

UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE
FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY

Master Thesis

2018

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**The Origins, Institutions and Future of Russia's In-
fluence in Serbia**

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Belgrade 2018

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Academic Year: *2017/2018*

Abstract

Serbia is currently between 2 very different options, on one side trying to join the European Union while keeping friendly with Russia on the other side. Various local political actors are very pro-Russia and try to influence Serbia staying more on a pro-Russian project. The reasons are multiples, historical, as very often in the Balkans, political, economical and diplomatic. The Balkans and more especially Serbia is too often wrongly categorised by the Western powers as being a "natural Russian ally" or historically depending from Russia. While Serbia would rather be more independent. Serbia is the center of the Balkans which remains a key region at the door of the European Union. It gives the region a geo-strategic importance and it would be a major mistake to assess the Russians are not acting in Serbia simply because it looks like that. Serbia is an interesting case where Russia does not need to be visible and can act efficiently in the back. Regarding the recent news of partition of Kosovo-Metohija and the exchange of territory with Serbia, which is out of question for the Kremlin, it can seriously be assessed Serbia could be the first country to experience a "reverse coloured revolution" instigated by the Russians.

Keywords

Serbia, Balkan region, Geo-strategy, economy, Security, European Union, NATO, Russia, Nationalism, Religion, Kosovo-Metohija

Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that she compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Belgrade 15/08/18

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Introduction:

When President Putin took power in Russia, he first focused on solving national issues such as terrorism in Chechnya, economic situation alongside with consolidating its personal credit.

The first time he clearly explained his vision of the world was in 2007 at the Munich Security Conference. His speech could easily be described as being prophetic concerning the future of the relations and developments in the world and more precisely the role he wanted Russia to play in the future.

He only waited a year to put his speech into practice, when in 2008, few month after the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo, the Russian troops entered Georgian territory. President Saakashvili of Georgia (from 2008 till 2013), Saakashvili was very pro-western ; He pushed Georgia toward the EU and put his country on the track for joining the NATO alliance. He played the same game from the West when the Serbian province of Kosovo unilaterally (and strongly) pushed by the US and other NATO countries declared independence. President Putin sent its troops in Georgia to defend the Russian population in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. During his speech, as Prime Minister at that time, he used the case of Kosovo to start operating in Georgia but also to back the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia used the example of Kosovo for legitimising its foreign policy on many occasions since 2008. The last example was when in Russia took over Crimea. Many Russian experts stated: "If Albanian from Kosovo claim independence simply because they are a majority in Kosovo, then why could Russians in Crimea could not seek independence too ?". Indeed, the unilateral independence of Kosovo was and still is often used by Russian regime to strengthen its rhetoric and politics toward the West and abroad for advocating some of its interventions and positions.

Since that time, Russia definitely entered in confrontation with the West and several "hot spots" became roots of tension between the 2 blocs, such as Syria, Ukraine and the Balkans in a less important part. Fdecided to focus on the Balkan region and to analyse what are the different Russian tools for influencing Serbia in the Russian track.

The first part of this document is dealing with economy and related matters. Since the end of the civil war Russia has invested a lot in Serbia, targeting very specific and strategic Serbian economic sectors.

Russia understood very well how energy such as gas and oil could be used as a weapon, more especially towards the European markets which for most of the countries do not produce any oil and gas and have no reserves. During the second war of Chechnya, whereas President Putin and the operations of the Russian army were pointed out by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Russian president simply threaten to increase the price for gas doing winter. France is mainly importing her gas and oil from Algeria and nowadays Libya but still some 20% from Russia. If a country which is only getting 20% of its gas from Russia agrees to stop « talking » about some points Russia does not agree on, it is easy to calculate how it comes with countries such as Germany, Poland and the Baltic States which are getting from 70% to the totality of their energy from Russia. Indeed, while dealing with Crimea, Ukraine and the sanctions towards Russia, Germany which is getting 70% of its gas from Russia was very more diplomatic and less keen than France for targeting Russia. The fact Russian energy sector is so important to Germany gave Russia the possibility to build and corrupt (often both together) some economics and politics figures keen on having good relations with Russia. Ex-Chancellor Schroeder, now chairman of the board of Nord Stream AG and Rosneft is a very good illustration of that proximity, if not corruption.

In this economic part, it will be we demonstrated that Russia currently fully took control of the oil and gas system in Serbia (through the former Serbian companies Nis and Beopetrol, now owned by Russian funds) and is pushing to build the South Stream pipeline and making thus Serbia the heart and best beneficiary of that project. This will come with questions about Serbian attitude towards these Russian projects in contradiction with a pro-European Serbia seeking to join the EU and possibly NATO.

How could Russia be able to buy Nis, the biggest Serbian energy distribution company, for a very good price and give such a positive and strategic situation to Russians ?

Second part of this survey will be dedicated on how Russia, after controlling the energy sector, focused on the military, security system in Serbia and with which results.

In September 2017, Russian President Putin made a very smart move in that domain when offering eight MiG 29 fighters to the Serbian air force. Serbian Minister of Defence Vulin is often visiting Russia, trying to negotiate and buy weapons from either Russian or Belarusian armies and several common exercices have been arranged between the nations. After focusing and analysing the rheto-

rics used by Russians in order to achieve their goals, it will be necessary to look at what were the tools Russia used in the past for achieving her position in Serbia.

This study will demonstrate Serbia remains in a difficult situation, between Russia and the West (the EU and NATO). Difficult choice to make in a difficult region where history, traditional links and common heritage on the Russian side counterbalance a more prosperous future, being a possible neutral actor to deconflict tight relations, should they become really antagonist. Serbia is not their but should consider it to guarantee her prosperity and a peaceful development in the future.

**Part I: How Russia uses economic ties to straighten its geo-strategic position
in Serbia**

In 2017, during a meeting between Ministers of foreign Affairs from Russia and Serbia Lavrov and Dacic, Lavrov explained that the Serbo/Russian relations are "on the rise in all areas"¹. Indeed, in both countries, bilateral relations are shown and seen as important and on good terms, mainly based on history and religion. After the overthrow of Milosevic² and more than a year after the NATO bombing, President of Yugoslavia Koštunica paid a visit to Putin in October 2000³. Russia has always been portrayed as being "the Serbian's older brother, defending Serbia" and Serbian presidents and ministers often went to visit Russia. Whereas Russian narrative tend to present relations with western countries, as only based on economic purpose, they have always presented the relations Russia has with Serbia traditionally based on history, culture and religion without any economical or geopolitical Russian interest behind. Of course, no need to say this Machiavellian⁴ view of Serbo/Russian relations is not accurate and this essay will try to demonstrate that through the angle of economic ties between the 2 countries.

Often, Its seen that economic relations between Serbia and Russia cant be only explained by the pursuit of pure economic interests but also due to the geopolitical location of Serbia in the Balkans. In fact, as we said previously, Serbo/Russian relations are not without any hidden agendas based on economic and geopolitical purposes but they also must be seen within the spectrum of a common religion, historical ties and mutual interests. We will briefly explain them here as it will make easier to understand and translate the rhetorics used by both countries while speaking about economy.

The main factor often used for explaining the Serbo/Russian relations is the religious aspect. Indeed if both countries have ethnics and religious minorities on their land, they are both strongly rooted and still guided by Christian Orthodox faith. As we all know, Orthodox is consisted of different independent churches which are not necessary working well together and more especially with the Russian one. Indeed, the Russian Orthodox Church is often and rightly presented as hegemonic, pursuing the geopolitical interest of Russia more especially by trying to impose Moscow as being the third Rome. However, Serbian Orthodox Church and Russian Orthodox Church have many in common and are often presented as the two churches being the closest. Sharing the same opinion

¹B92 (June 2, 2017) "Dacic and Lavrov see outstanding relations in all areas" B92.

² His wife found asylum in Russia.

³CNN.com (June 17, 2001) "Putin urges actions on Kosovo visit" CNN world.

