedoms back to the authoritarian leaders and the particratic country. They exchange these freedoms for the opportunity to participate in a corrupt system, and the right to arbitrarily judge who is a patriot and who is a traitor, who is a true Serb or Orthodox, who is a friend and who is an enemy of the state and society, what are national and state interests, and what is societally acceptable.

Those who attempt to keep the effects of Russian soft power mainstream are exposed to cyber-bullying in the social networks and insults in the public media, that does not refrain from spreading lies or threats, which the relevant state institutions either do not respond to, or do so at the last minute. It seems that this is partly a result of strengthening Russian soft power in Serbia.

That is why it is of special concern that the democratic forces in Serbia do not have the courage or the interest to publicly speak out about the pro-Russian structures in Serbia using illegitimate methods of action in the public space. They abuse and advocate for the suppression of the achieved level of freedom, democratic practices, and legal procedures. In doing so, they often operate in the grey zone, without formal registrations with the competent state authorities and legally prescribed methods of financing. This runs counter to the functions of real civil society organizations in Serbia. It is absurd that in Serbia, the majority Orthodox country characterized by a confused identity, economic weakness in terms of skills and work abilities needed by the global labor market, bombed by NATO, and now participating in negotiations on the status of Kosovo under the auspices of the EU – therefore much more susceptible to the effects of Russian soft power than other countries in the region – the objectives, instruments, and results of Russian soft power still constitute a political taboo.

The international Western community is to some extent partly responsible for the current situation. In the past few years, in order to achieve its particular goals, the Western

community was not set to respond to the obvious undemocratic trends, and rather attempted to “cure” them with short-term measures, such as support to the political engineering that positions the ruling structure in the center of the ideological spectrum and presents it as the only operational alternative. Or, in the worst case, it may voluntarily waive the support to the democratization of Serbia and the rest of the region which have not yet entered the Euro-Atlantic structures, focusing solely on maintaining stability, primarily through insisting on cooperation in the struggle against terrorism and military cooperation.

Thus, Serbia and the Western international community find themselves in a situation in which, although Serbia is formally a candidate for membership in the EU, it has its eyes wide shut, allowing absurdity to infiltrate the processes of stabilization, democratization, regional cooperation, and transitional justice, which are prerequisites for the process of European integration.

A consequence of such a situation is the orchestrated overturn of support for European integration. This situation is the result of the “mutual non-democratic and non-European enterprise” of the local supposedly pro-European structures in power, nationalist anti-European opposition, and the influence of Russian soft power in Serbia. The objectives, methods, and instruments are increasingly difficult to separate, as if they coalesce organically. A part of the responsibility also lies with the somewhat more sincere pro-democracy options that are either ideologically unable to define their position on the current policies of Moscow, or are blackmailed into leaving their position undefined. A similar case exists with regards to individuals who have the power to create public opinion in Serbia.

It is thus not surprising that in April 2016, according to the CESID survey, as many as 71.6 percent of the respondents in Serbia think that entry into the EU and NATO is not good for Serbia, while over 55 percent of the respondents say that Serbia should stick to Russia, although it is not defined at all what specifically that would entail.

The electoral list for members of parliament for the early elections in Serbia that were held in April 2016 made by the leading party in Serbia, the Serbian Progressive Party, led by the

old and new Prime Minister of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić, , includes top openly pro-Kremlin people and pro-Kremlin coalition partners. This as well as the rhetoric of the campaign signaled to the current government of Moscow a turnaround in the foreign policy of Serbia. An obvious message was sent to Moscow in Belgrade in 2016, that, in addition to being the minority partner of the ruling party until recently, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić, president of the Socialist Party of Serbia, has another springboard. This shift clearly has great support among the Serbian public as evidenced by the election results of the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia, and the openly pro-Kremlin election participants.

The conditions under which as many as four openly pro-Kremlin electoral lists were created, in addition to hundreds of other pro-Kremlin structures, is mapped in the study. Of these, two have even crossed the threshold and entered parliament, supporting the claim that Prime Minister Vučić has been increasingly turning towards Moscow.

Besides, what exactly does his increasingly frequent “warnings” that he will not allow the “Ukrainian” scenario in Serbia mean? It is time to lay the cards on the table.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2015–2016, in the Western Balkans, and especially in Serbia, right before the eyes of the local democratic public and the political West that is dealing with the Balkans and Serbia, there was a significant strengthening of Russian soft power. It reworks history; it perverts the concepts of democracy, civil society, transitional justice, and EU integration; it demonizes NATO; it successfully introduces propaganda into the media; it establishes structures that are only seemingly democratic; it chooses methods of operation that seem democratic, but are not, abusing the achieved level of democratization in Serbia. The aim of Russian soft power in the entire region of the Western Balkans, including Serbia, is to: destabilize the region, discredit the concept of non-violent change of authoritarian regimes, stop the processes of democratization and European integration, pervert the process of transitional justice, and demonize cooperation with or membership in NATO. At the same time, cooperation with Russia is more successfully presented as a functional alternative to the EU and NATO, although there is no mechanism for this. Unlike other

countries in the region, in achieving its goals in Serbia, Russian soft power finds the doors wide open.

Most pro-Kremlin structures, new instruments of Russian soft power in Serbia mapped within this study, have been created *under the radar* in recent years. Their common characteristics are: non-transparent organizational structures; lack of clearly stated sources and methods of financing; advocating non-democratic achievements; disregard for the principle of the separation of powers, rule of law, and protection of human rights; relativization or misrepresentation of the terms of individual and collective freedoms; incorrect interpretation of the condition of legislation for minority rights; and other forms of deception of the citizens of Serbia. Self-fulfilling prophecies and factually unfounded narratives about the nature of historical relationships, the extent of economic cooperation, and possibilities for increased relations are being designed and spread. The future of cooperation between Serbia and the Russian Federation is incorrectly compared with the process of European integration, which is completely different from any bilateral relations. Such inaccurate comparison is then offered as a legitimate alternative to the European integration of Serbia.

Pro-Kremlin propaganda has successfully permeated almost all mainstream media in Serbia. It is being implemented by both the official Moscow government and the official Belgrade government. Unfortunately, even among the professional community, it is not being critically addressed.

The rhetoric in the election campaign, the choice of the key partners of the ruling structures in the electoral process, and the very results of the early parliamentary elections in Serbia in April 2016, unfortunately, confirm the thesis about the growing influence of Russian soft power in Serbia, one of the main objectives of which is discrediting and falsely interpreting of the concept of the EU and its enlargement. Despite the assessment by the European Commission and a majority of the Western media, no winners of Serbia's parliamentary elections were pro-EU, at least in the sense of having a genuine policy of advocating for Serbia's accession into the EU. This is also a consequence of Russian soft power and other aspects of Russian politics in Serbia and the Balkans.

There are fears that the political West has fallen into its own self-fulfilling narrative of the pro-EU Serbia, which is increasingly less founded, as Serbia is sliding into autocracy that cannot be prevented by the formal process of negotiations by chapters, as is apparent in the case of Turkey. It is necessary that the political West, despite the other bigger and more important challenges it is facing, realize that the current approach to Serbia with its eyes wide shut is not in their interest, nor in the interest of a democratic and stable Serbia and the greater Balkans.

The so-called progressive opposition in Serbia, the high-quality media, and the civil society must also be much clearer about the value and the foreign policy course of Serbia, the nature of the process of EU integration, the importance of NATO integration for Serbia, and the impact of the official Moscow government on the collapse of democratic procedures and decreasing freedoms in Serbia. The newly established pro-democratic structures, supported by Western donors, are mainly dealing with the situation in the media or struggling against corruption, while foreign and security policy, including the increasingly strong undemocratic influence of the Kremlin, is hardly being analyzed at all. The official Belgrade government is not being called on to define its position on foreign and security policy as much as it is over the issues of the media and corruption.

What to do next?

The Western international community should stop, as soon as possible, lowering the standards and expectations in the processes of integration and cooperation with the countries of the Western Balkans, and must simultaneously intensify assistance, instead of increasingly slacking in its duties in the implementation of these processes. It must remain committed to its principles and promises concerning the possibility of realizing full membership in the EU and NATO if the candidate countries should meet the necessary requirements, regardless of the new geopolitical trends and challenges it is facing.

It is necessary to invest more resources in the Western Balkans, as is already the case in the more stable political West, and especially in Serbia, due to the special circumstances that Moscow counts on, for the purpose of prevention and reduction of all negative effects of the penetration of Russian soft power and other forms of action by the official Moscow

government. It would also be good to encourage a debate in the region on the internal and external threats to liberal democracies, with a reminder of their basic principles and achievements, which are being increasingly devalued or taken for granted.

In parallel with this, it is necessary to do the following, as soon as possible:

- Ask Aleksandar Vučić and his old – and probably new – ministers exactly what they mean by “not allowing the Ukrainian scenario in Serbia” and how exactly they plan to prevent it;
- Investigate the legality of operation of the newly established pro-Kremlin structures and insist on their greater transparency;
- In accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Serbia, respond to all comments on the position of ethnic Russians in Serbia;
- Define the time frame and the endgame of the process of the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, which has caused great leniency of the West towards the government of Aleksandar Vučić and has been charged dearly by reinforcing his autocratic power;
- Provide more support to the processes of transitional justice, primarily trials before local courts, in order to cleanse the security system from personnel who are, in fear of justice, turning to the official Moscow government, which is frankly not interested in these processes;
- Focus, finally, on the reform of the security system, with an emphasis on democratic control. For this purpose, it is necessary to utilize all the mechanisms enabled by the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) of Serbia with NATO, as well as the relevant chapters in the negotiations with the EU;
- Enter into a broad public debate, on rational basis, on the adoption of a new national security strategy, which is expected of Serbia during the negotiations with the EU under Chapter 31: Foreign, security and defense policy;

- Adopt the already drafted Law on the Reduction of Risks from Natural and Other Disasters and Crisis Management, and thus prevent the so-called non-transparent operation of the Serbian–Russian Humanitarian Center;
- Promote a broad debate on the growing need for the joint action of the EU and NATO;
- Finally, initiate internally a debate on the need for the membership of Serbia in NATO.

2. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

The Center for Euro–Atlantic Studies (CEAS) within the project *Reform of the Security Sector in Serbia and Integration*, which was supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, among other things, analyzes the objectives and effects of Russian soft power in Serbia. This study is part of that project, the preparation of which was in part supported by the US Embassy in Serbia.

Since mid–2013, the Center for Euro–Atlantic Studies has begun to monitor the growing interest of the official Moscow government in Serbia and in the Western Balkans. By mid–2015, CEAS published a series of studies and analyses on the strengthening of Russian influence in the region.¹

Research for this study was conducted from autumn 2015 to spring 2016.

In addition to the special survey created by CEAS in collaboration with IPSOS, on the perception and preferences of young people in Serbia on the US, the EU and Russia, as well as expert-authored articles on historical and economic relations between Serbia and Russia, we have also used and other research methods.

¹ Jelena Milić. 2013. Sad Stream. Novi Vek. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: https://www.ceas-serbia.org/images/Novi_vek_br-05-nov-dec_2013-Jelena_Milić.pdf

Jelena Milić. 2014. #Putinization. Novi Vek. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: https://www.ceas-serbia.org/images/Novi_vek_br_06-J.Milić-Putinizacija.pdf

Jelena Milić. 2014. Putin's Orchestra. Novi Vek. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: https://www.ceas-serbia.org/images/Jelena_Milić_Putinov_Orkestar_11.pdf

For the purpose of the research for this study, we used publicly available scientific literature and data, as well as excerpts from local and foreign media, analytical organizations, and think tanks that CEAS monitors regularly. We also carried out a large number of consultations with representatives of: political parties, student movements, organization of a democratic civil society, independent media sources, public administration employees, the diplomatic corps, and experts who deal with Serbia. CEAS representatives participated in several meetings organized by quasi civil society organizations that are discussed in the study. Special attention is dedicated to their profiles and activities on social networks.

In this study, the concept of soft power is defined by the Harvard professor Joseph Nye: **“Soft power of a country is one that relies on the attractiveness of its culture, applied political values and legitimate foreign policy. In addition, the soft power of the United States involves values or ideals such as: democracy, human rights and equal opportunities for all individuals, which are considered attractive by themselves.”**

Bearing in mind the very wide range of potential readers of our study, we have tried to find a compromise between what some would recognize as commonplace, in the hope that for others this would be the first – or the less common – source of information about certain concepts and trends. Therefore, we thank everyone for their patience when reading this study.

CEAS apologizes in advance if some of the data referred to in this study is not authentic. This is certainly not intentional and we are ready to immediately and publicly correct any mistakes. All data was verified with the following publicly available sources: The Business Registers Agency, Bisnode Business Portal, Center for the Development of the Nonprofit Sector, Registry of Political Parties, National Register of Internet Domain Names of Serbia (RNIDS), and publicly available data on the websites of the mapped organizations.

Although uncommon, we conducted parts of the research partially before completing the entire study. The reasons are twofold. It was determined that the strengthening and effects of Russian soft power in Serbia, which gained new momentum in the spring of 2016 as early parliamentary elections were announced and held with the support of the state

leadership of Serbia, must be discussed as soon and to the greatest extent as possible. Hence, we have partly become targets of Russian soft power ourselves. The experience we are going through has given us additional valuable insight into this undemocratic phenomenon, which is still being insufficiently discussed in Serbia, due to circumstances that are to a large extent favorable for its spreading. At the same time, it has become a mainstream issue in the political West.

This study was not written by “people who hate Russia”, as instruments of Russian soft power in Serbia and the Russian Federation increasingly claim in order to discredit CEAS and the findings presented herein. The assessments relate only to the current official politics of the Kremlin and Belgrade. We have used the research and our analytical freedom to highlight trends that we consider important, and to present our own conclusions and recommendations. Given the descriptive concept of soft power, which concerns also the power of attraction of culture of a certain country and other legitimate elements, we have retained the adjective ‘Russian’. When discussing the current official politics of the Russian Federation, we have used the term ‘Kremlin’. In this study, we have minimized the use of the phrase *Vladimir Putin* and all its derivatives, which we have utilized in previous studies, in order to point out that in this study we analyze processes that certainly would not be possible to realize if they were the idea and the goal of a single man. The term *Putinization*, which is described in more detail further in the study, implies the erosion of the democratic results achieved by 2012; the strengthening of autocracy; the weakening of institutions and institutional decision-making; the erosion of the concepts of the separation of powers, rule of law, and protection of human rights; the de-legitimization and criminalization of opponents; the partization of the country and above all the justice and security systems, and public and state owned property and enterprises; the erosion of secularism; the strengthening of illegitimate influence on the media; the enhanced role of the parties as the “employment bureau”; the rise in overall corruption with a simultaneous struggle against political and economic competition under the pretext of “fighting corruption”; and the perversion of the concept of European integration and transitional justice. Putinization, in CEAS’ interpretation, does not even necessarily mean direct involvement by the Kremlin. In Serbia it has largely been implemented internally. It is

broadier than the concept of Russian soft power, because it also involves the effects of hard power and autochthonous political trends in Serbia. Unfortunately, they are such that they themselves have a real power of attraction for the Serbian general public, although they are mostly undemocratic and corrupt.

2.1. VERY BRIEFLY THE CONCEPT OF SOFT POWER AND ITS LIBERAL UNDERSTANDING

The concept of soft power – the realization of what you want by attracting, not coercing, or the way to win people over instead of forcing them - was developed by the American Harvard professor Joseph Nye. He emphasizes that the concept is not descriptive, but normative, and that soft power is not a form of liberalism, but simply a form of power, or one of the ways to achieve desired goals.

A country's soft power relies on three main resources: culture (when it is attractive to others), political values (when they are respected both at home and in international relations), and foreign policy (when the others see it as legitimate and with moral authority). Nye himself briefly explains the concept as follows: "If we achieve that others admire our ideals and want what we want, we do not have to spend so much on punishments and rewards in order to move them in the direction we want. Seduction is always more attractive than coercion, and many values such as democracy, human rights and opportunities for an individual are very seductive. The best propaganda is actually not propaganda. In the information era, credibility is the most valuable resource."²

Compared with the hard power of a state, which includes achieving goals by means of armed forces or economic measures, soft power as a means of achieving a goal can be used by other players in international relations, such as non-governmental organizations and international institutions.

² Joseph S. Nye. 2004. Soft Power: The means to success in world politics. Public Affairs. Available at: <https://webfiles.uci.edu/schofer/classes/2010soc2/readings/8%20Nye%20Soft%20Power%20Ch%201.pdf>

2.2. RUSSIAN UNDERSTANDING OF SOFT POWER

One of the explicit goals of Russian foreign policy today is to “increase its weight and influence” in the world. The way to achieve this, according to the Foreign Policy Strategy of the Russian Federation from 2013, is through the use of “soft power” as a supplement to traditional diplomacy. The aforementioned Strategy states: “Soft power is a comprehensive method for achieving the objectives of foreign policy built on the potential of civil society, information, cultural and other methods and technologies, an alternative to traditional diplomacy, which has become an indispensable component of contemporary international relations (...) At the same time, the increase in global competition and the potential of the growing crisis sometimes creates a risk of destructive and illegal use of soft power and the concept of human rights to exert political pressure on sovereign states, in order to enforce interference in their internal affairs, destabilize the political situation, manipulate public opinion, under the pretext of financing projects of cultural and human rights abroad.”³

Vladimir Putin himself defines soft power as, “instruments and methods to achieve the objectives of foreign policy without the use of arms, through information and other leverage of influence.”⁴

It is obvious that the official Moscow government is at the same time afraid of the effects of soft power from the political West. However, it is also ready to strengthen and implement its own perverted, non-liberal, non-secular version without democratic credibility, by means of shameless propaganda and weaponization of information as an instrument of foreign policy. While in a country, it has been closing down more and more domestic and foreign civil society organizations. In its immediate and distant neighborhood, Russia has been increasingly promoting the work of quasi civil society organizations. These organizations mostly promote conservative, extremely right-wing, anti-globalization ideas,

³ Foreign Policy Strategy of the Russian Federation. 2013. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Available at: http://archive.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D

⁴ Vladimir Putin. ‘Rossiia i meniaiuchshiisia mir’. 27.2.2012. Moskovskie novosti. Available at: <http://www.mn.ru/politics/20120227/312306749.html>

on non-transparent, hypocritical, ideologically superficial and conflicting way, not hesitating to spread lies, insult, and intimidate their opponents.⁵

The true key to understanding Russia's conversion of information (or misinformation) into a weapon is its approach to soft power. The book, *A Review of Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft power and Russian foreign policy*,⁶ by the Dutch expert Marcel Van Herpen is recommended to those interested in learning more about Russian soft power. Excerpts from the review of this book written by Adam Reichardt, the editor-in-chief of the magazine *New East Europe*⁷, are included herein, as a very good explanation of Nye's basic concept, and the way in which it is perverted by the Kremlin.

"As originally coined by Joseph Nye, soft power is linked to the ability to attract through non-violent means. This attraction arises from the culture of a country, its art, music, values, ideals and politics. In his book *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft power and Russian foreign policy*, Van Herpen explains that a characteristic of the soft power is that 'there is no resistance that needs to be overcome'. Moreover, soft power is not only about politics. It could be a Hollywood film, Coca-Cola, McDonald's or the German BMW. The Soviet Union also possessed a degree of soft power, as communist ideology was attractive for many in Western Europe and the developing world. However, since the fall of the Soviet Union and the 'victory' of Western liberal democracy over communism, this attraction has disappeared.

Putin's famous claim, almost a cliché, that the fall of the Soviet Union was the worst geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century, is a subtle recognition of the power of soft power. After the Rose Revolution in 2003, and the Orange Revolution in 2004, the Kremlin's strategists have begun to fear that the attractiveness of the West, in other words its soft power, had penetrated their backyard. Not only could Russia lose its traditional sphere of influence, which is currently happening, but Western ideas could find their way

⁵ "I Seek Clemency for Jelena Milić". 29.3.2016. Sputnik. Available at:

<http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/autori/20160329/1104435696/jelena-Milić-pomilovanje.html>

⁶ Marcel van Herpen. 2015. *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft power and Russian foreign policy*. Cicero Foundation. Available at:

http://www.cicerofoundation.org/lectures/Marcel_H_Van_Herpen_Putin's_Propaganda_Machine.pdf

⁷ Adam Reichardt. A perversion of soft power. 2016. *New Eastern Europe*. Available at: <https://www.ceas-serbia.org/sr/93-preuzeto/4842-a-perversion-of-soft-power>

into Russia and thus endanger the existence of the regime. This is the moment, as Van Herpen pointed out, when the Kremlin realized that Russia itself is no longer susceptible (attractive), and must find a way to use soft power if it wants to survive.

However, the Kremlin's way of thinking is very different than that of the political West. This may sound like an obvious statement, but in order to really understand the Kremlin's approach in its relations with the world, we must understand their belief that the world is a zero sum game. Their attitude toward soft power in this case is no exception. For many in the Kremlin, the world is divisible, but the reality is black or white. The success of Western soft power is interpreted in Moscow as a direct result of politics directed against Russia. Some players, such as NGOs, the media, and spies are considered agents who impose Western 'values' in the region, and the only way to oppose them is to respond in some way. Therefore, Putin and the Kremlin, in Herpen's words, decided to launch the campaign of soft power. This campaign is "large in scope, centralized, and represents a coordinated effort by Russia in order to achieve maximum impact". In other words, it is a perversion of soft power, as its approach is actually hard power. It has become a weapon in the war against the West.

This perversion manifests itself in several ways. In the field of the media, the international media channel RT (formerly Russia Today) is probably the most visible. Their production mimics the twenty-four hour format television channel that exists in the West, such as CNN or BBC. However, unlike these channels, RT does not comply with reporting standards and ethics. This is a classic approach to propaganda in the context of the 21st century. Still, this is not the end of the perversion of soft power. The Kremlin is hiring "lobbyists" in order to promote its image and interests abroad. In some case, they engage lobbying firms directly, as was the case with Henry Kissinger, or use of "useful fools" who are promoting the Kremlin's arguments about a given topic or situation in the media.

Van Herpen also notes the purchase of foreign media outlets, as is the case with the French *Soir* purchased by Alexander Pugachev, the son of the wealthy oligarch Sergei Pugachev. Pugachev's initial goal was to create a newspaper that would simultaneously promote the Kremlin and the right wing in France. The project fell through in 2012. However, since

then, the Kremlin decided to take a more direct approach by financing right-wing parties, such as the National Front in France, or Eurosceptic alternative in Germany (AfD). These investments have already paid off: the National Front won the first place in the first round of regional elections in December 2015 (although they lost in the second round).

Another instrument of soft power from the Kremlin's arsenal is the Orthodox Church. Van Herpen points out that the Russian Orthodox Church is not independent, and that it is closely associated with the Kremlin. The aim of the activities of the church is to show the 'spiritual' face of Russian foreign policy. This is especially apparent when we follow the activities in the United Nations Human Rights Council, where the Russian Orthodox Church is constantly trying to link human rights with the values of 'traditional Orthodoxy,' whereby it opposes the universality of human rights. In 2008, the Moscow Patriarch Kiril criticized the behavior of some countries (read: 'Western countries'), "which regard their system of implementation of human rights as universal (...) trying to impose their standards on other nations or to become the sole judge in the field of human rights." The Russian Orthodox Church has become an influential institution, particularly in the post-Soviet states. The role that the church had during the revolution of Euromaidan in Ukraine illustrates its dependence on the Kremlin, driving many Ukrainians away from it, and toward the unrecognized Kiev Patriarchate. The Russian Church plays a large role in Georgia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. It has a significant impact on people's attitudes towards Russia and promotes, at least indirectly, sympathies for Putin's neo-imperialist ideology.

The role that soft power plays in the 21st century has not decreased, as was the case during the Cold War. In fact, with the strengthening of social networks and new technologies, the role of soft power is augmented in many ways. The flow of information is immediate and only works when its power is expanding organically. This is the part in which the Kremlin fails to see the true significance behind soft power: this is the power for oneself; it cannot be controlled and it cannot be manipulated. It is not a weapon and cannot be played with the gain or loss. Despite all the manipulations, lies, and propaganda, the power of ideas and attractiveness cannot be completely suppressed.

We can only hope that, in the end, the perversion of soft power by the Kremlin will be unsuccessful. In the words of Van Herpen, the efforts of Russia are “limited with the reality in the field (...) People can be fooled by state propaganda, but not forever, no matter how wisely it is packed. Moscow’s manipulation with soft power cannot avoid the fact that the essence of soft power is its attractiveness.” If the Kremlin continued to act aggressively and in a revisionist manner, in violation of international law and subjugation of its neighbors, it will eventually have to learn the hard lesson of true soft power.

3. CURRENT OBJECTIVES OF RUSSIAN SOFT POWER IN SERBIA AND THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THEY ARE REALIZED

The increased activities of Russia in the Western Balkans began in parallel with the extensive preparations of the official Moscow government for the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine.⁸ However, the association between them is rarely seen in Serbia. Since 2013, CEAS has been continuously analyzing the methods and effects of the overall operation of the official Moscow government in Serbia, and calls the result the *Putinization* of Serbia, the main elements of which were already listed in this study. Similar methods of operation of Moscow are also visible in the rest of the Western Balkans, especially in Macedonia and Montenegro. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, they are more pronounced in the entity Republic of Srpska and in the north of Kosovo.

The objectives of the official Moscow government in the Western Balkans are:

- Destabilization of the region;
- Stopping democratization;
- De-legitimization of the concept of non-violent regime change;
- De-legitimization of the European Union and the European integration process;
- Relativization and stopping the process of transitional justice;

⁸ Speech of A. Ilarionov at the Atlantic Council of the USA. April 2015. Available at: <https://youtu.be/C7xVycOW09E?t=5h24m>

- Stopping the process of normalization of relations of Serbia and Kosovo;
- Demonization of the process of cooperation or membership in NATO.

Each of these objectives, as well as the ways in which the Kremlin achieves them, deserves further analysis, but for the purposes of this study, they were simply mentioned. They are very much being implemented by Russian instruments of soft power.

The Kremlin also does this partly due to its voters, in order to show that the countries of the former Warsaw Pact, in the absence of an adequate alternative in the moment of historic weakness of the USSR–Russia, almost mistakenly and involuntarily ended up in the EU and NATO. In addition, the process of Euro–Atlantic integration now has an alternative, which is allegedly happily and voluntarily accepted by most of the countries in the Western Balkans. This legitimizes the constant strengthening of the autocracy in Russia and delegitimizes internal and external resources for the peaceful, pro–democratic reaction of citizens against autocracy, corruption, self–isolation, and others.

Due to a number of circumstances, Serbia is a particularly suitable testing ground for the articulation of current Russian interests. It is a Slavic country that is predominantly Orthodox. Also, it has been in democratic and economic transition for too long. The demographic situation is unfavorable, just like in Russia. It has an interesting geographical position and complex relations with Montenegro. The process of dealing with the war–crime politics of the 1990s is moving slowly and reluctantly. The processes of establishing transitional justice too. Neither external nor internal actors associate the new status of Kosovo with mass crimes committed by Serbian security forces against Albanian civilians in Kosovo during the conflict of 1998–1999, and again those with the NATO bombing. Due to this, these issues are seen in the Serbian public sphere as separate wounds inflicted onto it by the West “for no reason”. The reform of the security system was never articulated as a

priority, and is not implemented systematically, although it is a necessary prerequisite for many other related processes.⁹

In the last four years, which is how long the regime of Aleksandar Vučić has been in power, Serbia has been under the impact of a perfect storm. A synergy has been created between direct Russian and domestic anti-democratic and anti-EU interests, in a period when the European Union faces many complicated challenges. Elements of the ruling structure in Serbia do not really want European integration, partly due to their (essentially) authoritarian nature, and partly out of fear of losing income from corruption, monopoly in doing business with the state and public companies, and control of the security system and judiciary system, which are controlled by the political parties. EU integration would hinder, if not abolish these. In addition, some in the security system and other parts of the state and society see the continuation of EU integration as a danger, as it may lead to the continuation or extension of trials for war crimes. In Serbia, these particular interests are protected by telling the West and the voters that there is an intention of the EU integration. This brings international support and votes for the idea of more investments and generally better standards of living. However, they would have to be slowed down or sacrificed because Serbia would never impose sanctions on Russia, which is also represented by the same politicians as the key foreign policy partner.

At the same time, as we have already pointed out, Serbian high officials do not refrain from increasingly frequent rough critiques of the policy of the EU or its member states. They persistently repeating mantras about the EU conditioning Serbia, neglecting the fact that EU integration is not an obligation, but the democratically expressed will of the people.

By using the dangerous leniency of the political West, caused by the fear of strengthening Russian influence and knowledge of the lack of viable alternatives, the current official Belgrade government has been more openly showing its true face, which is increasingly and obviously pro-Kremlin. In the field of foreign policy, the rhetoric of, “yes, to the EU, but only with a symmetrically balanced policy towards Russia” has returned. Open cynicism is

⁹ The missing link: Reform of the security system, ‘military neutrality’ and EU integration in Serbia – How can EU best utilize its influence to advocate sustainable reforms. 2014. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: <http://www.ceas-serbia.org/images/prilozi/CEAS-Karika-koja-nedostaje.pdf>

expressed towards the values of Western soft power and those who are devoted to it, while achievements and processes in the EU and the process of integration are presented in a perverted manner. Under the cloak of excuses that everything is permitted during the election campaign, the official Belgrade government seems to have deliberately worsened relations with everyone in the region. At the same time, the attitude of the official Belgrade government towards the events on Euromaidan are getting closer to the positions of the official Moscow government than official Kiev government or the EU. Unfortunately, the situation is similar in its attitude towards the nature and achievements of the non-violent demonstrations from October 5th, 2000 in Serbia and the overthrow of the regime of Slobodan Milošević.

The Director of CEAS warned that the de-legitimization of the October 5th changes, carried out with the positive effects of the soft power of the political West, is one of the main objectives of Russian soft power, in her open letter to the Russian ambassador to Serbia, already in 2013.¹⁰

This is not surprising, bearing in mind that, as has been said, some of the main targets of Russian soft power are the so-called “color revolutions” – non-violent attempts to change the authoritarian regimes in the countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, by facilitating the establishment of power structures that the countries should lead through stabilization and democratization, assisted by the instruments of Western soft power. The Kremlin denies them legitimacy, negating the ideological and methodological attraction as a mainstay among citizens, thus negating the sincere commitment of individuals and movements projected by Western soft power, in the countries where these took place.

We should not forget that of the countries that have taken the path of non-violent replacement of authoritarian regimes, long after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Serbia has gone the furthest in the European integration process, compared to Ukraine or Georgia. At the same time, in Serbia there are now people in power who were an important part of the

¹⁰ Jelena Milić. More is less of “30 NATO pieces of silver” Mr. Chepurin, it is a pity you don’t understand. 17.10.2013. Open letter of CEAS Director to the ambassador of the Russian Federation in Serbia, Alexander Chepurin. Available at: <http://www.ceas-serbia.org/sr/saopstenja/1686-i-vise-je-i-manje-od-30-nato-srebrenjaka-gospodine-cepurin-steta-sto-ne-razumete>

regime that was being dismantled in the late 1990s with the help of the political West and the wave of attraction stemming from Western soft power, which promoted that change. These people have been increasingly de-legitimizing the methods and achievements of the October 5th democratic changes in Serbia,¹¹ partly due to the romanticizing and legitimizing of their own political pasts, and partly out of fear that something like that could happen again to their increasingly authoritarian power. Serbian Prime Minister Vučić has been increasingly using the phrase “Ukrainian scenario” in the same context in which the phrase is used by Russian officials.¹²

Unfortunately, in achieving its objectives in Serbia, Russian soft power has been successfully perverting not only the concept of non-violent methods of change of authoritarian regimes, but also concepts of civil society, human and minority rights, transitional justice, freedom of expression, and other positive democratic achievements that have been slowly, painfully, and at a high price been developed in Serbia from October 5th 2000 until a few years ago.

Extremely worrisome is the fact that the objectives and effects at least of Russian soft power in Serbia, if not Russian foreign policy in general, were not discussed by any party or coalition that participated in the early elections in Serbia in the spring of 2016, and which allegedly advocate for democracy and the continuation of European integration for Serbia.

The situation is similar with regards to the numerous civil society organizations in Serbia, with the exception of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, which emphasizes the topic of Russian influence in the region, and perhaps a few less-visible organizations. It appears as if the overall goals, instruments, and effects of Russian soft power in the supposedly pro-EU structures in Serbia are taboo, despite being a generally mainstream topic in EU member states and NATO¹³ for quite a long time. Serbia, as we have

¹¹ Dačić: October 5th negative, Kosovo survived because of Milošević. 11.4.2016. N1. Available at: <http://rs.n1info.com/a150981/Vesti/Dačić-o-5-oktobru.html>

¹² What does Prime Minister Vučić mean by the phrase “Ukrainian scenario” and “destabilization of Serbia”? 26.4.2016. Press release. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: <https://www.ceas-serbia.org/sr/saopštenja/sta-premijer-Vučić-podrazumeva-pod-ukrajinskim-scenarijem-i-destabilizacijom-srbije>

¹³ The Hybrid War: Russia's Propaganda Campaign Against Germany. 5.2.2016. Spiegel Online. Available at:

already stated, has been under the perfect storm for four years, resulting from the synergy of direct Russian and domestic anti-democratic and anti-EU interests.

Primarily because of this inconsistent, supposedly democratic, and pro-EU policy, and to a lesser extent because of the ambivalent attitude of the West towards these negative trends when only formally pro-EU parties were in the Parliament, support for EU integration has dropped significantly to less than 50 percent between when the Serbian Progressive Party came to power in 2012 and the announcement of early parliamentary elections in 2016.

Unfortunately, as shown in the CEAS-IPSOS survey *The EU, Russia, US: Images and preferences of citizens of Serbia ages 18 to 35 years*,¹⁴ confusion has been created on a much deeper level. The young generations have a superficial perception of the concept of human rights, rule of law, media freedom, the importance of the separation of powers, etc. They do not recognize the connection between a good, modern, democratically structured political system and long-term economic, social, and political stability in a democratic environment. Although, they clearly realize where, for example, better health and education are – in the political West.

In addition to the government, the inert, so-called democratic opposition and other players in the public life also contribute to such a state of great influence of Russian soft power in Serbia. As pointed out, it could not have such dramatic effects without the support of the ruling structures and the social strata of Serbia itself.

The Western international community also contributed to this confusion, by, at one moment, putting the long-term processes of stabilization and democratization of the Western Balkans, which it had been patiently helping with for years, in the background, in order to achieve its own particular goals. The process of normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo is almost exclusively reduced to the expectations of the implementation of non-transparent process of negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/putin-wages-hybrid-war-on-germany-and-west-a-1075483.html>

¹⁴ The EU, Russia, US: Images and preferences of citizens of Serbia ages 18 to 35 years . February 2016. CEAS-IPSOS public opinion survey. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: http://www.ceas-serbia.org/images/CEAS_2016_ipsos_srp.pdf

under the auspices of the EU with the support of the US. Its reach has been exaggerated and overpaid, with almost complete legitimization of the regimes that enforce it, which are, to a large extent, compromised. This has made the internal processes of democratization and the work of the forces that truly advocate for them on both sides, difficult, while also devalueing the process of EU integration in their eyes. It is similar with the processes of transitional justice and the strengthening of regional cooperation in the entire Western Balkans. Through the normalization of the abnormal, they are reduced to insincere messages, symbolic gestures, and frivolous attitudes towards the events of the 1990s, and their causes, actors, and consequences. It does not come as a surprise that the Kremlin itself relativizes them more frequently and more successfully, and not only the process of EU integration and improvement of relations with NATO. Reactions of the official Moscow government to the first instance rulings for Radovan Karadžić and Vojislav Šešelj, announced in the spring of 2016, for example, prove this beyond doubt.¹⁵

¹⁵ Moscow: The judgment for Karadzic maintains the myth of Serb's guilt. 25.3.2016. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/politika/20160325/1104326243/Moskva-Haski-tribunal.html>
Rogozin: If I were Šešelj, I would put the tribunal judges in jail. 31.3.2016. N1. Available at: <http://rs.n1info.com/a147803/Svet/Svet/Rogozin-Cestitam-mom-drugu-Seselju.html>

3.1. THE MAIN METHODS OF OPERATION OF RUSSIAN SOFT POWER IN SERBIA

In addition to the two-sided insistence on strengthening bilateral ties between Serbia and Russia, which is manifested in a disproportionately large number of high-level visits in comparison to other actors in international relations even during the period when the political West introduced sanctions due to the annexation of Crimea and incitement of war in eastern Ukraine, the implementation of Russian soft power in Serbia is also implemented with the following methods:

- Creating conditions for the realization of the Russian policy of compatriots;
- Reworking of history and imposing the self-fulfilling narrative of “traditionally good Russian-Serbian relations throughout history”;
- Using propaganda and abusing media freedom;
- Creating and supporting the functioning of structures and individuals who advocate for various aspects of strengthening Serbian-Russian relations;
- Insisting on identity similarities and their policies;
- Intensifying relations between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church;
- Imposing the designed narrative of Russia as “the primary economic partner”.

As noted above, this study does not delve into the effects of what is considered one of the key elements of legitimate soft power that cannot be controlled or directed: the attractiveness of a country's culture. There are a number of reasons for this, of which bulkiness is only one. Therefore, in the listed instruments of articulation of soft power there is no analysis of the work of Russian cultural centers in Serbia. It is indicative, however, that their numbers are growing, although the number of citizens of Serbia who declare themselves as ethnic Russians is not. Unfortunately, their key partners, or guests, as can be concluded from publicly available sources, are mostly illegitimate other organizations that are discussed in more detail in this study.

3.1.1. RUSSIAN POLICY OF COMPATRIOTS

In June 2015, in order to warn about similar methods and instruments, as well as those detected in its monitoring of the implementation of Russian soft power in the region, CEAS translated into Serbian and began to promote the remarkable study of the Swedish Ministry of Defense *Instruments of Destabilization – Russian “Soft Power” and Non-Military Influence on the Baltic States*,¹⁶ which discusses in detail the use of Moscow's compatriot policy in achieving its objectives in different countries. Due to their proximity to Russia and ethnic composition, the Baltic States have become a kind of testing ground on which Russia can explore the reaches of its version of soft power, which is primarily focused on “compatriots” who live in the former Soviet republics, which are now EU and NATO member states.

There has been an increase in the number of Russian compatriot organizations in Serbia, although the number of ethnic Russians who live here has not increased, a trend of which almost no one in Serbia speaks. This method of implementation of Russian soft power is extremely important, and in Serbia not well known. Thus in the next chapter slightly more space is devoted to it for the sake of readers for whom this may be their first encounter with the topic.

In Russia, the compatriot program is legally regulated by the Law on State Policy on Compatriots Abroad. It was adopted in 1999, but has gone through several changes, and the last amendments were introduced 2013. It identifies four categories of compatriots: 1) people born in the country, who live there and are characterized by common language, history, cultural heritage, traditions, and customs, as well as and their direct relatives; 2) citizens of the Russian Federation permanently living abroad; 3) those who were born in the Soviet Union and who now live in countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union, and who retained citizenship obtained in the country of residence, as well as those without citizenship; and 4) immigrants from the Russian Federation or the Soviet Union, who have

¹⁶ *Tools of Destabilization. Russian Soft Power and Non-military. Influence in the Baltic States*. 2015. Official CEAS translation of the study *Tools of Destabilization. Russian Soft Power and Non-military. Influence in the Baltic States*, with the consent of Swedish Ministry of Defense. The Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: <http://www.ceas-serbia.org/prilozi/foi-6.pdf>

obtained citizenship of the receiving country, as well as those without any citizenship (Article 1). The Law also stipulates that the compatriot policy is an integral part of both internal and foreign policy (Article 5.1) and that the goal of the policy is to support the interests of Russian compatriots (Article 5.3).¹⁷

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation cares for compatriots through a strategy that is revised every two years and focuses on helping compatriots abroad by providing the necessary information, legal advice, education, cultural programs, and spiritual and linguistic links between those who speak Russian. In the implementation of the plan and program, the Ministry has assistance from organizations such as Rossotrudnichestvo,¹⁸ foundation Russkii mir,¹⁹ and media companies like ITAR-TASS and others.

Rossotrudnichestvo is the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation, established by presidential decree in September 2008. The director of Rossotrudnichestvo is Glebova Liubov Nikolaevna, who is also well known in Serbia, primarily due to her visits with high Serbian officials. According to the State Program for Foreign Policy²⁰ adopted in April 2014, the following is to be achieved through the activities of Rossotrudnichestvo:

- Empower the networks and modernize the Russian centers for science and culture abroad;
- Promote Russian science, culture, and education in foreign countries;
- Strengthen the position of Russian language abroad;
- Support compatriots living abroad;

¹⁷ State program for working with compatriots - О программе работы с соотечественниками, проживающими за рубежом на 2013-2014 г. 2013. Гарант.ру. Available at: <http://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/70311152/#ixzz44Cfbqszd>

¹⁸ Rossotrudnichestvo. Available at: <http://www.rs.gov.ru/en>

¹⁹ Russkii mir. Available at: <http://russkiymir.ru/en/>

²⁰ Gosudarstvennaia programma RF "Vneshnepoliticheskaia deiatelnost". Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Available at: <http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/activity.nsf/0/70C680302CAF0CC744257B4000450BF3>

- Develop public diplomacy, science, education, culture, economy, information, and other humanitarian ties with governmental and non-governmental organizations in the framework of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) , as well as with other foreign governments and international and regional organizations;
- Establish international relations on the subject of the Russian Federation and municipal formation;

Strengthen the regional and supra-regional integration within the Commonwealth;

- Contribute to the participation of the Russian Federation in international events;
- Contribute to the participation in information analysis of the policy for strengthening the objective positions about Russia and the cultural and humanitarian impact of present-day Russia in the world.

This program clearly shows how important the role of the Russian compatriot and cultural centers in the world are for achieving the foreign policy objectives of the Russian Federation. The method and the “reasoning” with which Russia annexed Crimea -part of the sovereign independent state of Ukraine -affirm the need to be particularly wary of similar trends that it strengthens in other countries, including Serbia, where relatively small number of ethnic Russians live.

3.1.2. RUSSIAN COMPATRIOT ORGANIZATIONS IN SERBIA

According to the 2011 census, the Republic of Serbia has a total of 7.2 million inhabitants. Serbs as the majority, number 6.0 million, which is 83.3 percent of the total population. In the last inter-census period – from 2002 to 2011 – there was a decrease in members of the majority ethnic group from 6.2 to 6.0 million, or a change of 3.6 percent. This trend is the result of negative natural increase, which is a consequence of the mortality rate being higher than the birth rate, due to old age structure. The average age of Serbs is 42.6 years. The Serbian population is one of the oldest, with the portion of elderly people at more than 18 percent.

According to the 2011 census of the Republic of Serbia, 3,247 ethnic Russians live in Serbia, which is 0.5 percent of the population. Of these, 1,173 live in Vojvodina.²¹

The following organizations of Russian compatriots operate in Serbia: Sveslavica, General Cadet Association of Russian Cadet Corps Abroad at the Russian Cultural Center in Belgrade, the Association of Russian Compatriots *Luč*, the Association of Compatriots and Friends of Russia, the Association of Serbian–Russian Friendship Colonel Rajevski, the Serbian–Russian Association Bela Crkva, Russian Wave, the Society for the Preservation of the Memory of Russians in Serbia, the Association of Russian National Minorities, and the Association Serbian–Russian Link. Of these 10 organizations, 4 are based in Vojvodina. This number of Russian compatriot organizations,²² that are active in 2016 appears unreasonably large in comparison to the aforementioned results of the last census.

For the purpose of this study, Dr. Snežana Ilić, Executive Director of the Center for Development of Civil Society in Zrenjanin, was engaged to briefly describe the main methods and results of activities of Russian soft power in Vojvodina. Dr. Ilić believes that, when discussing the strengthening of Russian influence in Vojvodina, it is necessary to first provide some demographic characteristics of Vojvodina. Two-thirds of its population are ethnic Serbs. One-fifth belongs to ethnic minorities. One-seventh identify themselves differently: regionally, as Yugoslavs, or refuse to identify themselves ethnically.

Dr. Ilić also agrees that the pro–Kremlin organizations, Russian parties, Russian cultural centers, and associations of Russian–Serbian friendship, are now already numerous and engaged in numerous activities. A brief chronological overview of the formation of new organizations illustrates the aforementioned trend:

–2005: Association of Serbian–Russian Friendship St. Aleksandar Nevski was founded in Subotica;

²¹ Census 2011. The Republic Statistical Office. Available at:

<http://webzrs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/Public/ReportResultView.aspx?rptId=1210>

²² Oxana Shevel. Migration, Refugee Policy, and State Building in Postcommunist Europe. 2011. Cambridge University Press. Available at:

https://books.google.rs/books?id=zzbelxtHoBEC&pg=PA87&lpg=PA87&dq=compatriot+organization+definition&source=bl&ots=iXz5U_3Q6l&sig=P16BbiH6pg3n20sNeaBljovw2l9o&hl=sr&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=0ahUKFwjOo5DDyuPLAhWDVhQKHSzfBiMQ6AEiOTAE#v=onepage&q=compatriot%20organization%20definition&f=false

- 2009: Russian Center was opened in Novi Sad;
- 2010: Another Russian Center was opened in Novi Sad, in the building of NIS;
- 2013: A committee of the Party of the Russians of Serbia was established in Subotica, which has one councilor in the City Assembly;
- 2014: A branch of the Serbian-Russian-Belarus brotherhood Holy Prince Vladimir was founded in Subotica;
- 2015: The City Council of the Russian Party was established in Zrenjanin;
- 2015: Walk for Russia was organized in Novi Sad, by patriotic movements Obraz and Naši 1389;
- 2016: The fourth Russian party in Serbia – United Russian party – was registered with head office in Novi Sad.