⁴ from the writer Machiavel - Machiavellian view is when someone consider either it is all good or all bad.

about the Serbian holy land of Kosovo and Metohija, Russian Orthodox Church is building strong relations with its Serbian counterpart. Both Patriarches Cyril and Irinej often meet and support each other on different topics such as said previously about Kosovo. Here it is important to underline and remind that since the President Putin is in open confrontation with the West, with the goal to bring back Russia to play her role in the leading nations, the Russian Orthodox Church is an important tool in that plan, inside and outside the country, as developed in 1977 book "Power and Interdependence" by Joseph Nye (an American political scientist, co-founder, of the international relations theory of neoliberalism with Robert Keohane). Very quickly, Joseph Nye defined soft power as the non military tools a nation can use to strengthen its position abroad.

The religious aspect is also deeply linked with the common history both countries shared in the past. However, here we must be careful as historical narrative is often being used in the political arena of both countries and not always with accurate manners. Indeed, some historical facts are often forgotten, manipulated and misused in attempt to prove one point or another.

For example when asking Russian people which country helped each other first, both would always answer Russia, so Serbian people would say as well. In fact, if we look at historical facts, whereas the Mongol invasion started in 1226 and devastated Russia, Serbia was at that time certainly a small but strong empire which will have his hegemony a century later with Tsar Dusan and helped Russia, especially by taking care of many Russian religious books in its monasteries. In many, even the smallest gestures throughout the history have shown the true Serbian loyalty and friendship towards Russia.

Russian is still using the case of the NATO aggression of Yugoslavia to demonstrate that Russia has been ever since, long and forever the enemy. Indeed, the Russian politics explained that the aggression on Yugoslavia was used as a punishment for its closeness with the Russian federation. In reality, based on historical facts, the Yugoslav federation and USSR ended relations in 1948 which lead to a close war scandal when in 1949 Soviet troops were massively placed in Hungary, ready to enter Yugoslavia.

Praising history based on its advantages, is very important to Russia, keen in order to make Serbian people on their side and especially to accept some deals which are not in the Serbian interest as we will see in the paper. As we said previously, Russia is using history sometimes with very accurate

facts and sometimes by changing and simply ignoring some facts for pushing political and/or economical decisions to their advantages.

The historical narrative and the way Russia uses it, is bringing us to the conclusion and quickly realising the true Russian nature by overlooking the current situation in the Former Yugoslav republics, especially in Serbia. As the current aim of that part is just to put the economic Russian initiatives in Serbia we will pass very quickly by saying that except Macedonia, Bosnia and Serbia every former Yugoslav countries joined NATO. The cases of Macedonia and Bosnia could be subject for an entire paper but we can easily say that Macedonia is close to join the European Union and NATO while Bosnia's accession to NATO is blocked by the Republika Srpska while Serbia is for the moment not interested by NATO. The point here is that Serbia, as the only country not part of NATO or willing to join in a short period of time, can be seen as one of the natural ally of Russia in the region.

Russia has an approach of international relations strongly based on political factors while China for example is more economically oriented. It means Russia is not keen to develop close relations in the Western Balkan with NATO countries which actually identify Russia as the strategic Serbian partner and then a potential threat for the region. Since the collapse of Yugoslavia and the NATO military and political intervention which never stops, countries were built on debatable borders and sometimes with very complex political institutions as in Bosnia for example. Since the Dayton Agreement⁵, Bosnia is divided in the Federation with Muslim Bosnian and Croats and with the "Republika Srpska" the Serbian Republic of Bosnia regrouping the Serbs in another hand. As if Bosnia was still not enough complicated, there is an international high representative with more power than the local elective politicians and he can revoke any decisions or political leaders not respecting "the spirit of the Dayton agreement".

Also, since the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo in 2008 mainly pushed and supported by the US, UK, Germany and other NATO countries, the Serbs of Bosnia crave the same independence for themselves and do not understand the support of those countries for Kosovo independence. The current situation of Bosnia and the division with the Republika Srpska is weakening Bosnia and allowing the destabilisation of the country and then the rest of the region as well. To be clear, it is important to explain that in former Yugoslavia, Russia has no need to create new unstable situation as they just use the numerous mistakes being made and still now by the NATO intervention and the current interferences in national affairs.

⁵OSCE "Dayton Peace Agreement" OSCE

To end our introduction, we will now explain how we will proceed our research.

First of all, we will discuss the main economic channel in which manner is Russia using energy. Russia is active throughout building pipelines going through the region and buying energy industries in Serbia.

Our second part will focus on banking and trade between the 2 countries. How is it implemented and what is the agenda behind that.

Finally, our last part will demonstrate how as we said previously, Russia is using and mixing economy with history, religion and culture like when Gazprom is renovating the Serbian Orthodox Church of Saint Sava.

Indeed, our 2 first parts will mainly be focused on governmental/companies bilateral relations while the last one will focus on what Russia is directly doing for the eyes of the Serbian population.

I: First and main economic channel used: the energy sector.

For the first part of our research we decided to focus on what the Russians mainly own in Russia; the energy sector. We all know Russia is using energy as a soft power and a method to strengthen its place abroad. If we look at the case of Ukraine for example, we could see that without the Russian gas and oil Ukrainian economy could not work properly and it forces the Ukrainian oligarchs and politicians despite the war to have good connections and relations with Russia. The situation of Ukraine is the same with the European Union and Vladimir Putin often threaten the EU to increase gas price when it is not adopting a favorable energetic politics towards Russia. Also, the Russian gas is often an example of division within the EU, between the Northern countries (Germany, Poland, the Visegrad countries and the Baltic States) which are all strongly dependent on Russian gas⁶ and the south of Europe (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal) which is a way less dependant on the Russian gas because more oriented toward the African resources⁷⁸. The proof is that after Putin annexed Crimea in 2014 and EU decided to put sanctions against Russia, Germany and the other northern countries which are actually often the most anti-Russian states among the European countries did not touch at all on the energy sector⁹. We can easily prove that argument with the German acceptance in 2017 for building the North stream 2 pipeline which is concerning all the northern countries mentioned above¹⁰¹¹¹²¹³.

As Russia is very weak in terms of soft power, the only alternative they have for not sending their troops is to use the energy sector as a soft weapon and it is why they always try to control and bargain the production and the distribution of gas and oil.

⁶Yafimava, K. (2015), European Energy Security and the Role of Russian Gas: Assessing the Feasibility and the Rationale of Reducing Dependence. Istituto Affari Internazionali. [pdf]. Vol. 15, n. 54. [Accessed 25 August 2016].

⁷(January 14, 2018) "EU even more dependent on Russian gas" The National Business

⁸(May 14, 2018) "Gas pipeline, Italy-France to launch the reverse flow" snam.it

⁹"EU sanctions against Russia over Ukraine crisis" The European Union Newsroom.

¹⁰November 08, 2011 "Merkel and Medvedev open Baltic Gas pipeline" Spiegel online

¹¹(April 12, 2018) "Nord Stream 2 receives full set of permits in Finland" Gazprom.

¹²Vinois, J-A.; Pellerin-Carlin T. (2015), Nord Stream 2: a decisive test for EU energy diplomacy. Natural Gas Europe. [online]. [Accessed 25 August 2016].

¹³(May 19, 2018) "Putin and Merkel defend Nord Stream pipeline" The local Germany.

I/A: Understand and analyse the South Stream pipeline project.

The following will deal with the South Stream pipeline Russian had the project to build. Several details must be discussed about that pipeline because even if the decision of doing it is reported, it was a disputable project, saying a lot about the Russian wishes and views in Serbia and in the former Yugoslav countries.

About the South Stream pipeline in general:

According to the Russian press agency RIA Novosti, the South Stream project was a pan-European pipeline aiming to link Russia to the western Europe¹⁴. The capacity was projected to be around 63 billions of squares meters gas per year, going under the Black Sea, Bulgaria, Serbia, Italy and Austria. His price was around E25 billions and it was supposed to be ready for 2013 as in August 2009 Turkey gave his agreement for passing through is territorial waters.

During a visit in Turkey in December 1, 2014, President Putin announced the abandon of the construction of the South Stream pipeline due to EU pressure toward Bulgaria¹⁵¹⁶. However, Putin announced another project, the Turkish Stream going from Russia to Turkey and linked to the Tesla pipeline from Turkey to Austria. As we dont know much about these 2 new projects and because the last one was left out due to the section going through Bulgaria we can consider it will impact Serbia more or less , as it was initially planned with the South Stream.