Dr. Ilić notes that the four minority parties of Russian national minority gather, besides Russians, a large number of pro-Kremlin oriented citizens, mostly ethnic Serbs. The aforementioned Russian parties advocate in their programs the accession of Serbia into the Eurasian Economic Union, not the European Union.

“It is quite understandable that in the multiethnic Vojvodina the holders of Russian cultural influence advocate for national-emancipatory cultural policy - policy that, under the umbrella of concern for the preservation of Serbian national identity, no carries a solid core of brotherly Russian culture. For, where is the Serbian national interest endangered more than in this potentially and actually the most non-Serbian region of Serbia?” notes Dr. Ilić.

However, it is important to note that this trend does not apply only to Vojvodina. The exceptional concentration of organizations and institutions that are under Russian influence has also been observed in other border areas of Serbia, mostly populated by ethnic minorities. In addition to Vojvodina, a Serbian-Russian culture center was also opened in 2012 in Bujanovac, a city in Presevo Valley with a majority Albanian population.

In 2013, the Russian Peace Fund, the Russian Center of Novi Sad and the Association of Compatriots "Russia" published an invitation addressed to all Russians living in the territory of the Republic of Serbia to join the initiative for the formation of the National Council of the Russian National Minority (Community).²³ The invitation, among other things, says: "All of you who have, by the will of fate, found a shelter in the friendly Republic of Serbia – the Association of Compatriots "Russia", together with other organizations of Russian compatriots, began working on establishing the National Council of the Russian National Minorities (Community). We need your help in this, each of you is very important, since we are paving this road for our next generations in Serbia, and the number of Russians in Serbia is growing daily. The first step is that persons of Russian ethnicity who have Serbian citizenship fill out a form and certify it in court...We invite the Russian diaspora, of Russian ethnicity, to become actively involved in the formation of the National Council of the Russian National Minority (Community)."

The Association of Russian Descendants Romanov in Novi Sad announced in November 2014 that it had been working actively to create conditions so that the Russian minority in Serbia would take part in the next elections for national councils.²⁴ Representatives of this association started collecting signatures and doing whatever was necessary to, in cooperation with numerous other societies and organizations, found the National Council of the Russian Minority in Serbia. Through this and with the support of the state, they could better realize their programs. This association, as they say, also plans to establish the Russian Cultural Center in Novi Sad, which is a project that brings together societies of Serbian–Russian friendship. The initiative has already received support from the embassies of Russia and Belarus in Belgrade, Matica srpska, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Russian Cultural Center, and the City of Novi Sad.

²³ Invitation of the Society of Compatriots "Russia" to all Russians who live in the territory of the Republic of Serbia to join the initiative for the establishment of the National council of Russian national community. 2013. National council of Russian national community via Fond Ruski mir. Available at: http://www.ruskicentar.edu.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=106%3A2013-11-10-08-51-55&catid=15%3A2011-10-03-20-04-49&Itemid=9&lang=sr

²⁴ Russian national wants more rights. 11.11.2014. RTS. Available at: <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/drustvo/1747706/ruska-nacionalna-manjina-zeli-veca-prava-.html>

As a reminder, the Association of Russian Descendants Romanov was founded in 2013 to foster tradition and memories of the “white” Russians who left Russia after the October Revolution nearly a century ago. The representative of this association, Jovan Ivanov, pointed out that many of the members made great contributions to the development of Serbia and Yugoslavia of that time. “Unfortunately, it is now almost forgotten, and that is why it is the intention of us, their descendants, to keep the memory of them, to preserve tradition, their customs, holidays and important dates that were celebrated and commemorated, and which are important not only for Russians and their descendants, but also for Serbia.”²⁵ The Association was named in honor of Emperor Nicholas II Romanov, who, “provided the greatest assistance to Serbia in World War I, thus giving the greatest contribution to its preservation.” These assessments fit perfectly with the strategy of creating new narratives, which do not coincide fully with the factual, historical course of events.

The Assembly of the Association of Romanov, which was held at the time in Novi Sad, adopted a series of decisions including the establishment of a city council in Belgrade, Valjevo, and Stara Pazova, as well as Copenhagen and the Greek city of Skutaros.

It is interesting to note that *Russian Word* and *Sputnik*, writing about the same initiative of the Association Romanov, also quoted the president of the association Jovan Ivanov. In their quotation he says the following ²⁶: “According to the Serbian passport, we are Serbian citizens, but we are Russian descendants who feel as Russians. Now, according to the law, national minorities actually can, and the state supports them in this, establish their national councils. And through these national councils, the minorities receive funding from Serbia to develop their culture and their language here. There are about twenty national minorities in Serbia that have established their national councils and received funds from Serbia to develop their culture, language, everything that is important for a national minority. Only Russians and Turks do not have their national councils. However, there is one very important “but”. It concerns the fact that, as the Committee for the Protection of Human

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ What is the future of Russian national minority in Serbia? 14.11.2014. Sputnik. Available at: http://rs.sputniknews.com/serbian.ruvr.ru/2014_11_14/Kakva-je-buducnost-ruske-nacionalne-manjine-u-Srbiji-6335/

Rights in the Government of the Republic of Serbia explained to us, Russians under the law do not have the status of a national minority. And that means they do not have the right to establish their national council.”

By September 2015, namely by the last publicly available excerpt from the register of the national councils, no Russian national council was registered.²⁷

²⁷ Excerpt from the Register of the national councils. 14.9.2015. The Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government. Available at:
<http://www.mduls.gov.rs/doc/dokumenta/nac-manjine/lzv%D0%BE%D0%B5gistr%D0%B0%20n%D0%B0ci%D0%BE%D0%B0lnih%D0%B0v%D0%B5t%D0%B0%2014092015.doc>

3.1.3. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROTECTION OF MINORITY RIGHTS IN SERBIA

The backbone of legal regulations on the realization and protection of minority rights consists of two laws: the Law on the Protection of National Minorities (Law on National Minorities) and the Law on National Councils of National Minorities (Law on National Councils). Provisions of the Law on National Minorities rely on European standards of protection of national minorities, with the influence of Europe's Framework Convention being clearly visible. The Law has improved the system of protection of minorities in Serbia primarily by defining the concept of national minorities, establishing basic rights to preserve specificities of national minorities, and introducing the institute of national councils of national minorities into the legal system of Serbia.

When defining the term national minority, the legislature opted for a descriptive definition without exhaustively listing which national minorities enjoy the protection of the law. Gaining the status of a national minority is linked by the law to the following attributes: citizenship, numerical inferiority (but still sufficiently representative in number), and distinct ethnic, religious, linguistic or similar attributes, as well as interest of the members to preserve and maintain their common identity (Article 2, paragraph 1). With such an “open” definition, the law has adopted a liberal model and allows every “ethnic group” that meets the abovementioned criteria to have the status of national minority. However, in accordance with the freedom of ethnic self-determination, we should bear in mind that possessing the said attributes at the individual level does not automatically lead to belonging to a national minority, because every person has the right to decide whether they want to be treated as a member of a national minority or not.

An important characteristic of the law is that it has introduced the cultural autonomy of national minorities through the introduction of national councils of national minorities, which will become a constitutional institution pursuant to the Constitution from 2006. Although it founded the basis of effective influence for national minorities exercising their rights, the law has three basic weaknesses that still follow such institutions today. They are related to the selection of national councils and political influence in the process, the

centralization of minority autonomy, and the vague and insufficiently defined competencies of national councils. Following the Law on Minorities, the Law on National Councils conceives of these groups as bodies of cultural autonomy of national minorities in the fields of culture, education, information, and the official use of the minority language and alphabet. In these areas, a national council has three main powers: the right to represent the national minority, the right to decide or participate in deciding, and the right to establish institutions, companies, and other organizations (Article 2, Paragraph 2 of the Law on National Councils). A national council has the status of a legal entity, acquired after being entered in the register maintained by the competent ministry.

In addition to the Law on Minorities, the rights of members of national minorities are also regulated by other laws, in the segment of the area they regulate. Thus, we can find provisions on the rights of minorities in the Law on the Official Use of Language and Alphabet, the Law on Primary Education, the Law on Secondary Education, the Law on Identity Cards, the Law on Public Information, the Law on Local Self-Government, procedural laws, etc.

The rights of national minorities established in state regulations are realized mostly at lower levels of government, namely at the level of autonomous provinces and local self-government.

The most important political body for the establishment of minority policy is the Council for National Minorities. The Council is legally founded in the Law on National Minority that, in Article 18, stipulates that the government will establish the Council for National Minorities, “in order to preserve, promote, and protect national, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural specificities of members of national minorities and in order to realize their rights.”²⁸ The law entrusts further regulating of the composition and responsibilities of the Council to the government, but it stipulates that representatives of national councils of

²⁸ Minority policy and integration in Serbia. Analysis and recommendations for improving minority policy and the process of integration in the Republic of Serbia. 2014. Forum for Ethnic Relations. Available at: <http://www.fer.org.rs/uploads/sr/dokumenti/publikacije/analiza-i-preporuke-za-unapredjenje-manjinske-politike-i-procesa-integracije-u-republici-srbiji/Forum-1-2014-SRP-web.pdf>

national minorities will be the members of the Council. The Council was established in 2004 by a government decree. “²⁹

The Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government of the Republic of Serbia announced at the session held on March 3rd 2016 that the government adopted the Action Plan for the realization of the rights of national minorities, which is envisaged in the Action Plan for Chapter 23 of negotiations with the EU.³⁰ In drafting the Action Plan for the realization of the rights of national minorities, proposals of the national councils of national minorities were especially taken into account, and their active participation is expected in the coming stages of the implementation of activities, as well as during the monitoring of its implementation.

By adopting the said document, Serbia has rounded off its strategic orientation focused on improving the institutional and legislative framework in the field of human and minority rights and freedoms.³¹

3.1.4. COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE POSITION OF ETHNIC RUSSIANS IN SERBIA

As we already stated, there are 3,247³² ethnic Russians living in Serbia, which constitutes 0.5 percent of the population. Of these, 1,173 live in Vojvodina. In Serbia, they do not have their national council of a national minority.

During the campaign for the early parliamentary elections in Serbia in April 2016, discrimination “of the Russian people in Serbia” was raised publicly for the first time. Slobodan Dimitrijević, President of the Serbian-Russian Movement, which participated in the elections in April 2016 as an independent list,³³ explains the reasons for participating in the elections as a minority Russian party: “Russian people in Serbia do not enjoy the same rights as other minority groups, while this nation is the closest. We try to provide

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Adopted Action Plan for the realization of rights of national minorities. 3.3.2016. Government of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: <http://www.srbija.gov.rs/vesti/vest.php?id=259965>

³¹ Ibid.

³² 2011 Census. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: <http://webbrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/Public/ReportResultView.aspx?rptId=1210>

³³ Parliamentary elections in 2016 – Election lists. The Republic Electoral Commission. Available at: <http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/izbori-za-narodne-poslanike-2016-izborne-liste.php>

information and education in Russian language, introduce Russian into official use, display national symbols, and other means of connecting the Russians in Serbia with Russia. All this is covered and presented in our statute and program principles.”³⁴

On the basis of publicly available information, it appears that the aforementioned remarks were orchestrated. It is not known if listed and unlisted representatives of the Russian minority complained, in substantiated and organized manner, to representatives of the offices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe in Belgrade, or civil society organizations that deal with these issues. One gets the impression that the newly formed pro-Kremlin structures that begin to raise these questions deliberately confuse the concepts of *diaspora* and *national minority*.

Bearing in mind the very broadly defined notion of compatriots in the Russian legislation on the one hand, and the experiences of the Baltic countries, especially the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine, on the other, any attempt to create a newly constructed narrative, this time about the "endangered Russian minority" in Serbia should be prevented. This should be done in compliance with existing laws, or by changing them democratically, if it is determined that there is an aspect of discrimination against ethnic Russians in Serbia.

3.2. REWRITING HISTORY AND CREATING AND SPREADING THE SELF-FULFILLING NARRATIVE OF UNDOUBTEDLY GOOD TRADITIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SERBIA AND RUSSIA IN THE FUTURE

The rewriting of history is one of the most perfidious and widespread methods of operation of Russian soft power in Serbia. It is of particular concern that the newly created narrative, which has no historical justification, is also lightly accepted by the representatives of the political West. They take this narrative for granted without fact-checking, and on this basis, substantially define their policies towards Serbia. It is interesting that perhaps the most dynamic and honest period of cooperation between the Serbian and Russian people was at the time when Serbia and Russia did not have

³⁴ Russians in Serbia are discriminated against. 15.4.2016. Kurir. Available at: <http://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/ruse-u-srbiji-diskriminisu-clanak-2223285>

diplomatic relations, namely when a large number of those who fled the totalitarianism of the October Revolution and emerging regime, permanently settled in what was then Serbia.

For the purpose of this study, an analysis by the respectable young historian Dr. Milivoje Bešlin was commissioned, and is presented here in its entirety.

3.2.1. SERBIAN–RUSSIAN RELATIONS 19th to 21st century: MYTHS, MISCONCEPTIONS AND STEREOTYPES AGAINST RATIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE PAST AND PRESENT

Written by Dr. Milivoje Bešlin, a historian

Russian "soft power" in Serbia in modern times often uses distorted interpretations of historical events, spreading the myth of the "centuries–old friendship," "Slavic and Orthodox brotherhood," and "traditional historical ties" of the Serbian and Russian peoples. Particularly widespread is the myth of Russia as the "protector" of the Serbs, the Russian "sacrifice" for Serbia, and how Russian imperial aspirations are not historically verified, but that Russia was coming to Southeast Europe to "defend" "centuries–old" friends. In contrast to these widespread theses, rational and critical historical science has a different perspective. Russia is an empire, and like other big powers in the Balkans, it has exercised its imperial intentions. This policy, with certain modifications, has survived over more than two centuries without changing its essential characteristics.

Russian policy towards the East and the Balkans showed more serious aspirations in the time of Emperor Ivan IV ("the Terrible") from 1530 to 1584. However, it was only in the 18th century that the narrative of Russia as the "patron" of Christian nations, especially the Slavs in the Balkan Peninsula, was created, masking Russian imperial ambitions towards this part of Europe. Behind the myth of centuries of closeness and ties between the two nations, there have always been primarily Russian attempts to functionalize the Balkan nations for the purpose of their imperial goals. This was also due to their struggle with other great powers. The Ottoman Empire did not oppose these Russian aspirations, because they sought for themselves the right to "protect" the Muslims in Russia. This is how the ideological basis was created, allowing Russia in the coming centuries to expand

towards Southeastern Europe with the right to "protect" the Christian, primarily Orthodox peoples. This served as a universal excuse for Russian imperial aspirations.

The Küçük Kaynarca Treaty from 1774 is the first international treaty granting Russia the right to act on behalf of the "Orthodox nations in the Balkans" (Bulgarians, Serbs, Greeks). After that, Wallachia and Moldova, as still nominal parts of the Ottoman Empire, came under Russian protectorate, and gave Russia the right of passage for its merchant fleet through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. In this way, Russia moved closer to realizing its aspirations of access to "warm seas". In 1782, the "Greek project" of Empress Catherine II was created, with the intent to divide the Ottoman Empire, and thus the Balkan Peninsula, between Russia and Austria. According to this plan, Russia would gain control of the greater part of Serbia and gain access to the Danube.

The first Serbian Uprising in 1804 was an opportunity for the stronger penetration of Russia into the Balkans. At first, Russia imposed onto the Serbian rebels the goal of seeking only autonomy within the Empire, due to Russia's own interests and its good relations with the Ottoman Empire ("Мы с турками друзья"). Additionally, we should not overlook the fact that the Serbian rebels first wanted to seek help from Austria, as it was geographically closer and a Christian ally in the previous wars against the Ottomans. However, under the strong influence of the Orthodox Church, which acted under Russian influence, they turned to Russia. The situation changed in 1806, as Russia entered the war against the Ottoman Empire. The Serbs, with Russian persuasion, withdrew from further negotiations on peace with the Ottomans, and the good results achieved in "Ičko's Deputation" were annulled (Petar Ičko, head of the Serbian delegation during the negotiations with the Ottomans). Russian policy then considered that Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro should be the guarantors of Russian presence in the Balkans. However, in 1812, led by its own interests and the fear of Napoleon, Russia signed the Bucharest Peace Treaty with the Ottoman Empire. The well-known eighth clause related to the Serbian rebels : The Ottoman garrisons were returning to the cities, the fortifications of the rebels were demolished, and the Serbs were entirely left to the Ottomans, being in the most direct way "released down the drain". The year of 1813 ensued, the military crushing the uprising, the Ottoman victory and repression against the Serbian people.

The following Russian attempt at the functionalization of the Balkan Christians was during the Crimean War, from 1853–1856. Russian attempts to pull the Balkan Slavs into the war, and especially for the Serbs to raise a rebellion against the Ottomans, were at play then. However, with the defeat in the Crimean War in 1856, Russia lost the right of patronage over the Balkan Slavs. Defeated and with increasing socio-economic problems, in 1860 Russia again launched the so-called Eastern Question aimed at the “protection” of the Balkan Slavs. Serbia was to be the center of a new uprising against the Ottoman Empire.

The great Eastern Crisis lasted from 1876 to 1878, and Serbia entered the war against the Ottoman Empire. Meanwhile, Russia was making plans with Austro-Hungary to divide the Balkans into the spheres of interest – the most famous of such plans was the Budapest Convention from 1877. With Empress Catherine II (the second half of the 18th century), Russia was trying to destroy the Ottoman Empire and take the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. These negotiations were becoming all the more necessary because of Russia’s growing agrarian exports and the related interests in preserving its Black Sea Fleet. This imperial economic and strategic motive was clumsily shrouded in the ideological narrative of the struggle to help in the liberation of the Balkan Christians from Ottoman “slavery” and “yoke.” Russia was helping the Balkan Christians, but only when it suited its interests, and most often it used their help in the fight against other great powers, while turning its back to the Balkan allies in decisive moments. For Russia, as for other great powers, the key motive was state interest and rational action, rather than the imagined “historical ties” and “brotherly feelings.”

Specifically, in March 1878, Russian diplomacy imposed on its Balkan allies the Treaty of San Stefano. With this Treaty, Russia created, at the expense of Serbia, an enlarged Bulgaria as a puppet state for the realization of Russian interests in the Balkans. With this peace treaty, all Serbian territorial gains in the recent wars were annexed to Bulgaria, including Pirot, Vranje, parts of Kosovo, and Macedonia. Russian politicians even wanted to deprive Serbia of Niš and Leskovac, but Prince Milan Obrenović responded that they could only do this through war. The Treaty of San Stefano was a “bitter disappointment” for Serbia, received with “pain,” as the Austro-Hungarian consul in Belgrade wrote. Russia's goal was clear: via Bulgaria, as an outpost of Russian interests, it would control the Balkans and

create a basis for taking over Istanbul, in order to gain control of the Strait. Balkan nations and their little states were only a “bargaining chip” in a game of Russian policy with other powers. European powers annulled the said decisions at the Congress of Berlin in the summer of 1878. The interests of Serbia were represented in Berlin by the neighboring Austro–Hungarian monarchy. In 1885, the Serbian–Bulgarian war broke out, and Russia was on the side of its Bulgarian allies. In addition, with the Treaty of San Stefano, Russia spoiled more permanently the relations of Serbia and Bulgaria, which would be reflected in the next decades in the frequent wars between these two countries.

In fact, every time Russia was weakened, it strengthened its influence in the Balkans, relying on the Balkan nations and encouraging conflicts between them, so that it could continuously mediate, to “play one national movement against others without ever ending the conflict,” as Serbian historian Milorad Ekmečić wrote. Russia needed the Balkans so that it could prove itself as a major power over it, but also to control the straits.

One of the most common myths about Serbian–Russian relations, which was repeated by Russian Patriarch in Belgrade in 2014, is that Czar Nicholas II “sacrificed his crown, empire, and life for the salvation of Serbia,” in World War I. Russia entered World War I in order to maintain its international credibility and status as a great power, which was severely shaken during the annexation crisis in 1908–1909 and, before that, the defeat by Japan in 1905.

In the period between two wars, until 1940, there were no diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. During World War II, the Soviet Union tried (unsuccessfully) to functionalize the partisans to serve as its negotiations with the Western Allies. In the second half of 1944, Red Army forces significantly contributed to the victory of the Yugoslav partisans against the fascist forces. However, in the background of the military campaigns, the Soviet liberators carried out, for lack of discipline, numerous crimes of robbery, murder, and rape of civilians. Tito complained to Stalin about this, to which the Soviet dictator replied: “These are young guys. Let them have fun, they deserved it.” The data on the impropriety of the Red Army, whose dominant importance in the victory over fascism cannot be challenged, has never been researched. This is in contrast to

the bombing of the German garrisons in occupied Serbia by the Western allies, which is constantly discussed as the “Western bombing of Serbia.” The misdeeds of the Red Army has so far been taboo.

At the time of the Cominform Resolution in 1948, Soviet aggression against Yugoslavia was at play. Again, the cause of the conflict was Soviet expansionism and imperialism, as well as the attempt to put Yugoslavia under Soviet control. The USSR used threats, economic blackmail, sanctions, cancellation of commercial contracts, etc. The conflict began when the Soviets informed the Yugoslav government that on March 18th 1948 it would withdraw its civil experts from Yugoslavia, and a day after, its military advisers and instructors, because they were surrounded by “unfriendliness.” The “war” against Yugoslavia was a propaganda and intelligence war, but also involved the military, with almost daily attacks on Yugoslav border troops. These attacks included nearly 8,000 border incidents, in which dozens of Yugoslav soldiers and citizens were killed.

After the Soviet–Yugoslav reconciliation following Stalin's death in 1958, a new Soviet attack on Yugoslavia took place, as a result of the Kremlin regime’s intention to influence the content of the new program of the Yugoslav Party (SKY). A fierce anti-Yugoslavia campaign in the Soviet media was also followed by encouraging its satellites, such as Bulgaria, to make claims on Yugoslav territory. Any attempt at reforms in the SFRY was causing “serious reservations, anxiety, and suspicion as to where it would lead” among the Soviets. Particularly severe were criticisms of the economic reforms of 1965. According to the Soviets, every reform and democratization effort in Yugoslavia was leading “to liberalism and to the West” and had to be prevented. The Soviet regime continuously sought and encouraged dogmatists, as “healthy forces,” which would encourage the Sovietization of Yugoslavia. One of the turning points in the democratization process of the country – the overthrow of the conservative Yugoslav Vice President and controller of the State Security Administration, Aleksandar Ranković, in Brioni in 1966 caused dissatisfaction among the Soviets. For them, it was the end of the hope for Yugoslavia to return to the Soviet “camp” after Tito. At that time, Soviet officials were sending messages that Ranković was a, “better and more honest Communist than those who replaced him. He

saw that and did not want such a development, and was condemned by the winning concept, which leads to liberalism and resembles social democracy.”

The Soviet aggression against sovereign Czechoslovakia in August 1968 caused the third Soviet political attack on Yugoslavia, but it also initiated ideas regarding the need for its breakup. Also, that same year of 1968, Yugoslav condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia brought about new threats that Yugoslavia could be the next victim, because of its “anti-Soviet campaign,” i.e. condemnation of the occupation of sovereign Czechoslovakia. Yugoslav positions were then compared with NATO and former SS troops. As the Moscow *Pravda* wrote, “SKY is one of those angry opponents to the Marxist-Leninist party and it inspired the anti-socialist elements in Czechoslovakia.” It was a hint of a possible Soviet invasion of Yugoslavia, which did not happen after all.

In the second half of the 1960s, the USSR spread the claim about the need for the breakup of Yugoslavia. The Eastern European countries should “conquer key positions in Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro,” because these republics were always “pro-Slavic,” while the other half of Yugoslavia was “pro-Western” and “it does not matter what happens to it.” At that time, the Soviet emissaries characterized the issue of the disintegration of Yugoslavia “as not only its internal affair,” saying that, “in the case of jeopardizing socialism in Yugoslavia, Warsaw Pact troops would intervene, as they did in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.” It is indicative that the Russian state television *Russia Today* claims that the Warsaw Pact was a, “defensive alliance protecting Soviet allies from the aggressive North-Atlantic Alliance.” The Russian state television still defends the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, which represented, as they say, “a truly important exam of the united armed forces of the Warsaw Pact.” It is a continuation of aggressive and imperialistic policy in Europe.

Today, the Russian propaganda activity in Serbia clearly overlaps with Milošević’s propaganda during the period of wars in the 1990s. In this process, the Russian and pro-Russian media outlets are, in the most radical way, abusing, and falsifying modern history in order to incite conflict and intolerance in the region, and further Serbian nationalist homogenization. Solidification of Serbia with a compromised nationalistic past serves to

justify the aggressive wars of the 1990s and constitute the “new” Serbian identity, which should be even more pronouncedly anti-Western, pro-Russian, and antagonized towards all neighbors. Although Russia's official policy, as well as its media services, are today in the position of defending the political legacy of the Milošević regime in Serbia, the official Russian government, at all times during the 1990s, followed the Western policy towards the Balkans. Russia was a member of the Contact Group and in the UN Security Council, supported all resolutions related to the Balkan crisis of the 1990s.

In 2013, an outpost of the Russian Institute of Strategic Research (RISI), the so-called Putin's Institute for the expansion of “soft power”, ideological values, and influence, was opened in Serbia. This institution is known for controversial appearances by its Moscow director, a former member of the Soviet security services, Leonid Reshetnikov. He has stated that, “Orthodoxy is a special civilization,” which is “an alternative to the US–Western concept of consumer Europeanism,” and that, “the goal and mission of Orthodox peoples are to, on a planetary scale, spread their Orthodox concept.” Promoting xenophobia in Serbia, he claimed, “we will do everything to make Serbia and Russia carry the flame that was handed over to us from Constantinople, and that is why they want to destroy us.” He also stated that, “without Russia, Serbia would disappear, it would not exist.” Encouraging the revanchist intentions of Serbian nationalists, Reshetnikov and people from the said Institute claim that the map of the Balkans is “temporary,” because the borders are “artificial.” From this it necessarily follows that a new war in the region is inevitable.

Russia has also been objecting to the European integration of Serbia ever more openly. Thus, the Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Dmitry Rogozin stated in Belgrade that, “Serbia must be cautious when it comes to the harmonization of its foreign policy with the EU.” Otherwise it could face “Cologne 2,” alluding to the assaults against women in the German city. The Russian Deputy Prime Minister also said that if Serbia enters the EU, the “newcomers would feel like bosses, and women will be afraid to come out on the street,” therefore openly encouraging xenophobic and racist forces in Serbian society.

One of the goals of contemporary Russian policy towards the Balkans is to keep Serbia in a state of frozen conflict with the region for as long as possible. This gives hope to Serbian

nationalists for historical revenge for the defeat in the wars of the 1990s. The open pressure that Russia is exerting over Montenegro, and the media spins, insults, and threats against the Montenegrin leadership, as well as the brutally open support for the corrupt separatist regime of Milorad Dodik in the further destabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina, speak mostly in favor of the claim that Russia could create an outline of the Balkan “Abkhazia” and “South Ossetia,” from the loyal Serbian nationalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, mirroring the way in which Russia turned the rebels in Ukraine in the territories of the so-called “Novorossiia” (New Russia). With these political tendencies, the Kremlin regime fortifies the platform for new conflict in the Balkans. Historical experience shows that, for Russia, armed conflict in Southeastern Europe is a proven risk-free method for it to confirm itself as a global, not only regional, power. Opening new conflicts in the Balkans, attempting to create frozen conflicts, or preventing the resolution of existing (Kosovo) ones, would be an opportunity for long-term Russian influence in the region, with the purpose of further destabilizing Europe.

Certain historical patterns and imperialistic tendencies endure over centuries, regardless of the character and the ideological prefix of the government in Russia. Rhetorical excuses and ideological narratives change (centuries of friendship, Slavic brotherhood, proletarian internationalism, etc.), but not the desire to manifest as strongly as possible Russian imperialistic intentions in the Balkans, using indigenous nationalisms that are anti-Western, xenophobic, extremely intolerant, and essentially, profoundly anti-liberal.

3.3. NOTHING IS TRUE AND EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE – MEDIA MANIPULATION AND PROPAGANDA AS A MODE OF OPERATION OF RUSSIAN SOFT POWER IN SERBIA

Russian state media propaganda, of course, has not spared European Union member states and countries of the former Soviet Union. The culmination of this propaganda ensued in February 2016, when *Russian Channel 1*³⁵ reported on the abduction and gang rape of a girl of Russian origin in Germany, which led to an exchange of sharp statements of high officials in Russia and Germany.³⁶ The EU and other structures have considered how to stop this trend and other negative impacts of Russian soft power in the narrow sense.

Serbia, which, unlike the EU member states, has weak institutions and democratic tradition, is of particular interest to the Kremlin for a number of special circumstances, which almost go unnoticed in public debate. This is especially a matter of concern if we take into account the size of the impact of Milošević's propaganda on Serbia and the region, and the similarities between the operations of these two projects. In 2015, without any promotion or significant reaction, the translation of the great book by Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*, was published in Serbia.

For the purposes of this study, the effects of the increasingly strong Russian propaganda machine will be observed as a component of the impact of Russian soft power. The reason for this decision lies in the fact that, in contrast to most European countries, the negative effects of this trend are almost never discussed in Serbia. The state leadership welcomed the arrival of *Sputnik* in Serbia as a balance to providing information,³⁷ and it also attended the celebration of the first anniversary of its operation. Russian propaganda has the standard classic power of attraction in the Serbia and has greatly penetrated almost all media sources. Therefore it is included in the analysis of the strengthening of Russian soft power.

³⁵ Russia's hybrid interference in Germany's refugee policy. 4.2.2016. European Council on Foreign Relations. Available at:

http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_russias_hybrid_interference_in_germanys_refugee_policy5084

³⁶ Heated debate between Russia and Germany about the girl. 27.1.2016. B92. Available at:

http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2016&mm=01&dd=27&nav_category=78&nav_id=1090176

³⁷ Portal *Sputnik* start operating in Serbia. 3.2.2015. The Association of Journalists of Serbia. Available at: <http://uns.org.rs/sr/desk/media-news/28777/portal-sputnik-poceo-da-radi-u-srbiji.html>

According to the Law on Public Information and Media from 2014, *media* is defined as, “a means of public information that, by using words, image, or sound, transmits editorially shaped information, ideas, and opinions, and other content intended for public dissemination and an unspecified number of users.” Under this law, media includes daily and periodical newspapers, news agency services, radio programs, television programs, electronic editions of these media sources, and independent electronic publications (editorially shaped websites or internet portals), which are registered in the Media Registry. The purpose of the Media Registry is to ensure that information in the media is public. This ensures transparency and compliance with both the law and the journalistic ethics code.³⁸

In this study, Russian media in Serbia is considered to be media sources that are registered in the Russian Federation, such as *Sputnik*, which is registered in the Russian Federal Service for Supervision in the sphere of connections, information technology, and mass communications. According to the Serbian Law on Public Information and Media, a representative of foreign media (editor, journalist, photo-reporter, cameraman, and other associates) and the correspondents of foreign media, in carrying out their activities, have the same rights and duties as local editors, journalists, other associates, and the media.

Serbian pro-Kremlin media sources are those that are registered in the Media Registry of the Republic of Serbia, and which publish content that promotes the policy of the Kremlin, by focusing particularly on various aspects of Russian-Serbian relations, their history, present state, and prospects of development, as is stated, for example, on the Serbian pro-Kremlin portal of the Strategic Culture Foundation.³⁹

To analyze the state of the media in Serbia, it is necessary first to separate the concept of objective journalism in the media from propaganda, which is increasingly widespread in Serbia. Media objectivity is reflected in the principles of fairness, accuracy, objectivity, and indispensable independence. In order to achieve these objectives, it is also necessary that journalists are fully professionally trained researchers, or that they are at least informed

³⁸ The Law on Public Information and Media. The “RS Official Gazette”, no. 83/2014 i 58/2015.

³⁹ About Us. Strategic Culture Foundation. Available at: <http://www.fsksr.ru/o-fondu-strateske-kulture/>

about the topic they report about – which is rarely the case in Serbia. Although media reporting influences the formation of opinions in the general public, if these principles are applied, these opinions will develop independently on the basis of the provided accurate and objective facts about a given topic.

On the other hand, propaganda implies the spreading of ideas, information, and rumors for the purpose of strengthening or weakening certain institution, initiatives, or persons. Propaganda presents given goals or attitudes as general interest. It suggests a distorted meaning by perverting general concepts, concealing facts and the truth, and instructing desired opinion through the manipulation of the general public with fallacies.

Serbia does not have a long tradition of influential independent journalism, which can serve as a counterweight to increasingly aggressive propaganda. While the trend of internet portals dealing in more detail with corruption is praiseworthy, they are mostly *single issue* and do not go deep into situations in the security system and foreign policy, and do not deal with issues of transitional justice or the strengthening of non-democratic trends in the broader political sense. Public opinion is mostly created from the top-down: from state leadership, down to the individual. This is realized through several television channels and pro-government or state-related, allegedly “more moderate” daily newspapers and tabloids, which are all serving the interests of the current government. None hesitate to spread propaganda, lies, intimidation towards competitors, or make open threats.

The fact that in the latest *Index of Media Freedoms in the World*, published by Reporters Without Borders,⁴⁰ Serbia moved up eight places since 2014, is a consequence of many countries having fallen down on the scale. The situation in Serbia has actually worsened since the arrival of Vučić as prime minister in 2014. This has been reported in *Cenzolovka* by Christian Mihr, the Executive Director of Reporters Without Borders, an organization that has been, for the past 14 years, been assessing the conditions in which journalists work in 180 countries. While Serbia, on the one hand, moved from 67th to 59th place and is

⁴⁰ Index of Media Freedoms in the World 2016. Reporters Without Borders. Available at: <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

statistically a leader in the region in terms of media freedom, the *Index of Media Freedoms in the World* at the same time stated that media freedoms are endangered and the job of a journalist has become especially difficult since May 2014. In the Reporters without Borders assessment, those who are most critical of their government are the target of public attacks. Journalists are faced with financial and editorial pressures, and the laws that protect freedom of information have never been implemented in full. Serbia's jump in the *Index* surprised many Serbian journalists, who say that it does not reflect reality, and that the state of the media in Serbia is disastrous. Their opinion is shared by Christian Mihr, who states for *Cenzolovka*, that this slight improvement in the table is really only a statistical effect.⁴¹

The findings of the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) are consistent with this assessment. It concludes that the situation in the Serbian media has only worsened in the last few years, and that currently "soft" or disguised censorship is at play. In the February 2016 report *Soft Censorship: The changes in the media sector – from worse to worse*, BIRN states that the media scene in Serbia suffered several key changes in the past two years: "New media legislation did not give the expected results – the process of privatization of the media was accompanied by numerous abuses, and a number of inconsistencies were identified in the implementation of public tenders for support of media content; the privatization process has led to a new type of concentration in the media market; a poor media market and smaller budgets for advertisement additionally directed the media towards budget financing; censorship, auto-censorship, and numerous limitations of editorial independence are on the rise."⁴²

This situation is naturally fertile ground for foreign, state, and state-supported propaganda to manipulate the citizens of Serbia. In addition, the fact that media ownership in Serbia is non-transparent allows for the easier penetration of Russian propaganda machinery.

⁴¹ Christian Mihr: The situation in the Serbian media has deteriorated since the arrival of Vučić. 21.4.2016. Cenzolovka. Available at: <https://www.cenzolovka.rs/misljenja/kristijan-mir-rwb-stanje-u-srpskim-medijima-pogorsano-od-dolaska-Vučića>

⁴² Soft censorship: Changes in the media sector – from bad to worse. 2016. Balkan Research Network. Available at: http://birnsrbija.rs/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/izvestaj_meka_cenzura_final.pdf

In February 2015, the Anti-Corruption Council published the **Report on the ownership structure and control of the media in Serbia**.⁴³ The Council identified and singled out five systemic problems that had been paralyzing the public information system in the Republic of Serbia, namely: lack of transparency of media ownership; lack of transparency of financing; economic influence through the budget, tax incentives, and other indirect forms of financing with public funds; problems of media privatization and the uncertain status of media public services; censorship, self-censorship, and tabloidisation.⁴⁴

It was found that 613 legal entities appear as founders of more than one media company. Of the analyzed sample of 50 media companies, including 9 internet portals and websites dealing with public information, the Council found that 23 media companies have completely transparent ownership, 14 media companies have nontransparent or partially transparent ownership, and at least 13 media companies have ownership that is formally transparent, but another person is perceived in the public as the owner.

According to the report of the Anti-Corruption Council, the public media sources that are not registered in the registry (APR) of the Business Registers Agency and are engaged in activities of public information, are *Pravda*⁴⁵ and *Facts*.⁴⁶ These media outlets openly advocate for pro-Kremlin views.

Russian soft power in Serbia is certainly taking advantage of the aforementioned circumstances. As a part of the research for this study, 16 pro-Kremlin media outlets, 6 Russian media outlets, and 2 media outlets whose origin had not been determined were mapped.

⁴³ Report on the ownership structure and control of the media in Serbia for the period from 2011 to 2014. The Anti-Corruption Council of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: <http://www.antikorupcija-savet.gov.rs/saopstenja/cid1011-2752/savet-objavio-izvestaj-o-vlasnickoj-strukturi-i-kontroli-medija-u-srbiji>

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *Justice*. Available at: <http://www.pravda.rs/>

⁴⁶ *Facts*. Available at: <http://fakti.org/>

In November 2014, the International Informational Rusija Sevodnja (МИА РОССИЯ СЕГОДНЯ ⁴⁷) presented its new International Media Project **Sputnik**,⁴⁸ which is, according to the General Manager of RS, an international information network, the content for which is not edited in Moscow, but in different cities around the world. He also said that the aim of Sputnik will be to, “present to the global public an alternative view of world events, which is not shaped under the influence of western mass media.”⁴⁹

Sputnik is currently among the major instruments of creation and dissemination of Russian soft power in Serbia. In addition to being an internet portal, Sputnik can also be accessed via radio program, in digital format, and through a mobile application that has more than 100,000 users.⁵⁰ Sputnik in Serbia is using the facilities of the dissolved radio company Voice of Russia. Russia today broadcasts its program via internet portal Vostok.⁵¹

The international project called Russia Beyond the Headlines (**RBTH**), which has existed since 2007, is presented in Serbia by **Russian Word**.⁵² The goal of RBTH is to increase the presence of Russia in the foreign media for 23 countries that publish supplements to the printed editions in 29 influential newspapers, including the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post* in the United States; *Figaro* in France; *Handelsblatt* in Germany; *Repubblica* in Italy; *Pais* in Spain; *Global Times* in China; and *Politika* and *Geopolitika* in Serbia. RBTH also maintains 20 websites in 16 languages, including the aforementioned Russian Word.

A large number of media outlets in Serbia, including those that are financially connected with the state or the current government, to a large extent create their own content following the discourse of Sputnik. Some of them are: *Večernje Novosti*, *Politika*, *Pink*, *Studio B*, *Informer*, *Pečat*, *NSPM*, *Standard*, *Novi Standard*, and *Pravda*.

⁴⁷ МИА РОССИЯ СЕГОДНЯ. Dostupno na: <http://ria.ru/docs/about/>

⁴⁸ Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs.sputniknews.com/>

⁴⁹ “Sputnik” for the new view of the world. 17.11.2014. Russian Word. Available at: http://ruskarec.ru/politics/2014/11/17/sputnik_za_novi_pogled_na_svet_35057.html

⁵⁰ Sputnik application. Google Play Store. Available at: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.sputniknews.sputnik&hl=sr>

⁵¹ Vostok. Available at: <http://www.vostok.rs/>

⁵² Russian Word. Available at: <http://ruskarec.ru/>

This is demonstrated by the emergence of many newly established internet portals with large numbers of followers and a strong presence in social networks, which, like the above-mentioned media, spread propaganda, frequently work to defame political opponents, and contaminate the public space with fallacies of various kinds, without suffering any consequences. Among the most influential are **IN4S**,⁵³ and **Politikanews**,⁵⁴ which do not contain any trace of authors, editors, owners and journalists, objectives, etc.⁵⁵

One example of the impact of the media mentioned by the Anti-Corruption Council in its Report, refers to the pro-Kremlin party Third Serbia. It is suspected of potential abuse of public resources, i.e. money from public sources of funding to ensure political influence, the promotion of political views through advertising and marketing, and the leadership of JKP Informatika from Novi Sad. Since September 2012, the director of JKP Informatika has been Dejan Čelar from the party Third Serbia, and his assistant is Aleksandar Đurđev. Đurđev is also the President of the Council of Public Order, Peace, and Security in the City of Novi Sad. He is an adviser to the mayor on issues of the Danube Strategy and is the Secretary General of the Third Serbia.

According to the State Audit Institution's report on the completed audit at JKP Informatika Novi Sad in 2013, the said company contracted services of advertising, marketing, and promotion in 2013 without conducting a public procurement procedure in the manner prescribed by the Law on Public Procurement.⁵⁶ Based on discretionary decisions, the company management concluded six agreements worth 8.7 million dinars.⁵⁷

The advertising was also performed at the following sites: *Kurir*,⁵⁸ *NSPM*,⁵⁹ *Srbodroid*,⁶⁰ *Danas*,⁶¹ *Standard*,⁶² and *Akter*.⁶³

⁵³ IN4S. Available at: <http://www.in4s.net/>

⁵⁴ NATO pays well – Jelena Milić brags about life of luxury. 3.2.2016. Politikanews. Available at: <https://politikanews.wordpress.com/2016/02/03/nato-dobro-placa-jelena-Milić-hvalise-se-luksuznim-zivotom/>

⁵⁵ During its research, CEAS also searched the data on the media through the RNIDS (Registry of National Domain Names of Serbia). IN4S and Politikanews do not have domains registered with the RNIDS. IN4S is a Montenegrin media, so that verification in the APR and RNIDS-u is not possible.

⁵⁶ The Law on Public Procurements. The "RS Official Gazette" no. 124/2012, 14/2015 and 68/2015.

⁵⁷ Novi Sad: They allocated five million dinars to organize the round table. 20.1.2014. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/vojvodina/novi-sad-izdvojili-pet-miliona-dinara-za-organizovanje-tribine/lcgmh81>

⁵⁸ *Kurir*. Available at: www.kurir-info.rs

On the basis of discretionary agreements concluded by the management of JKP Informatika with the provider of the advertising services, the officials of Third Serbia were present in the public through media recognition and the promotion of political views and activities.⁶⁴

The only company that contacted the Privatization Agency to purchase media in Vojvodina is the company owned by Danijel Kulačin, who until recently was an official of the Third Serbia.⁶⁵ Kulačin owns the company *Feedback Consulting & New Media Production* that offered to buy *Dnevnik*, which has been in circulation for 70 years, as well as Radio Kikinda, Radio Vrbas, Radio Novi Bečej, Radio Zrenjanin, Radio Subotica, and Radio Bačka Topola. It also submitted bids for RTV BAP from Bačka Palanka and Television Novi Sad. After this situation, and due to a lack of interest, concern for the media in Vojvodina was justifiably raised by Third Serbia, which used to be in a coalition with SNS at the local level in Novi Sad, and would become the owner of a majority of important media outlets in Vojvodina.⁶⁶

The editor of the website *Cenzolovka*, Zoran Nikolić, warned about this phenomenon: “The media laws are either not enforced or are enforced poorly. Privatization is a great example – on the one hand, the government avoids its legal obligation to grant free shares to the employees of non-privatized media, but is waiting for these companies to get dissolved. On the other hand, no one wants to buy local media that depends mainly on local budgets for economic reasons, but they are being purchased for political reasons by people close to the parties in power.”⁶⁷

⁵⁹ NSPM. Available at: www.nspm.rs

⁶⁰ *Srbodroid*. Available at: www.srbodroid.com

⁶¹ *Danas*. Available at: www.danas.rs

⁶² *Standard*. Available at: www.standard.rs

⁶³ *Akter*. Available at: www.akter.co.rs

⁶⁴ Report on the ownership structure and control of the media in Serbia for the period from 2011 to 2014. The Anti-Corruption Council of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: <http://www.antikorupcija-savet.gov.rs/Storage/Global/Documents/izvestaji/izvestaj%20mediji%2026%2002.pdf>

⁶⁵ Third Serbia is purchasing media in Vojvodina. 6.12.2014. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/treca-srbija-kupuje-medije-po-vojvodini/1ennrfh>

⁶⁶ Murky waters of privatization: Is the right wing rushing toward the media in Serbia? 10.12.2014. Radio Free Europe. Available at: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/jurisaju-li-desnicari-na-medije-u-srbiji/26735672.html>

⁶⁷ Nikolić: Gašić dismissed only so that Vučić would show that he keeps his word. 9.2.2016. N1. Available at: <http://rs.n1info.com/a133114/Vesti/Zoran-Nikolic-o-protestu-novinara.html>

Russian soft power exerted through the portal Sputnik is very much focused on Montenegro. Of approximately 300 articles on Montenegro, 70 percent have a negative connotation, which is primarily reflected in the criticism of the government of Montenegro. Sputnik devoted special attention to the invitation to Montenegro to become a member of NATO, which was followed by a number of headlines such as: “Montenegro in NATO, an Eyesore for Russia,”⁶⁸ “NATO Performs Territorial Cleansing of the Balkans,”⁶⁹ “Montenegro – a pawn in a Large Chess Game,”⁷⁰ “Zaharova: The question of accession of Montenegro to NATO to be solved in a referendum,”⁷¹ and “Đukanović leads Montenegro into new conflicts.”⁷²

Some media outlets in Serbia announced that the Russian millionaire Konstantin Malofeev will buy a television network with national coverage. In addition to television, they also mention the launch of another cable TV station, daily newspapers, and an advertising agency. An intermediary in this business could be the Serbian businessman Bogoljub Karić, who, after being indicted for abuse of office, fled to Russia, where he is still located.⁷³ In addition, Karić’s family’s political party is a coalition partner with the ruling SNS.

A survey conducted by the Russian–Serbian news agency *Gazeta*, whose goal was to establish what percentage of the population in Serbia was interested in the opening of a Russian television channel that would focus on the promotion of Russia in the country,⁷⁴ showed that 88 percent of respondents had a positive view of the idea, while only 9 percent were against it.

⁶⁸ Montenegro in NATO – An Eyesore for Russia. 25.12.2015. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs.sputniknews.com/regioni/20151225/1102043816/CrnaGora-Rusija-sankcije.html>

⁶⁹ NATO performs “territorial cleansing” of the Balkans. 25.12.2015. Available at: <http://rs.sputniknews.com/regioni/20151225/1102051631/NATO-Rusija-Balkan.html>

⁷⁰ Montenegro, a pawn in the great game of chess. 22.12.2015. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs.sputniknews.com/regioni/20151222/1101978798/crna-gora-nato-lajms.html>

⁷¹ Zaharova: The question of accession of Montenegro to NATO to be solved in a referendum. 16.12.2015. Sptunik. Available at: <http://rs.sputniknews.com/regioni/20151216/1101830162/Rusija-Podgorica-NATO.html>

⁷² Đukanović leads Montenegro into new conflicts. 15.12.2015. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs.sputniknews.com/analize/20151215/1101813064/crna-gora-djukanovic-nato-referendum.html>

⁷³ Putin’s tycoon buys media empire in Serbia. 2.2.2016. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/saznajemo-putinov-tajkun-kupuje-medijsko-carstvo-u-srbiji/rp6lk8m>

⁷⁴ 88% of Serbs want Russian television in Serbia. 16.2.2016. Vaseljenska. Available at: <http://www.vaseljenska.com/drustvo/88-srba-zeli-rusku-televiziju-u-srbiji/>

3.4. INSISTING ON POLICIES OF ACQUIRED IDENTITIES

At the end of 2015, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia published an important collection of original papers titled, *Identity of Serbia*.⁷⁵ In his highly analytical and precise editorial, *Identity of Serbia – between Glorification and Humiliation*⁷⁶, the director of the Helsinki Committee, Sonja Biserko, inter alia, states: “It is indicative that Russia is feeding the Serbian frustration and the claim that Yugoslavia was a Serbian mistake. Also the claim about artificially created nations, such as, for example, the Montenegrins. Russian political analyst Vladimir Trapara from the Institute for International Politics and Economics, believes that the admission of Montenegro into NATO would mean for that country distancing from Serbia and Serbian identity. At the same time, the influential pro-Russian conservative bloc produces an impression of identity 'Russianisation of the Serbian nation', the basis of which is the superiority of Orthodox civilization, Byzantine heritage, and the Slavs, as well as historical mutual assistance.”

However, in Serbia in 2016, the issue of identity is unfortunately, rarely thought about or raised as a topic of public debate. The mainstream and/or pro-government media writes fatalistic articles or transmits articles on the certain collapse of the EU and the crisis of its identity, without mentioning facts, such as the 70 years of peace, economic prosperity, and progress in the protection of individual and collective human rights. There are frequent “debates” in the public sphere on terrorism originating in the Middle East, whose “structures were certainly created by the notorious US.” There are not enough much-needed discussions, as is the case in the political West, about the negative consequences of cultural relativism and the democratic deficit of multiculturalism.⁷⁷ For this reason, the fact that inherited identities represent key elements in the entire identities of individuals and nations caught in the whirlwind of globalization is not surprising. Bearing in mind that Serbia is the largest country in the Western Balkans and is mostly Orthodox and Slavic, it is

⁷⁵ Collection of original papers “Identity of Serbia”. The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. 2015. Available at: <http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/hpovelja.html>

⁷⁶ Identity of Serbia – between Glorification and Humiliation. The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. 2015. Available at: <http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/2015%20dec%20-%20sonja%20biserko.pdf>

⁷⁷ Jens-Martin Ericksen & Frederik Stjernfelt. 2013. The Democratic Contradictions of Multiculturalism. The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia. Available at: <http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/doc/Ogledi16.pdf>

very suitable for the imposition of acquired identities, similar to Russian, through the articulation of soft power.

Leonid Petrovich Reshetnikov, by the order of the President of the Russian Federation, serves as the Director of the Russian Institute of Strategic Research (RISI).⁷⁸ From 1976 to 2009 he worked in the Foreign Intelligence Service of Russia, and retired with the rank of Lieutenant General. At the end of 2013, he gave an interview to the Moscow newspaper *Stoletje* entitled, *Russia is a global alternative, the world has no politician like Putin*.⁷⁹ This article became a kind of manifesto for the instruments of Russian soft power in Serbia.

In April 2014, the well-attended and well-covered promotion of Reshetnikov's book, *Back to Russia*, was held in Belgrade. In the foreword to the Serbian edition, Reshetnikov states: "At some point in its development, Russia has stepped down from the divinely predetermined path and taken the path of willfulness, human vanity, and passion. That was the road to hell, where we almost arrived, but we stepped on the brake in early 2000, and since then we have stopped. Now we stand at a crossroads. Where should this country go?" Shortly before the promotion, Leonid Reshetnikov also received the Medal of the Holy Emperor Constantine from Patriarch Irinej for special merits in strengthening Russian-Serbian ties.

Particularly interesting is Reshetnikov's confession that that as a young man he was an devout communist, but in 1979, when he came to Belgrade, he started losing his faith. "As I looked at the problems of the Serbs in Yugoslavia, met Russian immigrants, and read Russian books that were banned in the Soviet Union, I realized that we bordered with frames. If you want to know more, you can be declared an enemy of the working people,

⁷⁸ The Russian Institute of Strategic Research was founded by the President of the Russian Federation in 1992 with headquarters in Moscow, as a state scientific institution, responsible for information and analytical support of the presidential administration. RISI provides expert evaluations, recommendations, prepares information-analytical materials for the Administration of the President of Russia, Federation Council, State Duma, Security Council, the government, ministries and other departments, and, as stated on the official website, pays great attention to the fight against terrorism and opposes the falsification of history in the post-Soviet area. The Russian Institute of Strategic Research. Available at: <http://riss.ru/>.

⁷⁹ Leonid Reshetnikov: Russia is a global alternative, the world has no politician like Putin. 16.10.2013. NSPM. Available at: <http://www.nspm.rs/hronika/leonid-resetnikov-rusija-je-globalna-alternativa-svet-nema-politicara-kao-sto-je-putin.html?alphabet=l#yyComment92977>

and if you go to the other side, you can be declared a traitor to Leninism and Stalinism. I wondered why millions of Russians who speak Russian and love their homeland cannot live in Russia. It has been 30 years since then, and this book is the result of these reflections. I realized that we had committed a sin. We gave up our name. Nobody mentioned Russia, only the Soviet Union. We had betrayed our lineage. This betrayal of one's people and nation led to the disaster in 1991. The state founded on millions killed and tortured could not survive."⁸⁰

Reshetnikov believes that Russia should not follow communism or liberalism, but rather a third path. "The only way out, so that we do not return to a dead end, is to turn back to faith, tradition, and our worldview. The previous two generations of Reshetnikovs have told the prior 50 generations that they were fools and had not lived properly. The liberal and communist opposition in Russia is sometimes saying that Russia must develop to ensure the progress of the nation. But God did not allow Russia, with its vast lands and wealth and with population of 145 million, to become the Netherlands or Austria. Honestly, Russia is not a state, it is a civilization. The French President Jacques Chirac once said that in Russia there is a continuous debate over turning towards the East or to the West, when all has been given to us to become our own civilization." Reshetnikov states this, wondering whether Russia should copy the gay parades, the legalization of light drugs, or the attack on Iraq. According to him, today's problems with Ukraine and other republics were already established in 1917 and 1918, adding that it is absurd that the Ukrainian nationalists today are removing Lenin's monuments, while it was the communists who created Ukraine for them. During the promotion of the book, Reshetnikov also shared certain knowledge gained while working in the intelligence sector. He claimed to have read correspondences between the Soviet Ambassador Kvicinski and the German Ambassador Strauss, the former Chancellor of Germany, in which Strauss warned, already in 1983–84, that the Soviet Union was facing great challenges and possible disintegration. According to him, this was due to the fact that the Soviets had made, within one country, 15 countries with their flags, anthems, and governments. Prompted by Kvicinski's answer that Germany also had

⁸⁰ Third time for Russia. Balkan Magazine. 30.4.2014. Available at:
<http://www.balkanmagazin.net/knjizevnost-i-knjige/cid147-88735/treci-put-za-rusiju>

provinces, Strauss said that the Germans had made them on a territorial basis, and the Soviets, on a national one. It was the same in Yugoslavia. Such leftists' experiments led to this situation in Russia as well as Yugoslavia. Reshetnikov said that there had been two major attacks on Russia in its history. The first was Napoleon's, which was stopped at the Battle of Borodin. The second was Hitler's, which was stopped at Stalingrad. "The third attack is in progress, and now Putin chooses where it will be stopped," he said, adding that all that is happening now in Ukraine is only an attempt to stop the rebirth of Russia.⁸¹

Mikhail Degtyarev, an MP and the Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Science and Technology of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, who also spoke at the promotion, noted that the Russian elite is standing between Stalin and Yeltsin, although it should not. "It should go back to Russia. Today, those who believe that Western civilization is a standard are entitled to their own opinion, but we, as modern, Orthodox people, should know that this civilization has gained its wealth by plundering Constantinople and its own colonies, effectively destroying the people of South and Central America, Asia, Africa, and even the Russian and Serbian people. If we want to return to Russia and come to eternal life, it is not enough that we love our country and people, but we should also impartially assess historical events. Europe thinks that it is the head, but it is, in fact, the butt. Moscow is the head. Moscow is the third Rome, and there will be no fourth Rome," ⁸² said Degtyarev.

Another speaker at the promotion of the book *Go Back to Russia*, Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coast Amfilohije, drew on the words of St. Peter of Cetinje from his legacy: "Those who are not faithful to the monolingual, single-blooded Russia, God willing the living flesh will fall off of them. They should be damned and cursed three times, and 3000 times by me. This is what St. Peter of Cetinje left to his Montenegrins, and it would be good that the current Prime Minister of Montenegro read these words at the moment when, for the first time in history, he is imposing sanctions on Russia (...) Đukanović made such a decision on behalf of the government, but not in the name of Montenegro and

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

Montenegrins. It would be sad and ridiculous if it were not true. We could expect everything in Montenegro, but we could not expect that,” concluded Amfilohije.⁸³

Although Reshetnikov is a fierce critic of the Soviet Union, and Putin sees its collapse as one of the great historical tragedies,⁸⁴ local instruments of Russian soft power do not concern themselves with ideological details. Both Reshetnikov and Putin are equally respected and quoted. In general, these voices of Russian soft power either know very little about contemporary Russia, or do not want to acknowledge and disclose to the Serbian public the identity confusion that exists within it. Perhaps the best example of such deception of the Serbian public and political self-delusion is the political program *Zavetnici*, which, it seems, is unaware of basic information, not only about the decadence of modern Moscow, but also of the Russian economy, its global involvement, or the current economic problems in all BRIC countries. Instead, it loudly advocates for increased cooperation precisely with Russia, and, of course, the abandonment of the EU integration process.⁸⁵

3.5. STRENGTHENING TIES BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN AND SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

According to the results of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, in the latest census conducted in Serbia in 2011, 84.6 percent of the total population declared themselves to be Orthodox.⁸⁶ In Serbia, unlike in some developed multi-ethnic and multi-denominational countries, the terms of national origin and religion are generally considered to be identical. Questions of nation and religion are often confused, and *belonging* is measured with ethnic characteristics, which, in Serbia, also include religion as a key attribute.⁸⁷ Thus, religion and nation are merged, and become a basic element of the

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Expensive restoration of the Soviet Union. 13.1.2014. Politika. Available at: <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/281282/Svet/Skupa-obnova-Sovjetskog-saveza#!>

⁸⁵ About Us. Serbian patriotic movement *Zavetnici*. Available at: http://zavetnici.rs/?page_id=23

⁸⁶ Religion, native language and ethnicity. Census 2011. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: <http://webzrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/Public/PublicationView.aspx?pKey=41&pLevel=1&pubType=2&pubKey=1586>

⁸⁷ Vladimir Bakrač. Theoretical approach to the similarities and differences between religion and nation. 2009. Religion and tolerance. Center for Empirical Research of Religion. Available at: http://www.ceir.co.rs/images/stories/rit_12/10.str.337-350.vladimirbakrac_terojskipristup.pdf

identity of individuals – *Serbhood* and *Orthodoxy* are unified, dismissing the fact that among the 83.3 percent of the population who declared themselves Serb there are members of other faiths. At the same time, there are Orthodox Christians among other ethnic groups, such as the Russians. In addition to some of the qualities already mentioned, this is a very suitable characteristic for the operation of Russian soft power in Serbia.

The influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) on the state and government depends on the relationships that the leaders of the SPC have with the ruling political elite. This relationship is primarily of Caesar–Papal nature, that is to say that the state has a stronger impact on the SPC than vice versa. The relationship between Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church (RPC) is similar.

The President of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolić, although technically the president of all citizens of a secular Serbia, frequently grants privileges to the SPC and its position within the state. Prime minister Vučić acts similarly. This behavior extends to the Ministry of Defense, the Army of Serbia, and other state institutions and public authorities. In December 2015, the Serbian Patriarch Irinej received the President of Serbia Tomislav Nikolić and on that occasion discussed the opening of negotiating chapter 35.⁸⁸ It is evident that the church has an important role in the issue of Kosovo, but it is not the only issue in which the church openly interferes in politics.

The SPC gives great support to Serbian organizations that advocate for the strengthening of ties with Russia and with Russian organizations in Serbia. Ties between the SPC and the organizations RISI, Fund of St. Andrew the First–Called, and the Centre of National Fame particularly stand out.

In 2008, the Delegation of the Russian Federation visited the SPC Patriarchate (which is not uncommon when we take into account that almost no visit of Russian leadership has passed without a visit to the Patriarchate) in order to strengthen relations between the Russian Federation and Serbia in all fields, as well as town twinning between Sremski

⁸⁸ His Holiness Serbian Patriarch Mr. Irinej received the President of the Republic of Serbia Mr. Tomislav Nikolić. 28.12.2015. Serbian Orthodox Church. Available at: http://www.spc.rs/sr/patrijarh_srpski_primio_predsednika_republike_srbije_tomislava_nikolitsha

Karlovcu and Sergiyev Posad.⁸⁹ In November 2014, the Moscow Patriarch Kiril visited the Serbian Orthodox Church.⁹⁰ After the Serbian Patriarch Irinej awarded several representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church. On this occasion as well, the officials of the two churches did not forget to mention the fraternal relationship between the two nations. During his visit, Patriarch Kiril visited the exhibition, *Russia and Serbia: History of Spiritual Ties from the 14th to 19th century*. The exhibition was organized by the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, the Federal Archival Agency (Rosarhiv), and the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia, with the participation of the State Archive of the Russian Federation, the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents, the State Historical Museum (Moscow), and the Historical Museum of Serbia. This exhibition was just one of the activities that promoted the traditionally good Russian–Serbian relations.

Good relations between the two churches were highlighted in March 2012, when Serbia and Russia signed a protocol on cooperation and formed the Russian–Serbian working group, responsible for implementing the plan for mosaic painting in the Temple of Saint Sava. After Vladimir Putin’s visit to Serbia, he stated in an interview with the Patriarch that Russia would finance the painting of the mosaics for the Temple of Saint Sava for the amount of about 30 million EUR.⁹¹

In April 2014, the Serbian Patriarch Irinej presented Leonid Reshetnikov, Director of the Russian Institute of Strategic Research (RISI), with the Medal of the Holy Emperor Constantine, at the Patriarchate in Belgrade. The ceremony for this high recognition in the Serbian Orthodox Church was attended by the Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coast Amfilohije, Bishop Jovan of Lipljan, founder of the organization *Our Serbia* Mladjan Đorđević, several members of the Russian Duma, and Reshetnikov’s friends and

⁸⁹ Delegation of the Russian Federation in the Patriarchy. 7.5.2008. Serbian Orthodox Church. Available at: http://www.spc.rs/sr/delegacija_ruske_federacije_u_patrijarsijskom_dvoru

⁹⁰ Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, Mr. Kiril, visiting the Serbian Orthodox Church. 18.11.2014. Serbian Orthodox Church. Available at:

http://www.spc.rs/sr/patrijarh_moskovski_sve_rusije_g_kiril_u_poseti_srpskojpravoslavnojcrkvi

⁹¹ Russians will transform the Temple of Saint Sava. 13.4.2015. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs.sputniknews.com/kultura/20150413/1231626.html>

associates.⁹² Previously, the SPC Patriarchate, in addition to the medal awarded to Reshetnikov, awarded more medals to other prominent citizens of the Russian Federation.

Research on the number of visits by Russian officials to the Serbian Orthodox Church shows that the Russian ambassador was received in the Serbian Patriarchate 9 times from December 2012 until January 2016. This number only includes official visits according to the statements published on the SPC website. In addition to regular meetings with the Russian ambassador, the SPC Patriarchate also hosted official delegations from the Russian Federation several times, as well as representatives of the Foundation of St. Andrew the First-Called, the Center of National Glory, the Russian Federation Federal Agency for Commonwealth of Independent States, the Compatriots Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudničestvo), and the President of the International Fund of Unity of Orthodox Nations.

3.6. INSISTING ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMIC TIES AND RUSSIAN MARKET POTENTIAL FOR SERBIA, WHILE IGNORING REAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIA AND SERBIA

Although instruments of coercion themselves do not belong to the corpus of soft power, the production of false narratives regarding the importance of these relations definitely do. In Serbian–Russian relations narratives, such as the narrative of traditionally good historical relations, are systemically imposed and promoted by both the Russian and the Serbian side, regardless of the lack of foundation in reality. Unfortunately, representatives of the political West also sometimes fall for these narratives and take their conclusions for granted.

For the purposes of this study, a short analysis on the extent to which the Russian market represented an opportunity for Serbia was commissioned. The economic commentator Mijat Lakićević executed the following report, which was also presented at the conference *Serbia*

⁹² Medal of Holy Emperor Constantine to Dr. Leonid Reshetnikov. 29.4.2014. Orthodox Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral. Available at: <http://www.mitropolija.com/orden-svetog-cara-konstantina-dr-leonidu-resetnjikovu/>

and Russia – the Russian influence on the stabilization, democratization and European integration of Serbia. We present the full text of this analysis here.

3.6.1. RUSSIAN MARKET – CHANCE FOR SERBIA OR MYTH

Article by Mijat Lakićević, economic commentator

Russia, long before the European Union, was the first country with which Serbia signed a free trade agreement. It actually happened under Milošević, and the formal "contractor" was the government of SR Yugoslavia, on the eve of the elections in September 2000. This clearly shows that this economic document had a strong political background and meaning. But, it was not only about election marketing. In the Serbian public, political and general, there was a strong belief that since Serbia had separated from the former Yugoslav republics, it would be able to economically valorize its traditional and deep friendship with Russia. This, however, did not happen. Later, on two occasions, in 2009 and 2011, the list of products that are subject to free trade was expanded, but the effects were equally modest.

Commodity exchange has grown, but not faster than exchange with other countries. From 2001 to 2015, Serbia's total exports rose by eight times (from 1.7 to 13.5 billion US dollars). The same growth was seen in its exports to Russia (from 90 to 725 million). A significant increase in the value of the dollar occurred in 2015, which led to a drop in exports. However, the picture is not much different, even taking the year 2014 as a benchmark: Serbia's total exports jumped in that case from 1.7 to 15 billion dollars (nine times), and exports to Russia 11 times, i.e. to one billion dollars.

(Author's Note: Data on foreign trade is expressed in dollars for comparison in the long-term, as the euro did not exist at the beginning of the millennium. Other data (about investments, for example) is presented in euros, because that is how they appear in statistical documents, and it would be inappropriate to convert them into dollars.)

Actually, the aforementioned "tailwind" came to Serbian-Russian trade, more specifically to Serbian exports to Russia, due to the trade war between the West, i.e. the EU and US, and the RF, which led to a rapid increase in Serbian exports of food products. However, even in this case, the results were not particularly spectacular, and decline ensued after a brief upturn. There are two reasons for this. First, others are often more competitive; i.e. Russians and other actors found their way around the trade wars, with these others being able to offer cheaper (and possibly better) products than Serbia.

And second, but certainly more important: Russia fell into crisis, i.e. recession.

The Russian crisis is a consequence primarily of the sharp drop in the price of its major sources of income, namely the major export trump cards: oil prices fell to one-fifth of their original price (a barrel costing \$150 a few years prior, fell to \$30) and natural gas prices fell to one-third of their original price (from about \$500 to \$170 for 1,000 cubic meters). This reduced Russia's annual revenues from about 450 billion dollars to just one-fourth, or about 100 billion dollars. The consequences that this had on the Russian state can be seen, for example, in the fact that, in 2014, it was concluded that in order to balance the Russian budget, the price of oil needed to be \$100 per barrel. Then it decreased to \$80, and in 2015, \$50 per barrel. In 2016, the necessary price per barrel has dropped to \$30, and is expected to continue decreasing.

The Russian crisis is a consequence of a trade war with the EU and the US. Both are intertwined with its politics, especially with regards to the Ukraine crisis. In fact, it can be said that the Russian economic crisis has primarily political roots, but that is another topic.

All basic macroeconomic data for Russia in 2015 was negative. The gross domestic product fell by 3.7 percent compared to 2014. However, this figure does not even reflect the true state of affairs in Russia, due to the way in which the gross domestic product is calculated. Namely, the GDP consists of three or four elements: consumption (private and public), investments, and net exports. Net exports represent the difference between exports and imports. Since last year, imports in Russia have been falling faster than exports, resulting in a positive contribution to the GDB. When, however, we examine investments and consumption, we see that the real decline is as much as 10 percent. As Vladimir Gligorov

states in the text from which this mini analysis was taken, this is longer a recession, but something that borders on economic depression.

With regards to exports and imports in Russia in 2015, the former fell by one fifth (i.e. precisely by 19 percent), and the latter by a quarter, i.e. as much as 25 percent.

The only figure with a positive mathematical prefix was recorded in inflation, which last year amounted to 15.5 percent. There is no need to explain how bad it really is.

The depth of the Russian crisis is also reflected in the precipitous fall of the ruble, which last year, continuing the trend of 2014, lost about 30 percent of its value; in early 2015, one euro was worth 60 rubles, but by the end of the year it was 80 rubles. The drop of the Russian national currency continues, and at the end of January 2016, one euro was equal to 93 rubles. Connected with this is the drop in Russian foreign exchange reserves, which almost halved in the last two years: from about \$500 billion in 2013 to \$300 billion at the end of 2015.

Even more worrying than this are the prospects of the Russian economy. Last year, direct foreign investment in Russia amounted to only one and a half billion euros. Prior to the trade wars with the West, these figures were 20–30 times higher: in 2011 and 2012, for example, direct foreign investment in Russia amounted to about 40 billion euros, and in 2013 to 52 billion, but already the following year it fell by two thirds, i.e. to 17 billion euros.

If we add the drop in imports from the United States, which amount to about 35 percent, and the European Union, which was even slightly higher, the picture becomes even darker.

In the public sphere, one could hear that the United States, which is the greatest advocate of sanctions against Russia, and in some ways even forced Brussels to impose sanctions to Moscow, actually increased its exports to Russia. The data, however, as we see it, refute such claims.

The problem for Russia is even greater due to the fact that imports primarily included technology and equipment. The Russian President Vladimir Putin has several times declared that Russia would rely on its own strengths and replace imported products with

its own domestic products. Those who live in Serbia are well aware that every campaign of so-called import substitution ended in disaster for the local economy. Simply, there is no development without importation. Of course, make no mistake, the import of modern equipment will be the basis for increasing exports.

This downward trend in foreign trade also applied to Serbia. However, we should first mention that, although individually Russia is one of the largest foreign trade partners of Serbia, Russia's share in Serbia's total foreign trade is rather modest. Of Serbia's total exports (\$13.4 billion), Russia accounted for only 5.5 percent, or \$725 million. In total imports (\$18.2 billion), Russia, with \$1.7 billion, accounted for 9.5 percent.

When it comes to exports, Russia is ranked fifth, behind Italy (\$2.2 billion), Germany (\$1.7 billion), Bosnia and Herzegovina (\$1.2 billion), and Romania (\$745 million).

In the ranking the countries from which Serbia imports the most, Russia places third behind Germany (\$2.3 billion) and Italy (\$1.9 billion), but ahead of China (\$1.5 billion) and Hungary (\$870 million).

Finally, to document the aforementioned claim that both exports to Russia and imports from Russia are declining. Last year, compared to the year prior, both exports and imports declined by about 30 percent: the former from over \$1 billion to \$725 million, and the latter from \$2.3 billion to \$1.7 billion. In consideration of foreign trade in euros, it was very similar: exports in euros dropped by nearly 16 percent (from €775 to €653 million) and imports by about 11 percent (from €1.8 billion to €1.6 billion).

It is often said that agriculture is Serbia's opportunity. In some way, agriculture actually benefited from the Western sanctions against Russia. Export of food to Russia practically doubled in two years: from \$165 million in 2012 to \$310 million in 2014. However, already in 2015, the export of food products, as well as all other exports, dropped by nearly 20 percent, to \$265 million.

However, the fact that the export of Serbian agricultural products in the past 10 years increased 15 times is significant. Recent trends show where Serbia should seek its opportunity. Meat exports have jumped from just a few million, practically nothing, in

2010, to almost \$70 million in 2014. In 2015, however, they dropped to about \$30 million. This, however, did not happen with fruit exports, which increased from \$80 million in 2010 to \$150 million in 2014, and continued to grow in 2015, reaching \$170 million.

Exports to Russia have been around 5–6 percent of total Serbian exports for years, while the export of food to Russia makes up nearly 10 percent of total exports of food products. Therefore, food could be Serbia's comparative advantage.

Russia is even less important as an investor than as a trade partner. Total Russian investments in Serbia are estimated at €1.1 billion: €900 million of Gazprom Neft to NIS and €200 million of Lukoil to Beopetrol, i.e. former INA, which is a separate problem. Ahead of Russia are Italy (€2 billion), Austria (€1.95 billion), Norway (€1.6 billion), Belgium (€1.5 billion), and Germany and Greece (at €1.2 billion). While on the list, Russia shares positions no. 7, 8, and 9 with Slovenia and the United States.

As we can see, practically all Russian investments are concentrated in the energy sector. There have been some attempts to invest in the food industry: Russians kept Karneks for a while, but they abandoned it. In the past year, most Russians invest primarily in the media and the strengthening of cultural ties. Russian investments in energy sector have a strong political nature, which is nothing new for this field. . The sale and purchase of the Oil Industry of Serbia was more of a political than an economic deal: Serbia would provide NIS, and Russia would provide the veto of the recognition of Kosovo in the UN Security Council. This is not only reflected in the relatively low price (€400 million, the remaining €500 million is related to investments in "Pančevo" Refinery), but also in a number of other components of this transaction that placed Serbia and its interests in quite a subordinate position.

First of all, Russians included in the contract a provision stipulating that it is not possible to increase the concession for exploitation, or the so-called mineral rent. As a result, NIS now pays the state of Serbia three percent of the price of extracted oil or gas, while mineral rent in Russia is 22 percent.

Second, and partly thanks to the previous point, the Russians have begun a furious exploitation of oil and gas fields in Serbia. This is characterized as "overexploitation," which means that the Russians do not care about optimal exploitation, but only about the speed at which the exploitation occurs, thus increasing oil production from 700,000 to 1.2 million tons, and natural gas to about 500 million cubic meters. At prices from a few years ago, this would bring Serbia an income from mineral rent of nearly \$200 million. Perhaps for Russia this is not a large amount, but for Serbia it is substantial. Russia annually produces 500 times more oil (520 million tons) and over a thousand times more natural gas (650 billion cubic meters) than Serbia. Why then, one could ask President Putin, is the great and rich Russia robbing the small and poor Serbia?

And in a third example, the contract on the sale of NIS stipulates that through 2020 the buyer must maintain production in both refineries, therefore both Pančevo and Novi Sad. The latter, however, is practically non-operational. Rather, some menial production of motor oil takes place there, but everything indicates that the Russians are waiting for the "set" year of 2020, and for the said obligation to expire, in order to completely close down the Novi Sad refinery.

The best example of how and to what extent Russia is using the energy flows for political influence is in the gas industry. Namely, Serbia is the only country that imports natural gas from Russia through an intermediary. This company is the Russian–Serbian company founded in the Milošević era, "Jugorosgas," in which Serbia initially owned half of the shares, but later, presumably owing to some political-corruption machinations, lost half the ownership and now owns only one quarter of the company. The former Minister of Energy Zorana Mihajlović tried to eliminate this intermediary, but failed.

Mihajlović also failed to achieve another one of her intentions: to put "Srbijagas," a gas distribution company, under the control of the Serbian government. Mihajlović tried, and we should not get into real motives now, to implement a reorganization of Srbijagas in accordance with European directives, and then to dismiss its director Dušan Bajatović who opposed it. There was practically an open conflict from which Bajatović, who was, it is no secret, supported by the Russians, emerged as the winner. When in a new government was

created in 2014, Mihajlović lost the post as Minister of Energy, while Bajatović retained the position of the Director of "Srbijagas."

Serbia's inferiority and Russia's desire to, as strongly and as directly as possible, realize its interests in practically the only and last country in the Balkans and in Eastern Europe, can be seen in the case of the gas pipeline "South Stream." With all the countries through which the pipeline is supposed to pass, Russia concluded parity, i.e. contracts on equal, 50-50 ownership. Only in the company "South Stream Serbia," Russia had 51, and Serbia 49 percent share. We should not blame primarily the Russian side for this: the government in Serbia also wanted to make political profit from this relationship. We should remember the ceremony of welding pipes in the Srem village of Šajkaš in November 2013, when the construction of the "South Stream" had not even started in Russia. While the Serbian authorities needed this for the sake of their internal political struggle with the opposition, the Russians needed it in their global fight with the US.

The collapse of the "South Stream" as a result of the economic and political stumblings of Russia in recent years, coincided with the halting of Russian economic expansion in Serbia. With the acquisition of the Austrian "Folks banks," "Sber bank" entered the market of Serbia, and the "Bank of Moscow" also started working. In 2012 the insurance company "Sogaz" was founded, which is 51 percent owned by the Russian "Sogaz" (which is the sole owner of "Gazprom") and 49 percent owned by "Srbijagas." However, it has been noticed that neither of these financial institutions is expanding in the market, and moreover, both the "Bank of Moscow" and "Sogaz" hold themselves with reservations, at least with respect to their retail business.

A new opportunity for Russia, however, is the Serbian chemical complex: MSK from Kikinda, as well as "Azotara" and "Petrohemija" from Pančevo. All three companies use oil and gas as raw materials, namely derivatives thereof, and all three are severe economic patients. Serbian authorities offered them to NIS long ago, because as a supplier of raw materials, it was practically the only possible partner. However, NIS did not want to take them under its wing. With the drop in oil and gas prices, these companies began to operate positively, due

to which, NIS now has more economic interest in taking them. May 31 2016 is the final deadline for the issue to be resolved.

Having lost its economic strength, Russia has started to show its so-called “soft power.” It founded “Sputnik,” a portal and radio station, which is a branch of the media giant *ММА РОССИЯ СЕГОДНЯ*. Allegedly, the establishment of newspapers and television is in sight, but there is almost no need for that, given the number of local media outlets which already propagate Russian interests.

The answer to the question of whether the Russian market offers salvation for Serbia is, no, it does not. But, if the question is rephrased to, “whether it is an opportunity for Serbia,” the answer is yes, it is. Here, however, there is a “but,” attached, like many other situations.

First, Russia, is a country with a population 20 times that of Serbia (150 million people) and a GDP 40 times bigger (€1,200 billion). It is not as far away as China, and is, for those especially in Europe, a preferred destination. However, precisely due to this, Russia will not simply give Serbia its market. Serbia needs to win it through fierce competition with others. Russia did not show any compassion towards Serbia in this area: when it needed something, Russia bought it; if something was wrong, Russia returned it.

Russian attitude towards Serbia is perhaps best illustrated by the example of the car factory in Kragujevac. Serbia has always tried to put “Fiat” on the list of trade, but it failed to do so. Since 2012, especially great efforts were being invested in this, counting on the ideological closeness and fraternal ties with Russia and Putin by the socialist-progressive governments, both Dačić’s and Vučić’s or, if you like, as they are often called in public, and Vučić’s first and second. But there was no success. Russians did not allow “Fiat,” although 10,000 vehicles mean practically nothing for their huge market.

Second, with its backwards politics, especially in agriculture, Serbia is, “cutting the branch on which it is sitting” and reducing its opportunities. Specifically, Serbian agricultural policy is based on pushing livestock production. This is why those who could have a better chance in the Russian market, such as fruit and vegetable growers, are losing.

Third, unlike the Serbians, the Russians remained true to the Serbian proverb: brotherly love for brotherly love, but cheese for money. Serbia has put itself in an inferior position and lacks the knowledge to defend its economic interests. This has not resulted in any political or other points with the Russians, but rather, the contrary..

4. NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK – NEW INSTRUMENTS OF THE RUSSIAN SOFT POWER

During the research for this study 21 associations of citizens, 6 student organizations, 16 movements with political action, 14 political parties, 2 Russian organizations that have branches in Serbia, and 3 Russian foundations were mapped.

Just like the number of compatriot organizations and media portals of pro-Kremlin orientation, the number of formal associations of citizens, political movements, and parties has grown significantly in the last two years. The individual influence of each of these instruments of soft power cannot be measured individually, but we believe that it is precisely the influence of these newly created structures that has decisively contributed to the strengthening of the effects of Russian soft power in Serbia. That is why in the following paragraphs we will discuss their common characteristics and mode of operation. They are listed in a separate table at the end of this study, which outlines also the basic information regarding their legal status in Serbia.

4.1. PRO-KREMLIN ASSOCIATIONS OF CITIZENS AND STUDENTS ORGANIZATIONS

The 51 organizations mapped in this group mostly present themselves as associations of citizens, student organizations, or political movements. This is the most critical group in terms of the availability of information, manner of registration, and sources of financing. Based on publicly available program documents of the organizations in this group, we have noticed that none of them explicitly advocates for concepts such as the separation of powers, rule of law, secularism, and respect for individual and collective freedoms and human rights.

Most of them are committed to halting the European integration of Serbia, or are strongly Eurosceptic. At the same time, they are nationalistic. Their programs glorify the Serbian nation, mostly without mentioning the minority population in Serbia. This is extremely

worrying when we take into account that Serbia is comprised of only 83 percent Serbs, with the rest belonging to some 21 different ethnic communities.⁹³ The same goes with respect to secularism and the religious freedom of others. Another common position is that towards the LGBT community. At best, the programs of these organizations do not mention LGBT rights at all. Some think that they are an anomaly in this society and that they represent a threat to the “traditional family values of Serbia.” Frequently mentioned phrases include: “our country is occupied,” “the statehood is challenged,” “the value system of the Serbian people is destroyed,” “the preservation of Serbian spirituality,” and “the preservation of Kosovo and Metohija.”

These structures often advocate for the introduction of sovereign, arbitrarily, “nationally responsible” politics. They also support the selection of Russia as the most important political and economic partner, and bringing back into the public sphere the division of the citizenry into patriots and traitors. After a more profound analysis, however, it appears that these organizations and their members do not possess or refuse to publicly disclose, factual information on the situation in Russia today, especially with regards to the economy, demography, social issues, and politics.

Although often anti-modernization and anti-globalization, almost all have multiple profiles on social networks created in the political West, such as Facebook or Twitter. The Serbian Patriotic Movement Zavetnici has 16 profiles, SNP Naši 17 profiles, and Serbian National Movement 1389 6 profiles, for different cities and municipalities in Serbia.

Their meetings, which are mostly led by retired military officials, rarely include those of differing opinions. The members themselves rarely respond to invitations to participate in meetings organized by other civil society actors, who advocate for open society. The exceptions are “media duels”, which involve sometimes verbally violent confrontation on social networks. These are necessary in order to provide visibility and legitimacy to the groups. In the following paragraphs, some of the most influential organizations in this category will be described in more detail.

⁹³ National minorities. Government of Republic of Serbia. Available at: <http://www.srbija.gov.rs/pages/article.php?id=41>

SNP Naši⁹⁴ is one of the oldest ultra-right-wing organizations, and was founded in January 2006. From the very beginning of this movement, their main objectives have been closer cooperation with Russia, Eurasian integration of Serbia, and an uncompromising attitude towards the membership of Serbia in the EU and NATO. This organization is led by Ivan Ivanović, who is the defendant in the proceedings conducted before the Higher Court in Belgrade for publishing a list of “the 30 biggest Serb-haters.” It was published on March 28th 2014, and CEAS Director Jelena Milic is one of the people on the list. She joined the prosecutor's office in suing Ivanović over this list. Charges against Ivanović were filed by the Prosecutor's Office of the High Tech Crime on April 14th 2014, and the trial began on June 20th 2014. Ivanović was arrested in April 2014, on the suspicion that he had committed crimes endangering safety and discriminating, in some cases racially, on the internet. The leader of Naši was also charged for racial and other discrimination during the election campaign in Voždovac in 2013, when he posted posters with the words “for the thief upstairs, yellow cross on the door,” after which, in May 2016, the Higher Court in Belgrade acquitted him of the charges.

SNP Naši was named after the Russian youth movement Naši (“Ours”) (founded by the administration of the Russian President in April 2005), which was, at the time of its establishment, designated as a *governmental non-governmental organization*. The main purpose of the Russian Movement Naši was protesting in support of Vladimir Putin and struggling against the color revolutions. Both organizations have a common demographic: members are typically 17 to 25 years old. Among them is a large number of skinheads and hooligans who are close to the sports fan groups. Both organizations are known for riots and protests. One well known case is that in which Naši Russia in Moscow in January 2010 met near the Embassy of Ukraine, where they “congratulated” the Ukrainian President Yushchenko for losing the elections. During the Pride Parade in October 2010, SNP Naši, together with the organization Obraz, and a few more left-wing organizations, rioted in Belgrade, causing significant material damage. Numerous windows in the city center were

⁹⁴ SNP Naši. Internet presentation, available at: <http://nasisrbija.org/>

broken, as well as the premises of the pro-West oriented parties and organizations.⁹⁵ On this occasion, they clashed with the police, resulting in about 200 injuries, including 147 police officers.⁹⁶

There are serious indications that SNP Naši and similar organizations are often hired by unreformed parts of the security system, with or without the knowledge of state leadership, for the implementation of illegal and often violent actions, such as threats and riots during organizing meetings that support individual and collective rights or the transitional justice process.

From the organizational aspect, the organizations based in northern Kosovo are particularly interesting. There, branches of the Business Registers Agency of the Republic of Serbia still operate, which registers civil society organizations as legal entities, but not tax authorities, which is a mitigating factor for the funding of non-transparent operation and functioning in general. The most active among them are: the **Serbian Patriotic Movement Zavetnici**⁹⁷, **Kosovo Zavetnici**⁹⁸, **SNP Naši** and the **Serbian National Movement 1389**.⁹⁹ Zavetnici claim to have begun their activities in Kosovo, after having their first official meeting in 2012 in the “barricades” of that time.¹⁰⁰ But there are also claims that they were created in Belgrade and that they have been allowed to operate in northern Kosovo. In addition to these movements that act on the whole territory of Serbia, the organization the **Association of Serbian-Slavic Solidarity of Kosovo and Metohija "Grigorije Stepanović Ščerbina"**¹⁰¹ operates only in the north of Kosovo. They present themselves as a non-governmental and non-partisan association with headquarters in Kosovska Mitrovica. The website of the organization lists the Russian Cultural Centers, the

⁹⁵ A revitalized far right in Serbia? B92. 12.10.2010. Available at: http://www.b92.net/eng/insight/opinions.php?nav_id=70250

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Serbian patriotic movement Zavetnici Kosovo. Facebook group. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/346177062144547/?ref=br_rs

⁹⁸ Kosovo Zavetnici. Facebook group. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/Kosovski-Zavetnici-973531545993894/?ref=br_rs

⁹⁹ SNP Naši 1389 Staro Gracko. Facebook group. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/112425828834591/?ref=br_rs

¹⁰⁰ Serbian patriotic movement Zavetnici. Available at: http://zavetnici.rs/?page_id=23

¹⁰¹ The Association of Serbian-Slavic Solidarity “Grigorije Stepanović Ščerbina”. Available at: <http://www.dsss-scerbina.co.rs/odrustvu1.htm>

Embassy of the Russian Federation, and the Embassy of Belarus as its partners. As is the case with most of these organizations, the website provides no information on its activities, projects, or possible donors.

Another organization operating in Kosovska Mitrovica is **Kosovo Front**,¹⁰² founded one day after the declaration of the independence of Kosovo,¹⁰³ and registered with the Business Registers Agency. It gathers many supporters throughout Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. It also has a branch in Moscow.¹⁰⁴ The group is led by Aleksandr Kravčenko, a former Russian volunteer in the war in former Yugoslavia. He is also the editor of the website **Srpska.ru**.¹⁰⁵ The Facebook community of the Kosovo Front has about 11,700 followers.¹⁰⁶ In 2011, Kravčenko conducted a series of actions in Moscow and throughout Russia to inform the public about developments in Kosovo and collected financial aid for Serbs at the barricades.¹⁰⁷ During this period, people in the municipalities in northern Kosovo began signing the petition Mitrovdanska prošeniye,¹⁰⁸ in which the Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija asked the state leadership of Russia to grant them double Serbian-Russian nationality and requested that only Moscow “represents them to the world.” Twenty-one thousand Kosovo Serbs then submitted applications for citizenship to the Russian embassy.¹⁰⁹ Kravchenko and the Kosovo Front organized visits of Serbian children to various camps in Russia, and on this occasion Kravchenko stated, “ in Russia there are 2,500 clubs, which aim to teach children various skills, even warrior skills, and to help

¹⁰² Kosovo Front. Website available at: <http://kosovo-front.ru/>

¹⁰³ Serbs and Russians are brothers when the times are the toughest. 7.3.2014. News online. Available at: <http://www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Svet/387062/Srbi-i-Rusi-braca-kad-je-najteze>

¹⁰⁴ Annual report for 2009. 18.8.2010. Kosovo Front. Available at: http://kosovo-front.ru/price?mode=view&post_id=461001

NB: The report is signed by Dmitrij Bernacki, representative of the Moscow branch of the movement Kosovo Front.

¹⁰⁵ Srpska.ru. Website available at: <http://srpska.ru/>

¹⁰⁶ Kosovo Front. Facebook page of the organization available at: <https://www.facebook.com/kosovski.front.ru>

¹⁰⁷ Protection to Serbs, right to intervene to Russia. 30.11.2011. News online. Available at: <http://www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Srbija/183522/Srbima-zastita-Rusiji-pravo-na-intervenciju>

¹⁰⁸ Despite threats, great response to the petition for Russian citizenship. 26.11.2011. News online. Available at: <http://www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Srbija/182673/Uprkos-pretnjama-veliki-odziv-na-peticiju-za-rusko-drzavljanstvo>

¹⁰⁹ 21.000 Serbs want for Russian citizenship. 12.11.2011. News online. Available at: <http://www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Srbija/178846/21000-Srba-hoce-rusko-drzavljanstvo>

them mature spiritually.”¹¹⁰ Behind these camps are the state and the church. They teach children martial arts and military skills: to assemble and dismantle weapons, to throw bombs and knives, to understand topography, to survive in nature, and to keep Christian values. This mode of operation, in Kravchenko’s words, has shown great efficiency. The Church blesses it, accepts it and actively participates in it.