The global importance of the pipeline:

Quoting the European Commission, the European demands of gas will go from 502 in 2005 to 815 in 2030 (in billions of cubes meters), which means there is a certain battle for gas supply to the European Union¹⁷. It means the European Union will be even more dependant for its energy security by the countries where the pipeline is going through. It could for example strengthen this

¹⁴(January 14, 2015) "Gazprom announces final nail in the South Stream coffin" Russia Today

¹⁵Dombey, D. (December 1, 2014) "Russia to abandon South Stream pipeline, says Putin" Financial Times.

¹⁶ Lewis, Barbara. (June 3, 2014) "EU asks Bulgaria to stop work on Gazprom's South Stream pipeline" Reuters.

¹⁷Foy, H. (January 3,2018) "Russia's gas exports to Europe rise to record high" Financial Times.

countries position, which are dealing with the EU from the inside, like Hungary with the migrants for example, or the other dealing outside of the EU and trying to join them as the case of Serbia for example.

We can easily say the first aim of the building of South Stream pipeline was to counter Ukraine which is in war since 2014 and which even before the war was starting to look at the EU and NATO. Also due to the war in the Donbass region and the extremely tense relations with Russia, gas delivery to European countries was and is still often late.

As we said previously, building a pipeline costs a lot of money but in the same time creates new working opportunities for the unemployed and revives local economy of the countries and makes it sustainable longterm. Also, as we explained earlier, having a Russian pipeline in your country obviously makes you dependant from Russia.

If we look at the European Union pipeline project, it is interesting to notice the ways it was planned, leaving Serbia out of the Nabucco project, building its pipeline around the borders of Serbia, going through the European neighbouring countries, precisely choosing Romania¹⁸.

Instead of that, Russia offered 2 projects, one failed and the other still on discussion, positioning Serbia as their strategical partner¹⁹. Continuously investing into Serbian energy infrastructure, implementing the pipeline through the whole length of the countries territory, clearly reflecting its favours and political interest throughout the energy sector, bringing Serbia under Russian control. Due to planning and building the pipelines it economically urges more taxes, by having more of it, costs additional taxes per kilometre, making Serbia prospering of additional budget income.

Talking about Nabucco²⁰, it is important to notice the construction of the pipeline is not going very well at the moment. Launched in 2002 with the aim to import Iranian gas to Europe in order to reduce Russian dependance of some European countries such as Hungary or Germany for example²¹, the project was supposed to be ready for 2017 but was stoped in 2013. Regarding the recent events and more especially the new alliance between the Russian and the Turkish we can doubt a European

¹⁸(June 19, 2015) "Dacic: EU offered Russia to build gas pipeline bypassing Serbia" B92.

¹⁹ See the map in appendice I.

²⁰Dempsey, J. (December 22, 2009) "Hoping for more than just Energy from a pipeline" The New York Time.

²¹Dempsey, J. (June 11, 2008) "EU natural gas pipeline project gets first order" The New York Time.

project of pipeline will emerge soon. Also the general European attitude in the Syrian crisis and the last airstrikes lead by the US, supported by the EU and military involving France, pushing Tehran to strongly reconsider EU as a potential partner anymore. In the near future, it clears the path for the 2 Russian current projects, Turkish Streams and Tesla.

Was the South Stream project valuable for Serbia?

As we said in the previous paragraph, the path of the pipeline is interesting and not randomly drawn. In the South Stream project, Serbia was one of the key countries and it would have made Serbia an important energy supplier for the whole region. The total length of the track going through the Black Sea was 900 kilometres and Serbia was supposed to have 450 kilometres on its territory. The capacity of the Serbian section was supposed to be around 10 billions of square meters gas per year. As a pipeline requires new facility infrastructures, Russia had a plan to create a Serbo/Russian company to build the facilities, take care of them and work on the pipeline project. It would, according to Oleg Mitiaev, who works for the Russian Press agency RIA Novosti and also other western experts, bring around EUR 2 billions of foreign direct investments in Serbia, create 100,000 new jobs and generate EUR 200 millions of profit coming from the transit taxes²². For example, they estimated the Serbian section would require EUR 100 millions investment for being maintained and being checked for the next 25 years.

In every country concerned by the South stream project, Russian owned state company Gazprom would be partner with the national facility companies and also with the local distributors. The Russian projections and hopes in numbers for the employment went high on purpose, staging it as a political lie, for Russia to be seen as one of the biggest employer in Serbia and then strengthen its image in the country. Indeed, it is not impossible that the Russian project could fail one more time due to European pressure on both Bulgaria and Serbia for that time. Indeed, the EU could easily blackmail Serbia for the accession. Looking at how EU is working inside with for example Poland and Hungary, we can say EU is only powerful before accessing but not anymore once you joined the EU.

²²(December 16, 2009) "Final details on South Stream gas pipeline" Sputnik

Still talking about the Serbian alignment of South Stream, in May 2009, Serbia supported by Russia proposed Bosnia and the Republic of Macedonia to be linked to the pipeline. Here is an interesting point as we know that the Republic of Macedonia is under pressures from the EU and the United States to accept what the Albanian minority is asking for and to strongly and firmly turn toward them and not Russia²³. An example of that is the recent law Macedonia passed recognising Albanian as a national language despite a strong opposition from some politicians and the street. Also the relations between Macedonia and Serbia are currently not as the best. Having Macedonia dependant from Serbia for gas would have drive the crisis in a very different path and put Serbia in a stronger position to negotiate with them.

Concerning Bosnia, it is very important to notice that the preposition to be linked to the pipeline was not made to the authorities of the federation of Bosnia but only to the leader of the Republic Srpska of Bosnia, Milorad Dodik. As we explained previously in our general introduction, situation in Bosnia is very complex between the 2 entities and that pipeline would definitely give a strong asset to the Serbs Republic and his authoritarian leader, who is actually friend with Russian President Putin. We here clearly understand the importance of that kind of project and we see that while drawing their pipeline, Russian put Serbia in the best place possible in the project.

I/B: The alternative to the South Stream pipeline: Turkish Stream and Tesla Pipeline.

As we explained in the previous part, the South Stream pipeline was stopped²⁴ mainly due to European pressure towards Bulgaria, but we also mentioned the European option of Nabucco pipeline was abandoned as well. Also, if we look at the current situation, what the European Union is doing in Syria and the US redrawing from the Iranian nuclear deal, making almost sure the EU will not have any options to build their own pipeline. Considering the recent convergence between Russia and Turkey we can expect Turkey will favour Russia in the building of a new pipeline.

Here, it is important to explain the reasons for that. If we compare the current Russian, Eastern European, Serbian and Turkish form of power, we can say they all are more authoritarian than western

²³Gjukovikj, D. and Wilson Sokhey, S. (May 29, 2017) "This is why the West should pay attention to the drama in Macedonia" The Washington Post.

²⁴(December 1, 2014) "Russia drops South Stream gas pipeline plan" BBC News.

Europe. Also the European Union such like the US are mainly motivated, dealing with Serbia, by political purpose. Indeed, in Serbia, the US and EU are always coming with a political agenda while other countries such as Russia or China are coming with the clear intention to make business. Rather Russian or Chinese come to sign deal and do investments in Serbia, the German always send their minister of foreign affairs and the point of the discussion is about the recognition of Kosovo even if 5 EU countries do not recognise Kosovo. In fact, the EU is pressuring Serbia to recognise Kosovo while they even don't have a common agreement on the topic as we saw it on the last Balkan/EU summit in 2018 in Bulgaria. The EU often say they are afraid of Russia interfering via Serbia in the Balkans. For that reason, they do not want Serbia to take Russian side, but they do everything to push Serbia into the Russian hands, more especially in not doing anything to find a common agreement about Kosovo.

Serbia, in spite of all its efforts, has made the EU and US consider Kosovo independence according to Vucic as "to be a closed issue" because "the western countries do not wish to discuss the issue of where the territory of Kosovo belongs" he said in an interview to the Radio Television Serbia in 2018 after his trip to the US²⁵.