In 2014, the Kosovo Front invited the citizens of Serbia to join a campaign to help the forces of Novorossiya. By mid-July the movement the Kosovo Front, as a part of the campaign *Kosovo Shield*, collected around 200,000 rubles, or 4,000 euros. On that occasion, Aleksandr Kravchenko stated, “most of these funds were sent to the defenders of Novorossiya: to purchase medicine and operate radio stations. Assistance was also given in the formation of Serbian volunteer detachments and Cossacks Loyalty Detachment. The movement the Kosovo Front continues to collect aid in material resources for the defenders of Donbas. From now on, the aid will be submitted to the Slavic-Serbian detachment of Jovan Šević. We invite all branches of the movement the Kosovo Front, activists of the movement, those who approve of these ideas, and all people who are not indifferent to participate in the campaign *Kosovo Shield of Novorossiya*.”¹¹¹

Similar activities are also conducted by the organization **Patriotic Front**.¹¹² The organization was founded in 2007 as, they say, a voluntary group of military leaders, soldiers, police officers, and others, who advocate for more rights and the better treatment of veterans in the country. As their main activities, their website mentions efforts to integrate and bring together veterans, as well as the 2012 foundation of the Association of War Veterans of Serbia. In addition to this, the Patriotic Front also deals with the, “preservation of heritage, culture, tradition, and history, and contributes to the preservation of the true values of life, prevents the rewriting of history, and helps its country dispose of the unfair label of 'aggressor,' or the powder keg of the Balkans.”¹¹³ However, as a part of its activities mentioned online, the organization does not

¹¹⁰ Serbian children in Cossacks school for soldiers. 29.10.2010. News online. Available at: <http://www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Svet/92764/Srpska-deca-u-kozackoj-skoli-za-ratnike>

¹¹¹ This is how you can also help the defense of New Russia. 19.8.2014. Srpska.ru. Available at: <http://srpska.ru/article.php?nid=24008>

¹¹² Patriotic Front. Available at: <http://www.patriotskifront.rs/>

¹¹³ Why us? Patriotic Front. Available at: <http://www.patriotskifront.rs/zastobasmi>

acknowledge the excursion for Serbian children to Siberia where they learned to disassemble and assemble weapons, fire weapons, throw bombs, and participate in fights. The program was organized in cooperation with the Russian Association *Stjag* (flag), the Orthodox-nationalistic organization from Siberia, which brings together veterans from the wars in Chechnya and Afghanistan.¹¹⁴

In 2012, in Banja Junaković in Apatin,¹¹⁵ the Patriotic Front organized the third international youth educational camp *Sabor 2012*. The camp was opened by the Mayor of Apatin, Dr. Živorad Smiljanić, a member of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). The audience was also addressed by the advisor to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Serbia, Alex Konanykhin, who welcomed the, “great effort of the Apatin Municipality and its president, who provided a valuable contribution in helping the camp to come to life, which is aimed primarily at cultivating the Orthodox tradition and the spirit of the Serbian people and the Serbian family.” The opening ceremony was also attended by Dejan Drakulić, the deputy mayor of the Municipality of Vukovar from the Republic of Croatia, Mirko Pušara, Mayor of Bač Municipality, Mirko Cvetičanin, Deputy Mayor of Apatin, and high representatives of ORVS Apatin, Fifth Training Centre of the Army of Serbia from Sombor, and the Sombor Police Department. On the first day of camping, the SPS official, Dr. Živorad Smiljanić, was awarded the prestigious charter of an honorary member of the extremist Patriotic Front. In his opening statement, the representative of the Patriotic Front thanked the leadership of the Apatin Municipality, the Russian Embassy in Serbia, Russian companies, as well as Moscow's Kosovo Front, *Stjag*, and the National Parliament.¹¹⁶

The Serbian Patriotic Movement Zavetnici,¹¹⁷ an organization founded on February 15th 2012, has become one of the most visibly pro-Kremlin organizations in Serbia. Its main objectives are to return Kosovo to the auspices of Serbia, end negotiations with the EU,

¹¹⁴ Children from Serbia trained in military skills in Siberia. 21.10.2010. Radio Free Europe. Available at: http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/srbija_rusija_patriotski_front_deca_oruzje/2197399.html
How to send a child to a Russian military camp? 29.10.2010. e-Novine. Available at: <http://www.e-novine.com/srbija/srbija-tema/41817-Kako-poslati-dete-ruski-vojni-kamp.html>

¹¹⁵ Today Special Rehabilitation Hospital Junaković.

¹¹⁶ Children's camp. 18.7.2012. e-Novine. Available at: <http://www.e-novine.com/srbija/68237-Logor-decu.html>

¹¹⁷ Serbian Patriotic Movement ZAVETNICI. Available at: <http://zavetnici.rs/>

Serbian Patriotic Movement Zavetnici. Facebook group. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/zavetnici>

fight against the population decrease, and preserve traditional Serbian values. Zavetnici has over 24,500 followers on social networks, most of whom are students. Most actual members of the organization are also students, such as, for example, the spokesperson of Zavetnici, Milica Đurđević. The Congress of the Patriotic Movement Zavetnici, organized in October 2015 when it presented *Serbian Sovereign Platform: Resistance to Occupation*, was attended by representatives of the embassies of the Russian Federation, Belarus, and Syria.¹¹⁸ In June 2015, the Serbian Patriotic Movement Zavetnici hosted a seminar on the Russian organization, the Vladimirski Trade Association and its president, Evgeni Belih. The theme of the seminar was the cooperation of Russian and Serbian youth. Besides the members of Zavetnici, students of the Faculty of Political Sciences, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Law, and other faculties participated, as well as guests from the friendly association **Srbska akcija** (*Serbian Action*).¹¹⁹

Together with the electronic newspapers of Andrićgrad (*Iskra*), in June 2015, Zavetnici organized an open panel entitled *Orange Balkans*.¹²⁰ Besides Stefan Stamenkovski from Zavetnici, other panelists were Miroslav Lazanski, Dragomir Anđelković, Branko Radun, Dževad Galijašević, and others. All participants are very pro-Kremlin, and are close to the ruling, supposedly pro-EU, Serbian Progressive Party. Lazanski was also on the SNS electoral list for parliament in the April elections. In his opening statement, Stamenkovski presented a strategy for opposing the activities of non-governmental organizations and color revolutions, which have lately become a common topic in the statements of Serbian officials. "Colored revolutions are a constant threat to the Republic of Serbia and Republic of Srpska, which it faced during its elections, but this threat is not over yet. It is therefore high time to face it conceptually. In their research and data collection, the Serbian Patriotic Movement Zavetnici developed a strategy to counter the colored revolutions." The strategy presented by Zavetnici consists of 6 points: clearly define the position of the state towards

¹¹⁸ NEW POLITICAL POWER: Zavetnici presented their program "Serbian Sovereign Platform: resistance to occupation". 24.10.2015. Pravda. Available at: <http://www.pravda.rs/2015/10/24/nova-politicka-snaga-zavetnici-predstavili-program-srpska-suverenisticka-platforma-otpor-okupaciji/>

¹¹⁹ Vladimirski Trade Association: Cooperation between Russian and Serbian Youth. 8.6.2015. Vesti.rs. Available at: <http://www.vesti.rs/Drustvo/Vladimirski-trgovinski-savez-Saradnja-ruske-i-srpske-omladine.html>

¹²⁰ Arrest, prosecute, shoot. eNovine. 01.06.2015. Available at: <http://www.e-novine.com/entertainment/entertainment-vesti/121238-Hapsiti-progoniti-streljati.html>

the concept of new world order; clearly define the position of the state towards international organizations; adjust criminal legislation with regards to the trends of operation of the so-called NGOs; operate institutionally by correcting failures of counter-intelligence and police experience; generate a general social reaction through sponsoring mass patriotic organizations; focus on global media, propaganda, political, military, and economic connection and action.

Zavetnici raised their operation to the next level when they officially submitted a list for the early parliamentary elections that were held on April 24th 2016.¹²¹ Despite being very visible and having a growing number of supporters, especially among the youth, it appears that the pro-democratic public in Serbia does not want to recognize and discuss this organization. Zavetnici and other mentioned organizations, because of how and what they advocate for, and the youth that constitutes their membership, deserve serious analysis by the democratic public. There also needs to be a strategy to hinder their anti-democratic activity, which is based on the abuse of the freedoms and democratic procedures that have been achieved in Serbia. In April 2016, the social-political online magazine “Teleprompter” published an article in which it presented a profile of the Serbian Patriotic Movement: Zavetnici resemble an experiment in a marketing laboratory. They are a textbook example of a product created through marketing formulas. It is crucial to note that only young and attractive girls gain attention in their media. This is the only quasi-political movement that puts girls and their appearance in the foreground. Milica Đurđević, also called “Milica Zavetnica” in the media, who is presented as the spokesperson of Zavetnici, was born in 1990 and graduated from the Faculty of Political Sciences. For a while, she was the president of the local board of the Serbian Radical Party Kaluđerica. Her father and one of the founders of Zavetnici, Rajko Đurđević, was a follower of Šešelj. As a guest of Suzana Trninić on the TV show “Kažiprst,” Đurđević explained that, in only a few days, Zavetnici had collected as many as 13,000 signatures in support of the electoral list. Strahinja Erac who is on Zavetnici’s list, published on his Facebook profile a picture from the gathering, in which one can also see Nemanja Ristić, who had been arrested last year for death threats to the Republic Prosecutor, Zagorka Dolovac, the then US Ambassador, Michael Kirby, and the

¹²¹ Zavetnici submitted their list to the RIK and held a protest in Belgrade. 27.3.2016. Tanjug. Available at: <http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=237876>

editor of B92, Veran Matić. At the age of 20, Ristić was already a prominent member of the Voždovac crime clan. He also committed murder during the 1994 clash with Sredoje Šljukić Šljuka and Srđan Adžemović, members of Zvezdara clan, in which Tatjana Nikolić, 20, was killed in a shootout. He was released from prison in 2012.¹²²

At the end of March 2016, Zavetnici organized an anti-NATO protest in Belgrade titled, *For free and sovereign Serbia*. They said that the protest was attended by over 20,000 people from all over of Serbia. In addition to many patriotic political associations, many public figures and members of Serbian ethnic groups in the Republic of Srpska and Montenegro supported the protest with their presence. After this protest, Zavetnici held several similar ones in Niš, Novi Sad, and Valjevo.¹²³ In early parliamentary elections they won 0.7 percent of the vote. However, given the general strengthening of the pro-Kremlin structures in Serbia, it is expected that Zavetnici will also continue their activities, especially with strong anti-NATO propaganda.

Two of the pro-Kremlin organizations that were established directly by students of the Faculty of Political Sciences are **Serbian Political Forum**,¹²⁴ an organization founded in 2007, and **Support us**, an organization just founded in 2015. On its website, the organization Support us lists under the heading, “*friends from whose donations the realization of projects depends*” the University Youth of Belgrade, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, and the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.¹²⁵ Precisely, with the support from the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, this organization held a round table titled, *Kosovo Triangle* – including Belgrade, Pristina, and Brussels, in December 2015 in the National Assembly.¹²⁶ The CEAS Director, Jelena Milić, accepted an invitation to be one of the speakers at the event. After ovations to

¹²² WHO IS HIDING BEHIND THE FUR COAT OF MILICA FROM ZAVETNICI? Kids, mobsters, mental patients and Vučić's radicals. 07.04.2016. Teleprompter. Available at: <http://www.teleprompter.rs/ko-se-krije-iza-bunde-Miliće-zavetnice-klinci-mafijasii-dusevni-bolesnici-Vučičevi-radikali.html>

¹²³ Anti-NATO protest: “For free and sovereign Serbia!”. 27.02.2016. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs.sputniknews.com/srbija/20160327/1104376717/nato-zavetnici-protest.html>

¹²⁴ Student organization Serbian political forum. Bisnode. Available at: <http://search.bisnode.rs/rs/887755/studentska-organizacija-srpski-politicki-forum/>
Serbian Political Forum. Facebook group. Available at: <https://sr-rs.facebook.com/spffpn/info/?tab=overview>

¹²⁵ Support us. Available at: <http://www.podrzitenas.org.rs/>

¹²⁶ Kosovo Triangle: Beograd-Pristina-Brussels. Support us. Available at: <http://www.podrzitenas.org.rs/seminar-vest/>

General Vladimir Lazarević, who was convicted by the Hague Tribunal for command responsibility for war crimes committed against civilians during the war in Kosovo, and who had been released the day before this discussion, Jelena Milić, the director of the CEAS, demonstratively left the meeting. It was one of the participants, Colonel Stevan Đurović, the Chief of Security of the Pristina Corps during the war in Kosovo and Metohija in 1999, who called for these ovations. The media did not report on this incident in the Assembly. Apart from a brief report from the event, there are no more details about the work of the organization on their website, including implemented and/or ongoing projects or donations and help from the already mentioned “friends.”

The Strategic Culture Foundation¹²⁷ is another very influential and increasingly visible pro-Kremlin organization that is trying to present itself as a think-tank. In December 2015, the Strategic Culture Foundation organized a meeting in the Media Center entitled *NATO campaign on the Balkans: the next steps*. The speakers at this conference included Branko Krga, the former Chief of Staff of the Yugoslav Army, Spasoje Smiljanić, the former commander of the air force and air defense of the Yugoslav Army during the NATO intervention in Serbia, who was decorated for exceptional services during the war with a first degree medal by the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, Radovan Radinović, a retired General Lieutenant Colonel, Jovan Milanović, a retired Lieutenant General, Luka Kastratović, the former Deputy Chief of the Intelligence Service of the Army of the SRY, Prof. Dr. Svetozar Radišić, a retired Major General, Goran Jevtović, a retired Colonel and, Dr. Zlatoje Terzić a retired Lieutenant General. At the meeting, they mostly presented explicitly anti-NATO positions, at the same time glorifying the current moves of Russia. They presented Russia as the best choice for a strategic partnership, coordinated either directly or through the CSTO. It is interesting that during their professional careers in the Serbian security system, they mostly advocated military and political neutrality of Serbia and had no objections to the course of European integration of the country.

The Dignity Foundation (founded in August 2014) signed the Cooperation Agreement with the Russian Gorchakov Fund (founded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the

¹²⁷ Strategic Culture Foundation. Available at: <http://www.fsksr.ru/>

Russian Federation) regarding the organization of an international conference on the topic of political neutrality as a possible solution for Serbia and the region.¹²⁸ Before founding the Dignity Foundation in 2013, the Third Serbia submitted to the Assembly of Serbia an initiative to start the Dignity Fund,¹²⁹ through which emergency measures would be taken to help the poorest citizens. Their idea was to present to MPs from all political parties a model that would be adequate for the implementation of assistance to the most vulnerable. The next stage in the establishment of the Fund was its registration with the APR in 2014, on which occasion Miroslav Ilić was registered as the representative (manager),¹³⁰ who is also an official in the Third Serbia.¹³¹ Judging by their activities so far, the foundation deviated from its original goal to help the poorest. In their Serbia Project, they stand for the following: creating a pro-birth policy, stopping the depopulation of the peripheral territories of Serbia, creating an environment for better mobility in a society based on positive selection, international positioning, etc.¹³²

One of the activities conducted by the Dignity Foundation is the *Forum of young leaders of Serbia and Russia "Krepost"*¹³³ held in October 2014 in Novi Sad. The organization **Serbian Code** also participated in the forum. In addition to young leaders from Serbia and Russia, the Forum was also attended by representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Dignity Foundation initiated the Project Serbia. Within this project, they announced an open competition for a prize amounted at 1,000,000 dinars. The task was to create the *Serbian national program for the 21st century*. There are still many unknown details related

¹²⁸ Cooperation agreement between the Dignity Foundation and Gorchakov Fund. Dignity Foundation. Available at: <http://fonddostojanstvo.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/gorcakov.pdf>

¹²⁹ The Third Serbia for the "Dignity" Foundation. 21.11.2013. RTV. Available at: http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/vojvodina/novi-sad/treca-srbija-za-fond-dostojanstvo_439431.html

¹³⁰ Data on registration of the Dignity Foundation. the Business Registers Agency of the Republic of Serbia. <http://pretraga.apr.gov.rs/FoundationAndEndowmentWebSearch/FAESteeringComitteePage.aspx?beid=7101476&type=&rnd=3291A99E9DDFBC83924D5AF006A97880122BB242>

¹³¹ PARAJLIJA: Miroslav Ilić from the Third Serbia earns more than Mayor Vučević. 7.3.2015. Pravda Available at: <http://www.pravda.rs/2015/07/03/parajlija-miroslav-ilic-iz-trece-srbije-zaradjuje-vise-i-od-gradonacelnika-vucevica/>

¹³² Dignity Foundation. "Serbia Project". Available at: <http://fonddostojanstvo.rs/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%98%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82-%D1%81%D1%80%D0%B1%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0/>

¹³³ Forum of young leaders of Serbia and Russia "Krepost". 31.10.2014. The Third Serbia. Available at: <http://www.trecasrbija-bs.rs/vesti/forum-mladih-lidera-srbije-i-rusije-krepost-video/index.html>

to the project, such as who is financing it, what they intend to do with the winning program, what is the procedure for applying, etc.¹³⁴

The Serbian Code¹³⁵ is an organization whose programs are aimed at preserving Serbian identity and protecting Serbian people in the uniform cultural, political, and spiritual territory of Serbia, Montenegro, the Republic of Srpska, and other parts of the Balkans where Serbs live. In addition, the organization aims to deepen ties between young intellectuals in Serbia and Russia. Members of the Serbian Code are students in different years of study at various faculties and universities in Serbia and regional countries, whose aim is to restore the spiritual and moral heritage of the Serbian people. The Serbian Code is increasingly directing its plans towards Russia. The Serbian Code is implementing the project *Soft Power of Russia in Serbia* in cooperation with the **Gorchakov Fund to support public diplomacy**. As stated on the website of the Serbian Code, this project aims to present to the public of the two countries the current state of the soft power of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Serbia, and to draw conclusions as to how this soft power could be increased. The organizers said that their target groups are students of Belgrade University, representatives of political parties, government authorities, as well as youth and non-governmental organizations and cultural centers.¹³⁶

The organization Serbian code was actually created under the auspices of the aforementioned organization, **Our Serbia**. Our Serbia is a Serbian non-governmental organization based in Belgrade, and was founded in 2000 to assist and protect children. It was primarily focused on children and young people in Serbia and countries in the region, dedicating special actions to youth in the Serbian enclaves in Kosovo and Metohija. In this work, they encouraged the cultivation of a national identity, the Serbian language, religion, culture, customs, and traditions, as well as love, respect, and understanding towards

¹³⁴ Serbia Project. Dignity Foundation. Available at:

<http://fonddostojanstvo.rs/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%98%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82-%D1%81%D1%80%D0%B1%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0/>

¹³⁵ Serbian Code. Available at: <http://srpskikod.com/%D0%BE-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B0/>

¹³⁶ International conference The Soft Power of Russia. Serbian Code. Available at:

<http://srpskikod.com/%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%92%D1%83%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%84%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0-%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%9B-%D1%80%D1%83/>

members of other nations and cultures. However, since 2010, the organization has begun dealing also with educational programs. It was then that the said “cultural and educational” project, Serbian Code, was established. The program is part of the School of Friendship, which was organized by Our Serbia, and from 2010 has been named the Serbian Code. The group brings together children of Serbian nationality from the region. The topic of their work is Serbian identity, and the goal is to acquaint children with national values, history, language, culture, religion, tradition, and to support the strengthening of their ties to the homeland.¹³⁷

In August 2014, at the invitation of the Director of the Russian Federal Agency for Youth Affairs (Rosmolodež), Sergei Pospelov, the founder of the Serbian Code, Mlađan Đorđević, the controversial former adviser to President Boris Tadić of Serbia, and Mina Milićević, the director of the organization Our Serbia, visited the Youth Forum “Tavrida,” which took place not far from Sevastopol, Russia. During the visit, the Serbian delegation met with the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, and the Chairperson of the Parliament of Crimea, Vladimir Konstantinov. At the meeting, the members of the Serbian delegation gave their full support to the “democratic commitment of the people of Crimea for annexation to the Russian Federation.”¹³⁸

The Russian Institute of Strategic Research (RISI)¹³⁹ is the first “non-governmental” organization from Moscow with a representative office in Belgrade, which opened in October 2013. RISI is a branch of the Russian Institute of Strategic Research, which declares itself as the most important analytical think tank in the Russian Federation, whose founder is the president of the country. The opening ceremony was attended by about 50 Serbian scientists and public figures, representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Miroslav Jovanović (president of the Center for Russian Studies), as well as guests from Moscow. The

¹³⁷ About us. Our Serbia. Available at: <http://nasasrbija.rs/o-nama/>

¹³⁸ “Serbian Code” and “Our Serbia” visiting Crimea - no parallels between Crimea and Kosovo. 21.8.2014. NSPM. Available at: <http://www.nspm.rs/hronika/srpski-kod-i-nasa-srbija-u-poseti-krimu-nema-paralele-izmedju-krima-i-kosova.html?alphabet=l#yvComment112065>

¹³⁹ Bondarev: Russia and the RISI will not allow that Serbia is accused for World War One. Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Serbia. Available at: <http://www.ambasadarusije.rs/sr/vesti/bondarjev-rusija-i-risi-nece-dozvoliti-da-za-prvi-svetski-rat-bude-optuzena-srbija>

appointed director of RISI was Dr. Alexei Timofeyev, who graduated from the Lomonosov University in Moscow, and since 2006 has been employed at the Institute for Recent History of Serbia and who authored numerous publications on the history of Russian-Serbian relations.

The current Director of the Russian Institute of Strategic Research is Leonid Reshetnikov. From April 1976 to April 2009, Reshetnikov worked in the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR).¹⁴⁰ He is known in Serbia for his fierce rhetoric against the EU integration of Serbia. Among other things, he stated that RISI did not come to Serbia as a representative of any “soft power”¹⁴¹ or extended hand of Moscow. The fact that it was established by a decree of the President of the Russian Federation and that it is headed by Leonid Reshetnikov, whose job it was to collect foreign intelligence information abroad for the Russian Federation, makes its true role in Serbia questionable.

Regarding RISI's arrival to Serbia, the Head of RISI's Department for Balkan countries, Nikita Bondarev, commented, “if we look at what has been happening with the Russian presence in the cultural and public life of Serbia in the last two or three years, we will see that very big steps have been made. I refer to the very successful media projects, such as Russia Beyond The Headlines, which has over 250,000 readers on the website **ruskarec.ru** and supplements in *Nedeljnik*, *Geopolitika*, and before that in *Politika*. There is also *Sputnik*, but not everything goes as smoothly with it as it should. There is also *Русский экспресс*, which has, in a little more than a year of its existence, managed to organize the world premiere of Nikita Mikhalkov's *Sunstroke* in Belgrade and to assist in the organization of bringing the Holy Fire to Serbia.”¹⁴²

Bondarev also praised the Gorchakov Fund, which provides scholarships for Serbian students, organizes student visits to the Russian Federation, and holds scientific conferences and seminars in Serbia, for example the *Balkan dialog - Russian soft power in*

¹⁴⁰ Reshetnikov, Leonid P. PIR Center. Available at: <http://www.pircenter.org/en/experts/151-reshetnikov-leonid-p>

¹⁴¹ Reshetnikov: Minister Mihajlović sabotages the agreement between Nikolić and Putin. 7.11.2013. Russian Institute of Strategic Research. Available at: <http://riss.ru/smi/4248/>

¹⁴² The truth about Russophilia: Serbs poorly understand the modern Russia. 24.9.2015. Nedeljnik. Available at: <http://www.nedeljnik.co.rs/sr/2015/09/24/ekskluzivno/istina-o-rusofilstvu-srbi-slabo-razumeju-dana%C5%A1nju-rusiju>

Serbia. The Balkan Dialogue is an international conference held in June 2015 in Novi Sad. The conference was organized by the Serbian Code with the support of the Gorchakov Fund.¹⁴³ RISI representatives also participated in the conference.

4.2. RUSSIAN FOUNDATIONS ACTING IN SERBIA

In addition to the already mentioned Rossotrudnichestvo and the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States of Compatriots Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation, the work of the **Fonda Russian World**¹⁴⁴ and their international cultural project, the **Russian Center**, is also interesting. Although the activities listed on the Russian Center's website, which are aimed at popularizing language and culture through Russian language learning programs abroad, the development of intercultural dialogue, and the strengthening of understanding and cooperation among the nations, entirely legitimate activities, the location of the Fund is questionable. Namely, the Russian center is located in the Gymnasium Jovan Jovanović Zmaj in Novi Sad. Although due to the formal and legitimate nature of its activities, the Russian Center does not belong directly among the organizations with which this study is concerned, it is important to emphasize the existence of the principle of using state institutions, such as gymnasiums, for the specific promotion of Russian language and culture. This is in contrast to cultural centers of other countries, which are mainly located in separate premises, i.e. are institutions themselves.

The Gorchakov Fund, which represents a “fund of public diplomacy,” is a Russian, formally non-governmental organization, founded in 2010 with headquarters in Moscow. It was named after the 19th century Russian diplomat Alexander Mikhailovich Gorchakov. This organization, as it says, has recognized the potential and the role that “soft power” has in the international environment, in which “the priority is not given to military or economic force, but the ability of a state and society to increase its influence in international waters

¹⁴³ International conference “Balkan Dialogue” takes place in Novi Sad – 2015” (18-21 June). 18.6.2015. NSPM. Available at: <http://www.nspm.rs/hronika/medjunarodna-konferencija-balkanski-dijalog-%E2%80%93-2015.html?alphabet=l>

¹⁴⁴ Russian Center. Available at: http://www.ruskicentar.edu.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=2&Itemid=4&lang=sr

using cultural, historical, and political values.” The Gorchakov Fund has directed its focus and influence towards people around the world who are not indifferent to what is happening in Russia. The Executive Director of the Fund, Leonid Drachevski, pointed out that, “it has become evident that the Russian non-governmental organizations have begun to play a significant role in the implementation of the Russia's Foreign Policy Strategy.”¹⁴⁵ The connection between this formally non-governmental organization and the authorities of the Russian Federation is also reflected in the fact that members of the Management Board of the Fund are Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov,¹⁴⁶ who is also the chairman of the board, and Konstantin Kosachev, who is president of the Federal Organization Rossotrudnichestvo.

The Gorchakov Fund in Serbia has implemented numerous activities, which mainly take place with the help of Serbian nongovernmental organizations. Together with representatives of the Serbian Academic Circle and the organization Serbian Code, they organized the said international conference *Balkan dialogue – Russia's soft power in Serbia*.¹⁴⁷ On that occasion, they presented their stance that the Russian Federation had not been present in the Balkans for many years, and that only in recent years had Russia decided to respond to Western soft power at least reciprocally. Fund representatives expressed their opinion that the Russian government will not abandon its intention of expanding soft power. The Director of the Russian Institute of Strategic Research, Leonid Reshetnikov, said on this occasion, “the Russians, Georgians, Bulgarians, Serbs and Greeks are separate civilizations – although we do not understand that. We need to fight for our understanding of the world. However, we have forgotten that we are a civilization that is an alternative to the Anglo-Saxon civilization. Our mission is to carry our civilization into the world and to propose our view. Our soft power is to be loyal to the principles of the Orthodox civilization. That is the idea we should have in mind when we talk about the

¹⁴⁵ Public Diplomacy Fund Alexander Gorchakov. Available at: <http://gorchakovfund.ru/en/about/>

¹⁴⁶ Management Board. Public Diplomacy Fund Alexander Gorchakov. Available at: <http://gorchakovfund.ru/en/about/trustees/>

¹⁴⁷ Balkan Dialogue: Russia's soft power. 29.5.2015. Serbian Academic Circle. Available at: <http://akademskikrug.rs/balkanski-dijalog-meka-moc-rusije/>

influence of Russia. Why do Serbs and Russians so easily find a common language? Because we have the same root, we easily find a common language with the Serbs.”¹⁴⁸

In addition to these discussions, the Fund organizes scholarship awards to Serbian students, as well as visits to the Russian Federation. In October 2013 it organized a presentation of the work of the Gorchakov Fund and a meeting with students at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade.¹⁴⁹

Another two Russian instruments of the realization of Russian soft power in Serbia from this category are the **Foundation of St. Andrew the First-Called** and the **Centre of National Glory**. These organizations do not have their representative offices in Serbia, but are well connected with several Serbian organizations that coordinate activities under their auspices, as well as former Serbian diplomats and retired personnel of the security system who, with their participation in the activities of these organizations, provide them with media visibility and social “legitimacy.” Some of these organizations are the formerly mentioned Our Serbia and the Serbian Code, as well as the **Belgrade Forum for the World of Equals**. Members of the Foundation of St. Andrew the First-Called repeatedly visited Kosovo, and in 2004, at the initiative of the Foundation, more than 500 Serbian children from Kosovo visited Russia for three weeks.¹⁵⁰

In November 2015, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation through the Foundation of St. Andrew the First-Called and the Centre of National Glory in cooperation with the Belgrade Forum for the World of Equals and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, organized a conference, *Yalta-Potsdam-Helsinki-Belgrade: In search of a safe world order*, dedicated to the issues of security and cooperation.¹⁵¹ It was preceded by the international scientific conference in Belgrade in September 2014 titled, *The Great War*

¹⁴⁸ “Soft power “of Russia in Serbia – possibilities and perspectives. 15.12.2014. NSPM. Available at: <http://www.nspm.rs/politicki-zivot/meke-moc-rusije-u-srbiji-mogucnosti-i-perspektive.html>

¹⁴⁹ Presentation of the Russian Fund Gorchakov in Belgrade. 23.10.2013. Ceopom-Istina. Available at: <http://www.ceopom-istina.rs/vesti/prezentatsija-ruskog-fonda-gorchakov-u-beogradu/>

¹⁵⁰ Interview of the Vice-president of the Foundation of St. Andrew the First-Called Mihail Jakushev on unilateral proclamation of independence of Kosovo. 19.2.2008. Radio Voice of Russia. Available at: <http://rs.sputniknews.com/serbian.ruvr.ru/2008/02/19/1037920/>

¹⁵¹ Searching for a safe world order. 23.11.2015. Sputnik. at: <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/politika/20151123/1101296368/Skup-Bezbednosti-Terorizam.html>

and the New World: current reminder to humanity, marking the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. Before the conference, representatives of both organizations paid an official visit to the Serbian Orthodox Church. The purpose of the visit was to inform the head of the SPC about the preparations for the conference. Both events were organized with the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia and the Belgrade Forum for the World of Equals, with full the support and the presence of representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Unlike most Western donors, who publish annual reports on financing in the civil sector, including accurate data on all organizations, their Russian counterparts do not have this practice, making relevant sources of information difficult to access. Even the websites of organizations that implement joint activities with Russian organizers lack explanations regarding the types of projects and the funds received. Such lack of transparency leaves room for abuse and fraud. Interestingly, pro-government and pro-Kremlin media outlets in Serbia, such as the daily newspaper Politika, which published a series of articles on the sources of funding of “Western non-governmental organizations,” have not explored this parallel circumstance.¹⁵²

4.3. PRO-KREMLIN STRUCTURES THAT PARTICIPATED IN ELECTIONS IN SERBIA

Of the 14 active pro-Kremlin political structures that participated in the elections in Serbia, 7 are registered in the Registry of Political Parties, 5 are registered as associations of citizens with the Business Registers Agency, and two movements are not registered at all.

¹⁵² The state annually allocates to NGOs as much as it does for science. 12.6.2015. Politika. Available at:

<http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/330139/Drzava-za-NVO-godisnje-izdvaja-koliko-i-za-nauku>

How to Make USD 45,000 by reprinting old texts. 7.1.2016. Politika. Available at:

<http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/346747/%D0%9A%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8-45-000-%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%9A%D0%B5%D0%BC-%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%85-%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0>

Most of these structures have been founded in the past few years. There is a general problem with transparency in the financing of political parties in Serbia,¹⁵³ as well as issues of collecting membership by movements and associations. All of this allows resources in this area to move quickly and to circumvent legal procedures, no matter how broadly they may be defined.

It is particularly interesting that some of these structures are registered as parties of the Russian minority, despite the fact that the Russian national council of national minorities has not yet been established.

In addition to the “old” Serbian Radical Party, Democratic Party of Serbia, Dveri, and Serbian People's Party, other pro-Kremlin parties and political movements in Serbia are: **the Third Serbia, the Russian Party, the Party of Russians in Serbia, the Serbian-Russian Movement, the Time for Action– Serbian League, the Serbian League – New Serbian Right-Wing Movement, the Movement “Svetozar Miletić”, the State Movement, the Serbian Patriotic Front, and the United Russian Party.**

The Serbian Radical Party (SRS) was founded in February 1991 and the decision on its registration in the Registry of Political Parties was adopted in November 2009. The Serbian Radical Party has long had a developed system of communication with the Russian extreme right-wing, as well as the left-wing. The SRS Chairman Vojislav Šešelj, who was at the end of March 2016 acquitted of all counts of indictment at the Hague Tribunal, still maintains close ties with structures in the Kremlin. Dmitry Rogozin, the Russian Deputy Prime Minister, during his visit to Serbia, met with the leaders of the Radicals, beyond the state protocol. This was assessed in the Serbian media as, “Moscow’s slap in the face to Belgrade.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Several hundred misdemeanor charges filed against parties. 30.10.2014. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/podneto-nekoliko-stotina-prekrhajnih-prijava-protiv-stranaka/jt68cqy>
MILLIONS FROM THE POOR "Social cases" donated RSD 1.5 million to the parties. 2.6.2015. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/milioni-od-sirotnije-socijalni-slucajevi-darivali-stranke-sa-15-miliona-dinara/myjx7km>

¹⁵⁴ VISITING ŠEŠELJ, Rogozin slapped the face of Serbia. 13.1.2016. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/u-poseti-seselju-rogozin-udario-samar-srbiji/qxjr6jp>

The Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) was founded in 1992 and was registered in the Registry by 2009. DSS has signed an agreement with United Russia, and party representatives have repeatedly visited the Russian Federation as well as Crimea. In the 2016 elections, DSS participated in a coalition with Dveri, an association of citizens, which was registered in the Registry of Political Parties in October 2015. The joint program goal of these parties is essentially to maintain friendly relations with Russia and to deviate from the path of EU integration. Like the SRS, the coalition of DSS and Dveri entered the parliament after the elections.

The Serbian People's Party (SNP) is among the pro-Kremlin parties and movements that emerged in the past few years. It was registered in 2015, and its leader Nenad Popović was a member of the DSS for many years before founding his own party. This party entered parliament through a coalition in the list of the Serbian Progressive Party.

Third Serbia has been registered as an association of citizens since 2012, but was only registered in the Registry of Political Parties after the merger with the party of Zaharije Trnavčević, **Rich Serbia**. This party is famous for its president, Miroslav Parotic's visit to Russia,¹⁵⁵ as well as their openly pro-Kremlin rhetoric.

The Russian Party was founded by Slobodan Nikolić, who was, from 2006 to 2015, a member of the City Council of Saba in charge of cooperation with associations of citizens and cooperation with the Russian Federation. The party was registered in 2013. This party, inter alia, stands for Eurasian integration and accession into the CSTO. In the April elections, the Russian party tried to register as a party of a national minority, but the Republic Electoral Commission rejected this request.

The Party of the Russians of Serbia (RUSS) is a political party of the Russian national minority, registered in 2012.

¹⁵⁵ Miroslav Parović in working visit to Russia. 27.1.2015. Portal Miroslav Parović, Active patriotism. Available at: <http://www.miroslavparovic.rs/polemike/miroslav-parovic-u-radnoj-poseti-rusiji/>

Another recent pro-Kremlin party is the **Serbian-Russian Movement**, registered in the Registry of Political Parties in 2015 also as a party of the Russian minority. They participated in the elections in a coalition with the **Movement of the Veterans of Serbia**.

The **Time for Action** and the **Serbian League – New Serbian Right-Wing Movement** are two movements, both registered as associations of citizens in 2015, and both represented by Aleksandar Đurđev, the former Secretary General of the Third Serbia. Before the elections, Đurđev formed a coalition with the association of citizens **Eastern Alternative**, led by Dragan Todorović, the former vice president of the Serbian Radical Party. The common idea on which they united is an alliance with Russia.

The Serbian National Movement “Svetozar Miletić” (SNP) was registered with the Business Registers Agency in 2012. SNP has enabled streaming of the radio station, the Voice of Russia, on its website. Airing the Russian radio’s full-day program is enabled in cooperation with the Embassy of the Russian Federation, and with the direct involvement of the management of the Voice of Russia. Before establishing this cooperation, the movement’s political action was directed at criticizing the administrative bodies of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

The Statehood Movement of Serbia (DPS) was founded in late 2014 and was registered in the Business Registers Agency as an association of citizens. The DPS representative is Slobodan Samardžić, who was, prior to founding DPS, a prominent member of the DSS. DPS did not participate in the elections in 2016. In the previous period, Slobodan Samardžić and DPS had sharp rhetoric against the government of Aleksandar Vučić, NATO, and EU integration.

The Serbian Patriotic Front (SOF) was registered with the Business Registers Agency as an association of citizens in 2015 and is based on 18 principles, including the cessation of EU integration of Serbia, the abolition of Vojvodina's autonomy, the amending of the Constitution, etc. One of the founders of the SOF is the playwright Siniša Kovačević who was, after the decision to join the Patriotic Block composed of Dveri and DSS, dismissed

from his position as President of the Movement. The SOF did not participate in national elections.

The United Russian Party (JRS) was registered in the Registry of Political Parties as a party of the Russian minority in March 2016, after its founding just two months earlier. When establishing the party, its members issued a press release proclaiming their main goals as the development of Russian culture and language in Serbia, the promotion of all forms of cooperation with Russia, assistance to all associations and individuals who work on these aims, accession into the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Union, and the improvement of cooperation with the countries of the BRICS. The candidacy of the JRS in national elections was marked by the rejection of its list by the Republic Electoral Commission for about 900 false signatures.

The movement **Zavetnici**, which was already discussed in previous chapters, is especially interesting. When the organization was founded on February 15th 2012, it became one of the most visibly pro-Kremlin organizations in Serbia. Its main goals are to return Kosovo to the auspices of Serbia, end negotiations with the EU, fight population decrease, and to preserve traditional Serbian values. Zavetnici augmented their activity when they formally submitted a list for early parliamentary elections in 2016.¹⁵⁶ They won 0.7 percent of the votes in the election. However, given the general strengthening of pro-Kremlin structures in Serbia, it is expected that Zavetnici will also continue with their operation, primarily with a strong anti-NATO propaganda.

Of these structures, those that independently or in mutual coalitions participated in the early parliamentary elections in April 2016 won a total of 14.96 percent of the vote. Two lists, the Serbian Radical Party and the coalition Democratic Party of Serbia – Dveri, will have representatives in the new Parliament of the Republic of Serbia.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Zavetnici submitted their list to the RIK and held protest in Belgrade. 27.3.2016. Tanjug. Available at: <http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=237876>

¹⁵⁷ Results of the pro-Kremlin election lists at the early parliamentary elections in Serbia in 2016. Serbian Radical Party: 8.10%, Democratic Party of Serbia - Dveri: 5.04%, Zavetnici Milica Đorđević: 0.73%, In the

In addition, we must add to these parties the now-ruling Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia, despite the fact that the EU and some other officials and analysts from the political West still refuse to see them in this light. Their perception of them is mistaken. They begin with how Putin sees Vučić, which is an erroneous and dangerous position, if one does not take into account the primary objectives of the Kremlin in the Balkans. Additionally, the larger issue is how the ruling structures in Serbia see the Kremlin. The composition of the candidates for the new MPs, primarily on the list of SNS, indicates that Vučić is trying to win favor from that side as well.

4.4. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF COOPERATION BETWEEN SERBIAN AND RUSSIAN POLITICAL PARTIES

Serbia has a total of 111 registered political parties, 14 of which are pro-Kremlin. In addition to the SRS, DSS, Dveri, and the SNP, pro-Kremlin parties and political movements in Serbia include the following: Third Serbia, the Russian Party, the Party of Russians in Serbia RUS, the Serbian-Russian Movement, the Eastern alternative, the Serbian League, The Serbian National Movement “Svetozar Miletić,” the Time for Action-Serbian League, and the Serbian Patriotic Front.

The two ruling coalition parties in Serbia, the **Serbian Progressive Party (SNS)** and the **Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS)** currently lead a supposedly pro-European policy. Already in 2010, the SNS signed a cooperation agreement with the United Russia, the largest Russian party. The document states, “as a part of the agreement, our parties will consult and exchange information on the current situation in Russia and Serbia, and bilateral and international relations. We will inform each other about experiences in the organization of the party, the control and audit work, and the training and preparation of staff.”¹⁵⁸ One of the special guests at the final pre-election convention of the SNS in April 2016 was also

Spite – Together for Serbia – National Alliance: 0.46%, Russian Party: 0.36%, Serbian-Russian Movement: 0.27%. The Republic Electoral Commission. Available at:

http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/doc/izbori-2016/rezultati/1.%20Zbirni_rezultati.pdf

¹⁵⁸ SNS and United Serbia signed a cooperation agreement. 5.3.2012. Naslovi.net. Available at:

<http://www.naslovi.net/2012-03-05/beta/sns-i-jedinstvena-rusija-potpisale-sporazum-o-saradnji/3242565>

Sergej Železnjak, Vice President of the Russian Duma and senior official of the United Russia. During the evening, while they awaited the results of the previous early parliamentary elections in Serbia in 2014, the Kremlin's special emissary, Alexander Babakov, was on the premises of SNS.

The Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) is considered to be the party with the strongest ties to the Russian Federation. From 2014 to 2016 its staff kept the energy portfolio in the government of Serbia. The Vice President of SPS, Dušan Bajatović is also the Director General of Srbijagas. CEAS has already written in its previous reports on the connections SNS and SPS have with structures in Russia, especially in the context of hard power.¹⁵⁹

A common characteristic of the party leadership of the ruling coalition in power, as well as the President of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolić, the founder of SNS, is the exhibition of anti-EU rhetoric and sharp criticism of EU officials or officials of member states, while this is almost never the case with Russia. In most instances, the party only provides positive context with regards to the Russians' appearances, in line with the self-fulfilling narrative that has already been described in this study, which is not a coincidence, but a planned strategy. It was while this coalition was in power, with a parliament that was supposedly almost 100 percent pro-European, that support for European integrations in Serbia fell below 50 percent. Positive perceptions of Russia in general, as well as the idea of strengthening institutional links with Russia, began to grow systematically during this time.

Of the ruling coalition parties, the **Socialist Movement** of Aleksandar Vulin has an especially open, pro-Kremlin position. In the previous government, Vulin held the position of Minister of Labor, Employment, Veteran, and Social Affairs, and was also the contact person for the European Commission for the Coordination of Refugees. The Socialist Movement, as Vulin himself, repeatedly said that the Russian Federation is of great

¹⁵⁹ Jelena Milić. Sad Stream. 2013. Novi Vek. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: https://www.ceas-serbia.org/images/Novi_vek_br-05-nov-dec_2013-Jelena_Milić.pdf

importance for Serbia.¹⁶⁰ Aleksandar Vulin has also frequently pointed out that Serbia has no intention to impose sanctions against Russia, and that the policy of the government of Serbia is to preserve and improve traditional relations with the Russian Federation.¹⁶¹ The openly pro-Kremlin internet portal *Pravda.rs* regularly quotes the statements and work of Aleksandar Vulin, exclusively in a positive context.

In Serbian-Russian relations, and especially in party cooperation, Alexander Babakov, the right hand of the Russian President Vladimir Putin in Serbia, has a particularly important role. Energy and Ukraine, the two most current international topics, are the key words in the biography of this Russian oligarch. A graduate of the Lomonosov, he was president of FK CSK Moscow, then entered politics and business 2013. He owns a number of companies in the energy sector, most of which are in Ukraine, such as Zhytomyroblenergo and Sevastopolenergo, as well as the Premier Palace Hotel, the Dnieper, and complexes in Crimea and Yalta. In Ukraine he was declared a financier of the “orange revolution” because the brother of Viktor Yanukovich worked at his bank. Babakov is also close to the current president, Petro Poroshenko. He owns companies in the Netherlands and Switzerland, as well as an enormous amount of property in France, and is considered a rich man even by Russian standards. Officially, Babakov has several functions: Special Representative for Cooperation with Organizations of Compatriots Abroad, Deputy of the State Duma, member of the Committee for International Affairs, and Chairperson of the Commission for Support to the Military and Defense Industrial Complex of the Russian Federation. It is believed that in Serbia he is the direct representative of the Russian President Vladimir Putin. Without his final approval, practically no work with Russians could be concluded. Those who know him say that, when talking to Serbian officials, he often uses phrase such as, “Putin said that this has to be done.” According to the Daily Blic, Babakov comes to Serbia at least three times per month. He always uses this opportunity to visit his compatriots who have jobs in Serbia, and spends much of his time with the director of “Srbijagas,” Dušan Bajatović. Supposedly, much of this time is spent on activities related to the construction of South

¹⁶⁰ “The Russian Federation is of enormous importance for Serbia”. Press release. Socialist Movement. 11.4.2016. Available at: <http://pokretsocijalista.rs/news/vesti/-ruska-federacija-od-ogromnog-znacaja-za-srbiju.html>

¹⁶¹ Vulin: Russian Federation is of enormous importance for Serbia. 11.4.2016. New Magazine. Available at: <http://www.novimagazin.rs/vesti/vulin-ruska-federacija-od-ogromnog-znacaja-za-srbiju>

Stream. Babakov generally has excellent relations with the state leadership, but the leaders of the SPS and their leader, Ivica Dačić, stand out in this regard.¹⁶² Babakov was seen in the SNS election headquarters while awaiting the results of the early parliamentary elections in Serbia in 2014. The sanctions that the EU and the US imposed on Russia over the war in Ukraine also hit Alexander Babakov hard, who was included on their blacklist. However, these sanctions were not an obstacle for the ruling coalition in Serbia, which continued bilateral encounters at a high level. These encounters have yet to result in public criticism from the political West.

The Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) is another party which has signed a cooperation agreement with the ruling United Russia. The new president of the party, Sanda Rašković Ivić, has been making official visits to the Russian Federation or Crimea for the past two years. In October 2001, she led the delegation of DSS and Dveri in their visit to the Russian Federation. During this visit, the delegation of DSS-Dveri was greeted at the highest level. After the visit a press conference was organized and broadcast by some Russian media channels.¹⁶³ Since the early parliamentary elections in April 2016, DSS has been a parliamentary party again.

The Serbian Radical Party (SRS) has long had a developed correspondence with the Russian extreme right and the left. Already in the 1990s, there was established cooperation with the Communist Party and the Liberal Democratic Party led by Vladimir Zhirinovsky. These two parties are still part of the political life of Russia, with a significant number of seats in the Duma. Gennady Zyuganov, who leads the Communist Party, is a prominent opponent to the Hague Tribunal. He is a frequent speaker at SRS rallies, and was a speaker at the commemoration of Slobodan Milošević in front of the National Assembly in Belgrade, when he harshly condemned the extradition of Ratko Mladić.¹⁶⁴ The SRS has also been a parliamentary party again since the early parliamentary elections in April 2016.

¹⁶² RUSSIAN CONNECTION Putin's man for Serbia. 7.5.2015. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/ruska-veza-putinov-covek-za-srbiju/4lw9nj1>

¹⁶³ В Крым приехали сербские политики. 26.10.2015. Комсомольская правда. Available at: <http://www.balkans.kp.ru/daily/26450.5/3320274/>

¹⁶⁴ The last meeting for Milošević before the Parliament of Serbia and Montenegro. 19.3.2006. Serbian Diaspora. Available at: <http://www.srpskadijaspora.info/vest.asp?id=6954>

The political party **Dveri** is another of the pillars of pro-Kremlin, right-wing sentiment in Serbia. The party is becoming more visible and more present in the media, and since the early parliamentary elections in 2016 it has also been a parliamentary party. Dveri was originally registered in the Business Registers Agency as an association of citizens, but in October 2015 they officially registered in the Registry of Political Parties. Dveri advocates for Serbia to remain outside the EU and for an alliance with Russia.¹⁶⁵

Third Serbia is a relatively new political structure in the pro-Kremlin constellation in Serbia. They are active mostly in Vojvodina, where at the level of the provincial capital, Novi Sad, until the recent elections they were in a coalition government with the ruling SNS. Third Serbia's officials also frequently visit Russia. Bearing in mind that the Third Serbia is a very small party, its officials were received at a relatively high level, with significant media attention.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Political program of Serbian movement Dveri. Available at: <https://dveri.rs/wp-content/themes/capital/pdf/Novi%20program%20-%20Dveri.pdf>

¹⁶⁶ Miroslav Parović in a work visit to Russia. 27.1.2015. Portal Miroslav Parović, Active Patriotism. Available at: <http://www.miroslavparovic.rs/polemike/miroslav-parovic-u-radnoj-poseti-rusiji/>
Miroslav Parović, During the visit, he participated in the conference Church, state and society - tasks for the 21st century. On the sidelines of the conference, he met with some of the leading figures in Russia, such as Mikhail Degtyarev (deputy of the Russian State Duma), Aleksandar Dugin (one of the leading Russian political strategist) and Konstantin Malofeev.

5. EFFECTS OF THE STRENGTHENING OF RUSSIAN SOFT POWER IN SERBIA

As already explained, for the purposes of this study, the definition of soft power developed by the American Harvard Professor Joseph Nye was used. The concept relies on three main resources: culture (when it is attractive to others), political values (when complied with, both at home and in international relations), and foreign policy (when others see as legitimate and moral authority).

Given the complexity of this concept and the resulting challenge of accurately estimating its effects, in this first chapter we first present a qualitative analysis of the effects of the Russian soft power in Serbia. This is followed by the chronology of events that reflect its manifestations, tools, and effects.

Primarily due to inconsistent, supposedly democratic, and pro-EU politics, and, to a lesser extent, because of the ambivalent attitude of the political West towards these negative trends, during the period in which the Parliament of Serbia consisted of formally pro-EU parties, i.e. since the arrival of the SNS to power in 2012 until the announcement of early parliamentary elections in 2016, support for EU integration dropped significantly below 50 percent.¹⁶⁷ Many facts speak in favor of the intensive strengthening of Russian soft power as a great contributor to this trend.

Unfortunately, as shown by the CEAS-IPSOS survey *EU, Russia, US: Images and preferences of citizens of Serbia ages 18 to 35 years*,¹⁶⁸ confusion exists on a very deep level. Younger generations have a superficial perception of the concepts of human rights, rule of law, media freedom, the importance of the separation of powers, etc. They do not recognize the connection between a good, modern, democratically structured political system and long-term economic, social, and political stability in a democratic environment. Although, they

¹⁶⁷ European orientation of Serbian citizens. December 2015. The public opinion poll. The European Integration Office of the government of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: http://www.seio.gov.rs/upload/documents/nacionalna_dokumenta/istrazivanje_javnog_mnjenja/javno_mnjenje_decembar_15.pdf

¹⁶⁸ The EU, Russia, US: Images and preferences of citizens of Serbia ages 18 to 35 years. February 2016. CEAS-IPSOS. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: http://www.ceas-serbia.org/images/CEAS_2016_ipsos_srp.pdf

do clearly recognize where, for example, there is better healthcare or education: in the political West.

Such a condition is exacerbated by an irresponsible government, inert democratic opposition, and other players in public life. It is also greatly influenced by Russian soft power in Serbia. As already stated, increasingly strong Russian soft power would not be able to have such pronounced effects without the support of ruling structures and the wider social strata in Serbia itself.

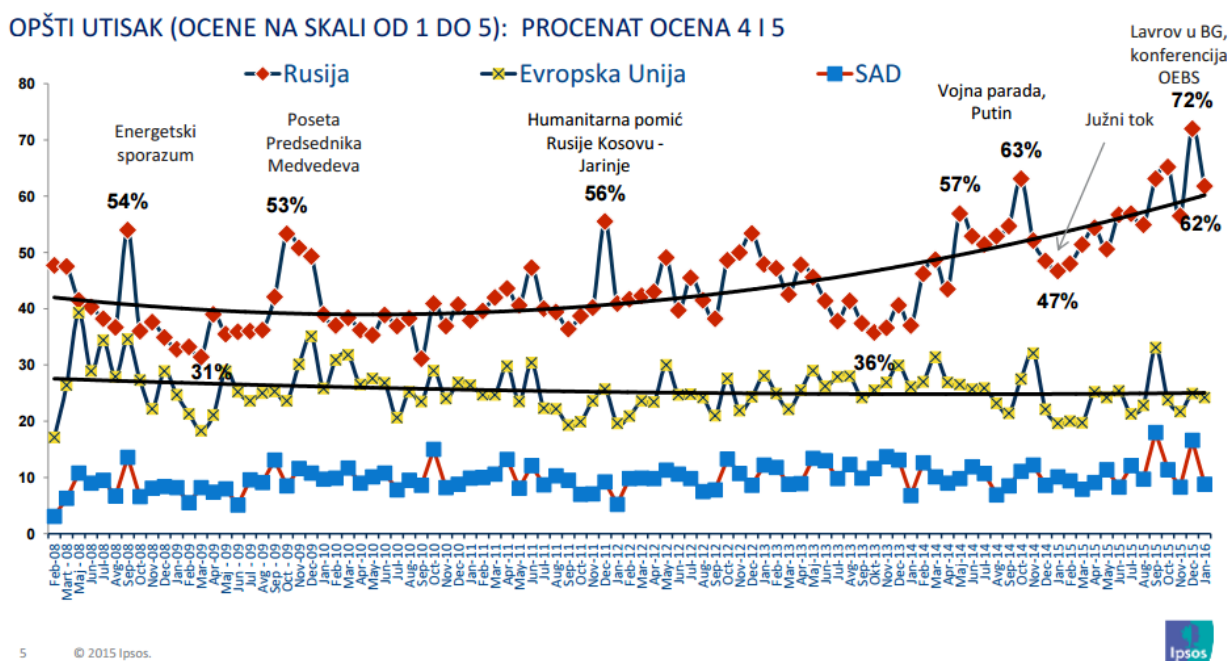
This confusion is also heightened by the Western international community, which has, in one moment, put on the back burner long-term processes of stabilization and democratization in the Western Balkans, which the West had been patiently helping for years, in order to achieve particular goals. The process of normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo has been almost exclusively reduced to expectations of the implementation of non-transparent negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina under the auspices of the EU, with the support of the US. Its reach has been exaggerated and overpaid, with almost complete legitimization of the compromised regimes that implement them. This has made the internal processes of democratization and the work of the forces that truly advocate for them on both sides very difficult. It has also devalued the EU integration process in their eyes. This is similar to the processes of transitional justice and the strengthening of regional cooperation in the entire Western Balkans. Through the normalization of the abnormal, negotiations have been reduced to insincere messages and symbolic gestures, with hollow attitude towards the events of the 1990s, including the causes, players, and consequences. Not surprisingly, they also more frequently and more successfully relativized by the Kremlin the EU integration processes and the improvement of relations with NATO. The reactions of the official Moscow government to the judgments of Radovan Karadžić and Vojislav Šešelj, issued in spring 2016, prove this beyond doubt.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ Moscow: The judgment for Karadzic maintains the myth of Serb's guilt. 25.3.2016. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/politika/20160325/1104326243/Moskva-Haski-tribunal.html>
Rogozin: If I were Šešelj, I would put the tribunal judges in jail. 31.3.2016. N1. Available at: <http://rs.n1info.com/a147803/Svet/Svet/Rogozin-Cestitam-mom-drugu-Seselju.html>

5.1. GENERAL INCREASE IN THE POSITIVE PERCEPTION OF RUSSIA AND PRO-KREMLIN MOOD

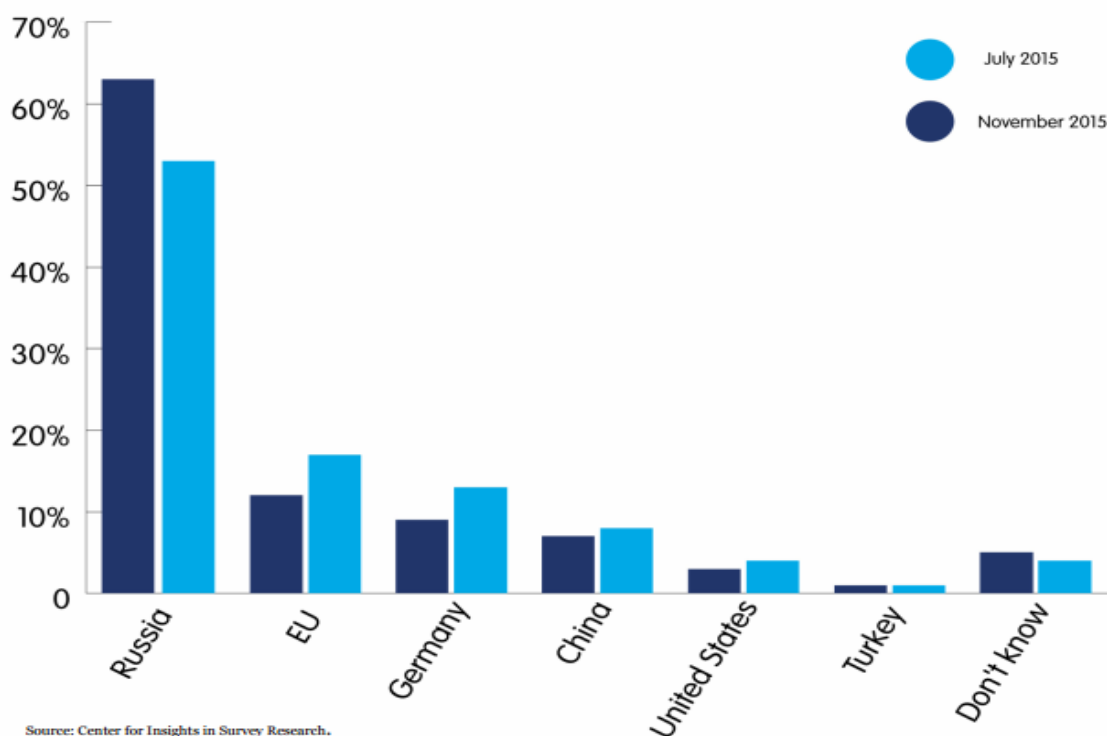
All recent opinion polls in Serbia have detected an increase in general pro-Kremlin attitudes.

According to the IPSOS Strategic Marketing survey from December 2015, 72 percent of the citizens of Serbia have a positive opinion of Russia, while only about 25 percent have such an opinion of EU institutions. This also shows the extent to which Serbia is a fertile ground for the expansion and strengthening of Russian soft power.



The research conducted by the International Republican Institute's Center for Insights in Survey Research shows that the Kremlin achieved a large increase in support: 10 percent in a period of five months. In July 2015, 52 percent of the citizens of Serbia believed that a

relationship with Russia is in the best interests of Serbia, while in November of the same year this parameter jumped to as much as 62 percent.¹⁷⁰



Russian soft power is particularly effective in positioning of Russia as the largest aid to Serbia. The Serbian government and media are participating wholeheartedly in this narrative, despite facts that unquestionably tell a different story.

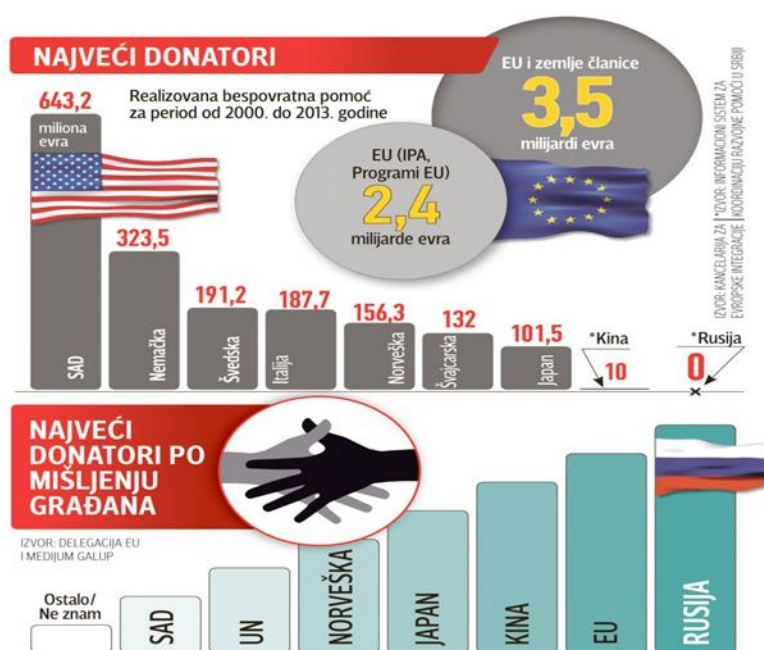
Research conducted from 2000 to 2013 shows that the biggest donors to Serbia are: the United States with €643.2 million; the European Union and member states with €3.5 billion; Japan with €101.5 million; and European Union donations through IPA funds with €6432.4 billion.¹⁷¹ China is at the bottom of the list of donors with €10 million, while in the same period Russia did not give any grants Serbia.¹⁷² Despite this, public opinion surveys

¹⁷⁰ Return to instability: How migration and great power politics threaten the Western Balkans. 2016. European Council on Foreign Relations. Available at: http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR_163_RETURN_TO_INSTABILITY.pdf

¹⁷¹ International assistance. European Integration Office of the government of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: <http://www.seio.gov.rs/dokumenta/medjunarodna-pomoc.127.html>

¹⁷² The EU donated billions, and nothing from Russia: The truth about donations to Serbia. 3.12.2014. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/milijarde-dala-eu-a-od-rusije-nista-istina-o-donacijama-srbiji/9ssrq01>

conducted by the EU Delegation in Serbia and the Medium GALUP show that citizens tend to believe that Russia is the greatest donor while, the US donates the least.¹⁷³



Public opinion in Serbia is also misguided regarding countries' contributions to the budget of the UNHCR. Although most citizens of Serbia believe that the US does not allocate funds for refugees, the actual image is slightly different. According to the published report on contributions to the UNHCR budget for 2013,¹⁷⁴ the United States allocated \$1,041,707,225, Japan allocated \$252,939,102, and the EU allocated \$213,490,514 (member states also allocated individual donations and are placed at the top of the list). At the same time, the Ruska Russian Federation has allocated only \$2,000,000 for that period.¹⁷⁵

For the purposes of this study, a special survey was commissioned, titled, *EU, Russia, US: Performances and preferences of citizens of Serbia from 18 to 35 years*. The findings of this

¹⁷³ Opinions of the citizens of Serbia towards EU integration. October 2015. Delegation of European Union in Serbia. Available at: <http://europa.rs/istrazivanje-stavovi-gradana-srbije-prema-eu-integracijama/>

¹⁷⁴ Contributions to UNHCR For Budget Year 2013. 4.2.2014. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/51c991a79.html>

¹⁷⁵ Contributions to UNHCR for 2013/2014/2015. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: <http://www.ceas-serbia.org/index.php/sr/prenosimo/4037-contributions-to-unhcr-for-2013-2014-2015>

report confirm that Russian soft power in Serbia has been growing stronger, leaving the youth in confusion regarding their perceptions and values. The main results of the survey were presented at the CEAS conference: *Serbia and Russia: Russian influence on stabilization, democratization and the European integration of Serbia*,¹⁷⁶ held on February 22nd 2016, and also in this study, in the section below.

5.2. IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE

The membership of newly established pro-Kremlin structures in Serbia primarily consists of young people. Their active participation in institutions of higher education, social networks, and use of other methods of Russian influence, the form of which resembles Western content, should be of special concern to those interested in the real democratization of Serbia. For this reason, CEAS has commissioned and helped in creating an in-depth analysis, the main results of which are presented here.

5.2.1. PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY: EU, RUSSIA, US: IMAGES AND PREFERENCES OF THE CITIZENS OF SERBIA AGES 18 TO 35 – IPSOS, FEBRUARY 2016

*Svetlana Logar, IPSOS, narrative summary of research results*¹⁷⁷

In the life choices of young people (18 to 35 years old), “Western countries” (the EU and US) evidently dominate over Russia. The West dominates in terms of their choices in the fields of entertainment and culture, the choice of country in which they would want to work, to be educated, to receive healthcare, to live (where they would want to move), and the model of the country by which they would build Serbia. As many as 70% chose the “Western” model as the model for building Serbia (59% chose the EU member states, and 11% the USA), and 27% chose Russia.

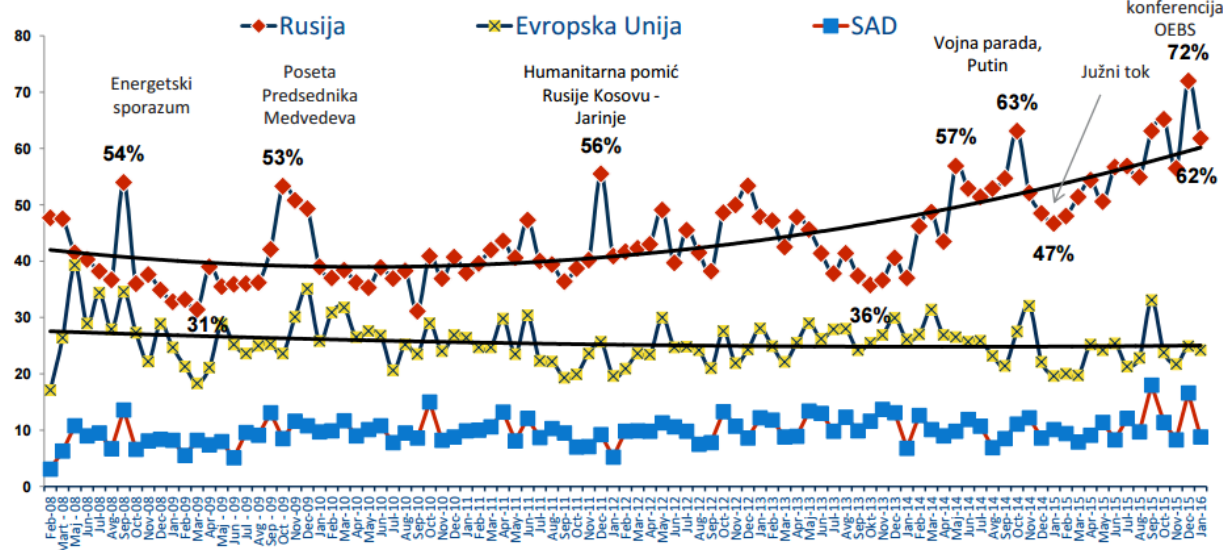
¹⁷⁶ Conference: *Serbia and Russia: Russian influence on stabilization, democratization and European integration of Serbia* was held. 22.2.2016. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: <http://www.ceas-serbia.org/sr/ceas-novosti/4627-odrzana-konferencija-srbija-i-rusija-ruski-uticaj-na-stabilizaciju-demokratizaciju-i-evropske-integracije-srbije>

¹⁷⁷ METHODOLOGY: Period of collecting data: 02 – 06 February, 2016. Target group: citizens of Serbia, 18 to 35 years old. Method of collecting data: telephone survey (CATI). Sampling framework: Registered fixed telephones; Sample type: Two-phase, stratified, representative sample: Selection of households – simple random sample; Selection of respondents within a household – quota sample. Stratification and post-stratification: Six geo-economical regions, type of settlement, gender and age groups (allocation proportionate to the stratum size). Sample size: 615.

In general, the image of the EU member states and the US is also far more positive than the image of Russia. Most young people estimate that in the EU and the US, the standard of living is higher, there is more use of alternative energy sources, greater media freedom, and greater respect for human rights.

There is evidently a conflict between the rational and irrational, apparently due to a lack of knowledge. Despite the predominantly positive attitude towards "Western" models of life, young people have positive expectations from the supposed alliance with Russia. Most support the presence of Russian military bases in Serbia (57%) and support Russian foreign policy (64%). Most believe that the alliance with Russia would improve opportunities for employment, travel, education, the arrival of foreign investment, political stability in the country and the region, the democratization of the country, and the image of Serbia in the world.

OPŠTI UTISAK (OCENE NA SKALI OD 1 DO 5): PROCENAT OCENA 4 I 5



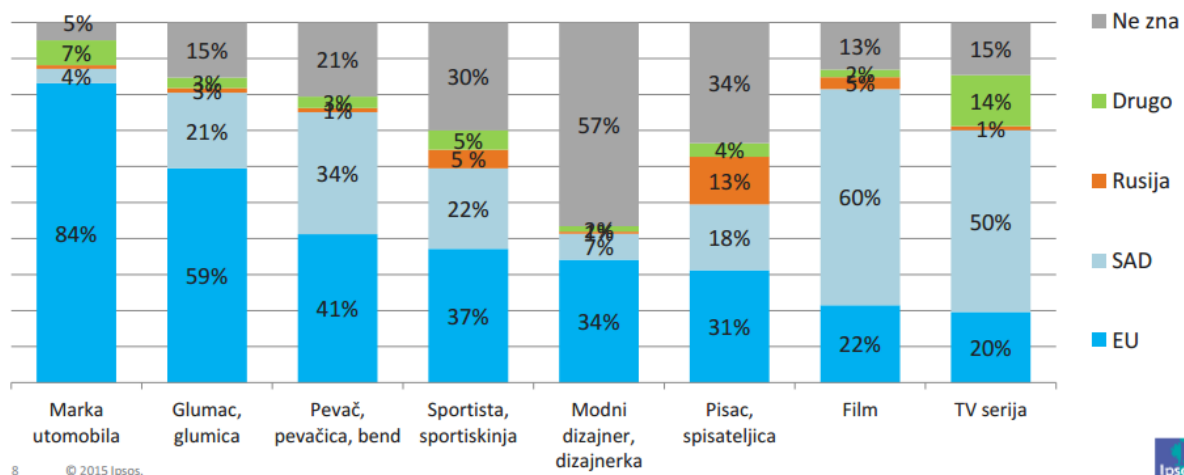
PREFERENCES

CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

U IZBORU KULTURE I ZABAVE UPADLJIVO DOMINIRAJU EU I SAD

Baza: oni koji imaju izbor

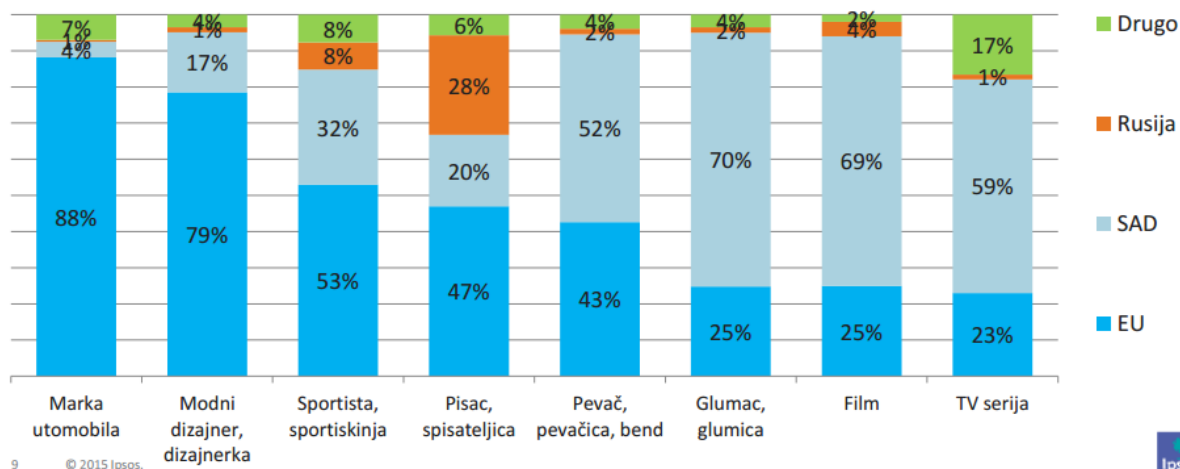
Iz koje zemlje potiče vaš omiljeni inostrani...?



U IZBORU KULTURE I ZABAVE UPADLJIVO DOMINIRAJU EU I SAD

Baza: Samo oni koji imaju izbor

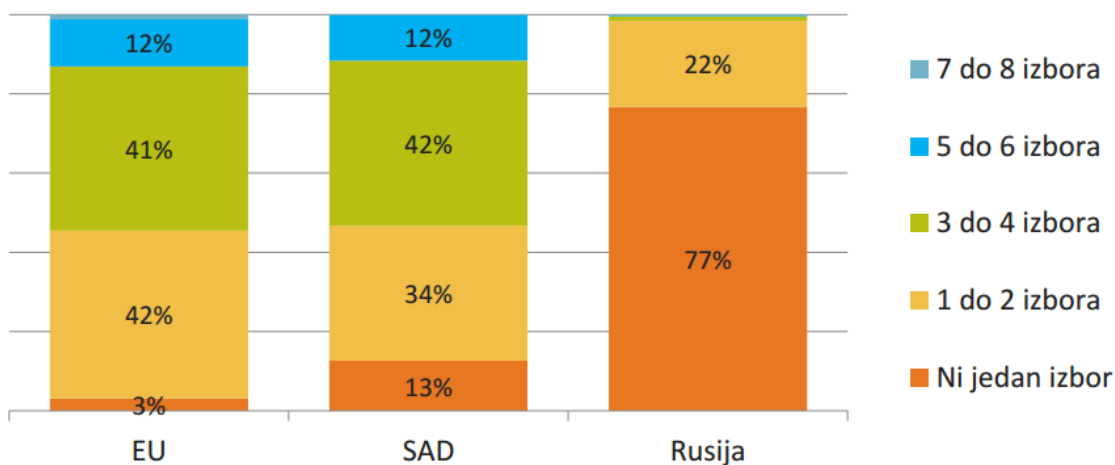
Iz koje zemlje potiče vaš omiljeni inostrani...?



OD 8 OBLASTI ZABAVE I KULTURE 77% NIJE IZABRALO RUSIJU NI U JEDNOJ

Kada biste mogli da birate, koju marku automobila biste izabrali?

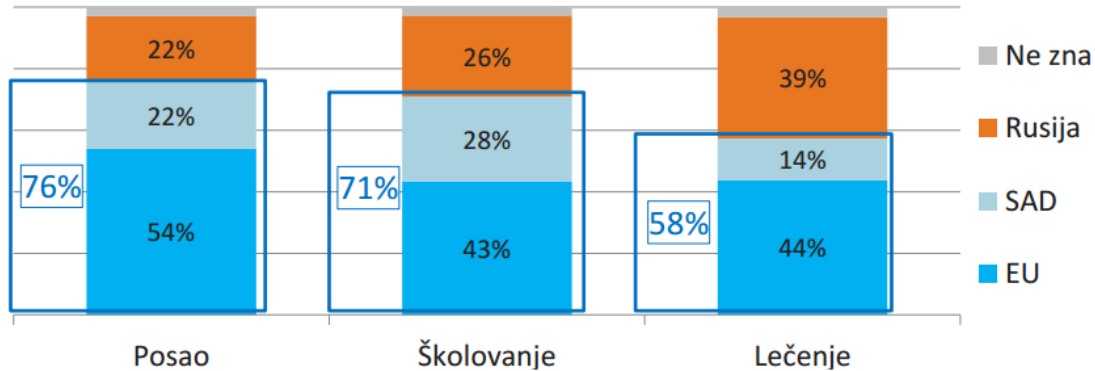
Iz koje zemlje potiče vaš omiljeni inostrani...?



EDUCATION, WORK, HEALTHCARE

VEĆINA MLADIH LJUDI BIRA „ZAPADNE“ ZEMLJE, POSEBNO KADA JE U PITANJU ZEMLJA U KOJOJ BI RADILI

Ako bi vam se pružila mogućnost da idete **na studije / stručno usavršavanje / specijalizaciju** i da možete da birate neki od univerziteta u Rusiji, Americi- SAD ili nekoj od zemalja zapadne Evrope, šta biste izabrali?
 Ako bi vama ili nekom članu vaše porodice bilo potrebno lečenje ili operacija, u koju zemlju biste najpre otišli na **lečenje**?
 A kada je u pitanju **posao**, ako bi u nekim okolnostima mogli da izaberete da neko vreme radite u Rusiji, Americi - SAD ili nekoj zemlji zapadne Evrope, šta biste izabrali?



12 © 2015 Ipsos.

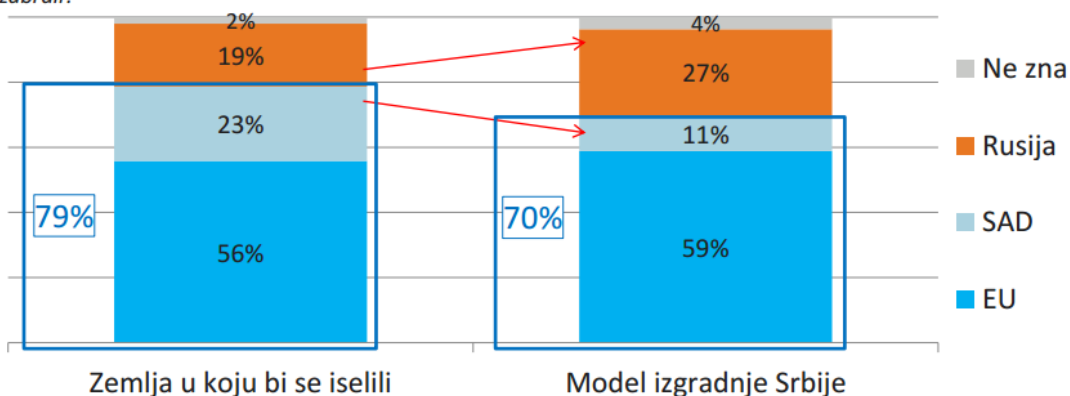


MODEL OF THE COUNTRY IN WHICH WE WOULD LIVE

„ZAPAD“ DOMINIRA KAO MODEL ZEMLJE U KAKVOJ BI MLADI LJUDI ŽELELI DA ŽIVE

A ako bi se dogodilo da se odselite **da živite u nekoj drugoj zemlji** i ako biste opet mogli da birate između Rusije, SAD i neke od zemalja zapadne Evrope, šta biste izabrali?

A kada je u pitanju Srbija i ako biste vi mogli da izaberete **model izgradnje zemlje u kakvoj biste vi voleli da živite**, model koje zemlje biste vi izabrali za Srbiju ako bi mogli da birate između Rusije, SAD i neke zemlje zapadne Evrope?



14 © 2015 Ipsos.



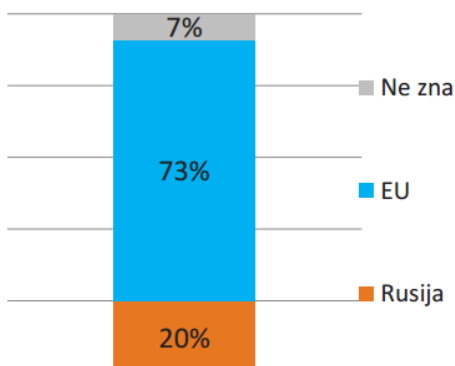
(SOME) IMAGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, RUSSIA AND THE UNITED STATES

IMAGES OF LIFE STANDARD, HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF MEDIA

VELIKA VEĆINA SMATRA DA JE ŽIVOTNI STANDARD VIŠI U ZAPADNOJ EVROPI I SEVERNOJ AMERICI NEGO U RUSIJI

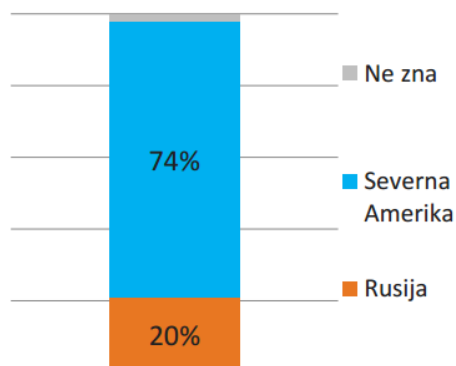
Koliko vi znate, šta biste rekli, **da li je životni standard građana viši...**

U RUSIJI ILI U ZAPADNOJ EVROPI



17 © 2015 Ipsos.

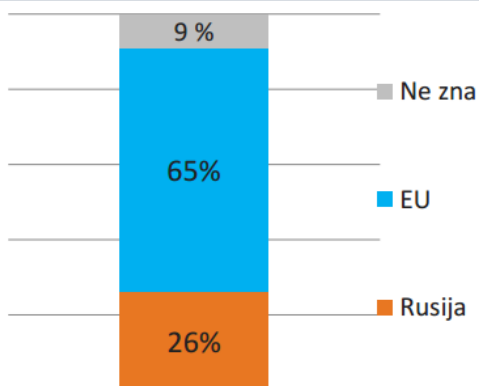
U SEVERNOJ AMERICI (SAD I KANADI) ILI U RUSIJI



VEĆINA SMATRA I DA SE ALTERNATIVNI IZVORI ENERGIJE VIŠE KORISTE U ZAPADNOJ EVROPI I SEVERNOJ AMERICI NEGO U RUSIJI

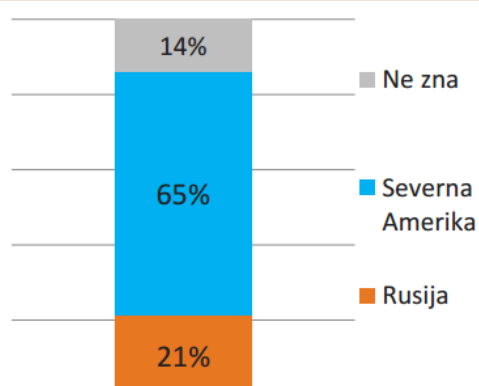
Gde se više koriste **alternativni izvori energije, kao što su vetar i sunčeva energija**

U RUSIJI ILI U ZAPADNOJ EVROPI



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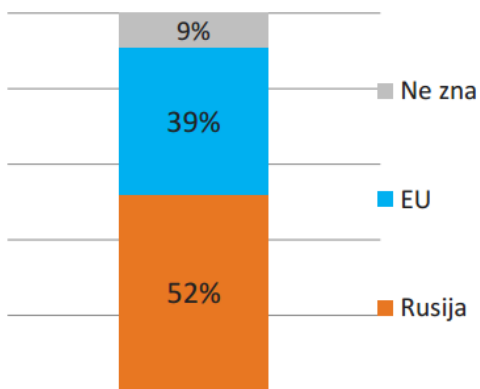
U SEVERNOJ AMERICI (SAD I KANADI) ILI U RUSIJI



VEĆINA SMATRA DA JE NATALITET VEĆI U RUSIJI NEGO U ZAPADNOJ EVROPI, ALI DA JE VEĆI U SAD NEGO U RUSIJI

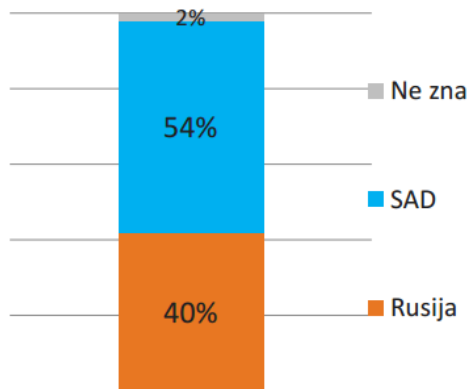
Gde je **veći natalitet** – procenat rođene dece u odnosu na broj stanovnika

U RUSIJI ILI U ZAPADNOJ EVROPI



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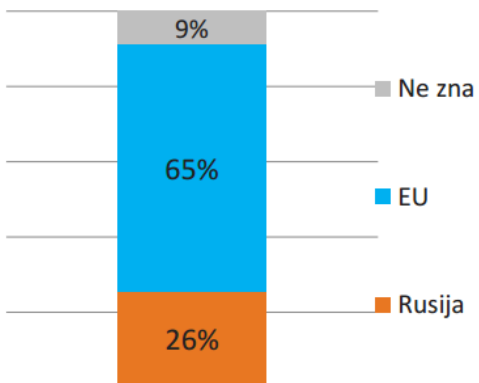
U SAD ILI U RUSIJI



VEĆINA SMATRA DA EU DAJE VIŠE DONACIJA ZA IZBEGLICE NEGO RUSIJA, ALI DA RUSIJA DAJE VIŠE NEGO SAD

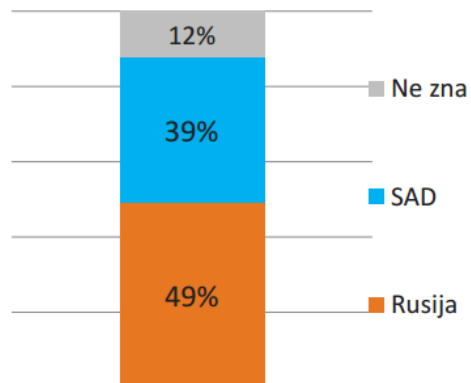
Ko daje više **donacija za izbeglice u svetu**

RUSIJA ILI EU



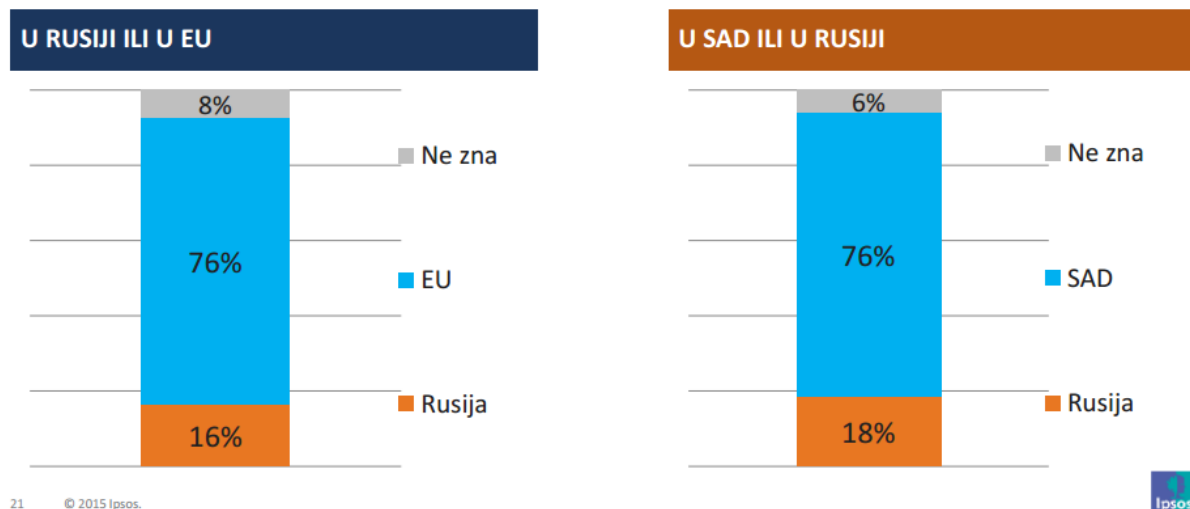
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SAD ILI RUSIJA



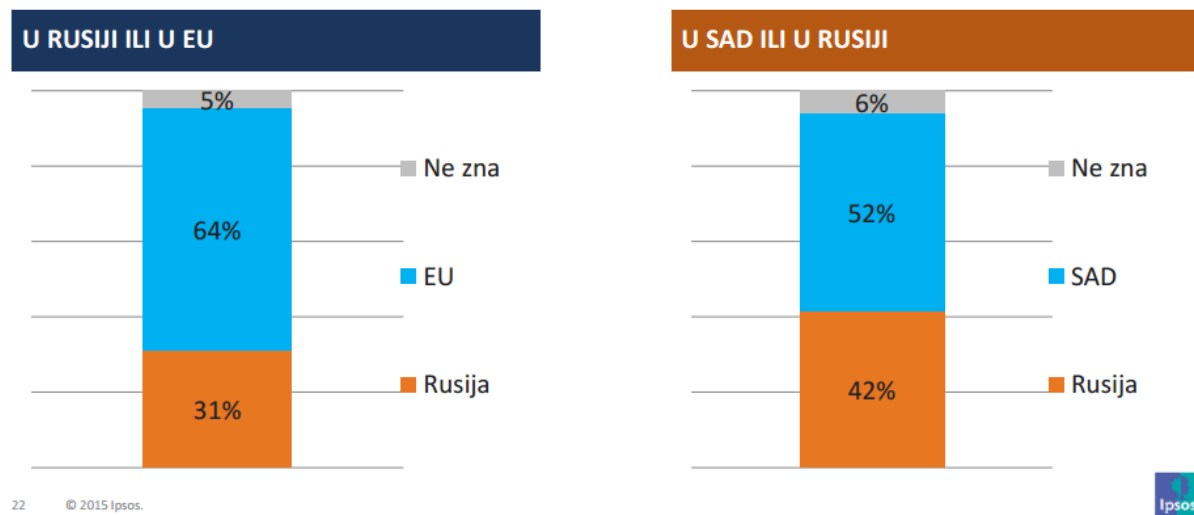
VELIKA VEĆINA SMATRA DA JE SLOBODA MEDIJA –SLOBODA GOVORA VEĆA U EU I SAD NEGO U RUSIJI

Gde je u većoj meri prisutna sloboda medija i sloboda govora, kritika vlasti



VEĆINA SMATRA DA SE U EU I SAD LJUDSKA PRAVA POŠTUJU VIŠE NEGO U RUSIJI, ALI JE RAZLIKA ZNATNO VEĆA U KORIST EU NEGO SAD

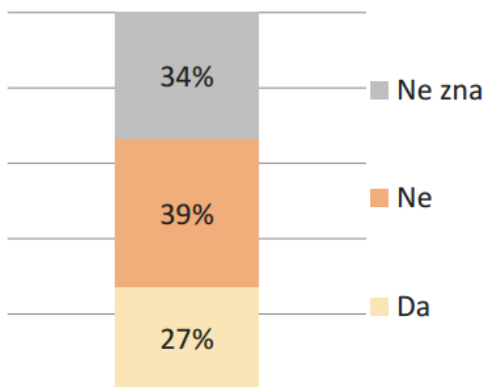
Gde se u većoj meri poštuju ljudska prava



IMAGES OF WARS AND VICTIMS

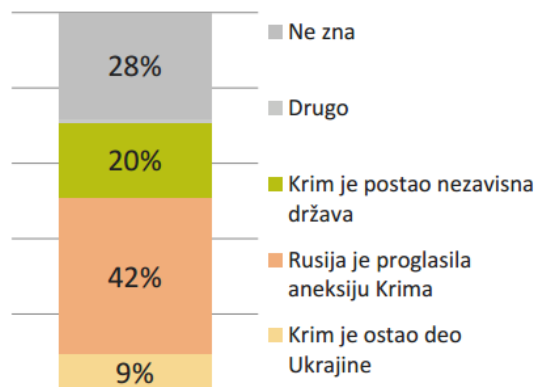
MLADI LJUDI SU NEŠTO BOLJE OBVEŠTENI O STATUSU KRIMA, NEGO O VOJNOJ INTERVENCIJI
RUSIJE U SIRIJI

**Da li su Rusi u vojnoj intervenciji u Siriji
pogađali civilne mete?**



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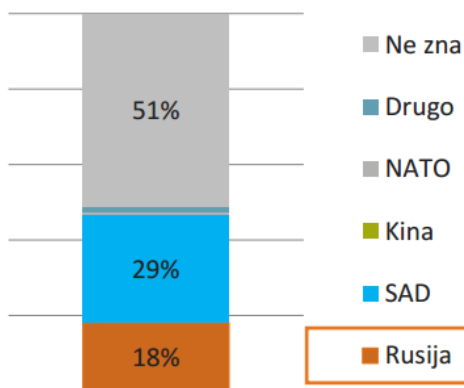
**Kakav je status dobio krim posle sukoba
Ukrajine i Rusije 2014 godine?**



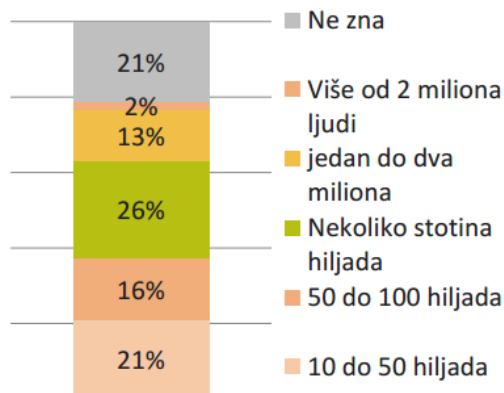
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SAMO 18% ZNA DA JE RUSIJA RATOVALA 9 GODINA U AVGANISTANU KRAJEM PROŠLOG VEKA

**Ko je krajem 20. Veka ratovao 9 godina u
Avganistanu?**



Koliko je civila izgubilo život u ovom ratu?
(Oni koj su naveli Rusiju, 18%)

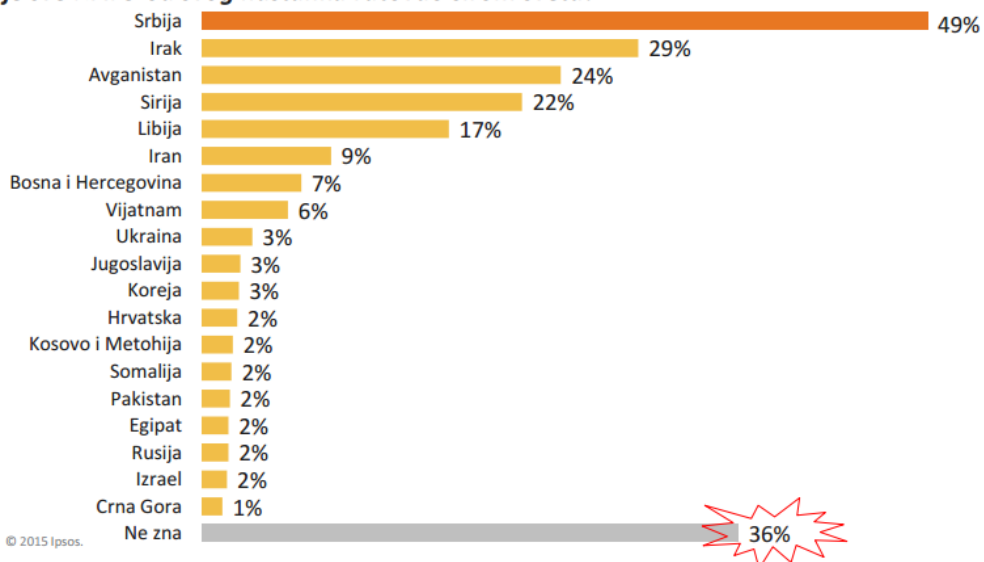


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VIŠE OD TREĆINE NIJE MOGLO DA NAVEDE NI JEDNU ZEMLJU U KOJOJ JE NATO RATOVAO OD SVOG NASTANKA

Gde je sve NATO od svog nastanka ratovao širom sveta?