The Turkish Stream:

In 2014, while the South Stream project was dropped, Putin and Erdogan found agreement in doing the Turkish Stream. It is a pipeline going from Russia to Turkey through the Black Sea and has a capacity of 31.5 billions of cubes meters of natural gas²⁶. Turkey will use about 14 billions and the rest will be for Europe. It will make Turkey²⁷ in the position of the biggest gas transit country for that pipeline. In the 10th of October 2016, the Putin and Erdogan agreed on the construction of the pipeline and in June 2017 the construction was launched. In December of the same year, a meeting was set between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria to build the Tesla pipeline.

(March 23, 2018) "Vucic: Western powers consider Kosovo as closed issue" InSerbia

²⁶Geropoulos, K. (July 29, 2016) "Russia wants EU gas pipe inroads backing Nord Stream" NewEurope.

²⁷(February 08, 2015) "Gazprom agrees on 180-km land sections of Turkish Stream gas pipeline between Kiyikoy, Epsila" Interfax.

The Tesla Pipeline:

Continuing the Turkish Stream, the Tesla pipeline is aiming of going through the Balkan. The Tesla pipeline, named after the famous Serbian engineer, is supposed to be between 1300 and 1400 km with a capacity of 27 billions of m³ and should be ready by the year of 2019. The final goal is to deliver gas to Austria, Hungary and the rest of Europe, which is similar to the idea of the South Stream. Austria has changed its policy towards Russia and maybe even the Balkans (due to the conservative/far-right government). We can notice the change when after the Skripal case Austria didn't expel Russian diplomats whereas most of the EU countries did.²⁸ Hungary in charge with Victor Orban, being on good terms with Putin, used it for achieving deals, among them an important energy project of renovating the only Hungarian nuclear central.

According to the Serbian prime minister Ana Brnabic in a conference given in 2018, the pipeline is supposed to "start soon" as "currently we are designing NIS-Dimitrovgrad (pipeline)". She also stated that the pipeline project is one of the top priorities of the Serbian government with the aim for Serbia to "become one of the gas hubs in this part of Europe, via the Turkish Stream".

The Serbian company "Serbian Stream" will normally be the main contractor for the works on the route of the pipeline and then from the Serbian hub they would like to do, gas will go to the rest of Europe. If the war in Ukraine keeps going it may be possible that pipeline turned to be the major gas route toward Europe²⁹³⁰.

I/C: The Serbian gas and oil industry.

According to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia and to the Serbian Ministry of Mining and Energy, Serbian crude oil reserves were in 2010 amounted to 10.14 millions tons. The same sources estimate the oil shale reserves about 4.8 billions tons. These estimations do not

²⁸Dewan, A. (March 28, 2018) "These are all the countries that are expelling Russian diplomats" CNN World.

²⁹Glamotchak, M. (2011) "Russie-Serbie: l'âme slave à l'épreuve de l'énergie"CAIRN.

³⁰Glamotchak, M. (2014) "Diplomates gazières dans les Balkans : la Russie et l'Union européenne" Géoéconomie.

count about the reserve in Kosovo-Metohija. To put it in a broader context, in 2010, 50.7% of the primary energy consumption for Serbia was coal, 23.7% oil and only 12.1% natural gas, mainly coming from abroad. Indeed, Serbian needs are only 15% satisfied with Serbian resources. According to the American intelligence agency the CIA, Serbia in 2016 imports 1.664 billion of cube meters.

Russian presence in the Serbian market, the example of the NIS/Gasprom deal:

Judy Dempsey in 2008 writing in the New York Times Magazine explained that Russian Gasprom company bought Serbia's oil monopoly few days only after signing a deal with Bulgaria as part of the South Stream pipeline project we explained previously. On that deal, Russian energy giant Gasprom bought 51% stake in NIS, the Serbian state-owned oil company.

According to Borut Grgic³¹, a Slovenian energy expert, "regarding the deal between Russian and Serbia, we can blame the E.U. for some of this [...] in all its negotiations with Serbia while dealing with the future status of Kosovo, the E.U. never brought up to Serbia the issue of energy security and how Serbia could play an important role for Europe. Indeed, more than that, when that deal was signed, it was clear, the European pipeline project Nabucco would never emerge. As said previously, Serbia is an important partner due to its geopolitical situation in the Balkan and rather to include them, the E.U. preferred to exclude Serbia. Russia just had to come after that and fix the European mistake, once again.

According to the BBC³², Gasprom paid \$ 560 millions for the 51% of NIS and will invest \$725 millions to modernise the Serbian energy sector. In March 2011 Gasprom decided to buy another 5% to reach 56% of the NIS's capital.

The deal between NIS and Gasprom definitely gave every means for Russia to control gas and oil delivery in the country and even the region as NIS started in 2011 to operate in Bosnia, Hungary and Romania. Indeed, NIS was already before to be privatised the largest Serbian network of filling

³¹Dempsey, J. (January 23, 2008) "Russia's Gazprom takes control of Serbian oil monopoly" The New York Times.

³²(January 25, 2008) "Serbia signs Gazprom energy pact" BBC News.

stations with around 330 filling stations, 10 loading terminals and a large network of depot all across Serbia.

The deal between NIS and Gasprom was not a strictly business agreement but it had a political agenda behind. It's important to emphasise that before the purchase of NIS, an independent financial audit cabinet estimated NIS to be sold around E2.2 billions and Gasprom bought it for only E400 millions. Also the deal was made without inviting any western stakeholders to compete on tender while other international and especially European companies were interested³³.

We can easily explain these very comfortable advantages given to Gasprom by the European and American position toward the question of Kosovo-Metohija. At the time the deal occurred, Serbian people were still freshly remembering the illegal bombing of Serbia and the western states were strongly pushing and supporting for Kosovo independence³⁴.

The older case of Beopetrol/Lukoil:

Even if NIS and then Gasprom were the main company in the energy sector, they weren't the only ones. During the Yugoslav wars, when Croatia started to secede, the Serbian part of the Croatian company INA decided to separate and to form a separate company and in 1991 they started to operate in Serbia with all INA properties, which meant around 200 petrol stations, 9 warehouses and several trucks and vehicles. The company was in 1992 renamed Beopetrol and was in 2003 sold by the Government of Serbia to the Russian company Lukoil. They paid E207 millions to acquire 79.5% of shares. In 2007, in his speech at the "Balkan Energy Cooperation Summit" in Zagreb, Russian President stated Lukoil "became the biggest provider of resources in the Balkans due to a Russian investment of \$1.5 billion".

Then it is important to notice that when Russia bought NIS it wasn't their first time, as they did it before with Beopetrol. Also it means Russia fully controls every part of the oil and gas market in Serbia, without having any kind of competition, leading a total monopoly. In that case, Serbian Go-

³³Moustafa, A. (November 24, 2015) "Les rapprochements énergétiques entre la Russie et la Serbie" InfoGuerre.

³⁴Menzel, J. (March 09, 2016) "La politique russe en Serbie: Solidarité Slave ou réalisme?" Revue Regard sur l'est.

vernment allowed the sale of the both companies surely knowing it would create a Russian monopoly in the very strategic energy.

Which was later on proven as a major economical mistake, again showing the true nature of the Serbian regime being evidently not ready to be fully capitalist but stuck in its old socialist and corruptive habits.

The first part of our essay basically focused on energy sector in Serbia. We explained that Russia is globally in lack of soft power except using in Church and energy, in the case of Serbia. We must however admit it is a very strong asset for Russia to strengthen its position in every country, and here we focused on their influence in Serbia. In an interview given to the Serbian newspaper Politika, Putin explained Russia invested more than \$3 billions in Serbia, mainly in energy or strategic sectors. Also, to link with our introduction, we explained that in the case of the deal between Gasprom and NIS, Russia was more than favoured due to his position toward the case of Kosovo and also because Russia played very well the card on historical/religious/cultural friendship with Serbia. As we said, Russia is using every means they can in order to strengthen its position in the Balkan and more especially Serbia and we saw that business is very often mixed with common history, religious feeling and cultural ties.