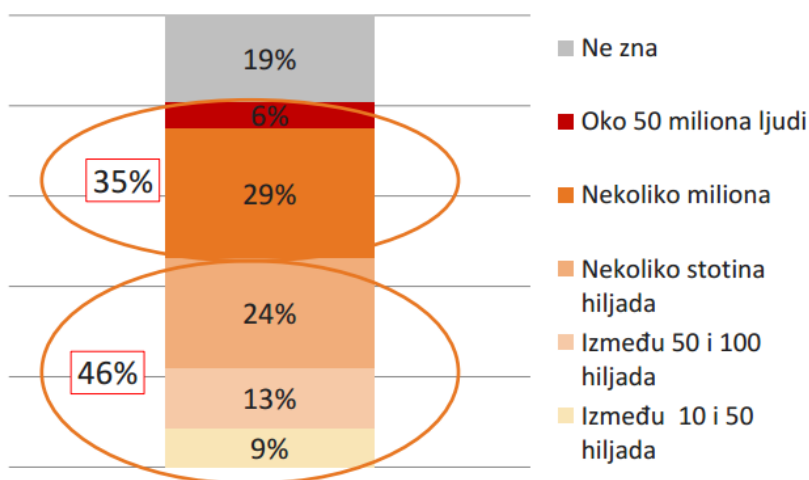
26

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IDEJE O BROJU ŽRTAVA STALJINISTIČKOG REŽIMA SU VEOMA PODELJENE, ALI 46% PROCENA KREĆE SE U RASPONU OD NEKOLIKO DESETINA HILJADA DO NEKOLIKO STOTINA HILJADA ŽRTAVA

Koliki je bio broj žrtava stanjinističkog režima u Rusiji



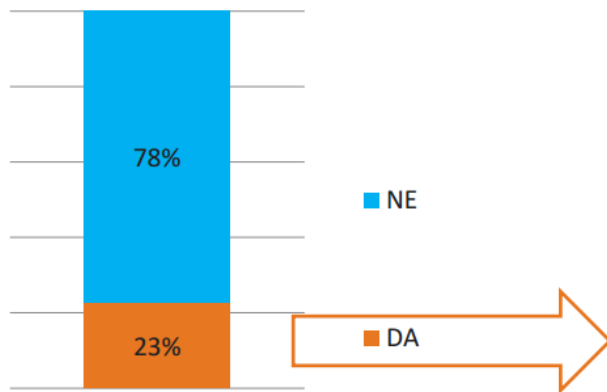
27

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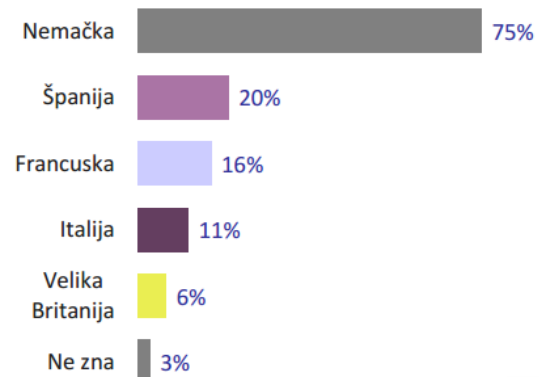


BLIZU ČETVRTINE SMATRA DA JE MASOVNO NASILJE NAD SOPSTVENIM GRAĐANIMA, SLIČNO ONOM IZ STALJINISTIČKOG REŽIMA, POSTOJALO I U ZAPADNIM ZEMLJAMA

Da li vam je poznato neko slično masovno nasilje nad sopstvenim građanima od strane vlasti među zapadnim zemljama?



U kojoj zemlji? (Oni koji su odgovorili DA, 23%) NAJČEŠĆE NAVEDENI ODGOVORI

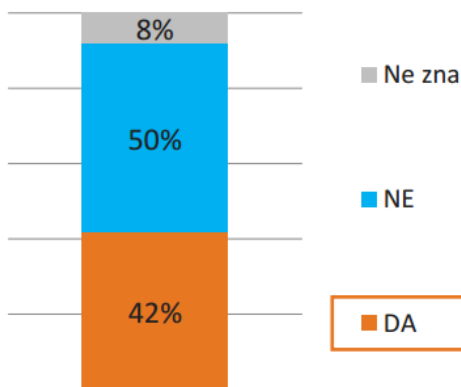


ALLIANCE WITH RUSSIA – WHAT DOES IT IMPLY AND WHAT DOES IT BRING TO SERBIA?

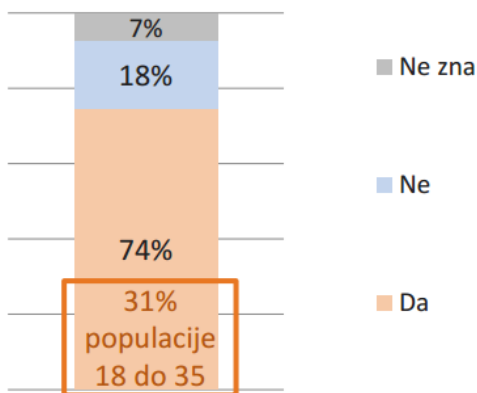
ALLIANCE WITH RUSSIA – WHAT DOES IT IMPLY?

42% SMATRA DA BI SAVEZ SA RUSIJOM PODRAZUMEVAO USVAJANJE RUSKOG ZAKONODAVSTVA I 74% OD NJIH TO PODRŽAVA (ŠTO ČINI 31% UKUPNE POPULACIJE 18-35 GODINA)

Da li bi Savez sa Rusijom podrazumevao usvajanje ruskog zakonodavstva?



*Da li vi to **podržavate**? (Oni koj su odgovorili DA, 42%%)*

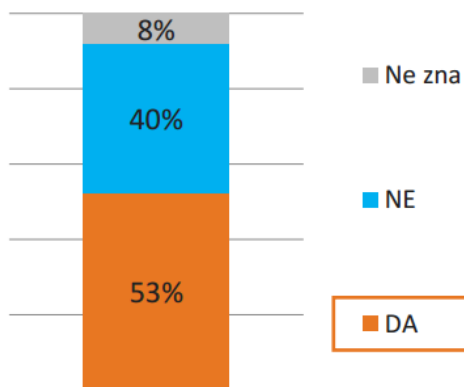


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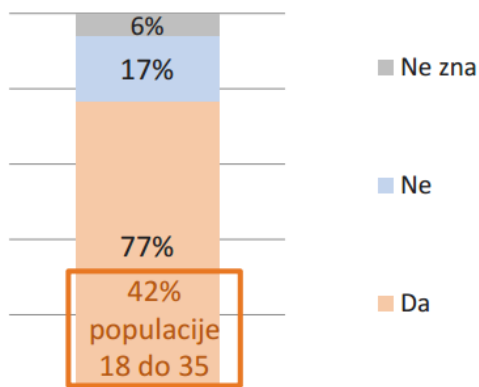


53% SMATRA DA BI SAVEZ SA RUSIJOM PODRAZUMEVAO USVAJANJE RUSKOG POLITIČKOG SISTEMA I 77% OD NJIH TO PODRŽAVA (ŠTO ČINI 42% UKUPNE POPULACIJE 18-35 GODINA)

Da li bi Savez sa Rusijom podrazumevao usvajanje ruskog političkog sistema?



*Da li vi to **podržavate**? (Oni koj su odgovorili DA, 53%%)*

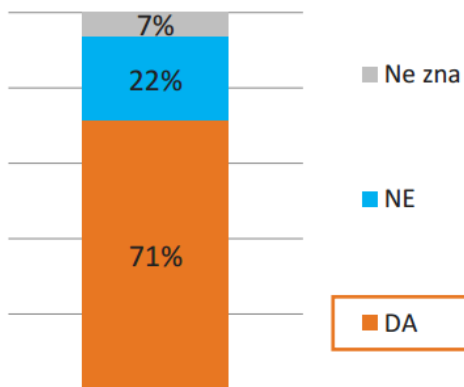


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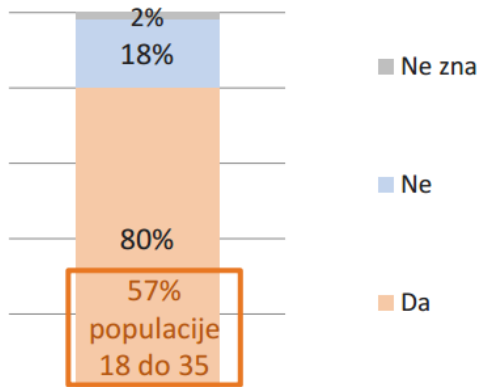


71% SMATRA DA BI SAVEZ SA RUSIJOM PODRAZUMEVAO PRISUSTVO RUSKIH VOJNIH BAZA U SRBIJI I 80% OD NJIH TO PODRŽAVA (ŠTO ČINI 57% UKUPNE POPULACIJE 18-35 GODINA)

Da li bi Savez sa Rusijom podrazumevao prisustvo ruskih vojnih baza u Srbiji?



*Da li vi to **podržavate**? (Oni koji su odgovorili DA, 53%%)*

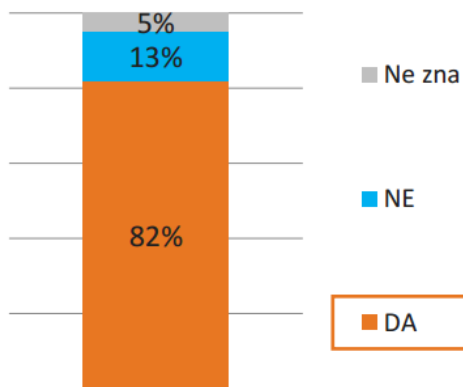


33 © 2015 Ipsos.

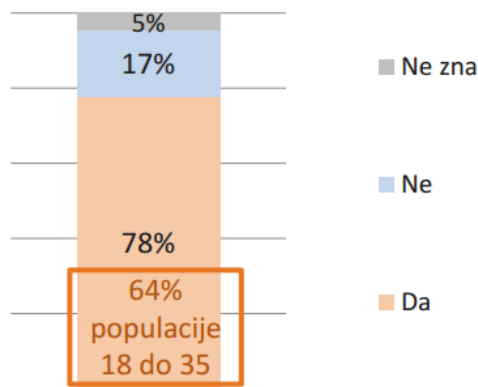


82% SMATRA DA BI SAVEZ SA RUSIJOM PODRAZUMEVAO PODRŠKU RUSKOJ SPOLJNOJ POLITICI I 78% OD NJIH TO PODRŽAVA (ŠTO ČINI 64% UKUPNE POPULACIJE 18-35 GODINA)

Da li bi Savez sa Rusijom podrazumevao podršku ruskoj spoljnoj politici?



*Da li vi to **podržavate**? (Oni koji su odgovorili DA, 53%%)*

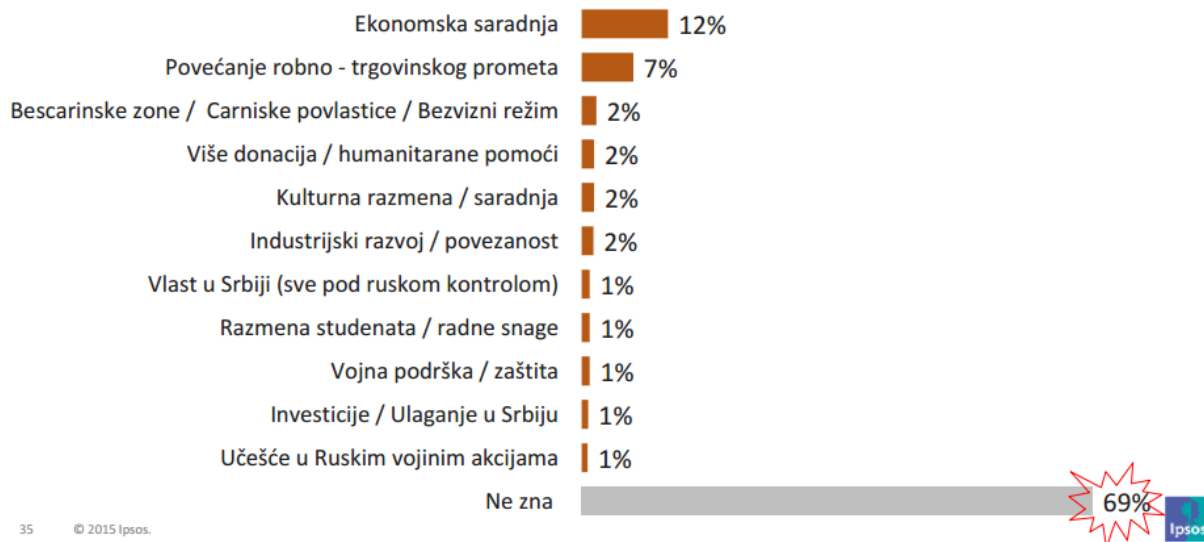


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VELIKA VEĆINA NEMA NIKAKVU IDEJU O TOME ŠTA BI JOŠ PRETPOSTAVLJENI SAVEZ SA RUSIJOM PODRAZUMEVAO

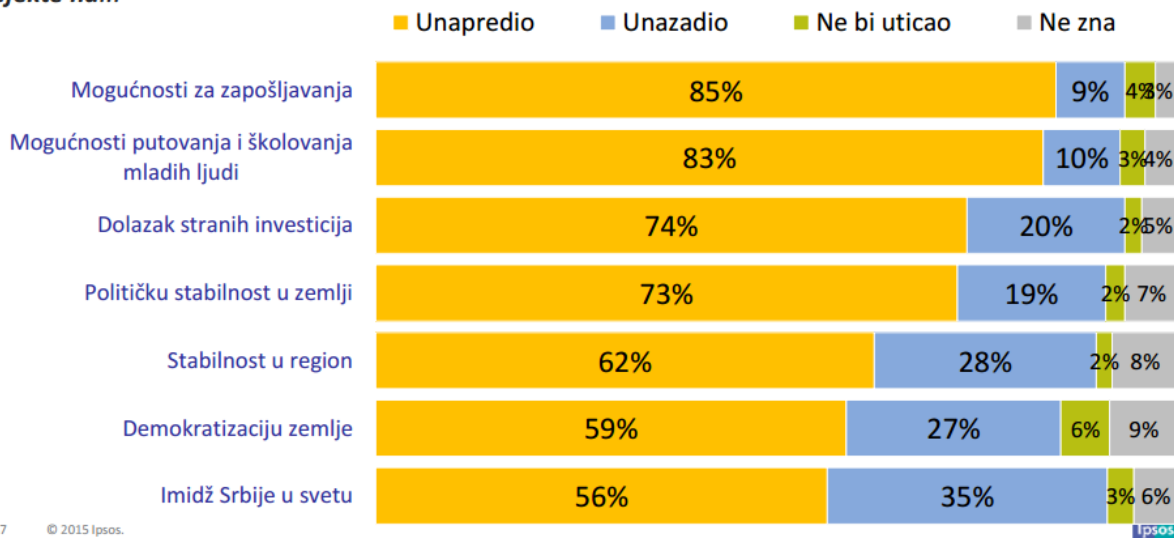
Šta bi još pretpostavljeni savez sa Rusijom podrazumavao? (SPONTANI ODGOVORI)



ALLIANCE WITH RUSSIA – WHAT DOES IT BRING TO SERBIA?

VEĆINA SMATRA DA BI SAVEZ SA RUSIJOM IMAO POZITIVNE EFEKTE, NAJVIŠE NA MOGUĆNOST ZAPOSŁJAVANJA (85%) I PUTOVANJA I ŠKOLOVANJA (83%), NAJMANJE NA IMIDŽ SRBIJE U SVETU (56%)

Da li bi pretpostavljeni savez sa Rusijom unapredio/imao pozitivne efekte ili unazadio/imao negativne efekte na...



5.3. HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT¹⁷⁸: PUTINIZATION OF SERBIA 2012–2016

In the former Yugoslavia there was a joke about two KGB agents who, sometime in the 1970s, were trying to involve a Western diplomat in an orchestrated sex scandal. The discussion on the preparations goes as follows:

- Have you found an adequate female to be a decoy?*
- Of course!*
- Is she a verified staff?*
- Of course, she has been a member of the Communist Party since 1921.*

The reality in Serbia in 2016 is somewhat different. Russian soft power is more sophisticated and attractive.

As previously explained, the phenomenon called the “Putinization” of Serbia by CEAS refers to the erosion of democratic achievements realized by 2012; the strengthening of autocracy; the weakening of institutions and institutional decision-making process; the erosion of the concepts of the separation of powers, rule of law, and protection of human rights; the de-legitimization and criminalization of opponents; the partization of the state, including the judiciary and security systems, and the public and state property and companies; the erosion of secularism; the illegitimate influence over the media; the enhanced role of the parties as an “employment bureau”; the overall corruption with simultaneous fighting between the political and economic competition, under the pretext of “fighting corruption”; and the perversion of the concept of European integration and transitional justice. Putinization, in CEAS’ interpretation, does not even necessarily mean the direct interference of the Kremlin. In Serbia, it has largely been implemented from the

¹⁷⁸ The title of this chapter is a tribute to excellent study of the US Atlantic Council entitled *Hiding in Plain Sight: Putin’s War in Ukraine*. Available at: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/hiding-in-plain-sight-putin-s-war-in-ukraine-and-boris-nemtsov-s-putin-war>

inside. Putinization is broader than the concept of Russian soft power because it also includes the influences of hard power and autochthonous political trends in Serbia. Unfortunately, they are such that they have the real power to attract a majority of the Serbian public, despite being mostly undemocratic and corrupt.

5.3.1. BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT IN WHICH THE STRENGTHENING OF RUSSIAN SOFT POWER AND THE PUTINIZATION OF SERBIA TAKE PLACE

There are concerns that the optimism expressed in the previously quoted final paragraph of Reichardt's review of Vah Harpen's book does not apply to Serbia. Namely, he states, "we can only hope that the perversion of soft power by the Kremlin will be unsuccessful. As Van Herpen says, Russia's efforts are, "limited with reality in the field (...) People can be fooled through state propaganda, but not forever, no matter how wisely it is packed. Moscow's manipulation of soft power cannot avoid the fact that the essence of soft power is in its attractiveness." If the Kremlin continues to act aggressively and in a revisionist manner, in violation of international law and by subjugating its neighbors, in the end it will have to learn the hard lesson of true soft power."

This is an optimistic prognosis even for the countries of the political West with stable and independent institutions, a strong independent media, amore accountable political elite, and separation of powers, although the political West also has huge challenges that will, hopefully, be answered with the appropriate balance of freedom and necessary restrictions. The renowned *New York Times* columnist Roger Cohen, in the introduction to his April 2016 article, *The Death of Liberalism*, states, " liberalism is dead. Or at least it is on the ropes. Triumphant a quarter-century ago, when liberal democracy appeared to have prevailed definitively over the totalitarian utopias that exacted such a toll in blood, it is now under siege from without and within. "¹⁷⁹

It is obvious that the soft power of the West is losing strength even in the West itself. The perverted soft power of Russia, and others who use similar methods, is attractive precisely

¹⁷⁹ The Death of Liberalism. 15.4.2016. The New York Times. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/14/opinion/the-death-of-liberalism.html?smid=tw-share& r=2>

because of its authoritarian nature and conservative, extreme right-wing, anti-globalist ideas. Russia and others consider these ideas legitimate, therefore use them to effectively undermine the principles of liberal democracy.

Below are excerpts of Cohen's aforementioned, extremely important article, which provide an excellent global context for the presentation of events in Serbia and the Western Balkans.

"Nationalism and authoritarianism, reinforced by technology, have come together to exercise new forms of control and manipulation over human beings whose susceptibility to greed, prejudice, ignorance, domination, subservience, and fear was not, after all, swept away by the fall of the Berlin Wall (...) Looking back at human history, the liberal democratic experiment - with its Enlightenment-derived belief in the capacity of individuals possessed of certain inalienable rights to shape their destinies in liberty through the exercise of their will — is but a brief interlude. Far more lasting have been the eras of infallible sovereignty, absolute power derived from God, domination and serfdom, and subjection to what Isaiah Berlin called "the forces of anti-rational mystical bigotry." (...) Such anti-rational forces are everywhere these days — in Donald Trump's America, in Marine Le Pen's France, in Vladimir Putin's Russia, throughout much of the Middle East, in North Korea. Representative government under the rule of law has proved to be insipid fare for an age that traffics in heady images of power and violence (...) Liberty, however, requires certain things. Liberalism demands acceptance of our human differences and the ability to mediate them through democratic institutions. It demands acceptance of multiple, perhaps incompatible truths. In an age of declamation and shouting, of polarization and vilification, of politics-for-sale and the insidious submersion of politics in fact-lite entertainment, the emergence of Trump is as unsurprising as it is menacing. (...) No wonder Putin admires him. Russian authoritarianism is all about the muscular trappings of power and popular adulation cultivated through fawning media for a Czar-like figure. The broad failure of the Arab Awakening — the greatest liberation movement since 1989, an attempt by Arab peoples to empower themselves — had many causes, but a central one was the absence of any liberal constituency in societies from Egypt to Libya. Even a country with a large middle class like Egypt was not ready to accept the mediation of multiple truths through democratic institutions. So power went back to the generals, and the Islamists —

even the moderates among them — were condemned to prison or worse. (...) In Russia, and now in countries from Hungary to Poland, and in China, forms of authoritarianism are ascendant and liberalism (or even modest liberalization) is in retreat. In the Middle East, the Islamic State casts its long, digitized shadow. In Western societies beset by growing inequality (neo-liberal economics has also sapped the credentials of liberalism), political discourse, debate on college campuses and ranting on social media all reflect a new impatience with multiple truths, a new intolerance and unwillingness to make the compromises that permit liberal democracy to work. (...) The threat for liberal Western societies is within and without. Liberalism may be feeble as a battle cry, but nothing is more important for human dignity and decency.”

In such conditions, a few civil society organizations in Eastern Europe have at least initiated projects on the deconstruction of Russian propaganda, which certainly undermines the principles of liberal democracy. The EU itself has launched certain activities, primarily in its eastern member states.¹⁸⁰

On the other hand, the Western Balkans has been left to itself, with a few ad hoc moves, such as the Berlin process,¹⁸¹ of which remains the ironic image of Bakir Izetbegović and Aleksandar Vučić playing chess in Knez Mihailova Street in Belgrade. Due to the challenges that it is facing, which drain its own resources, the political West has been fooling itself that the regular European integration processes, support by compromised leaders of the 1990s whose return to power it assisted and thus legitimized, and who are now supposedly pro-EU oriented, superficialize processes of “reconciliation” and “regional cooperation,” which are necessary to continue the stabilization and democratization of the region. Therefore, before the very eyes of both the democratically oriented citizens and the political West, the Western Balkans has become a sitting duck for the growing Russian influence and strengthening soft power.

¹⁸⁰ Tiny EU task force set up to counter Russian propaganda. 28.8.2015. EurActiv. Available at: <http://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/tiny-eu-task-force-set-up-to-counter-russian-propaganda/>

¹⁸¹ Final Declaration by the Chair on the Conference on the Western Balkans. 28.8.2014. Office of the Federal Government. Available at: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Pressemitteilungen/BPA/2014/2014-08-28-balkan.html>

5.3.2. BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT FROM THE 1990S TO THE ARRIVAL OF ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ TO POWER

As the largest Orthodox and Slavic country in the region, with its unique experience of UN sanctions, NATO bombing, hyperinflation, the Milošević war-crime regime and others, Serbia has long been a fertile ground for the effects of Russian soft power. Due to geopolitical and local trends in the past few years, it has become even more so. Some of these trends are: global challenges such as terrorism; the situation in Iran and North Korea; the war in Syria; the refugee crisis; the challenges in the EU itself; the great geostrategic battles for which Russia needs “international legitimization”; the dependence of the Western Balkans and Serbia on Russian energy; the West's insistence on enhanced defense cooperation with Serbia, which is becoming more important than anything else – even the democratic control of the defense system and honest attitude towards the recent war; the technocratization of pro-EU civil society organizations; the havoc of more honest pro-EU political options; and the plans to complete particular goals within a certain deadline, such as the agreements between Belgrade and Pristina, incorrectly called the process of normalizing relations.

Throughout the 1990s, Serbia was, for the majority of the population, going through an “experiment” by the Milošević regime, similar to the one through which post-Soviet Russia went. The main elements of this process are: the partization of the country, and above all the judiciary, security system, and public resources; tycoonization; huge social stratification; the illusion of a multiparty system; the illusion of freedom of choice; the illusion of freedom of expression and association; the rewriting of history; mass propaganda through controlled media in parallel with high-quality media with limited public impact; a flood of quasi-western television formats; the creation of external enemies; military aggression against neighbors; the revanchism of the totalitarianism of former regimes by giving enormous space to the church in state and social developments; and the “re-traditionalization” and criminalization of society.

The nonviolent October changes in 2000, which represented the beginning of the dismantling of the Milošević regime, were helped by the political West. They were organized by those for whom the main elements of Western soft power – freedom, modern democracy, Western culture, and others, were truly attractive to the extent that they risked much for them, in both the professional and private aspects of life. Slowly, the political West, and Serbia especially, are forgetting the causes and circumstances of the assassination of the first democratic prime minister of Serbia, Dr. Zoran Đinđić. The extent of the October 5th changes, no matter how important, has its limits. We should not forget that the holders of democratic changes were en masse, joined by those who were more bothered by Milošević's internal economic policy than his nationalistic war-crime policy in the region. That is why the foundations of the new, in terms of value, democratic society was only partially established in the extremely difficult circumstances, which left many important implementers of Milošević's policy in the state apparatus, partially due to the demands of Moscow. Since 2012, a good part of them are back in power in Serbia, now with a supposedly more moderate agenda. It was adopted primarily due to the desire for power and a shift in external and domestic circumstances, rather than a fundamental changes in ideology and mode of operation.

Meanwhile, the citizens of Serbia, acquired internet, cable television, social networks, commercial banks for citizens, smart phones, the ability to again easily travel around the region and the EU, relatively fair and democratic elections with peacefully replaceable governments, and laws that more explicitly protect human and minority rights. By 2012, the new, more democratic government managed to arrest and surrender to the Hague Tribunal all those accused of the most serious crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide.

Almost none of the aforementioned amenities were available to the majority of Serbians in the 1990s, under the UN sanctions and with incredible hyperinflation, which is not an excuse for unanimous support to Milošević's politics, but must be taken into account. Until a few years ago, thanks to NATO in the region, people rarely considered the fact that some less lethal version of Milošević's Serbia of the 1990s, could be replicated. Serbia has become a candidate for EU membership.

But even then, the quality of the political system and selection of bilateral and international alliances were not directly associated with the economic, legal, and infrastructural performance of the state and the situation in society.¹⁸² The political establishment reduced this to the path to the EU, mainly because of trade and investment.

Additionally, the political West has begun to be analyzed and criticized increasingly and disproportionately in relation to the political East by those who have been for many years directing public opinion towards stabilization and democratization, not only of Serbia, but the entire region. “Discoveries” of Assange and Snowden and Wall Street have become, thanks to some of those who have a great public impact, more of a risk to the global world than femicide in India or crimes in Congo or Nigeria. Every challenge through which the EU has passed, or is currently passing, is an opportunity to see all of its weaknesses and predict its imminent end. Seventy years of peace and economic prosperity with great progress in the achievement of personal freedoms are being taken for granted. The political West that is, “naturally under the complete domination of the United States” and has slowly become the reason for everything, from the emergence of the Taliban to the war in Syria to emergence of ISIS.

At the same time, the patience which is very much needed in order to experience the results of the attractive components of Western soft power is slowly fading. Both younger and older generations in Serbia have mostly reduced involvement in politics to securing jobs, without much effort to understand the values and ideological background of the parties they join or for which they vote. Ethno entrepreneurship has taken a monopoly on minority issues and ghettoized both the citizens and the concept, while almost never acknowledging the democratic deficit of multiculturalism.

The long-standing strategy of many representatives of the political West who have been working with Serbia since the beginning of the transition is to fight against corruption through bringing together the frustrated citizenry. However, this strategy is unsound. Excessive emphasis on this idea in the initial period of transition shook up the necessary

¹⁸² Gerald Knaus. Why are they looking at the West – Ukraine, poverty and the EU. ESI. Unofficial CEAS translation, Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: <https://www.ceas-serbia.org/sr/preuzeto/zasto-oni-gledaju-zapad-ukrajina-siromastvo-i-eu>

support for the liberalization of the economy, the privatization process, and the inclusion of Serbia into the global financial flows at the beginning of the millennium, all the way to undermining the very idea of liberalism. The witch hunt started even before the judiciary became remotely reformed and independent, a standard which it still has not reached today. In 2016, the so-called "tycoons" in Serbia, those who employ large numbers of people in the country, are increasingly becoming "national enemies," more so than senior officials in the Army of Serbia, for whom there are strong indications that units under their command were involved in Kosovo war crimes.

The soft power of Vučić's regime is appealing to the general public in Serbia, as is the direct Russian soft power. They have a few undemocratic and corrupt characteristics in common. Through the partization of the state, many have the opportunity to take part in widespread corruption. Promises of departization, of course, were not fulfilled. A false security is increasingly prioritized over everything else, and in that way democratic processes are replaced with autocratic practices. In Serbia in 2016, the "Ukrainian scenario" has become synonymous with unjustified, unconstitutional violence that allegedly, may come from the opposition and the West. This works to de-legitimize a legitimate and non-violent rebellion against autocracy, which the autocrats wanted to stop through blood. It is obvious that Aleksandar Vučić and his accomplices have decided to reduce the continuation of transitional justice to a necessary minimum, essentially perverting it. In this way, like Milošević in the past, he has been homogenizing supporters around a foreign enemy and buying loyalty from compromised security system members, fleeing from the implementation of the necessary, but unpopular measures. Despite these actions and many other concerns that CEAS has already raised,¹⁸³ the Western international community still does not explicitly insist upon the need to reform the security system, primarily to establish democratic control over it. The West does not have the power or, more dangerously, the interest to make Vučić's regime face core questions that would shed light on whether Serbia is moving towards autocracy or democracy, by focusing on the formal process of European integration as the main control mechanism. The Kremlin does not

¹⁸³ The missing link: Reform of the security system, 'military neutrality' and EU integrations in Serbia. 2014. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: <http://www.ceas-serbia.org/images/prilozi/CEAS-Karika-koja-nedostaje.pdf>

even have such expectations. The synergy of the strengthening soft power, both of Russia and Vučić, was created right in front of us, without timely and adequate reaction, both from the outside and the inside. How we arrived in the present situation will now be analyzed, by looking at the contributing past events.

From 2008 to 2012, a coalition government around the Democratic Party (DS) was in power in Serbia, and one of the minority parties in the government was the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) led by Ivica Dačić. He was once a close associate of the notorious Serbian leader of the 1990s, Slobodan Milošević, who died in 2006 in the custody of the ICTY. Milošević was arrested and extradited to The Hague as along with several other Generals of Milošević's security system who had remained in it even after October 5th 2000, and several high political officials in the former government led by late Prime Minister Đinđić. Boris Tadić, then the chairman of the Democratic Party, served as President of Serbia from 2004 to 2012, when he was replaced by the candidate of the SNS, Tomislav Nikolić.

In February 2008, the Assembly of Kosovo declared Kosovo's independence. There are indications that, already at that time, the first waves of "patriotic" organizations in northern Kosovo, advocating for closer cooperation with Russia had begun operations.

In late February 2008, a large meeting entitled *Kosovo is Serbia* was held in Belgrade, with the following speakers: Tomislav Nikolić, the President of Serbia, Milorad Dodik, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Srpska, Andreja Mandić, the President of the Serbian People's Party of Montenegro, Emir Kusturica, a director, and others. After the meeting, large riots erupted, in which the rebels attacked the embassies of the United States, Germany, Turkey, and Croatia. In September 2015, the Higher Court in Belgrade¹⁸⁴ allowed the first acquittals and suspended sentences for the burning of the Turkish and American embassies at the protest.

During the government of the Democratic Party and the presidency of Boris Tadić, the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić and the Republic of Srpska Army General Ratko

¹⁸⁴ Evident lack of justice in Serbia. 9.9.2015. Naslovi.net. Available at: <http://www.naslovi.net/2015-09-09/akter/vidan-nedostatak-pravosudja-u-srbiji/16271236>

Mladić were arrested and handed over to the Hague Tribunal in July 2008 and May 2011 respectively.

In July 2008 in Belgrade, the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) organized the *Rally in support of Radovan Karadžić – All-Serbian Patriotic Movement*, involving about 15,000 people. Participants of the rally were addressed by Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić. After the rally, there was a major clash between protestors and police, in which dozens were injured. One of the injured later died.¹⁸⁵

After months of legal troubles and the use of legal-political loopholes in law and practice, the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) was founded at the end of October 2008. Namely, the Serbian Radical Party, whose leader Vojislav Šešelj was in the custody of the Hague Tribunal from 2003 until March 2016, split due to issues controlling the flow of finances. Aleksandar Vučić and Tomislav Nikolić, Šešelj's former close associates, founded the SNS. As they retained their parliamentary mandate, the group immediately became a parliamentary party.

In September 2011, the Russian Ambassador to Serbia, Aleksandr Konuzin, demonstratively left a meeting within the Belgrade Security Forum, shouting, "I'm confused. NATO, KFOR, and EULEX are planning to bring the Kosovo customs officers to the border in northern Kosovo, thus breaching their mandate, Resolution 1244, and the decision of the UN Security Council from 2008, yet nobody from this audience asked a single question on the subject. Are there any Serbs in this audience? Are you worried for the fate of your fellow citizens?"¹⁸⁶

During the gatherings at the barricades in Kosovo and Metohija, backed by the Serbs who boycotted the presence of Kosovo customs officials, the Serbian Patriotic Movement Zavetnici was officially established in mid-February 2012.¹⁸⁷ Their presence and influence in Serbian society has been growing ever since. The Zavetnici managed to meet the

¹⁸⁵ Meeting ended, there is no walk. 29.7.2008. B92. Available at:

http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=07&dd=29&nav_id=310635

¹⁸⁶ Konuzin: There are Serbs in Serbia, but there is no unity. 1.1.2016. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/intervju/20160101/1102206719/Konuzin-Srba-u-Srbiji-ima-ali-nema-jedinstva.html#ixzz4533pSMjn>

¹⁸⁷ Serbian patriotic movement Zavetnici. Available at: http://zavetnici.rs/?page_id=23

demanding conditions for their participation in the early parliamentary elections in Serbia in April 2016. This is the second time that the number of pro-Kremlin organizations in both the north of Kosovo and the rest of Serbia has increased.

In January 2012, the Humanitarian Law Center published *Dossier Ljubisa Diković*, disclosing information about the actions of the former commander of the 37th Motorized Brigade during the war in Kosovo, as well as the Hague Tribunal's evidence on the war crimes committed in the area of responsibility of the commander Ljubiša Diković.¹⁸⁸

In March 2012, the Center continued to summarize the activities that were initiated and conducted before the courts in Serbia, comment on developments in the field of regional cooperation, including the transfer of cases, referring to standards and deficiencies of the trials in Serbia and its legislation, as well as problems of witness protection, which are explained in detail in the Center's *Report on war crime trials in Serbia in 2011*.¹⁸⁹

In March 2013, the Center published *Dossier 549. Motorized Brigade of the Yugoslav Army*,¹⁹⁰ providing insight into the activities of this unit of the Army of Yugoslavia during the Kosovo war and the crimes that occurred in its area of responsibility, in which more than 2,000 Albanian civilians were killed.

In early March 2012, at a summit in Brussels, the heads of EU Member States decided to award Serbia the status of a candidate for EU membership.¹⁹¹

In late April 2012, the Serbian-Russian humanitarian center (SRHC) was officially opened in Niš, created pursuant to the Law on Ratification of the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Serbia on Cooperation in the Field of Humanitarian Emergency Response, Prevention of Natural

¹⁸⁸ *Dossier Ljubisa Diković*. 23.2.2012. The Humanitarian Law Center. Available at: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/januar-23-2012-Dikovic-Ljubisa-Dosije.pdf>

¹⁸⁹ Report on war crime trials in Serbia 2011. 2011. The Humanitarian Law Center. Available at: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Izvestaj-sudjenja-u-2011.-final.pdf>

¹⁹⁰ *Dossier: 549th Motorized Brigade of the Yugoslav Army*. 2013. The Humanitarian Law Center. Available at: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Dosijea-549.-Motorizovana-brigada-Vojske-Jugoslavije.pdf>

¹⁹¹ Serbia gained status of a candidate for EU membership. 2.3.2012. European Integration Office of the government of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: <http://www.seio.gov.rs/vesti.145.html?newsid=1154>

Disasters, and Technological Accidents and Eliminating their Consequences. In the report, Regular in emergency situations published in March 2016 CEAS has wrote about the status and the work of this controversial institution and the increasingly strong pressure from the Russian Federation for the organization's special status and that of its staff.¹⁹² On the eve of the signing of the Agreement on Membership of Serbia in the Civil Protection Mechanism of the EU, in Belgrade in mid-2015, Christos Stylianides, the European Commissioner in charge of humanitarian aid and emergency management, said that the city of Niš could jeopardize the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, but that Brussels could not ask Serbia to close it. Still, he added that the general position of the EU is that every initiative should be complementary and create conditions for joint action within existing European mechanisms, and that any overlap or duplication should be avoided.¹⁹³

5.3.3. THE RETURN TO POWER OF OTHER PROMINENT FIGURES OF MILOŠEVIĆ'S REGIME: 2012–2016

In early May 2012, the regular parliamentary and early presidential elections were held in Serbia. After two and a half months of negotiations, the government of Serbia was formed by the coalition involving the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), and the Party of United Pensioners of Serbia and United Serbia, which were also joined by the Social Democratic Party of Serbia and several other minority representatives. For the first time since October 5th 2000, the majority government in Serbia was taken over by the flagships of the Milošević regime. The leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) Ivica Dačić was elected Prime Minister. Aleksandar Vučić (SNS) became the first Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense. Tomislav Nikolić (SNS) became the President of Serbia, replacing in this position Boris Tadić of the Democratic Party (DS).

At the end of April 2013, the government in Brussels signed the *First agreement on the principles of the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina*. The Western international community welcomed this move, and began to indiscriminately evaluate all progress, which was dearly paid for, made within the agreement.

¹⁹² The "RS Official Gazette – International Agreements" no. 6/2012.

¹⁹³ Message from the EU: Avoid duplication. 22. 4. 2015. Vesti. Available at: <http://www.vesti-online.com/print/487070/Vesti/Srbija/487070/NATO-tera-Ruse-iz-Srbije>.

In late June 2013, the European Council decided to open accession negotiations with the Republic of Serbia.

In late October 2013, the new Russian ambassador to Serbia, Aleksandar Chepurin, in an interview with the pro-government newspaper *Večernje Novosti*,¹⁹⁴ repeatedly emphasized the importance of the Slavic identity and identity politics in general¹⁹⁵ and, among other things, stated, “we do not want to be greater Serbs than you (...) NATO is a throwback to the last century. Wounds of the NATO bombing and deaths are still fresh – and not only in Serbia. I will never understand or accept those who, for 30 pieces of silver, are pushing the country into this military alliance, betraying the basic human values, and undermining the memory of the victims. Serbia has a long tradition as a nonaligned country.”¹⁹⁶

Only the director of the Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies, Jelena Milić, reacted to this statement in an open letter, in which, she stated, “as for the silver coins, there is a stable electorate in Serbia who wants Serbia in the West, who believe that all new identities, and not just the imposed old ones, are what should drive Serbia forward. In that West there are scientists, industry, athletes (...) whose results are measured by Forbes lists, Nobel prizes, sports medals, music top lists, TV and other earnings, rather than arbitrary evaluations. That West is ruled by basic human values, the rule of law, the separation of powers, the protection of fundamental human rights, including the rights of LGBTIAQ community. From that West we have not yet seen brutal images of the treatment of immigrants. The influence of churches is secular. Churches do not play a social dominant role in the ossification of the behavior of society. They are hindering our entrance into globalization trends, which contributes to the spreading of our identities and our maximums. Mr. Chepurin, some of us have been, for our entire active political lives, in one way or another, politically, financially, and unfortunately sometimes with our own lives, paying for Serbia to become a part of the Euro-Atlantic world. Neither then nor now have we put those 30 pieces of silver in our own

¹⁹⁴ Chepurin: We will not be bigger Serbs than you. 17.10.2013. *Večernje novosti*. Available at: <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/politika/aktuelno.289.html:459411-Cepurin-Necemo-da-budemo-veci-Srbi-od-vas>

¹⁹⁵ Author's note: inherited, ethnic and religious

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

pockets. I do not know whether words, conviction, and civic responsibility mean anything to you. They mean a lot to me.”¹⁹⁷

On January 29th 2014, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić signed a decree on the dissolution of the Parliament of Serbia and the decision to call for early parliamentary elections, which were held on March 16th 2014.

Due to the annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea, on March 17th 2014 the EU and US introduced the first round of sanctions against Russia and a travel ban and assets freeze for 21 Russian officials.¹⁹⁸ This was followed by three more rounds of restrictive measures. Also in this period, the Russian Federation began to show increasing open interest for developments in the Western Balkans.

The official Belgrade government then refused to comment on the actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, referring to the “technical government” as an excuse. After the formation of the government, it used the upcoming chairmanship of the OSCE and lack of legal regulations as a further excuse. Chairing the OSCE was completed in 2015. In 2016, the Law on Restrictive Economic Measures was adopted, but even then Serbia did not introduce sanctions against Russia.

Portal Stop Fake¹⁹⁹ was launched in March 2014 in Ukraine. Its main goal is to verify facts and information, and to dispute misinformation, mainly coming from the Kremlin, which is being perpetrated in the media regarding the events in Ukraine. In almost all Serbian media outlets, information about the events in Ukraine, if any, comes almost exclusively from Russian sources.

In late March 2014, at the height of the election campaign in Serbia, the extreme right-wing organization Serbian Movement Naši announced on their website the *List of the 30 greatest Serb-haters and traitors among the public figures*. Neither the technical state leaders nor the

¹⁹⁷ Jelena Milić. More is less of “30 NATO pieces of silver” Mr. Chepurin, it is a pity you don’t understand. 17.10.2013. Open letter of CEAS Director to the ambassador of the Russian Federation in Serbia, Alexander Chepurin. Available at: <http://www.ceas-serbia.org/sr/saopstenja/1686-i-vise-je-i-manje-od-30-nato-srebrenjaka-gospodine-cepurin-steta-sto-ne-razumete>

¹⁹⁸ Ukraine and Russia Sanctions. US Department of State. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/ukrainerussia/>

¹⁹⁹ Stop Fake. Available at: <http://www.stopfake.org/en/tag/ukraine/>

new government formed shortly thereafter responded adequately to this development. Naši explained the publication of the List as follows: “The goal of publishing of this list is to show the public all those who, in the social and cultural space of Serbia, are spreading hate speech against the Serbian people with no legal consequences, and committing serious offenses of discrimination and the spread of religious, national, and ethnic hatred and intolerance, and have never been brought to justice. Most of them are directly funded by the US and other Western countries, through various foundations and intelligence and non-governmental structure, but their openly anti-Serbian projects are often financed by the state itself. In this way, SNP Naši wants to send them the message that they cannot fool the Serbian people, despite the fact that they enjoy the protection of all pro-European regimes in the last decade and a half, and that they will expose them as intellectual waste and quasi-cultural activists who have, together with the rest of the political sludge, resurfaced in the post-war Serbia.” One of the people on that list was the CEAS Director Jelena Milić.²⁰⁰

Meanwhile, on the eve of the constitution of the new government, in considerable secrecy, the leader of the Progressive Party and the future Prime Minister of the Government of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, as well as the leaving Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior, and leader of the Socialist Party, Ivica Dačić, visited Moscow. Information on the whereabouts of Vučić was disclosed in Banja Luka by the President of the Republic of Srpska, Milorad Dodik, in announcing his encounter with the future Prime Minister, “on Saturday in Belgrade after Vučić’s visit to Russia.” This visit was not previously announced by the government of Serbia, nor was given significant space in the Serbian media.²⁰¹

The new government, elected in April 2014, retained a similar composition, except that Aleksandar Vučić became the new Prime Minister and the Progressive Party lost an important energy department, which fell into the hands of the Socialist Party. Alexander Babakov awaited the election results at the headquarters of the Progressive Party.

In May 2014, the Balkans and Serbia were affected by disastrous floods that exposed many

²⁰⁰ List of the 30 greatest Serb-haters and traitors among the public figures. 28.3.2014. SNP NAŠI. Available at: <http://nasisrbija.org/spisak-30-najvecih-srbomrzaca-i-izdajnika-medju-javnim-licnostima/>

²⁰¹ Vučić and Dačić in Moscow? 20.3.2014. Radio Free Europe. Available at: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/Vučići-Dačić-u-moskvi/25303845.html>

failures in the Serbian government, both at the local and state level. Prime Minister Vučić then intensified his modus operandi to derogate institutions and make most government decisions alone. In addition, during this period, and without adequate explanation, internet portals that wrote about the failures of the authorities during the period of flooding, were either closed down or under organized assault. Government rhetoric became almost openly anti-European. The exposure of corruption scandals in the government were presented as an attack – often coordinated by the EU and the political West in general – against the government and the state of Serbia.²⁰²

In early June 2014, the Office of the High Tech Crime filed charges against a member of the organization Naši, Ivan Ivanović, for publishing the *List of the 30 greatest Serb-haters and traitors among the public figures*.²⁰³

In early October 2014, in the presence of the highest state officials, such as President Tomislav Nikolić, the premiere of Nikita Mikhalkov's film *Sunstroke*, which legitimizes the Russian annexation of Crimea, was held in Belgrade.

In mid-October 2014, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, attended the military parade *Step of the winner* in Belgrade. The parade, dedicated to the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade in World War II, took place a few days before the actual date, October 20th, so that the Russian president could attend the event.²⁰⁴

Only one day earlier, the US Senator Christopher Murphy finished his visit to Serbia, the goal of which was, as stated, to provide support to the continuation of Euro-Atlantic integration.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Who is actually using hypocrisy, lies and persecution of those who think freely? 11.1.2015. Press release. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: <https://www.ceas-serbia.org/sr/aktuelno/saopstenja/3330-ko-se-u-stvari-sluzi-licemerjem-lazima-i-progonom-onih-koji-slobodno-misle>

²⁰³ Indictment against Pocuca and Ivanovic because of the "Women in Black". 3.6.2016. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/hronika/optuznica-protiv-pocuce-i-ivanovica-zbog-zena-u-crnom/fdgvcq9>

²⁰⁴ Military parade in Belgrade, Putin: Long live brotherly Serbia! 16.10.2014. RTV. Available at: http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/politika/vojna-parada-u-beogradu-putin-zivela-bratska-srbija!_527542.html

²⁰⁵ US Senator Christopher Murphy visiting Serbia. 14. 10. 2014. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/americki-senator-kristofer-marfi-u-poseti-srbiji/1lkz7cv>

EU sanctions against Russia were extended in June 2015, and extended for another six months in December of the same year.²⁰⁶ In addition to these measures, Russia was, as a member, expelled from the G8 and the Council of Europe.

Russian officials included in the sanctions continued to freely visit Serbia. Serbian officials welcomed Dmitri Rogozin, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, as well as Alexei Pushkov, the Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs of the State Duma, despite the fact that both of them are on the list of individuals covered by EU sanctions.²⁰⁷ In 2015, there were as many as 12 bilateral meetings between Serbian and Russian officials.

In mid-January 2015, Serbia and NATO agreed on the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP).²⁰⁸ They planned, among other things, stronger public diplomacy in Serbia in cooperation with NATO, and NATO's cooperation and assistance in strengthening Serbian structures for emergency response, as well as structures responsible for classification, and keeping and exchange of classified information.

In 2015, with no promotion or discussion in the Serbian public, Laguna Publishing House published the book, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*, a translation of world's best-seller by the British author Peter Pomerantsev.²⁰⁹ This book covers the enormous stratification of Russian society, the collapse of the institutions, and the devastating effects of Russian soft power and propaganda in Russia itself. In Serbia, very little is known and discussed with regards to the system of government in Russia under Putin. The topics of unemployment, demographics, and the effects of oil and gas on the state economy are all absent from public discourse. Putin's Night Wolves, Cossacks, and military choirs come to Serbia as guests. Just like in Putin's Russia in the aforementioned book, Vučić's Serbia is

²⁰⁶ EU sanctions against Russia over Ukraine crisis. European Union Newsroom. Available at: https://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu_sanctions_en

²⁰⁷ EU sanctions list includes Russian commanders, Crimea PM. 17.3.2014. Reuters. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/eu-russia-sanctions-idUSB5N0LP01720140317>

²⁰⁸ Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) of the Republic of Serbia and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). 2015. Available at: http://www.ceas-serbia.org/images/Srbija_IPAP.pdf

²⁰⁹ Peter Pomerantsev. *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia*. 2014. Public Affairs. Available at: <http://www.publicaffairsbooks.com/book/hardcover/nothing-is-true-and-everything-is-possible/9781610394550>

also ruled by reality shows, which of course existed before, but were not so deliberately visible, non-critical, or inaccurately providing news and views published by the pro-government media. The two main instruments through which public opinion is formed and the intentions of soft power in Serbia are realized are the tabloid *Informer* and the national channel, TV PINK.

In January 2015, the Humanitarian Law Center published the *Dossier: Rudnica*, in which crimes committed in villages of Kosovo are described. These areas in the critical period from April to May 1999, were located within the zone of responsibility of the 37th Motorized Brigade of the Yugoslav Army.²¹⁰

In 2015, the number of, no longer pro-Russian, but directly pro-Kremlin organizations began to grow in Serbia, gaining a strong foothold among youth. These organizations have become very active on social networks and are increasingly visible in the media.

In early February 2015, the portal Sputnik, a part of the Russian multi-media network *Rossiya Segodnya*, officially started operations in Serbia. The main editor of this portal and the eponymous radio station is Ljubinka Milinčić, author of the books *Vladimir Putin: My struggle for Kosovo* and *The Man Who Created Himself*, dedicated to the phenomenon of the popularity of the Russian President Vladimir Putin.²¹¹ On that occasion, representatives of Sputnik were received by the president of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolić, who said he was, “pleased because of the appearance of foreign media in the Serbian media market” and was happy that, “friends from Russia and from the EU” can inform Serbian citizens. In an interview with the editorial board, which presented him with the project of the Russian company *Rossiya Segodnya*, Nikolić said that, “competition always helps the truth and he wished them every success in their work.”²¹² Sputnik has positioned itself quickly in the Serbian media scene. Pro-government media outlets, such as *Večernje Novosti* and *Politika*, as well as tabloids and television stations with national coverage, have been increasingly

²¹⁰ *Dossier: Rudnica*. 30.1.2015. The Humanitarian Law Center. Available at: http://www.hlc-rdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Dosije_Rudnica_sr.pdf

²¹¹ Ljubinka Milinčić: I write about Putin because he has an ear for our troubles. 22.6.2011. Blic online. Available at: <http://zena.blic.rs/Poslovna-zena/7249/Ljubinka-Milincic-Pisem-o-Putinu-jer-ima-sluha-za-nase-nevolje>

²¹² Portal Sputnik started working in Serbia. 3.2.2015. The Association of Journalists of Serbia. Available at: <http://uns.org.rs/sr/desk/media-news/28777/portal-sputnik-poceo-da-radi-u-srbiji.html>

transmitting the content of Sputnik. One very popular radio station, Studio B, now controlled by the ruling Progressive Party, began to air Sputnik's radio program.

This is how one of the main commentators of Sputnik in Serbia assessed the achievements of October 5th 2000 in the fall of 2015: "The revolution, therefore, has not eaten its children. It did not eat even those for whom it happened. But, unfortunately, it has eaten Serbia, whose future is equal to Povlen fog."²¹³

The "spontaneous rebellions" against the NATO integration of Montenegro, for which there are indications of Russian support and finances, Sputnik has called, "legitimate protests against the authoritarian government." This is coming from the country which is widely known for its "democracy and respect for the will of its citizens." The peaceful demonstrations of the citizens of Macedonia on scandals within the ruling structures are described by Sputnik as externally induced, "attacks against the legitimate regime." They warn that the "Ukrainian scenario" is possible: the rhetoric that was also adopted by the Prime Minister of Serbia.²¹⁴

In late May 2015, Miroslav Lazanski, a former military commentator and one of the main individual instruments of Russian soft power in Serbia, Dragomir Andjelković, a representative of Zavetnici and pro-Vučić commentator, Emir Kusturica, a controversial anti-globalist director and Putin supporter, and Dzevad Galijasević, a controversial "anti-terrorist expert," attended a meeting aimed at developing the *Strategy for the fight against Western non-governmental organizations*.²¹⁵

In the spring and summer of 2015, Serbia was hit by a wave of refugees and migrants, mostly from Syria and Afghanistan. The government of Serbia successfully balanced the

²¹³ Anniversary of October 5th: 15 years that ate Serbia. 4.10.2015. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/komentari/20151004/1100035049/Godisnjica-5-oktobar-Srbija.html>

²¹⁴ Anti-NATO protest: Djukanović, you are risking a civil war in Montenegro. 12.12.2015. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/regioni/20151212/1101762951/Protest-protiv-clanstva-Crne-Gore-u-NATO.html>

The West does not like either Gruevski or Zaev, but obedience. 18.5.2015. Sptunik. Available at: <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/analize/20150518/1996826.html>

²¹⁵ ZAVETNICI: President Stefan Stamenkovski presented the strategy of fight against western NGOs. 31.5.2015. Centre for Development of Non-Profit Sector via Facebookreporter. Available at: <http://www.crnps.org.rs/2015/strategija-borbe-protiv-zapadnih-nvo>

response to the humanitarian needs of the foreigners and the security needs of the country and the region, which was positively recognized by the Western international community.

In April 2015, the Republic of Serbia and the Department for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection of the European Commission, as already mentioned in the context of the work of the so-called Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Center, signed an agreement which opened the way for the official membership of Serbia in the EU Mechanism for Civil Protection. After the agreement passed the internal procedure and was ratified on May 26th 2015, Serbia became the 32nd member of the Mechanism. The EU Mechanism for Civil Protection offers numerous opportunities for cooperation to Serbia, such as using European tools for monitoring and developing early warning systems, participating in joint training and exercises, exchanging experts, establishing projects on the prevention of disasters and preparedness, facilitating direct communication with other civil protection bodies involved in emergency response, exchanging information and best practices, coordinating operations with the EU on mitigating consequences, and co-financing transport.

In mid-May 2015, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov paid an official visit to Serbia. On that occasion, he met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, and President Tomislav Nikolić. In mid-June 2015, Serbia was visited by the Chairman of the Committee for International Affairs of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Alexei Pushkov. On this occasion, he met with President Tomislav Nikolić, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Kosovo and Metohija, Milovan Drecun, and the President of the Parliamentary Group of Friendship with Russia, Aleksandar Martinović. In an interview, Pushkov informed President Nikolić that he had submitted to the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and the State Duma of the Russian Federation a proposal to create a mutual inter-parliamentary commission.²¹⁶

In late June 2015, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum adopted the *Action plan on strategic communication*. The Action Plan is based on the conclusions of the European

²¹⁶ Nikolić: Serbia will never impose sanctions to Russia. 15.6.2015. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/nikolic-srbija-nikada-nece-uesti-sankcije-rusiji/lk6qjds>

Union from March 2015, which emphasize the need to challenge the current disinformation campaign by the Russian Federation by inviting the EU High Representative to, in cooperation with Member States and EU institutions, prepare such documents by June.²¹⁷ For the Western Balkans, also exposed to the relentless Russian propaganda, the EU has not yet launched such an initiative.

In early June 2015, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić was in a several-day visit to the US, during which, in a series of meetings with US officials and representatives of the corporate sector, he discussed bilateral relations, economic cooperation, and Washington's support for Serbia's European path.

In early July 2015, German Chancellor Angela Merkel paid an official visit to Serbia. Despite overwhelming evidence of the partitioning of the country, the derogation of institutions, and the generally autocratic behavior of the ruling coalition, at the press conference that was held on this occasion, she stated, "it is only a matter of time until the negotiating chapters with Serbia will be opened. Belgrade has shown great willingness to compromise in the dialogue with Pristina and showed a large number of initiatives aimed at stability and peace in the Western Balkans."²¹⁸

During this period, the political West, in general, rarely provided criticism of the current government for its increasingly authoritarian behavior. One of these rare instances occurred during Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić's visit to Washington. In this letter, submitted in September 2015 by five congressmen, and sent by US Vice President Joseph Biden, concern about the "strengthening of the influence" of those in the immediate surroundings of the Serbian Prime Minister was expressed. The congressmen also highlighted the alleged ties between Prime Minister Vučić and the special envoy of the Kremlin, Alexander Babakov.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Action Plan on Strategic Communication. 22.6.2015. Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. Available at: <http://eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Action%20Plan.pdf>

²¹⁸ Merkel: It is a matter of time when the negotiating chapters with Serbia will be opened. 8.7.2015. Naslovi.net. Available at: <http://www.naslovi.net/2015-07-08/blic/kancelarka-u-beogradu-merkel-pitanje-je-trenutka-kada-ce-pregovaračka-poglavlja-sa-srbijom-biti-otvorena/15356217>

²¹⁹ Bajden: I know that Vučić annoys Russians a lot. 16.9.2015. Danas. Available at: http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/politika/bajden_znam_da_Vučić_mnogo_nervira_ruse.56.html?news_id=30805

In late October 2015, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić led a political-economic delegation in a three-day visit to Moscow. On that occasion, Vučić met with Prime Minister Medvedev and President Putin. In Moscow, the Serbian Prime Minister said, “Serbia and Russia can develop trade relations in even greater percentages. We can do so much more to improve political cooperation. Russia always appears as one of the three most important trade partners of the Republic of Serbia. We think that there is much room for improvement of our cooperation in the field of construction, agriculture, and industry of course, as well as dedicated industry. There are many agreements we can reach.”²²⁰ This visit resulted in the signing of as many as 10 agreements,²²¹ of which the two most important were the Agreement on Military-Technical Cooperation,²²² and the Agreement on the Expansion of the Capacity of Gas Storage Banatski Dvor.²²³ CEAS reacted on this occasion with a press release.²²⁴ It expressed the hope that, during this visit, no contracts would be signed that violate the sanctions of the European Union against Russia, or with which Serbia would profit at the expense of the parties that implement sanctions, or suffer countermeasures, bearing in mind that the Russian Federation is under sanctions in many areas by the Western international community. CEAS thought that such an outcome would certainly impede the already complicated position that Serbia has with the EU regarding the fulfillment of conditions for the start of negotiations on Chapter 31: Foreign Security and Defense Policy.

In mid-November 2015, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić again visited the US and on that

²²⁰ Vučić in Moscow: It is important that Serbia and Russia have clean relations. 27.10.2015. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/Vučić-u-moskvi-vazno-da-srbija-i-rusija-imaju-ciste-odnose/4rcxfts>

²²¹ Vučić signed a memorandum on military-technical cooperation with Russia, 7 agreements in the field of economy as well as gas transport! 28.10.2015. Web-tribune. Available at: <http://web-tribune.com/srbija/Vučić-potpisao-memorandum-o-vojno-tehnickoj-saradnji-sa-rusima-7-sporazuma-iz-oblasti-ekonomije-kao-i-transporta-gasa>

²²² Law on Ratification of the Agreement between the government of the Republic of Serbia and government of the Russian Federation on mutual protection of intellectual property during bilateral military-technical cooperation. The National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/cir/pdf/zakoni/2016/312-16.pdf>

²²³ Signed an agreement on expanding the warehouse Banatski dvor. Embassy of the Russian Federation in Serbia. Available at: <http://www.ambasadarusije.rs/sr/vesti/potpisan-sporazum-o-prosirenju-kapaciteta-skladista-banatski-dvor>

²²⁴ On the occasion of the visit of Prime Minister Vučić to Moscow. 26.10.2015. Press release. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: <http://ceas-serbia.org/root/index.php/sr/saopstenja/4216-povodom-posete-premijera-Vučića-moskvi>

occasion met with US Vice President Joseph Biden, who said that, “the success of Serbia is very important for the US.”

In late November 2015, Serbia was visited by the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg. He announced the intensification of contacts between Serbia with NATO, the essence of which would be primarily in the fight against terrorism, maintaining stability in the region, and solving the migrant crisis, while restrictions in the airspace in a zone of 25 kilometers in central Serbia, which had been in force since 1999, were abolished.²²⁵

In early December 2015, a meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation took place in Belgrade as the last event during the Serbian Chairmanship of the OSCE that year. At the joint press conference of Sergey Lavrov and Serbian officials, after the US Secretary of State John Kerry had left Belgrade, the Russian Foreign Minister severely attacked the Department for Media Freedom in the OSCE, with claims that it is, “politicized and focused on serving the unilateral interests of some OSCE countries.”²²⁶

Autumn and winter of 2015 were marked by a new wave of overt authoritarianism by Prime Minister Vučić, accompanied by complete confusion regarding the true allies and alleged enemies of Serbia. In devising this confusion, Vučić was mainly assisted by the Minister for Labor, Employment, and Social Affairs, Aleksandar Vulin. Other ministers in the government also increasingly used anti-EU rhetoric, mostly presenting the legitimate expectations of the EU as, “additional deliberate pressure on Serbia.” The culmination of such ruthless behavior was on November 21st 2015 when, during an appearance on the morning program of TV PINK, the chief editor of the *Informer*, Dragan Vučićević, warned Prime Minister Vučić, “not to go on the planned visit to China because a coup is being prepared in Serbia.” On the occasion of these allegations, the Minister of the Interior, Nebojša Stefanović, called a press conference, to which he brought members of various units of the Ministry of Interior in riot gear and bearing weapons. The entire political

²²⁵ Stoltenberg in Belgrade: NATO abolished the restrictions on airspace in Serbia. 20.11.2015. Radio Free Europe. Available at: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/stoltenberg-u-beogradu-nato-srbiji-ukinuogranicenja-vazdusnog-prostora/27377415.html>

²²⁶ Lavrov: OSCE Media Department is politicized. 4.12.2015. Tanjug. Available at: <http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=217555>

leadership of Serbia joined in spreading panic with a story about an alleged attempt to bring down Prime Minister Vučić, while none of them ever explicitly stated from which side the alleged coup was to arrive. However, bearing in mind that internet portals and organizations engaged in the research of corruption, which are financed by the political West, discovered major scandals in 2015,²²⁷ one can easily conclude that the supposedly pro-European Prime Minister Vučić accused the EU of preparing to bring him down in.²²⁸

In early December 2015, after serving a ten-year prison sentence for war crimes against Albanians in Kosovo, General Vladimir Lazarević, accompanied by state and military leaders, landed at the Niš airport, where he was greeted by a few hundred supporters. In addition to Vučić's ministers of justice and defense, Nikola Selaković and Bratislav Gašić, who arrived from the Netherlands in a government plane with Lazarević, the greeting was attended by the Minister of Labor, Aleksandar Vulin, Chief of the General Staff of the Army of Serbia, Ljubisa Diković, the first priest of the Diocese of Niš, Bishop Teodosije, Mayor of Niš, Zoran Perišić, and many other city officials.²²⁹

At the end of 2015, the Humanitarian Law Center presented the *Analysis of the content of history textbooks in Serbia about the wars in the former Yugoslavia in light of the facts established before the ICTY*.²³⁰ This analysis included all history textbooks for primary schools that were used in teaching history in Serbia from 2000 until today.²³¹ The analysis

²²⁷ Revealing the secret of ministerial safe. 7.8.2014. BIRN. Available at:

<http://javno.rs/istrazivanja/otkrivanje-tajne-ministarskog-sefa>

Pumping of the mine and budget. 8.1.2015. BIRN. Available at: <http://javno.rs/istrazivanja/ispumpavanje-kopa-i-budzeta>

Tamnavo - Missing the deadline without explanation. 26.2.2015. BIRN. Available at:

<http://javno.rs/istrazivanja/tamnavo-probijanje-roka-bez-objasnjenja>

²²⁸ Vučić accused the EU of paying BIRN to write against the government of Serbia. 9.1.2015. Available at:

<http://rs.n1info.com/a26258/Vesti/Vučić-optuzio-EU-da-placa-BIRN-da-pise-protiv-Vlade-Srbije.html>

Lavrov and Vučić attacked Dunja Mijatović! 5.12.201. Kurir. Available at:

<http://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/skandal-lavrov-i-Vučić-napali-dunju-mijatovic-clanak-2046507>

²²⁹ Lazarević from The Hague to Niš: Ministerial greeting for a war criminal. 3.12.2015. Radio Free Europe. Available at: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/lazarevic-iz-haga-u-nis/27405437.html>

²³⁰ Forum for Transitional Justice. December 2015. The Humanitarian Law Center. Available at:

http://www.hlc-rdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Forum_5.pdf

²³¹ Dr. Nikola Gaćeša, Ljiljana Mladenović-Maksimović and Dr. Dušan Živković, History for the 8th grade of elementary school, the Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids: Belgrade, 2000; Radoš Ljušić and Ljubodrag Dimić, History for the eighth grade of primary school with a reading book and workbook, Freska, Belgrade, 2010; Predrag M. Vajagić and Nenad Stošić, History for the 8th grade of elementary school, Klett, Belgrade: 2011; Đorđe Đurić and Momčilo Pavlović, History for the eighth grade, Institute for Textbooks,

highlights the selective citation of facts, avoidance of mentioning victims of ethnic groups other than Serbs, and absence of facts established before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia on the responsibility of the highest representatives of Serbia during the war in Kosovo.²³² When victims and war crimes are mentioned, the textbooks exclusively cover the suffering of Serbs in Kosovo and the suffering of the Serbian people during the NATO bombing, which is referred to as an act of aggression. As stated, NATO threw onto the SRY, "more than 23,000 bombs and missiles. During the bombing, 7,643 houses were hit, around 300 schools, 53 hospitals and 50 churches or monuments." Also stated is that, "weapons banned by laws on war were used in the military actions (cluster bombs and weapons with depleted uranium)." Regarding the number of victims, it is declared that 462 soldiers and police officers were killed, as well as between "1,200 and 2,500 civilians, including 88 children." The number of wounded is usually referred to as "several thousand," except in the textbook by Đorđe Đurić and Momčilo Pavlović, where they present a numerical figure, stating "about 5,000 people were wounded." The suffering of Albanian civilians, either before or during the NATO bombing, is not mentioned.²³³

In late December 2015, intimidation of the public continued through the abuse of public institutions. In the "spectacular" action *Rezač*²³⁴ (Cutter), 80 suspects were arrested, mostly for the offense of abuse of office or abuse of position of responsibility, most of whom were quickly released, pending trial.

For the New Year, Prime Minister Vučić gave his most important New Year's interview in the tabloid *Informer*. Then, through a lengthy interview with the *Informer*, the public was

Belgrade: 2010; Zoran Pavlović i Jovo Bosnić, Mosaic of the past: History Textbook for Eighth Grade of Elementary School, BIGZ: Belgrade, 2011; Dunja Svilar Dujkovic and Goran Dujkovic, History 8: Textbook for the Eighth Grade of Elementary School, EDUKA: Belgrade, 2013; Mira Radojević, History: Textbook for the Third Grade of Natural Science Gymnasium, fourth grade of Humanities-Linguistics Gymnasium and General Gymnasium and Fourth Grade of Vocational Schools for educational profiles legal technician and bureau technician, Klett: Belgrade, 2014; Kosta Nikolić, Nikola Žutić, Momčilo Pavlović, Zorica Špadijer, History ¾ for the Third Grade of Natural Science Gymnasium and fourth grade of General Gymnasium and Humanities-Linguistics Gymnasium, the Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids: Belgrade, 2009.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Stefanović: Arrests of 80 people in action "Rezač" are not political! 30.12.2015. *Informer*. Available at: <http://www.informer.rs/vesti/politika/48095/STEFANOVIC-Hapsenja-ljudi-akciji-Rezac-nisu-politicka>

addressed by Bogoljub Karić,²³⁵ who had been, perhaps in Belarus or Russia, on the run from the Serbian authorities for several years. Karić's family's political party, the Movement Force of Serbia, participated in the 2014 elections on the Progressive Party's list, winning two seats. Meanwhile, the main pro-Vučić ministers, commentators, and analysts receive increasing media coverage on TV PINK, the tabloid *Informer*, and the refreshed web portal *Pravda*.²³⁶

Despite the fact that, for months prior, CEAS had been raising the issue of declining support for European integration primarily due to the anti-EU rhetoric of the state leadership and their media networks, the issue was scarcely discussed in the public sphere. In December 2015, IPSOS Strategic Marketing published a survey on the public opinion of various countries and institutions. When the study was published, 72 percent of respondents had a positive opinion on Russia, 25 percent on the EU, and 5 percent of NATO. At the time, 46 percent were ready to vote for the entry of Serbia into the EU, while 38 percent of respondents were against joining the EU.²³⁷

In early February 2016, Serbia was visited by a high US congressional delegation led by Senator John McCain, including Senator Bob Corker, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate of the United States.²³⁸ The main topics of discussion were global issues and the migrant crisis. Prime Minister Vučić said on this occasion, "that the relations between Serbia and the United States are much better than before, and that the partnership with this country is one of the strategic interests of Serbia." Senator John McCain then praised Serbia, especially due to the progress in normalizing relations with Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania. He stressed that, "Serbia is vastly different than in 1999." In this period of 2016, the Russian portal Sputnik marked the first anniversary of its

²³⁵ Bogoljub Karić tonight in "Harsh word": I will return a free man! 9.3.2015. *Informer*. Available at: <http://www.informer.rs/print/5717/vesti/politika/5717/BOGOLJUB-KARIC-VECERAS-TESKOJ-RECI-Vraticu-slobodan-covek>

²³⁶ Vulin: "Šešelji's release is an attempt at destabilizing the Serbian government". 11.7.2014. *Pravda*. Available at: <http://www.pravda.rs/2014/11/07/vulin-pustanje-seselja-na-slobodu-je-pokusaj-destabilizacije-vlade-srbije/>

²³⁷ Who is closer to the Serbs, Europe or Russia? 12.1.2016. B92. Available at: http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2016&mm=01&dd=12&nav_category=11&nav_id=1084372

²³⁸ US Senators in Belgrade. 12.2.2016. B92. Available at: http://www.b92.net/video/vesti.php?yyyy=2016&mm=02&dd=12&nav_id=1096185

operation in Serbia. Ljubinka Milinčić, the Chief Editor of Sputnik Serbia, concluded that Sputnik today is a “trusted media source,” and that the portal’s high ratings are due to the fact that it is able to prove that, “the truth is not only one-sided; there is another side of the coin.” The celebration was held at the National Theatre in Belgrade and was attended by President of the Republic of Serbia Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Srpska Milorad Dodik, Ambassador of the Russian Federation Alexander Chepurin, and Ambassador of Belarus Vladimir Chushev.²³⁹

In mid-February 2016, hidden from the public eye and contrary to the plans of the Individual Partnership Action Plan on strengthening Serbian public diplomacy with respect to NATO, the National Assembly ratified, and Serbian president Tomislav Nikolić signed, the Law on Ratification of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the NATO Support and Procurement Organization (NSPO) on Cooperation in the Field of Logistic Support. Once again, the prospect of cooperation between Serbia and NATO caused a negative reaction in the public sphere, which was demonstrated by protests in Novi Sad²⁴⁰ and Belgrade,²⁴¹ organized by the Serbian Patriotic Movement Zavetnici.

In this period, also hidden from the Serbian public, President Nikolić decorated with the Medal of the Republic of Serbia on ribbon of merit in the development and strengthening of peaceful cooperation and friendly relations between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Sudan, the President of the Republic of Sudan Omar Hassan al-Bashir, a fugitive from the International Criminal Court (ICC) for his involvement in war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in Darfur during the period from 2003 to 2008. However, despite the reactions of the International Criminal Court²⁴² and the Coalition for the International Criminal Court,²⁴³ a global network consisting of over 2,500 civil society

²³⁹ Sputnik’s first anniversary — who came to our birthday party. 11.2.2016. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/srbija/20160211/1103174093/Sputnik-godina-istina.html>

²⁴⁰ Anti-NATO protest held in Novi Sad. 19.3.2016. B92. Available at: http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2016&mm=03&dd=19&nav_category=12&nav_id=1109698

²⁴¹ Anti-NATO protest held in Belgrade. 27.3.2016. N1. Available at: <http://rs.n1info.com/a146596/Vesti/Anti-NATO-protest-u-Beogradu.html>

²⁴² NGO: Nikolić decorated the person accused for genocide. 6.4.2016. B92. Available at: http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2016&mm=04&dd=06&nav_category=11&nav_id=1116755

²⁴³ Letter to the President of Serbia. 6.4.2016. Peščanik. Available at: <http://pescanik.net/pismo-predsedniku-srbije/>

organization from 150 countries, foreign policy adviser to President Nikolić, Ivan Mrkić, claimed that this medal, “could not be avoided” and added that the EU has already contacted Serbia on the issue and that the necessary explanations were already provided.²⁴⁴

A few days later, on February 22nd, CEAS held a conference titled, *Serbia and Russia: Russian influence on the stabilization, democratization, and European integration of Serbia*,²⁴⁵ supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the US Embassy in Serbia. The mere announcement of this conference sparked a negative public reaction, and certain media sources published the invitation addressed specifically to the media houses, publicly announcing the date, place, and time of the event. A protest was announced in the form of a counter-rally, and police forces secured the meeting. This was followed by an intensified negative campaign against CEAS and Director Jelena Milić, including threats on social networks and by mail, as well as the hacking of the CEAS website, which was out of service for several days as a result.²⁴⁶ At the conference, the publication of this study was also announced. Already then, in advance, Sputnik characterized it as, “an investigation of Russophiles” and the “opening of a new Goli Otok.”²⁴⁷ One gets the impression that the protagonists of Russian soft power were especially concerned about the CEAS announcement that it would also publish a list of pro-Kremlin organizations in Serbia with publicly available information about their legal status in the country.

In late February 2016, CEAS published a press release urging the public not to manipulate the number of victims of the NATO bombing of SRY, since the Humanitarian Law Center

²⁴⁴ Nikolić awarded medal to the man accused of genocide in Darfur. 6.4.2016. N1. Available at: <http://rs.n1info.com/a149617/Vesti/Nikolic-odlikovao-optuzenog-za-genocid.html>

²⁴⁵ Conference *Serbia and Russia – Russian influence on stabilization, democratization and European integration of Serbia*. 22.2.2016. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: <https://www.ceas-serbia.org/sr/aktuelno/ceas-novosti/4627-odrzana-konferencija-srbija-i-rusija-ruski-uticaj-na-stabilizaciju-demokratizaciju-i-evropske-integracije-srbije>

²⁴⁶ NATO Democrats in Stalin’s greatcoat. 22.2.2016. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/autori/20160222/1103452465/nato-ceas-srbija-staljin.html>

²⁴⁷ Investigation of Russophiles: Are they opening a new Goli Otok. 25.3.2016. Sputnik. Available at: http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/autori/20160325/1104332717/istraga-rusofili-goli-otok.html?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Ft.co%2FWs0ckF0HbM&utm_medium=short_url&utm_content=aU5B&utm_campaign=URL_shortening

had published highly accurate data stating,²⁴⁸ “In Serbia (excluding Kosovo) and Montenegro, 275 people were killed due to NATO bombing, as follows: 180 civilians, 90 members of the Yugoslav Army (YA), and five members of the Ministry of the Interior of Serbia. In addition to the three Chinese citizens, all the others were citizens of the FRY.²⁴⁹ In Kosovo, 484 people were killed, including: 267 civilians (209 Albanians and 58 non-Albanians), 171 members of the YA, 20 members of the Ministry of the Interior of Serbia and 26 KLA members (19 of 26 KLA members were killed in the NATO bombing of Dubrava Prison near Istok).²⁵⁰ Furthermore, since the beginning of 1998 until the end of 2000, about 13,500 people in total were killed in the conflicts in Kosovo, of which about 10,800 were Albanians, 2,200 were Serbs, and 500 were Roma or other non-Albanians. This context is much less of a topic of discussion in Serbia, despite the mass graves of Kosovo Albanians discovered in the territory of Serbia proper, for which almost no one has been held responsible in the local courts.” Despite the published data, both Serbian and Russian officials continue to make public statements about thousands of civilian casualties.

This announcement triggered a new wave of vulgar cyber-bullying directed at CEAS and its director, new attacks on CEAS website, as well as death threats. Many profiles from which the threats were coming had images of Putin, the Russian flag, or the flag of the “Republic of Donbas.”

In early March 2016, another anti-NATO protest was held, this time in Niš. Representatives of the Serbian Patriotic Movement Zavetnici, the Movement for Serbia, and the Patriotic Movement of Serbia requested a referendum on the cooperation of Serbia with NATO. Among the protesters was the former commander of the Gendarmerie and the controversial police general Dikić.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Seventeenth anniversary of the beginning of NATO bombing of the SRY. 23.3.2016. Press release. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: <https://www.ceas-serbia.org/sr/aktuelno/saopstenja/4736-ceas-saopstenje-povodom-povodom-sedamnaest-godina-od-pocetka-nato-bombardovanja-srj>

²⁴⁹ Human casualties of Serbia and Montenegro during NATO bombing. 23.3.2014. The Humanitarian Law Center. Available at: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?cat=282>

²⁵⁰ List of human casualties in NATO bombing (Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro). The Humanitarian Law Center. Available at: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/db/nato/index.html>

²⁵¹ Anti-NATO protest held in Niš. 4.3.2016. B92. Available at: http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2016&mm=03&dd=04&nav_category=11&nav_id=1103906

On the same day, the Defense Minister Zoran Đorđević met with the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia, Michael Carpenter. During the bilateral consultations between Serbia and the US, in which the Chief of Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces, General Ljubisa Diković,²⁵² participated, it was pointed out that the, “multi-layered and comprehensive cooperation contributes to raising the operational and functional capabilities of both parties.” The emphasis of the consultations was placed on developing the “Jug” base, improving abilities for the participation of the members of the Ministry of Defense and the Serbian Armed Forces in peacekeeping operations, carrying out joint drills, training, and military medical cooperation, as well as cooperation through the State Partnership Program with the Ohio National Guard, which will mark its tenth anniversary in 2016.²⁵³

In March 2016, Serbia was hit by somewhat heavier rainfall. Partly due to the continuing practice of raising public tensions and partly due to pressures from “Russian meteorologists”²⁵⁴ who announced cataclysmic floods – and this was frantically disseminated by the pro-Vučić tabloid the *Informer* and the TV station PINK – the government of Serbia declared a state of emergency in the entire territory of Serbia for a few days in the middle of the election campaign, despite the fact that only a few municipalities were briefly, seriously threatened.²⁵⁵ On the other hand, the draft law on the management of risks from natural disasters,²⁵⁶ which had already been prepared and approved by experts, civil society, and the Ombudsman, was not sent through parliamentary procedure before calling the early parliamentary elections.

²⁵² Who is accused by the Humanitarian Law Center in its Dossier *Ljubiša Diković* of knowing or having had to know about mass killings committed in the area of Kosovo where units under his command were present

²⁵³ Zoran Đorđević: Bilateral military cooperation between Serbia and the US is the most developed segment of our relations. 4.3.2016. NSPM. Available at: <http://www.nspm.rs/hronika/zoran-djordjevic-bilateralna-vojna-saradnja-srbije-i-sad-je-najrazvijeniji-segment-nasih-odnosa.html?alphabet=I#yvComment152084>

²⁵⁴ Serbia is getting ready for the worst case scenario: Russian meteorologists predict great floods! 8.3.2016. Pravda. Available at: <http://www.pravda.rs/2016/03/08/srbija-se-priprema-za-najcrnji-scenarij-ruski-meteorolozi-predvidjaju-pravi-potop/>

²⁵⁵ FLOODS IN SERBIA Continued emergency in three cities and 14 municipalities, evacuated 171 people. 10.3.2016. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/srbija/poplave-u-srbiji-u-tri-grada-i-14-opstina-i-dalje-vanredna-situacija-evakuisana-171/x6lmskw>

²⁵⁶ Draft law on the management of risks from natural disasters. Public Investment Office. Available at: <http://www.obnova.gov.rs/uploads/useruploads/Documents/Nacrt%20zakona%20o%20smanjenju%20rizika%20i%20upravljanju%20vanrednim%20situacijama%20nakon%20primedbi%20org.jed.MUP.doc>

In March 2016, the Humanitarian Law Center presented the *Report on War Crimes Trials in Serbia in 2014 and 2015*, which includes an analysis of 27 cases conducted before the courts in Serbia, general findings on war crime trials, as well as an overview of the important social and political events that were of importance in the said period for the war crime trials in Serbia. The Center emphasizes the trend of a smaller number of indictments, an increased number of inadequately prepared indictments, more reversed first instance rulings, and the absence of legal proceedings against high-ranking perpetrators. The courts, in sentencing people accused of war crimes, in many cases took into account additional factors on the side of the accused including, “highly extenuating circumstances,” but failed to explain and specify them.²⁵⁷

President Tomislav Nikolić was in Moscow in early March 2016. On that occasion, Nikolić said that, “militarily neutral countries must balance and it follows from this that, what has been signed with one party, should be signed also with the others, without accession and entering into any military alliances,” referring to the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Center in Niš. Nikolić argued that the agreement is similar to that between the government of the Republic of Serbia and the NATO Support and Procurement Organization (NSPO) on cooperation in the field of logistic support.²⁵⁸ However, this issue was delayed, reportedly due to the fact that early parliamentary elections were called in Serbia, and the government in the technical mandate cannot decide on these issues.²⁵⁹ During the visit, President Nikolić thanked Putin for blocking the resolution on Srebrenica to the UN Security Council and preventing Kosovo's entry into UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization).

During the visit of the First Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivica Dačić, to Russia in early April 2016, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian

²⁵⁷ *War Crimes Trials in Serbia in 2014 and 2015*. 7.3.2016. The Humanitarian Law Center. Available at: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?p=31348>

²⁵⁸ Adoption of the Law on ratifying the agreement between the government of the Republic of Serbia and NATO Support and Procurement Organization (NSPO) on cooperation in the field of logistic support. 16.2.2016. Press release. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: <http://www.ceas-serbia.org/sr/saopstenja/4590-povodom-usvajanja-zakona-o-potvrdivanju-sporazuma-izmedu-vlade-republike-srbije-i-organizacije-nato-za-podrsku-i-nabavku-nspe-o-saradnji-u-oblasti-logisticke-podrske>

²⁵⁹ Serbia must remain militarily neutral. 10.3.2016. President of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: <http://www.predsednik.rs/lat/pres-centar/vesti/srbija-mora-da-ostane-vojno-neutralna>

Federation, Dmitry Rogozin, once again insisted that the status of the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Center is clearly defined.²⁶⁰

In late March 2016, the daily newspaper Blic published an article on four Russians who influence the elections in Serbia.²⁶¹ Blic stated that Vladimir Zotov, representative of the “Gorchakov” Fund, Sergei Glushchenko, from “Russian Express” Media Center, and Viktor Kolbanovski, Director of the Balkan Centre for International Cooperation, have long been present in the field. Furthermore, the Head of the Representative Office of the Chamber of Commerce of the Russian Federation in Belgrade, Aleksandar Khokhlov, also has a role in this. “The Russian side sees an opportunity to support those political forces with whom it has close cooperation, in order to achieve the best election result and as many seats in the Parliament as possible. Russians are willing to support all the actions, meetings, and media appearances in every aspect, including financially,” said a “well informed” Blic source.

In late March 2016, at the height of the election campaign, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivica Dačić, the main coalition partner of Prime Minister Vučić and the person deemed more sympathetic towards cooperation with Russia than European integration, after a series of negative or cynical statements about the nature and achievements of October 5th 2000, finally opened his soul completely: “Today we were attacked from many sides, both the left and the right, by those who think they are Europeans and those who think they are anti-Europeans. But neither NATO bombs nor the October 5th Revolution managed to destroy SPS, because it is backed by continuity, security, stability, and perseverance. Our politics are actions, not words. All we have done so far constitute our identity card and a ticket to the future. When we talk about the politics of the 1990s, I say to everyone that all who fought then were fighters for freedom and the protection of the Serbian people, and our policy was not a policy of crime, but of protection for the Serbian people. We need a future and a better life. God forbid that Serbia will never wage war and let us win in peace (...) I especially welcome the member of Otpor, Momčilo Veljković, who is here as a reporter

²⁶⁰ Strengthening of cooperation between Serbia and the Russian Federation at all levels. 1.4.2014. Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.rs/sr/index.php/pres-servis/saopstenja/16569-2016-04-01-09-10-34?lang=lat>

²⁶¹ DISCLOSING: Four Russian influence elections in Serbia. 23.3.2016. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/otkrivamo-cetiri-rusa-uticu-na-izbore-u-srbiji/vvs22ln>

on duty. On October 5th, he fought wholeheartedly to bring down Slobodan Milošević and us. Now, I believe, he bitterly regrets it, when he sees the results of his struggle.”²⁶²

Between these two visits, at the end of March, Serbia marked the 17th anniversary of the NATO bombing of the SRY much more intensely than the previous anniversaries. Despite CEAS’ appeals not to manipulate the number of victims, most local actors, as well as Russian diplomats and the media, still claimed that thousands of civilians and members of the armed forces were killed during the bombing. The Russian Ambassador to Serbia, Alexander Chepurin, gave a statement to Sputnik on this occasion saying, “in 1999, by bombing Serbia, NATO committed a horrible and arrogant crime, the bloodiest in Europe since World War II:²⁶³The bombing led to the most serious consequences for Serbia. Thousands of people were killed – mostly civilians, women, children. Infrastructure, houses, bridges were destroyed. Huge material damage was inflicted upon the Serbian economy. The consequences of contamination of the territory in the south of Serbia with radioactive substances are yet to be studied (...) Despite all its problems, Russia has been trying to help and did help the Serbs, both in 1999 and later. I am not saying this expecting any gratitude to Russia, it does not need it, but does this because of the truth (...) The memory of the NATO crimes will not fade even after twenty or even 100 years (...) It is horrifying that people are still being killed in military interventions that have not been approved by the UN Security Council. Employees of the Serbian embassy in Libya were also killed in the attack of US aviation. It is sad that Washington will not admit its obvious involvement in this incident. There are no investigation results, no apology, no punishment for the culprits, no compensation to families of those killed (...) And, of course, it's hard to believe that just coincidentally on the anniversary of the NATO aggression against Serbia, in the context of the processes before the Hague tribunal, the topic of alleged Serbian responsibility for the tragic events in the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s is being raised again.”

²⁶² "We survived NATO bombs and the October 5th". 31.3.2016. Danas. Available at: http://www.danas.rs/dodaci/branicevo/preziveli_smo_nato_bombe_i_peti_oktobar.59.html?news_id=318282

²⁶³ Chepurin: NATO committed horrible and arrogant crime. 24.3.2016. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/srbija/20160324/1104279417/Cepurin-NATO-zlocin-bombardovanje.html#ixzz464uUVKBo>

It is assumed that by the “alleged Serbian responsibility for the tragic events in the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s,” the ambassador does not mean Vukovar and Dubrovnik, to mention just a few crimes of this period.