Russia got a certain advantage from the deals they fulfilled within the last 15 years in Serbia. The Russia strategy in the Balkan is clear, using Serbia as a bridgehead for the Russian influence in the Balkan, in Central Europe and in Europe more globally. By controlling the 2 biggest Serbian gas and oil supplier, Russia is controlling the market but also indirectly around 10% of the Serbian State budget. Also by making NIS the biggest energy industry in the Balkan, Russia is indirectly assuring his position in the region. However, we must note that sometimes and even very often in the Balkan region the Russian and Serbian interests are going alongside. For example both had no interest in Montenegro joining NATO and both has interest in keeping Macedonia out of NATO. Looking at how the Russian use the gas as a mean of pressure, we can surely say that NIS oil and gas distribution in Macedonia will be used when Macedonia will not follow the Serbia/Russian interest in the region. Indeed, it must be said that Serbian authorities are not blind and they allow Russia to make a move in the Balkan which is in the complete Serbian interest. Also, some critics were more especially made when the sell to Gasprom occurred as the price was as we discussed it earlier a way too low. Maybe and even surely Serbia is not winning on a short term but that sell assure them to have a fix and cheap price for oil and gas for the next 25 years. However, it is not sure yet the deal will

really happen. Also, Russia strongly support Serbia over the question of Kosovo as it was explained by many as being part of the Nis/Gasprom deal but Russia, like Spain or China, also has his own interest in not recognising Kosovo. Also, the Russian support for Serbia over Kosovo is only in the UN and diplomatic world and it does not cost so much for Russia. Also Serbia is now sure to have all the ressources they need for pushing their economies.

Our conclusion and analyse would be too easy and not completed if we did not remind that E.U and the western countries in general made very important mistakes in the Balkan and more especially in Serbia. Talking about pipeline for example, it is too easy for European leaders to blame Serbia, Bulgaria and the other countries to favour Russia due to cultural or religious or any other kind of ties. Indeed, if we strictly look at the projects Russia and E.U proposed, they can globally say that while E.U was just planning to build a pipeline, Russia offered to build a pipeline, provide with gas and oil, and participate on a long run in the building and maintenance of the installations. European project was in a way too ambitious but not enough inclusive with the countries welcoming the pipeline. Also Russia just had to ride the E.U mistakes as they believe they could separate the pipeline project to their global international politics. It is sure that by pushing and supporting the unilateral declaration of independence of Serbian province of Kosovo, Serbs wont be very disposed to favour them. Also, for example the Nabucco project was aimed to transferred gas from Iran while on the same time the E.U is doing airstrikes and destabilising Syria, the main partner of Iran in the region. By following the aggressive US policy both in the Balkan and in the Middle East, the E.U has another time divest themselves from conquering or even securing allies in the both regions.

In that gas war, Serbia has not many other choices. Indeed, as we explained earlier, Russian option is assuring Serbia to have a lower gas price for the next 25 years and to have enough gas for their needs. Also, due to his location, and more especially since the lost of Montenegro, Serbia has no sea door anymore. The other option for Serbia would be to have gas from Italy, which is coming mainly from Libya or also to get gas from France which is receiving it from Algeria. It is a possible solution for Serbia since Italy is an important gas exporter but it will be a very expensive option. In another hand, considering Serbia has pretty good relations with Israel, Cyprus, Lebanon and Syria they could received gas from them and more especially Israel who has some gas exploitations in the Mediterranean Sea. But on that matter of gas, Serbia is not alone and they must build a pipeline and then find partners and the other countries involved (Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary and Austria) have no interest in paying their gas more than what the Russian offer. Finally, we must say that the energy

sector is requiring a long term policy and stability, which is definitely not the case in the Middle East.

II: The other economic sectors where Russia is investing.

We focused on our previous part about the Russian investments in the energy sector. Indeed, the one and only Russian soft power. In the present part, we will focus on the other sectors where Russia is investing in Serbia.

II/A: The Russian investments made in Serbia.

Except talking about energy sector, the economic relations between both countries were never very high. In 2000, Russia and Serbia signed a free trade agreement and to show how Russia took it seriously, it was never ratified by Russian side even if they later confirmed it. According to the National Bank of Serbia, between 2005-2013, Russia invested only 594.8 millions of US Dollars which is 4.5% of all foreign investment in Serbia during that period. However it is important to be aware of few facts.

According to the European Union³⁵, in 2010, Russia was the largest investor in Serbia with EUR 216 million of investments. However, due to the Ukrainian war, the cost of the Crimean annexion and the Western sanctions, Russia dropped in 2016 to the only the 9th largest investor in Serbia with only EUR 81.2 million worth of investment. Indeed, it is easy to make the numbers saying what they want and in that case, comparaisons are not always good. From a pro-European perspective, they will say EU invests more than Russia. It is true, but EU is not a single country, it is and was at that time 28 countries and 3 major economic countries (UK, Germany, France) and countries like Austria or Hungary which have been always a partner with Serbia rather than Russia as a single country³⁶. On the other hand, coming from a pro-Russian perspective, they would say the numbers were high but they would forget to signify, as Maria Szpala³⁷ explained, "Apart from the energy sector, oil and gas imports, Russia's role in the Serbian economy has been insignificant". Even more

³⁵(November 2017) "Serbia's cooperation with China, the European Union, Russia and the United States of America" Directorate-General for external policy.

³⁶ See appendice IV which compares the Russian and the EU investments in the EU.

³⁷Szpala, M. (October 29, 2014) "Russia in Serbia - Soft power and hard interests" OSW.

than that, while Russian President Medvedev said Russia will invest EUR 1 billion to help the Serbian infrastructures, the money never came.

In 2013 Serbian imports from Russia was estimated 1.4 billion euros, making up 9.2% of the total import volume. On the other hand, the value of Serbian exports to Russia stood at 0.79 billion euros. Although the volume of Serbian exports to Russia have been growing, in the context of the increase in Serbia's export figures the importance of the country's trade with Russia has diminished (from 7.7% in 2012 to 7.3% in 2013). The EU and CEFTA remain Serbia's main trade partners.

In order to give a global overview and an accurate summary of the Russian economic ties in Serbia we found important to also mention the other sectors where Russia invested and is investing. Also it is important to look at that part keeping in mind about the European sanctions put in place towards Russia in 2014. In fact, Russia used some non European countries and among them Serbia in order to counter measure the sanctions.

II/B: The Russian influences in the Serbian banking system.

The Serbian banking system is still weak and still in transition to be fully established as a liberal market and it may reduce or slow down foreign investments. In 2017, Snezana Bjelotomic wrote in the Serbian economic newspaper "the Serbian monitor" that around 90% of the Russian investments in Serbia went to the energy sector³⁸ as we explained in our previous part, she added, "Russia is the third biggest foreign trade partner of Serbia (after Italy and Germany)".

Russia has an insignificant role in the Serbian banking system, which is like energy, a strategic sector. The Serbian banking system is a liberal open system regulated by the central national bank of Serbia, including in 2018, 29 commercial banks and among them 21 are foreign. Russia has currently 2 commercial banks operating in Serbia (Sberbank ranked 22nd and VTB Bank ranked 28th). According to Andrey Khripunov, the Russian trade representative in Serbia, Russian bank Exporbank will soon be ready to start commercial banking operations in Serbia. Both banks mentioned above are closely working with the Kremlin as Sberbank is partially owned state company and both are from far controlled by Igor Vladimirovich Kim, a close friend to Putin. So even if the Russian

³⁸Bjelotomic, S. (June 26, 2017) "Truth about Russian investments in Serbia" Serbian monitor.com

banks operating in Serbia, are not the biggest in the market, the fact that they are close to the Russian State is a clear evidence they are not in Serbia by mistake and we can apparently take in account that there is a concern from the top to invest in different Serbian strategic sectors. We can surely say after investing and controlling the energy sector, Russia would be interested in controlling or at least having influences in the Serbian financial and banking sectors. However, knowing how Russian State is working we may not say it is a fully organised plan and we can not point out clearly who is behind. Indeed, as I already wrote in another paper "Why will Russia never recognise Kosovo"³⁹ the question of Serbia is always pushed on the table by the so called "siloviki" clan, coming from the security system of Russia and being led by ideological motivations. In fact, the current situation in Kosovo is being used by them for explaining with a propaganda purpose that the west wants to do in Russia what they did in Kosovo. The Russian myth viewing Russia as an assuaged castle is being threaten by the case of Kosovo and the NATO enlargement to the Russian border and in the Balkans.