In early April 2016, the Humanitarian Law Center presented its report *Access to documents on crimes against international law in the possession of the institutions of Serbia: State secret stronger than the right to the truth*,²⁶⁴ which identifies a trend of systematic obstruction of attempts to establish the facts about war crimes committed during the wars in the former Yugoslavia. The Center believes that the main reason for refusing access to the documents is to avoid punishing individuals who were in prominent positions in the army and police at the time, and remain in positions of power today. The Executive Director the Center, Sandra Orlović, points to the fact that the former Defense Minister, Bratislav Gašić, just a few days after the Center had requested documents related to the crimes committed against Kosovo Albanians in the area of responsibility of the 37th Motorized Brigade led by the current Chief of staff of Serbian Army Ljubisa Diković, declared the entire archive a state secret.²⁶⁵

In March 2016, in the first instance ruling²⁶⁶ the Hague Tribunal sentenced Radovan Karadžić to 40 years in prison,²⁶⁷ and a few days later, also in the first instance ruling, the court acquitted Vojislav Šešelj on all nine counts in the indictment. Dmitry Rogozin, the Russian Deputy Prime Minister, congratulated Vojislav Šešelj for this acquittal.²⁶⁸ Commenting on the ruling on Karadžić, Prime Minister Vučić showed either enormous cynicism or elementary ignorance: "It is only us who do not make a distinction based on whether the crime was committed by members of the Serbian people or the crime was

²⁶⁴ Presenting the report “Access to documents on crimes against international law in the possession of the institutions of Serbia: State secret stronger than the right to the truth”. 28.3.2016. The Humanitarian Law Center. Available at: <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?p=31507>

²⁶⁵ State secret stronger than the right to the truth. 5.4.2016. Danas. Available at: http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/drustvo/drzavna_tajna_jaca_od_prava_na_istinu.55.html?news_id=318502

²⁶⁶ From fury to greetings: This is how the world reacted to Šešelj’s acquittal. 31.3.2016. Newsweek. Available at: <http://www.newsweek.rs/svet/71703-od-besa-do-cestitki-evo-kako-je-svet-reagovao-na-oslobadjanje-seselja.html>

²⁶⁷ Moscow: Judgment to Karadžić is politicized. 25.3.2016. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs.sputniknews.com/rusija/20160325/1104318362.html>

²⁶⁸ Rogozin to Šešelj: “Congratulation, my friend”. 31.3.2016. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs.sputniknews.com/rusija/20160331/1104490792/Rogozin-Seselj-Rusija.html>

committed against Serbs. This shows the greatness of our nation, and seriousness and responsibility of the government.”²⁶⁹ Even more explicit in perverting the concept of transitional justice, was the statement of Prime Minister Vučić, also given on the occasion of the ruling to Radovan Karadžić: “The government of Serbia, after the verdict on Radovan Karadžić, came out with the most responsible, the clearest and most serious response to the public. Others in the region and other officials in Europe did not do that. We said that we would not go into the content of the verdict. We said only one sentence, that we will not allow the verdicts from The Hague to destroy the Republic of Srpska and Serbia. These are our legal and constitutional obligations.”²⁷⁰

Without a clear position from the state leadership and state institutions on what the verdicts of the ICTY and other courts contain, there is no institutional confrontation with the past war crimes. Arbitrary concepts of reconciliation are not an adequate mechanism, but a matter of the individual. Prime Minister Vučić acted quite similarly, when he commented on the acquittal of Vojislav Šešelj, a former close associate, stressing that, “the politics of Greater Serbia were wrong,” and that, “there is no return to the 1990s” without any reference to what the main elements of these wrong politics were.²⁷¹

In mid-March 2016, Ombudsman Saša Janković submitted to the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia the *Annual report of the Ombudsman for 2015*. The report is an exceptional overview of the situation in Serbia, which also confirms the trends of strengthening authoritarianism and disruption of institutions. In the part dealing with the police and the secret service, the report states that, “the Military-Security Agency escapes democratic civilian control, denies access to data to the control authority and conceals information that is legally obliged to produce.”²⁷²

²⁶⁹ We do not distinguish between crime and criminals by first and last name. 26.3.2016. Tanjug. Available at: <http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=237701>

²⁷⁰ Vučić: The Hag drove nails in the coffin of the sleeping Balkans. 1.4.2016. B92. Available at: http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2016&mm=04&dd=01&nav_category=11&nav_id=1114705

²⁷¹ Vučić: We protected the dignity of citizen Šešelj. 1.4.2016. N1. Available at: <http://rs.n1info.com/a148076/Vesti/Vučić-o-presudi-Seselju.html>

²⁷² Annual report of the Ombudsman for 2015. 15.3.2016. Ombudsman. Available at: <http://www.ombudsman.rs/attachments/Godisnji%20izvestaj%20Zastitnika%20gradjana%20za%202015%20latinica.pdf>

The alarming situation within his jurisdiction was also presented by the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, Rodoljub Šabić, in his annual *Report on the implementation of the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance and Law on Personal Data Protection for 2015*, which was submitted to the Parliament in April 2016. The report points to the fact that Serbia, when it comes to the protection of personal data, is practically at the beginning of the process of implementing European standards in the legal system and in practice. It is necessary to improve and quicken the pace of this process.²⁷³

In April 2016 at the Hohenfels training area in Germany, a regular military drill *Saber Junction 2016*²⁷⁴ took place, organized by the European Command of the US Armed Forces, including about 5,000 troops, of which this year there were 100 participants from Serbia. In terms of Serbian media coverage, this drill almost did not exist. It is an open question as to whether this is a matter of tacit agreement or growing media darkness in Serbia.

In early April 2016, the pro-Kremlin and pro-Vučić internet newsletter *Pravda.rs* estimated that the charges against Ivan Ivanović for the list of Serb-haters are falling apart.²⁷⁵ One of the characteristics of this process was that, it was precisely through *Pravda.rs* that information from the trial leaked, such as the statements of those called by the state as witnesses in the proceedings. In the spring of 2016, at the time of finalization of this study, early parliamentary elections were held in Serbia, although the government which had been formed in 2014 had a stable majority. The electoral list of the ruling Progressive Party also included the journalist Miroslav Lazanski, who has been glorifying Putin's regime in the recent years. In addition to him, the Progressive Party list also included Nenad Popović, president of the Serbian National Party, which also advocates for an intensive strengthening of relations between the Republic of Serbia and the Russian Federation.

²⁷³ Report on the implementation of the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance and Law on Personal Data Protection for 2015. March 2016. Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection. Available at: <http://www.poverenik.rs/images/stories/dokumentacija-nova/izvestajiPoverenika/2015/IZVESTAJ2015/g.izvestaj2015.pdf>

²⁷⁴ Serbian soldiers in the US drill in Germany. 29.3.2016. Vaseljenska. Available at: <http://www.vaseljenska.com/vesti/srpski-vojnici-na-americkoj-vezbi-u-nemackoj/>

²⁷⁵ CASE "SERB HATERS" IS FALLING APART: Neither Stefanović nor Stojanović prosecute Ivanović! 6.4.2016. Pravda. Available at: <http://www.pravda.rs/2016/04/06/slucaj-srbomrsci-se-raspada-ni-stefanovic-ni-stojanovic-ne-gone-ivanovica/>

Lazanski and Popović have a disproportionately large space in the Serbian pro-government media. The wife, Milanka Karić, and brother, Dragomir Karić, of the fugitive tycoon Bogoljub Karić, who is close to the Kremlin, were also directly on the Progressive Party's list.²⁷⁶

The Serbian Radical Party (SRS) of Vojislav Šešelj, together with four extremely nationalistic and openly pro-Kremlin lists, also participated in the early parliamentary elections, gaining more and more space in the media as legitimate actors in the democratic process. Other declared pro-Kremlin electoral lists that participated in the elections are: For a Free Serbia – Zavetnici – Milica Đurđević; Dveri – Democratic Party of Serbia – Sanda Rašković Ivić- Boško Obradović; Serbian Russian Movement – Slobodan Dimitrijević; and In Spite – Together for Serbia National Alliance.

Members of the Republic Electoral Commission (RIK) originally adopted the Decision on Rejection of the Proclamation of the Electoral List of Together for Serbia - National Alliance – Glišić – Parović, submitted by the Group of Citizens National Association. The list with a changed name, In Spite - Together for Serbia - National Alliance, was declared at the meeting of the RIK in April 2016. Members of the alliance were either former officials of a pro-Kremlin movement Dveri or the political party Third Serbia, which was in power locally in Novi Sad with the ruling Progressive Party and caused a series of corruption scandals. Their officials have visited Russia several times. In January 2015, Miroslav Parović, President of Third Serbia visited the Russian Federation.²⁷⁷ During the visit he participated in the conference *Church, state and society: tasks for the 21st century*. On the sidelines of the conference, he met with some of the leading figures in Russia, such as Mikhail Degtyarev, Deputy of the Russian State Duma, Aleksandar Dugin, a leading Russian political strategist, and Konstantin Malofeev.

In the midst of the election campaign, on April 8th 2016, CESID and B92 announced the results of the public opinion survey. For the first time, integration into the EU and NATO

²⁷⁶ "GREATER SERBS THAN SERBS THEMSELVES" Criticisms because of the reaction of Russian MPs to the verdict to Karadžić. 24.3.2016. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/hronika/veci-srbi-od-samih-srba-prozivke-na-racun-reakcije-ruskih-poslanika-na-presudu/dx57d55>

²⁷⁷ Miroslav Parović in a work visit to Russia. 27.1.2015. Portal Miroslav Parović, Active patriotism. Available at: <http://www.miroslavparovic.rs/polemike/miroslav-parovic-u-radnoj-poseti-rusiji/>

was mentioned in the same question, according to which about 71.6 percent of the respondents think that is not good for Serbia to enter the EU and NATO, while more than 55 percent of respondents think that Serbia should stick to Russia.²⁷⁸ It is alarming, as much as indicative of the fact that not a single electoral list or party adequately responded to this survey. Support for European integration and the growing inclination towards Russia were hardly mentioned in the early parliamentary elections in 2016.

In mid-April, CEAS announced the executive summary of the working version of this study, with data indicating great confusion, especially among young people, and the increased influence of Russian soft power aimed at the erosion of democracy, European integration, normalized of relations in the region, and transitional justice, with the hope that this topic would become significant in the election campaign. No party or political list in the elections in April 2016, even those that present themselves as the pro-EU opposition to Vučić's government, commented on these findings, although they had great visibility in the media.

In early April 2016, the implementation of a controversial agreement between the EU and Turkey on the control of the movement of migrants and refugees began, which almost closed the Balkan route, which includes Serbia. This robbed Prime Minister Vučić of one of the two trump cards he had before the West, which made him an important ally to them and at the cost of democracy in Serbia. The second card was the Brussels agreement, which has been implemented slowly at a technical level because of the political situations in Serbia and in Kosovo, but was also contributing to tensions in relations. For these reasons, along with the inability to fulfill August 2015 promises related to the electrical energy supply in Kosovo, and expectations of the EU to finally start amending the National Security Strategy, there is fear that Aleksandar Vučić would publicly renounce European integration.

In mid-April 2016, legitimate and peaceful gatherings of citizens were initiated again in Macedonia because of the decision of President Ivanov to dismiss all those involved in the "surveillance scandal." The Russian Foreign Ministry called on that occasion all political

²⁷⁸ B92 i CESID: Serbs for Russia, do not want into the EU and NATO. 8.4.2016. B92. Available at: http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2016&mm=04&dd=08&nav_category=11&nav_id=1117591

forces in Macedonia to solve the crisis in the country by peaceful means and warned of a “Ukrainian scenario” and “a coup incited from the outside,” which could destabilize Macedonia and the Balkans as a whole. The statement continues that the Macedonian opposition, “again became an instrument for escalation” of internal political conflict with external support, and a goal to interrupt the early elections on June 5th, which are, “the only democratically legitimate way out of the long crisis.” The Russian Foreign Ministry reminded that these elections were agreed to last year, with active cooperation with the EU and US. He said the West should comply with the agreements and commitments. “We invite all political forces and representatives of the international community to respect the way of resolving the situation in Macedonia by peaceful means while respecting the actions and decisions of the legitimate authorities and the leadership of Macedonia,” he said in a statement. Moscow is also of the opinion that the destabilization of the sensitive situation in Macedonia, caused by a complex ethno-confessional structure in the country, must not be allowed.²⁷⁹

On April 16th 2016, regarding the demonstrations of citizens dissatisfied with the decisions of the Macedonian authorities, the Prime Minister of Serbia stated, “for the stability of the entire region, it is important that the problems in Macedonia be resolved as soon as possible. I hope that the ideas of “Ukrainisation” of this area does not pass, because nobody in the Balkans needs this.”²⁸⁰ On a visit to Serbia, during which he was a guest at the final election convention of Vučić's Serbian Progressive Party, Sergei Zheleznyak, Vice President of the Russian Duma and a member of the list of persons targeted by EU sanctions, spoke negatively and incorrectly about the EU.²⁸¹ As far as we know, neither the supposedly more progressive opposition to Aleksandar Vučić and the Progressive Party, or the representatives of the political West and the Western media publicly commented on this.

²⁷⁹ Ruski MIP: Ukrainian scenario threatens Macedonia and Balkans. 15.4.2016. Radio Free Europe. Available at: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/archive/news/20160415/500/500.html?id=27677111>

²⁸⁰ Vučić: Nobody needs “Ukrainization of Macedonia”. 16.4.2016. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs.sputniknews.com/srbija/20160416/1104922875/Vučić-Makedonija-Ukrajina-scenario.html#ixzz464WNaSUs>

²⁸¹ Resentment about anti-EU rhetoric of Sergei Zheleznyak. 22.4.2016. Press release. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies. Available at: <https://www.ceas-serbia.org/sr/saopstenja/negodovanje-povodom-anti-eu-retorike-sergeja-zeleznjaka-zamenika-predsednika-ruske-dume>

At the early parliamentary elections in Serbia, held on April 24th 2016, the increasingly open pro-Kremlin, but supposedly still pro-EU, political parties, SNS and SPS, won 48.25 percent and 10.95 percent of the votes, respectively.

Six openly pro-Kremlin political options won a total of 14.95 percent of the vote, and two lists, the Serbian Radical Party and the coalition Democratic Party of Serbia – Dveri, will have representatives in the new parliament.²⁸²

At the early parliamentary elections of 2014, the then nationalistic and right-wing structures, which were at that time more Eurosceptic than openly advocating for pro-Kremlin positions in Serbia, won a total of 10.59 percent of the votes,²⁸³ but none entered the parliament. This makes the results of the elections in 2016 even more alarming in the sense of the strengthening of Russian soft power.

In addition, the winning list of the supposedly pro-EU oriented Serbian Progressive Party in the last elections had more pro-Kremlin-oriented individuals and coalition partners than in the elections of 2014. Senior officials of the Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia in the period after the publication of the preliminary results, unanimously denied claims by reporters that “Euro-Union structures” – a term used for pro-EU options by Russian officials – had won the election. In contrast, they said, “no, Prime Minister Vučić and well-balanced foreign policy won.”²⁸⁴

The so-called “democratic opposition” won only 17 percent and three lists (Democratic Party, Coalition SDS-LDP-LSV, and the Movement Enough) will enter the new parliament.

The European Commission assessed that through the elections, the citizens of Serbia showed strong support for the strategic development of their country, meaning, joining the

²⁸² Results of pro-Kremlin election lists in early parliamentary elections in Serbia in 2016. Serbian Radical Party 8.10% Democratic Party of Serbia - Dveri: 5.03%, Zavetnici Milica Đorđević: 0.73%, In Spite - Together for Serbia - National Alliance: 0.47%, the Russian Party: 0.36%, Serbian-Russian Movement: 0.26%.

²⁸³ The Democratic Party of Serbia: 4.24%, Serbian Radical Party: 2.01%, Dveri 3.58%. The Third Serbia: 0.45% Group of Citizens “Patriotic Front” - Dr. Borislav Pelević: 0.13%, the Russian Party: 0.18%. Elections for deputies of the National Parliament of the Republic of Serbia. March 2014. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. Available at:

http://webzrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/repository/documents/00/01/42/07/Parlamentarni_Izbori_2014.pdf

²⁸⁴ Show Cyrillic: Vučićević, Gojković, Đukić Dejanović. 25.4.2016. TV Happy. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKzYo7lt008>

EU. "Serbia has made big steps in its path towards the EU, by opening the first negotiating chapters last year. We are convinced that Serbia will continue this progress with a renewed commitment to reforms, especially regarding the rule of law and economy, and that it will continue the dialogue with Pristina."²⁸⁵

The head of the International Committee of the Federation Council of Russia, Konstantin Kosachev, said, "in the elections in Serbia and Austria, the forces that advocated for a newer Europe won, where there is no division into the candidates for the EU and NATO and "the others" and where there are no insurmountable boundaries between those who have already "entered" and those who have not."²⁸⁶

The assessment of the trend of creating a "newer Europe" and its victory in the parliamentary elections in Serbia, just a few hours later, was also made by one of the openly pro-Kremlin candidates on the list of the winning Serbian Progressive Party, Miroslav Lazanski.²⁸⁷

Vice President of the German Marshall Fund, Ivan Vejvoda, said that the Serbian voters showed that they elected the West. Since the democratic electoral victory over the regime of Slobodan Milošević in 2000, the experts have been asking whether Serbia has finally made a choice between the EU, i.e. the West, and Russia, indicating that all elections in the last 15 years have given rise to the pro-European majority. Eurosceptics or committed anti-Westerners, the far-right parties, won less than 15 percent of the vote and only two parties that oppose joining the EU have secured a seat in parliament. The remaining 87 percent, Vejvoda thinks, are parties of the pro-European orientation.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ EK: The citizens of Serbia showed strong support for the accession to the EU. 25.4.2016. Blic online. Available at: <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/ek-gradani-srbije-pokazali-snaznu-podrsku-pridruzivanju-eu/gmt7wsv>

²⁸⁶ Kosačov: Elections in Serbia and Austria— signal for changes in Europe. 25.4.2016. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/rusija/20160425/1105165361/rusija-izbori-evropa-izmene.html>

²⁸⁷ LAZANSKI GAVE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION: Does the opposition have a reason to celebrate?. 25.4.2016. Pravda. Available at: <http://www.pravda.rs/lat/2016/04/25/lazanski-dao-odgovor-na-pitanje-ima-li-opozicija-razloga-za-slavlje/>

²⁸⁸ Ivan Vejvoda: Serbia voted for continuation of the road to the EU and this binds Vučić and the SNS to go toward the goal set for 2020 – joining the EU. 25.4.2016. NSPM. Available at: <http://www.nspm.rs/hronika/ivan-vejvoda-srbija-je-glasala-za-nastavak-puta-ka-eu-i-to-obavezuje-Vučića-i-sns-da-idu-ka-cilju-zacrtanom-za-2020.-godinu-ulazak-u-eu.html?alphabet=>

During the finalization of this study, the current Serbian Defense Minister, Zoran Đorđević, met in Moscow with a Russian colleague, Shoygu, as well as with the defense ministers of the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Armenia.²⁸⁹ Speaking at the Fifth Moscow International Conference on Security, Đorđević said that today the “colored revolutions” are the major destabilizing factor in many regions of the world, and that the tendency towards internationalization could lead to direct military aggression.²⁹⁰ Meanwhile, US President Barack Obama stressed the importance of extending sanctions to the Russian Federation.

For his exclusive Easter interview, Prime Minister Vučić, as he did with the New Year’s one, spoke to the notoriously pro-Kremlin oriented tabloid, the *Informer*.

Meanwhile, Radio Free Europe announced that all previous returnees from Ukraine who fought on the side of the pro-Russian rebels, signed a plea agreement with the competent Prosecutor's Office, which, judging by the case of one of them, Radomir Počuča, could only bring them probation. The Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade has not yet given an official statement on concluded plea agreements with the 20 Serbian nationals who had returned after participating in armed conflicts abroad. “To this day, we have no official statement from the Prosecutor’s Office. The Prosecution is silent,” stated Meho Omerović, whose Social Democratic Party proposed amendments to the law that would allow the so-called “dogs of war” to be criminally prosecuted.²⁹¹

In this same time period, President Tomislav Nikolić in an interview with the pro-Kremlin portal Sputnik, said that, “everyone knows that Europe is a necessary evil.”²⁹²

Until the day of publishing the final and integral version of this study, the supposedly pro-democratic public of Serbia and the political West continued to ignore the growing use of

²⁸⁹ Đorđević at the Moscow conference. 28.4.2016. Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: http://www.mod.gov.rs/sadrzaj.php?id_sadrzaja=9556

²⁹⁰ Speech of the Defense Minister of the Republic of Serbia at the 5th Moscow Conference on International Security, focusing on “Global Security and Military Cooperation. Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: http://www.mod.gov.rs/multimedia/file/govor_final.pdf

²⁹¹ From the battlefields of Russia to freedom in Serbia. 9.5.2016. Radio Free Europe. Available at: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/sa-ratista-iz-rusije-na-slobodu-u-srbiju/27715156.html>

²⁹² I will entrust the mandate to Aleksandar Vučić. 8.5.2016. Sputnik. Available at: <http://rs-lat.sputniknews.com/intervju/20160508/1105504171/Mandat-cu-poveriti-Vucicu.html>

the phrase, “Ukrainian scenario” in the same context in which the Kremlin uses it, by the supposedly pro-EU winners of the April elections in Serbia, Vučić's Serbian Progressive Party.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the Western Balkans, in 2015-2016, and especially in Serbia, right before the eyes of the domestic democratic public and the political West that specializes in the Balkans and Serbia, there has been a significant strengthening of Russian soft power. It rewrites history; it perverts concepts of democracy, civil society, transitional justice and EU integration; it demonizes NATO; it successfully introduces propaganda into the media; it establishes structures that resemble democratic structures and selects methods that resemble democratic methods, but are not, abusing for that purpose the achieved level of democratization of Serbia. The aim of the Russian soft power in the Western Balkans and in Serbia is to: destabilize the region, discredit the concept of non-violent change of authoritarian regimes, stop the processes of democratization and European integration, pervert the process of transitional justice, and demonize cooperation or membership in NATO. At the same time, cooperation with Russia is continuously being more successfully presented as a functional alternative to the EU and NATO, although there are no mechanisms for this. Russian soft power in Serbia, unlike in other countries in the region, has found the doors wide open.

Most of the pro-Kremlin structures and new instruments of the Russian soft power in Serbia that were mapped as a part of the study have been created under the radar in recent years. Their common characteristics are: non-transparent organizational structures; a lack of clearly stated sources and ways of financing; advocating non-democratic achievements; disregard for the principle of the separation of powers, rule of law and protection of human rights; relativization or ill-presentation of the notions of individual and collective freedoms; incorrect interpretation of state legislation in the field of minority rights; and other forms of deception of the citizens of Serbia.

Self-fulfilling and factually unfounded narratives about the nature of historical relationships, the extent of economic cooperation, and possibilities for increased relations

are being designed and spread intentionally. The future of the cooperation between Serbia and the Russian Federation is incorrectly compared to the European integration process, which is completely different from any bilateral relations. Such an inaccurate comparison is then offered as a legitimate alternative to the European integration of Serbia.

Pro-Kremlin propaganda has successfully permeated almost all the mainstream media in Serbia. It is being implemented by both the official Moscow government and the official Belgrade government. Unfortunately, even among the professional community, it is not being critically addressed.

The rhetoric in the election campaign, the choice of key partners of the ruling structures in the electoral process, and the very results of the early parliamentary elections in Serbia in April 2016, unfortunately, confirm the thesis about the growing influence of Russian soft power in Serbia, one of the main objectives of which is discrediting and falsely interpreting the concept of the EU and its enlargement.

Despite the evaluation by the European Commission and a majority of the Western media, winners of Serbia's parliamentary elections were not pro-EU, at least not in the sense of having a genuine commitment to Serbia's accession into the EU. This is also a consequence of Russian soft power and other aspects of Russian policy in Serbia and the Balkans.

There are fears that the political West has fallen into its own self-fulfilling narrative of the pro-EU Serbia, which is increasingly less founded, as Serbia is sliding into autocracy that cannot be prevented by the formal process of negotiations by chapters, as is apparent in the case of Turkey. It is necessary that the political West, despite the other bigger and more important challenges it is facing, realize that the current approach to Serbia with its eyes wide shut is not in their interest, nor in the interest of a democratic and stable Serbia and the Balkans.

The so-called progressive opposition in Serbia, the high-quality media, and the civil society must also be much clearer about the value and the foreign policy course of Serbia, the nature of the process of EU integration, the importance of NATO integration for Serbia, and the impact of the official Moscow government on the collapse of democratic procedures

and the decreasing level of freedoms in Serbia. The newly established pro-democratic structures, supported by Western donors, are mainly dealing with the media or struggling against corruption, while foreign and security policy, including the increasingly strong undemocratic influence of the Kremlin, is almost hardly being analyzed. The official Belgrade government is not being called on to define its position on foreign and security policy as much as it is over issues with the media and corruption.

What to do next?

The Western international community should stop, as soon as possible, the lowering of standards and expectations in the processes of integration and cooperation with the countries of the Western Balkans. It must simultaneously intensify the assistance, instead of increasingly apparent slacking in its duties, in the implementation of these processes. It must remain committed to its principles and promises concerning the possibility of full membership in the EU and NATO if the candidate countries should meet the necessary requirements, regardless of the new geopolitical trends and challenges it is facing.

It is necessary to invest more resources in the Western Balkans, as is already the case in the more stable political West, and especially in Serbia, due to the special circumstances that Moscow counts on, for the purpose of the prevention and reduction of all negative effects of the penetration of Russian soft power and other forms of action from the official Moscow government. It would also be good to encourage a debate in the region on the internal and external threats to liberal democracies, with a reminder of their basic principles and achievements, which are being increasingly devalued or taken for granted.

In parallel with this, it is necessary to do the following, as soon as possible:

- Ask Aleksandar Vučić and his old – and probably new – ministers exactly what they mean by, “not allowing the Ukrainian scenario in Serbia” and how exactly they plan to prevent it;

- Investigate the legality of the operation of the newly established pro-Kremlin structures and insist on their greater transparency;
- In accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Serbia, respond to all comments on the position of ethnic Russians in Serbia;
- Define the time frame and the end game of the process of the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, which has caused great leniency of the West towards the governments of Aleksandar Vučić, and has been charged dearly by reinforcing his autocratic power;
- Provide more support to the processes of transitional justice, primarily trials before local courts, in order to cleanse the security system of personnel who are, in fear of justice, turning to the official Moscow government, which is frankly not interested in these processes;
- Focus, finally, on the reform of the security system, with an emphasis on democratic control. For this purpose, it is necessary to utilize all the mechanisms enabled by the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) of Serbia with NATO, as well as the relevant chapters of the negotiations with the EU;
- Enter into a broad public debate, on a rational basis, on the adoption of a new national security strategy, which is expected of Serbia during the negotiations with the EU under Chapter 31: Foreign, security and defense policy;
- Adopt the already drafted Law on the Reduction of Risks from Natural and Other Disasters and Crisis Management, and thus prevent the so-called non-transparent operation of the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Center;
- Promote a broad debate on the growing need for the joint action of the EU and NATO;
- Finally, initiate internally a debate on the need for the membership of Serbia in NATO.

7. EXHIBITS: TABLE OF PRO-KREMLIN STRUCTURES THAT OPERATE IN SERBIA WITH BASIC PUBLICLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THEIR LEGAL STATUS

	Name	Website	Registration APR- Registry of Political Parties - Registry of the Media	Advertiseme nt on the website	Registrant according to the RNIDS (Registry of the national internet domain of Serbia)	Total number - Special remarks
	<i>Political movements</i>					16
1	Serbian National Movement 1389	http://www.snp1389.rs/	Registered- Representativ e: Miša Vacić	None	Miša Vacić	
2	Movement 1389	http://www.1389.org.rs/naslovna.html	Registered- Representativ e: Radojko	None	Radojko Ljubičić	

			Ljubičić			
3	SNP Naši	http://nasisrbija.org/	Not registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
4	Obraz	http://obraz.rs	Deleted from the registry 2009	None	Mladen Obradović	
5	Serbian Patriotic Movement Zavetnici	http://zavetnici.rs/	Registered	None	Nenad Vukčević	
6	Patriotic Alliance	None	Not registered (Coalition Agreement)	None	Does not have a website	
7	Eastern Alternative	http://www.istocnaalternativa.rs/	Registered	None	Dragan Todorović	
8	Serbian League	http://srpskaliga.rs/	Registered	None	Activated prohibition of disclosure	

					of data	
9	National Network	https://www.narodnamreza.com/sr/	Registered	None	Nemanja Nedeljkovic	
10	Movement for Serbia	http://movementzasrbiju.org/	Registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
11	Serbian Vertical	http://srpskavertikala.org/	Registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
12	Serbian Action	http://www.srb-akcija.org/	Not registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
13	Gathered Serbs	http://srbinaokup.info/	Registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
14	National	http://nsfront.org/?lang=lat	Not	None	Not	

	Serbian Front		registered		registered with the RNIDS	
15	Patriotic Front	http://www.patriotskifront.rs/	Registered	None	Zoran Vranješević	
16	Kosovo Front	http://kosovo-front.ru/price	Registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
	<i>Russian organizations–branches in Serbia</i>					2
17	Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI)	risi.serbia@gmail.com	Status unknown	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
18	International Fund of Social Unity of Orthodox	http://www.ifuocn.com/	Status unknown	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	

	Peoples					
	<i>RUSSIAN FOUNDATION ACTING in Serbia</i>					3
19	Gorchakov Fond	http://gorchakovfund.ru/	Not registered in Serbia	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
20	Fond of St. Andrew the First-Called	http://istoki-foundation.org/en/programmers/	Not registered in Serbia	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
21	Centre of National Glory	http://istoki-foundation.org/en/programmers/glory/	Not registered in Serbia	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
	<i>Portals</i>					8
22	Strategic Culture Foundation	http://www.fsksr.rs/	Not registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
23	Roots	http://www.koreni.rs/	Not registered	Yes	Nikola Janić	

24	Society of Serbian-Russian Friendship and Russian Diaspora "Resurs"	http://resu.rs/	Registered as an association	None	Radojka Kovač	
25	Serbian Patriots	http://rodoljubi.weebly.com/	Not registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
26	Liberation	http://oslobodjenje.rs/	Not registered	Has	Activated prohibition of disclosure of data	
27	Srpska.ru	http://www.srpska.ru/	Not registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
28	Eurasian	https://www.facebook.com/evroazijskiekonomsk	Not	None	Does not	

	Union (Facebook community)	isavez	registered		have a website	
29	Goran Davidović- official website	http://gorandavidovic.com/	Not registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
	<i>Pro-Russian political parties</i>					14
30	Serbian Radical Party SRS	http://www.srpskaradikalnastranka.org.rs/	Registered in the Registry of Political Parties	None	Serbian Radical Party	
31	Dveri	https://www.dverisrpske.com/sr/	Registered as an association, and since October 201 registered with the Registry of	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	

			Political Parties			
32	Democratic Party of Serbia DSS	http://dss.rs/	Registered with the Registry of Political Parties	None	Democratic Party of Serbia	
33	Serbian People's Party SNP	http://www.srpskanarodnapartija.rs/	Registered with the Registry of Political Parties	None	Activated prohibition of disclosure of data	
34	Russian Party	http://www.ruskastranka.rs/	Registered with the Registry of Political Parties	None	Slobodan Nikolić	
35	Party of Russians of Serbia RUS	http://www.strankarusasrbije.rs/	Registered with the Registry of Political	None	Maja Stogov Damjanović	

			Parties			
36	Serbian-Russian Movement	https://www.facebook.com/Srpsko-RUSSIAN-Movement-924919147601307/	Not registered	None	Does not have a website	
37	Time for Action – Serbian League	None	Registered as an association	None	Does not have a website	
38	Serbian League – New Serbian Right-Wing Movement	http://srpskaliga.rs/	Registered as an association	None	Activated prohibition of disclosure of data	
39	Movement “Svetozar Miletić”	http://testmiletic.awardspace.info/	Registered as an association	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	

40	Statehood Movement of Serbia	http://www.dps.rs/	Registered as an association	None	DPS – Statehood Movement of Serbia	
41	Serbian Patriotic Front	https://srpskiotadzbinskifront.wordpress.com/	Registered as an association	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
42	Third Serbia	http://trecasrbija.rs	Registered as an association	None	Center for Contemporary Education– Aleksandar Đurđev	
43	United Russian Party	https://www.facebook.com/United-ruska-stranka-Pan%C4%8Devo-1604376699837120/	Registered with the Registry of Political Parties	None	Does not have a website	
	NGO– Associations of citizens					21
44	Center for	http://www.strateskealternative.rs/	Registered	None	Aleksandar	

	Strategic Alternative s				Mitić	
45	Dignity Foundation	http://fonddostojanstvo.rs/	Registered	None	Miroslav Ilić	
46	Orthodox Family	http://xn--80aaaahbp6awwhfaeihkk0i.xn--c1avg.xn--90a3ac/	Registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
47	Belgrade Forum for the World of Equals	http://www.beoforum.rs/	Registered	Yes	Belgrade Forum for the World of Equals	
48	Center for Developme nt of Internation al Cooperatio n	http://crms.org.rs/	Registered	None	Aleksandar Ćorluka	
49	Support us	http://www.podrzitenas.org.rs/	Registered	None	Support us	

50	Slavic Society	http://sloven.org.rs/srb/	Registered	Yes	Dragan Bunardžić	
51	Forum for Responsible Politics	None	Registered	None	Does not have a website	
52	Serbian Code	http://srpskikod.com/	Registered	Yes	Registered as NGO Our Serbia	
53	All-Serbian National Front	https://www.facebook.com/sfront	Not registered	None	Does not have a website	
54	Institute for Recent History of Serbia	http://www.inisbgd.co.rs/	Not registered	None	Momčilo Mitrović	No data in APR on registration, although registration number is submitted with the RNIDS
55	Association	http://www.srpveternik.org.rs/index.html	Registered	None	Ljiljana	

	of Serbian– Russian Friendship Veternik				Čakarević	
56	Association of Serbian– Russian Friendship Rusk	http://Russianklubnis.weebly.com/	Not registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
57	Serbian– Russian – Belarus Friendship of Serbia	http://www.srpsko-rusko.com/pocetna/	Registered	Yes	Not registered with the RNIDS	
58	Association of Serbian- Slavic Solidarity of Kosovo and Metohija	http://www.dsss-scerbina.co.rs/	Registered	None	Momir Kasalović	

	"Grigorije Stepanovič Ščerbina"					
59	Center for Research of Orthodox Monarchism	http://www.czipm.org/o_nama.html	Not registered	Yes	Not registered with the RNIDS	
60	Association of Serbian–Russian Friendship "St. Alexander Nevsky "	http://dsrpsu.org	Registered	Yes	Not registered with the RNIDS	
61	Eurasian Center	http://evroazijskicentar.com/	Not registered	Yes	Not registered with the RNIDS	
62	Movement Eurasian	http://ekcs.rs/	Registered	None	Goran Tešić	

	Serbia					
63	Russia in My Heart	https://rusijaumomsrcu.wordpress.com/	Not registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
64	Eurasian Security Forum	http://www.eabezbednost.org/	Registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
	<i>Student organizations</i>					6
65	Serbian Political Forum	https://www.facebook.com/spffpn	Registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
		http://spf.fpn.bg.ac.rs/				
66	Association of Students of Soviet and Russian	http://www.Russianstudentiscg.org/aktuelnosti.html	Registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	

	Faculties from of Serbia					
67	Students for the Truth (Office in Kosovska Mitrovica and Sarajevo)	https://studentizaistinu.wordpress.com/	Not registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
68	System of Values (Faculty of Law)	https://www.facebook.com/sistemvrednosti	Registered	None	Does not have a website	
69	SKOJ	http://www.skoj.org.rs/	Not registered	None	Branko Kitanović	No data in APR on registration, although registration number is

						submitted with the RNIDS
70	Student Action	https://www.facebook.com/studentska.akcija/	Not registered	None	Does not have a website	
	<i>Compatriot organizations in Serbia</i>					10
71	“Sveslavica “	None	Registered	None	Does not have a website	
72	General Cadet Association of Russian Cadet Corps Abroad with the Russian Cultural Center in	None	Not registered	None	Does not have a website	

	Belgrade					
73	Association of Russian Compatriots "Luč"	www.luc-serbia.com	Registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
74	Association of Compatriots and Friends of Russia "Russia"	http://rusrb.org.rs/	Registered	None	Bojana Mumović Peruško	
75	Association of Serbian-Russian Friendship "Pukovnik Rajevski"	None	Not registered	None	Does not have a website	
76	Serbian-Russian	None	Registered	None	Does not have a	

	Association "Bela Crkva"				website	
77	"Russian Wave"	None	Registered	None	Does not have a website	
78	Society for Preservatio n of Memory of Russians in Serbia	None	Registered	None	Does not have a website	
79	Russian National Minority	www.ruskanacionalnamanjina.rs	Not registered	Yes	Tatjana Vučenović	
80	Society " Serbian- Russian Link"	None	Not registered	None	Does not have a website	
	<i>Russian media in Serbia</i>					6
81	Sputnik	http://rs.sputniknews.com/	Not	None	Not	

			registered		registered with the RNIDS	
82	Russian Express	http://srb.Russianekspres.rs/	Registered	None	Evgeny Baranov	Registered as an active company under the name: Medija centar Nogina i Kurinoja Ruski ekspres D.O.O. Belgrade-Savski Venac
83	Russian Word	http://ruskarec.ru/	Not registered	Yes	Not registered with the RNIDS	
84	Vostok	http://www.vostok.rs/	Not registered	None	Saša Savićević	
85	Gazeta	http://vesti-gazeta.com/index.php	Not	Website not	Not	

			registered	available	registered with the RNIDS	
86	News Front	http://srb.news-front.info/	Not registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
	<i>Serbian pro-Russian media</i>					16
87	Srbin.info	http://srbin.info/	Registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
88	Strategic Culture Foundation	http://www.fsksr.ru/	Not registered	Yes	Not registered with the RNIDS	
89	Geopolitika	http://www.geopolitika.rs/index.php/sr/	Registered	Yes	Slobodan Erić	
90	SRBski FBReporter	http://facebookreporter.org/	Not registered	Yes	Not registered with the	

					RNIDS	
91	Vidovdan	http://www.vidovdan.org/	Registered	Yes	Not registered with the RNIDS	
92	CEOPOM Truth	http://www.ceopom-istina.rs/	Not registered	Yes	Dragan Milašinović	
93	Infoport	http://infoport.co/	Registered	None	Not registered with the RNIDS	
94	Intermagazin	http://www.intermagazin.rs/	Not registered	Yes	Zoran Kordić	
95	New Standard	http://www.standard.rs/	Registered	Yes	New Standard Media d.o.o.	
96	Princip	http://www.princip.me/	Not registered	Yes	Not registered with the RNIDS	
97	Pravda	http://www.pravda.rs/	Registered	Yes	Avala press	

					d.o.o. – Tomislav Dragojlović	
98	Pečat	http://www.pecat.co.rs/	Registered	Yes	Naš Pečat ad Beograd	Registered as an active company under the name: Publishing Company Naš Pečat AD Beograd
99	New Serbian Political Thought	http://www.nspm.rs/	Registered as an association	Yes	Research- Information Center– New Serbian Political Thought	Representativ e: Đorđe Vukadinović
100	Liberation	http://oslobodjenje.rs/	Not registered	Yes	Activated prohibition of disclosure	

					of data	
10 1	Kosmopol	http://kosmopol.rs/	Not registered	None	Željko Cajić	
10 2	Power of the People (radio channel)	http://snaganaroda.net/o-nama	Not registered	Yes	Not registered with the RNIDS	
	<i>Portal – unknown vlasnik</i>					2
10 3	Facts	http://www.fakti.rs/	Not registered	Yes	Đuro Bilbija	
10 4	IN4S portal	http://www.in4s.net/	Not registered	Yes	Not registered with the RNIDS	It is a portal in Montenegro
	Total number					104

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR EURO-ATLANTIC STUDIES

The Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies (CEAS) is an independent, atheist, socio-liberal, political research think-tank organization, guided by ideology and values. It was founded in 2007 by a small group of like-minded colleagues, who shared an awareness of the interconnectedness of global and regional trends, the orientation of the country's foreign policy, reforms of security and defense sectors and transitional justice in Serbia. With these ideas in mind, CEAS was founded with the following missions:

- To speed up the process of integration of Serbia into the EU and strengthen the capacity of Serbia to face the global challenges through joint international action, which will result in a full and active membership in the EU,
- To strengthen cooperation with NATO and advocate for full and active membership of the Republic of Serbia in the Alliance,
- To promote regional cooperation and raise public awareness of its importance,
- To impose a strong structure of democratic monitoring over the security system,
- To support the development of mechanisms of transitional justice, its implementation in Serbia and the Western Balkans, as well as exchange of positive experiences, to stress the importance of transitional justice mechanisms for successful security sector reform in post-conflict societies undergoing transition to democracy.

To accomplish its mission, CEAS is targeting Serbian legislators and public opinion in Serbia, as well as international organizations, governments and other players dealing with Serbia and the Western Balkans, or topics addressed by CEAS, through the promotion and advocacy of innovative, applicable and practical policies, aimed at:

- Keeping up with the trends and developments in the socio-liberal studies and practice, strengthening the socio-liberal democracy in Serbia;
- Accepting the principle of the primacy of individual over collective rights, while respecting those rights that individuals can only exercise through collective action;

- Strengthening the principle of secular state and promoting an atheistic view of the world;
- Contributing to raising and maintaining a more open, freer, more prosperous and cooperative international orders, based on smart globalization and equitable sustainable development;

Through quality research and dedicated work, CEAS has been generating accurate and recognized analyzes primarily in the area of foreign, security and defense policies with recommendations based on their core values, with special focus on:

- Accelerating the EU integration process of Serbia and strengthening its capacity to face the global challenges through joint international action, aimed at full and active membership of Serbia in the EU;
- Strengthening of cooperation with NATO and advocating full and active membership of Serbia in the Alliance;
- Promoting the importance of regional cooperation;
- Supporting the development of transitional justice mechanisms, its implementation in Serbia and the Western Balkans, as well as the exchange of positive experiences, stressing the importance of transitional justice mechanisms for successful security sector reform in post-conflict societies undergoing transition to democracy;
- Promoting humanitarian and security doctrine *Responsibility to Protect*, which says that states bear the primary responsibility to protect their citizens from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, that the international community has a responsibility to assist the countries in carrying this responsibility, and that the international community should use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means to protect the population from these crimes if the state has failed to do that, or if the state itself is the perpetrator of the crime;
- Promote the politics of open government, in order to specifically bind the government to promote transparency, strengthen the citizens, fight corruption and use new technologies to strengthen governance.

CEAS is implementing its mission through various projects within the 5 permanent programs:

- I Comprehensive monitoring of contemporary international relations and foreign policy of the Republic of Serbia
- II Advocacy for full-fledged active membership of Serbia in the EU and NATO
- III Advocacy for comprehensive Security Sector Reform in Serbia
- IV Advocacy for development of the discourse of Energy Security in Serbia
- V Liberalism, Human Rights, Responsibility to Protect, Transitional Justice and Open Government in the globalized world

CEAS is an active member of the RECOM coalition that gathers more than 1,800 civil society organizations, individuals from all the countries stemming from the break-up of former SFRY. Among them are also missing persons' parental and family societies, veterans, news reporters, representatives of minority ethnic communities, organizations for the protection of human rights, etc. The REKOM coalition suggests that governments (or states) establish REKOM, an independent, inter-state Regional Commission for the Establishment of Facts on all the victims of war crimes and other heavy human rights violations committed in the territory of the former SFRY in the period 1991-2001.

During 2012, CEAS became the first civil society organization from the region of Southeast Europe to join the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect – ICRtoP as a full member. The coalition brings together non-governmental organizations from all over the world to collectively strengthen normative consensus for the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (RtoP), for the purpose of better understanding of the norm, pushing for strengthened capacities of the international community to prevent and halt genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and to mobilize the non-governmental sector to push for action to save lives in RtoP country-specific situations. Among the prominent members of the Coalition are organizations such as the Human Rights Watch and the International Crisis.

In April 2013, CEAS became the first civil society organization in Serbia that joined the Commission of the Association of Serbian Chamber of Commerce for public-private partnership in the Security Sector in Serbia. The Commission, in addition to representatives of the private security sector, is also composed of the representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and other state authorities and institutions, who are, in the performance of state administration duties, also responsible for cooperation between the public and the private security sector.

In September 2013, CEAS also became a member of the Sectoral Civil Society Organizations - SEKO, for the rule of law sector. The program of cooperation with civil society organizations in the planning of development of assistance of the European Integration Office, especially programming and monitoring the use of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for 2011, envisaged the formation of a consultative mechanism with the CSOs that has Sectoral Civil Society Organizations (SEKO) as key stakeholders. The sectoral organization of civil society means a consortium of civil society organizations of up to three partners, one of which is the leading partner.

In September 2014, CEAS became a full member of the Policy Association for an Open - PASOS, international association of expert non-governmental organization (think-tanks) from Europe and Central Asia, which supports the building and functioning of an open society, particularly regarding issues of political and economic transition, democratization and human rights, opening up the economy and good public governance, sustainable development and international cooperation. PASOS has 40 full and 10 associate members, including the prestigious European Council on Foreign Relations – ECFR.



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