II/C: In which way is Russia impacting the Serbian agricultural sector?

In 2006, the exports of agri-food net worth \$3 billion was almost the same as in 2015 and the largest trade partner of Serbia is according to the Serbian Ministry of Agriculture once again the European with 58% of their exports and 45% of imports. Serbia is also exporting 37% to the Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and the Kosovo province) and importing 23% from them. Indeed, EU is a major trader partner and since 2001 Serbia is enjoying preferential access for its agri-food industry.

The agri-food sector represented in 2016 19.4% of the total Serbian exports, with a surplus of \$1.4 billion, which is 10% more than in 2015⁴⁰.

During the Ukrainian crisis, in 2014, the Western countries mainly part of NATO decided to adopt economic sanctions towards Russia. It made an important stop to the Russian economy but also to some European countries like France for example which saw his agriculture exportations decreasing. Putin's answer to the West was to import less and locally produce more, especially in the agriculture and food sector where Russia had a good potential. However it takes time and a country can

³⁹ Antoine, P. (2017) "Why will Russia never recognise Kosovo?" Paper wrote for the UCL class: Russian foreign policy.

⁴⁰(February 2, 2018) "Serbia - Agriculture" export.gov.

not build a whole agriculture sector or even expand it in just few years only. So Serbia seized the opportunity to export their agricultural products to Russia. Exports were estimated \$310 million in 2016 or approximately the same as in 2015, when exports to Russia increased over 65 percent compared to 2014 (before sanctions), when Serbian agricultural exports to the Russian market were valued only at \$184.6 million.

To conclude we can easily say Russia is not taking any risks in Serbia as they only deal with energy. Serbia took a small advantage of the western sanctions to increase his agro-food exports towards Russia but we must here admit that the main effort of Russia is to be independent from agriculture imports, which means possibly less exports for the Serbian agriculture towards Russia. Also it must be mentioned that Russian/Serbian ties are often a source of discussion and tensions while talking about the Serbian accession to the EU, which is strongly pressuring Serbia to implement sanctions towards Russia. Again, rather than having a strictly economic approach while dealing with Serbia, the European Union prefers to impose his views to Serbia. It is very strange to follow such policy since many European countries and among them Germany have very good economic relations with Russia but do not wish or let Serbia to maintain their good relations with Russia. Germany often says Serbia could be a Russian troll inside the EU and underline the case of Russian energy sector in Serbia, but they do not comment anything at all since the Baltic States, Poland and Germany itself is highly (not less than 70% and even 100% for the Baltic states) dependant from Russian gas. Also, Germany pressured Bulgaria not to do the South Stream pipeline but allowed the construction of the northern pipeline with Russia⁴¹. Here we have a clear example of the double standard Germany is playing by allowing pipeline to go through German allied countries (north countries, Baltic States and Poland) but not in the South Easter Europe where Germany is less present and less powerful.

⁴¹ Lewis, Barbara. (June 3, 2014) "EU asks Bulgaria to stop work on Gazprom's South Stream pipeline" Reuters.

III: How is Russia mixing economy with other factors in order to make Serbian people keen to develop ties with Russia

One of the ways Russia has found and experienced to develop its economical partnership with Serbia is to link the economical objective to other areas of strong interest Serbian people are much interested in: History, Religion and Culture are no doubt among the first of these. In a recent survey conducted among the population in 2017 to assess its perception on how much financial support was received by Serbia, and from where, the EU appeared to come in a bad position with only twenty-three percent, far below Russia and even China⁴²⁴³. This perception is far from reality, the EU being by far the first contributor and this misperception needs to be questioned and why is the EU not favourably seen by the Serbian population, compared to Russia at first.

Looking at establishing some comparison with Europe, the case of Poland is of interest with long and extremely difficult relationships with Germany in the West and Russia in the East. To survive in the middle of two major countries by the size and their regional heavy influence always needed - and certainly still at some point – some realism and excellent diplomatic skills. Being nowadays a full member of the EU and having joined NATO brought Poland in a very different and more stable situation than the one she had for centuries between her two tumultuous neighbours. Serbia is somehow in the same situation Poland was before joining EU and Nato.

The picture that the EU has played some double game with Serbia, still waiting to join, when Croatia or Kosovo look as having a much greater support does not give the EU a favourable position in the mind of the population and event brought some scepticism still in place. This makes the Russian manoeuvres more realistic and with chances for success.

Let us look now at some examples and how is Russia consolidating her position and benefiting from a difficult position of the EU in the country and the Balkan area and what is the weight of her involvement during the war and the fall of the former Yugoslavia and the Kosovo crisis.

⁴²Garcevic, S. (January 31, 2018) "Razzle dazzle diplomacy in Serbia" BalkanInsight.

⁴³(March 14, 2018) "Serbs trust Putin most among world leaders - Survey" BalkanInsight.

III/A: The case of the Serbian Church of Saint Sava.

In the centre of Belgrade stands the second biggest Orthodox Church in the world, which is an important root of pride for Serbian people. Saint Sava, is one of the most important Saint in the Serbian Orthodox Church as he was the founder of the Church in 1219 and was considered by the Serbs during the Ottoman colonisation as their protector.

The church started to be built in 1939 and due to historical events and political changes, the edifice is still not finished. After this historical introduction, it is interesting to stress the mosaic inside was entirely paid by Gasprom, worth EUR4 Millions and was made in Russia before to be brought and set in the church in 2018. 70 Russian and Serbian artists worked on that mosaic in what Vucic saw a ***”weaving in millions of glittering pieces into one single message of Brotherhood and solidarity”***. The unveiling of the mosaic was the occasion for Vucic to welcome Russian minister of foreign affairs Sergueï Lavrov and Milorad Dodik, the President of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia, himself very close to Putin. Of course, on the scale of international relations this stays a minor action but quite a good picture of Russian involvement in local affairs and a good one of a cheap and easy process to reinforce strong ties already in place⁴⁴.

In 2012, Russia further signed an agreement to complete the all building of the church and furnish it totally.

In 2016, Gasprom Deputy CEO for corporate Communications Alexander Dybal commented the fact that Gasprom was investing in NIS as not only being an economical investor but also a ”major supporter and sponsor of various projects estimated as important to the country” and added *”we have every confidence that the cathedral, once fully restored, will become a significant symbol of the many centuries of friendship between Russia and Serbia”*⁴⁵.

The case of the restoration of the Saint Sava Cathedral is interesting to illustrate how Russia is acting in Serbia. Indeed, Gasprom paid EUR 4 Millions for the restoration but bought 55% of the NIS capital for a quarter of the real price as we demonstrated previously. More, the Russian action in Saint Sava is very visible and every Serbian citizen can appreciate it, and see it as a support from

⁴⁴(February 22, 2018) ”Russian FM attends unveiling of mosaic in Church of St. Sava” B92.

⁴⁵Dybal, A. (March 11, 2016) ”Gazprom Neft supporting restoration of St Sava Cathedral, Belgrade” Gazprom Neft.

another Orthodox country⁴⁶. In Serbia, Russia is also committed to win a battle of media and picture. Aim is to reinforce the picture of a friendly Russia involved in Serbia and acting to develop the country while Western countries damaged Serbia during the bombings of Nato. It is of course not totally accurate and subject to more rational assessments based on real facts. Nevertheless, common people certainly keep irrational to some points, do not have the capacity to judge, do not have the real information to do it and certainly endorse this vision of a friendly relationship with Russia. This is also made easier by the perception of the aggressive attitude the EU and Nato kept during the Kosovo crisis and bombing of the country and the role played to have Kosovo out of Serbia. The fact that situation in Kosovo remains volatile and Serbian communities are left with few or no protection keeps the resentment against the EU real.

Dealing with the bombing, it remains that it was clearly illegal, ammunitions used (with use of uranium) were prohibited weapons which polluted many areas and most casualties went civilians. EU is often likely seen by many as an important actor in the break up of Yugoslavia while Russia was counter balancing this hostile approach and not taking any important role, which was the best she could do at that time.

III/B: The Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Centre in Niš.

Established in April 2012 following a cooperation agreement between the Russian Government and the Serbian Government, the centre official mission is to help Serbian authorities in case of fire, natural disasters (like the large flooding which took place in the whole region in 2014), to provide with humanitarian aid, organise mutual training with Serbian services and at the end to remove all residual explosives devices remaining from the NATO bombing.

The centre was from the beginning very badly welcomed by the EU and the US but the pressure towards Serbia increased in 2016 when Russia asked for the centre and the Russian people working in to be given a full diplomatic immunity. European and American diplomats often claim the centre

⁴⁶Aleksov, B. (December 2003) "Nationalism in construction: The memorial Church of St. Sava on Vračar Hill in Belgrade" Balkanologie.

to be a "spy nest for Russia",⁴⁷ with no real proof for it. On the other side, they also forget the biggest NATO base in Europe is currently located in the Serbian province of Kosovo. The US Ambassador to Serbia, Mr Kyle Randolph Scott admitted however that the centre was certainly not a Russian military asset but suggested that Russian would gain military support in Serbia because of this tool⁴⁸. While visiting Serbia in 2017 the US Senator Ron Johnson even threatened Serbia that granting the diplomatic immunity to the centre would no-doubt severely "impact Serbian economy and Western direct-investments"⁴⁹, which is a clear example of blackmailing a sovereign government.

Keeping neutral as much as possible, it remains challenging to estimate the EU and US complain about a Russian centre when ignoring the military Bondsteel base and the fact that Serbian soil has never been cleaned from the deadly and "dirty" weapons NATO used to bomb Serbia.

All together, these are good illustration of the double standards used in the region Serbian people are denouncing. Even without being pro-Russia but simply looking at the best for them and their country drives them to some realism. By acting this way, the EU and the US are somehow pushing Serbia towards Russia, then complaining and even blaming Serbia for that.

⁴⁷Zivanovic, M. (September 11, 2017) "Russian center in Serbia scorns espionage claims" BalkanInsight.

⁴⁸Djurdjic, M. (June 15, 2017) "US sees Russia's humanitarian center in Serbia as spy outpost" VOA Nesw.

⁴⁹(August 30, 2017) "Senator je rekao svoje, šta će biti sa Rusima u Nišu?" B92.

III/C: The limits of the Russian soft power in Serbia, the issue of corruption among others.

Russia is lacking soft power and Serbia is certainly one of the only countries they can keep acting or operating in due to the historical, cultural and religious ties both countries have. Looking carefully and analyzing how Russia can protect her own interests in the area and the current situation, it seems only three options remain open. Using gas they produce a lot and export as a weapon, use the diasporas they have or chose (as a last and risky option) military scenario when feasible at minimum cost. This last one was selected for Georgia and Ukraine.

Soft power has never been a major strength for Russia in the past.

Russia never had a strong history in soft power and the only remaining of the current Russian soft power is coming from the USSR like Yugoslavia for Serbia. Indeed, both countries, Russia and Serbia are now using the networks they developed during the USSR and Yugoslav era.

Another example is Latvia where the former USSR formed and pushed her own Diaspora, in the universities, in the army. Even if the Latvian authorities are aware of the manoeuvre and do her best to limit the real influence of this strategy and the actors it needs a lot of efforts, assets and strategy to achieve it and takes time. If you consider Russia still has an important Russian minority in the country, it explains why she is still keeping some influence in the country. However, even if it looks very difficult to compare, Russia is most likely not in a position to interfere as much as the US and the Western countries are doing, with using economic, diplomatic pressures when necessary.

In Russian history, the only tool of soft power they had and still try to preserve has been the Russian Orthodox Church and this is certainly still very present in Serbia where Russia always had some Slavonic and orthodox societies. Which were what we would now call NGOs. Indeed, other Orthodox Churches were being financially helped by the Russian one which means they were always close to Russia.

Later, with the Communist October revolution, the Russian Orthodox Church stopped having a role and after the collapse of the USSR, most of all the former satellites countries in Europe moved toward the EU and NATO.

Looking at and considering the Balkans, Russia could have done a lot more, although it was weakened by the fall of communism. This was especially true when recently Montenegro joined NATO. As well known, Montenegro is surviving from tourism and the whole developed around this sector

and the Russian authorities could have easily and very legally decreased the flow of Russian tourists (exactly what they did with Turkey when one of their fighter planes was shot down over Syria). Such retaliation action did not take place which looks like a confirmation Russia is not much interested in the Balkans, except of course about Serbia as illustrated above and for the reasons given.

Beside what was explained earlier, Russia has no soft power because the money the government could have spent or is spending for that matter is simply not going where it should be. Indeed, Russian administration is known to suffer from corruption when using soft power operation in its strategy requires money to be spent accordingly to plans, with proven results although financial checks and controls may be difficult⁵⁰. It is for example easy to claim that this amount of money has been spent for making pro-Russian advertisement and propaganda in France or Europe, it remains very tricky to confirm and prove this is reality. The occasions to have funds diverted and corruption to develop are many and experts are numerous to facilitate and benefit from any case with wrong information. Cheating on any aspect or step of such program is easy and proofs are usually extremely hard to get.

Serbia is also well known for the many monuments built to pay tribute to Russian famous people involved one way or the other in local history. Indeed, it is a very easy way to steal a bit of money. You are working at the embassy or Gasprom for example and you ask for \$150 000 in order to build a monument for the Tsar Nikolai II but you know the real price is \$75 000, its enough for you to keep the rest and share with the one who built the statue and gave you a bill of \$150 000. Also, the fact it happened in Serbia is better for them since Serbia is another country and as we explained you can always find excuse for having a bigger price than in Russia.

Due to that cash flow, being a pro-Russian politician can be a good work in Serbia as you can find some electors and supporters and as you can conclude a deal for organising important propaganda events which are big in the news but not in reality and again, no-one in Moscow can check it⁵¹.

According to many newspapers and survey (and among them Forbes), there is a corruption system which is used by President Putin and the clans around him to keep the power in Russia. The system

⁵⁰Baunov, A. (July 7, 2017) "How Putin made political corruption great again" The Atlantic.

⁵¹(March 04, 2017) "UDARNA VIJEST Novi.ba prvi objavljuje istraživanje i dokaze koje će potresti region: KAKO JE RUSKI TAJKUN i "SPECIJALISTA ZA REFERENDUME" ostavio Dodika na vlasti i zašto Moskva podržava rušenje BiH! (PRVI DIO)" Novi.ba.

is known in Russian language as: ”*Откат, распил, занос*”⁵² which can approximately be translated by the corruption is organised with three steps known as: Throwback, distribution, drift. It means corruption is institutionalised in Russia, at the top of the administration and is done by stealing the money the state is distributing to the population or on other purposes such as arranged for soft power.

To conclude, we can write it is then now clear how Russia is deliberately using and arranging economics in order to strengthen her ties with Serbia. Let us now carefully focus on the different Russian investments and economic moves this country is organising in Serbia. As well known Russia is mainly present in the energy sector and benefit of a very favourable position with gas exporting. Russia has succeeded to take over the Serbian energetic sector. This has been achieved in quite a short period of time and in a way which has brought no claim or anger from Serbian authorities which even looked consenting and did never check for a counter proposal. This is because the other main actor Serbia could have engaged with to limit its dependence to one actor only, the EU, was absent and not committed to help.

This is how and where the EU and more especially Germany lost possibilities for good investments in Serbia. The global impression could be that a share of responsibilities has come and is de facto in place with Russia keeping a pole position by controlling the energetic sector and the EU more involved in moral actions articulated around Liberty, Democracy and ways to promote them before Serbia would be allowed to join, even if they currently support Vucic as he can be seen as the less worst option in Serbia. Also Vucic is very strong in killing other democratic and EU friendly opposition and putting ultra nationalist leaders as the main opposition.

Russia as took in her hands some real ties and keep ways to impose her views in case of needs when the EU is struggling to have courageous but hard to reach concepts in place after many efforts are required.

Gasprom could buy 55% of NIS for a very good price because they supported (and still support) Serbia on the matter of Kosovo while the EU institutions and almost every EU countries (except 5) recognised Kosovo due to a total alignment on the US foreign policy. Talking about Kosovo, it is for example interesting to see that the United Kingdom is strongly supporting Kosovo independence

⁵²(October 21, 2010) ”Откат, распил, занос” Forbes.

while they strongly fought Irish separatist and even committed crimes like during the protests in 1972 when the British troops killed 14 people in the so called "bloody Sunday". Also the recent referendum on Scottish independence was obviously very manipulated as Scottish people living abroad could not vote but foreigners living in Scotland (like the British troops for example) could. These last ones voted with a high majority to remain in, while the Scottish government is in favour of leaving the UK, and is even more after the Brexit.

The same situation can be given in France as well for example, facing independent movements in Corsica and in the French Guyana.

Indeed, Serbia is rightly condemning the obvious double standard from the EU. Right after the events in Catalonia in 2017, Serbia rightly asked the EU why they did support Spanish territorial integrity when the same EU destroyed the Serbian one and even illegally bombed Serbia two decades before. With time going, it is now clear that the German allegation of war crimes and ethnic cleansing done by Serbs against Albanians living in Kosovo were fake and were just used as legitimate reason for attacking Serbia and forcing the Serbian troops to leave Kosovo soil and create their own puppet state backed by terrorist organisation UÇK. Not a single doubt can be raised about UÇK, even if the US withdrew them from their list of terrorist groups in 1997. Robert Gelbart, the US special envoy of Bill Clinton in the Balkan described them "without any question, as a terrorist group"⁵³. As a former French officier who's served in Kosovo said, "Europe died in Pristina"⁵⁴. Economically speaking we saw the consequences for the EU in Serbia to always be aligned on the US foreign policy.

We cannot seriously doubt Serbian governments from Djindic to Vucic are EU oriented but the "no go" is always coming from the EU, for political purposes mainly if not only. In fact, the economical and financial situation of Serbia is a bit better or at least to worst than in Bulgaria, Romania or Croatia for comparison. Serbia fulfilled every requirement the EU has required like for example having former President Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic surrounding. The EU, the US and France tried for so long to capture them, they spend millions and millions and never succeeded in their search to bring them to trial. And this had a cost if you consider the support from the local populations these 2 Serbian criminals enjoyed and still enjoy. The only way for the EU to catch

⁵³Prepared by Moran, M. (2006) "Terrorist Groups and Political Legitimacy", Council on Foreign Relations

⁵⁴Hogard, J. (2014). "L'Europe est morte à Pristina, Guerre au Kosovo (Printemps-Été 1999)", Hugo et Compagnie, available in Serbia.

them was to pressure Serbia and threaten her not to join the EU if they did not comply giving the former leaders. Serbia accepted and both are now in jail in Holland but Serbs often ask why the country is still delayed to join? And why is Croatia in already when General Ante Gotovina remains free? How could Croatian General Slobodan Praljak be able to kill himself in one of the most secured prison in the world? How could Croatia be given membership in the EU when she still does not really and frankly admit his guilt for WWII crimes and more especially in Jasenovac. And this when all EU countries are accepting their own responsibilities? The answer is that Croatia is part of NATO and accepts the US and EU views on the Balkan region which Serbia does not. There is nothing about economy in the Balkan, everything is politics.

China, to be the number actor someday in the world, sees Serbia as the door to Europe in the new Silk Road they would like to build between Asia and Europe. As described before the aims and games played by the EU and Russia in Serbia are known, but China does not care so much about politics, and only cares and pushes to build her silk road. Whereas the US, EU and Russia are keen to play with soft power, the Chinese play with their favourite and very pragmatic toll: investing in and building infrastructures⁵⁵.

It would be too easy to estimate Chinese interest over Serbia as economic only. Indeed, China, as Russia, is scared by separatism in the Tibet region and not very confident with its Ouïghours population. It is a reason why China is keen to support Serbia on the Kosovo issue. Indeed, China, one of the 5 permanent member-states of the UN Security Council did not recognise the independence of Kosovo in 2008 and voted against the Kosovo membership in UNESCO last year in 2016⁵⁶. Also in 2009, both countries have signed an agreement where they engaged to protect the territorial sovereignty of both states⁵⁷.

China is an economical empire waking up and seeking to invest. The Chinese foreign policy is very pragmatic and not based on political ideology like it is the case with the US or the EU, but with economical purposes. China is reinforcing her position in Serbia by building infrastructures as they plan to use them for the future. Again, China is not mainly driven by politics and build capacities in

⁵⁵Varsovie, A. (June 18, 2016) "China's Xi Highlights Serbia trade as Beijing signs 22 deals", Reuters.

⁵⁶Fitzgerald, D. (November 09, 2015) "Kosovo falls three votes short in UNESCO bid", UN Tribune.

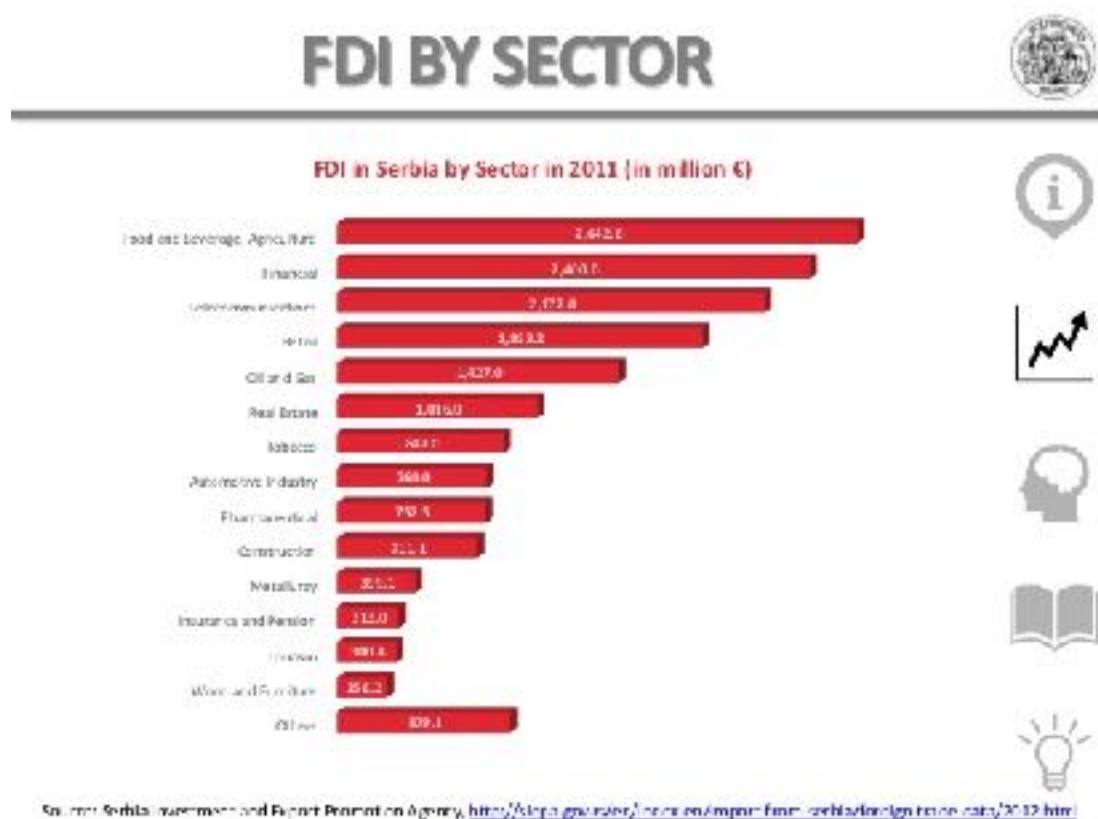
⁵⁷Ramani, S. (February 29, 2016) "China's growing ties with Serbia", The Diplomat.

Serbia first, but also in Croatia and mostly in Bosnia. They are now aligned on the Serbia foreign policy on the problem of Kosovo. They are actually afraid that the precedent created in Kosovo by the “West” could one day be played again for Tibet or in the Muslim Chinese regions or in the Ouïghours one. It is capital to understand that by their aggressive policy in the Balkan but also in the international arena, the Western powers are simply pushing Serbia in others’ hands (like China and Russia) and pushing others countries to support Serbia on common issues.

Appendices:

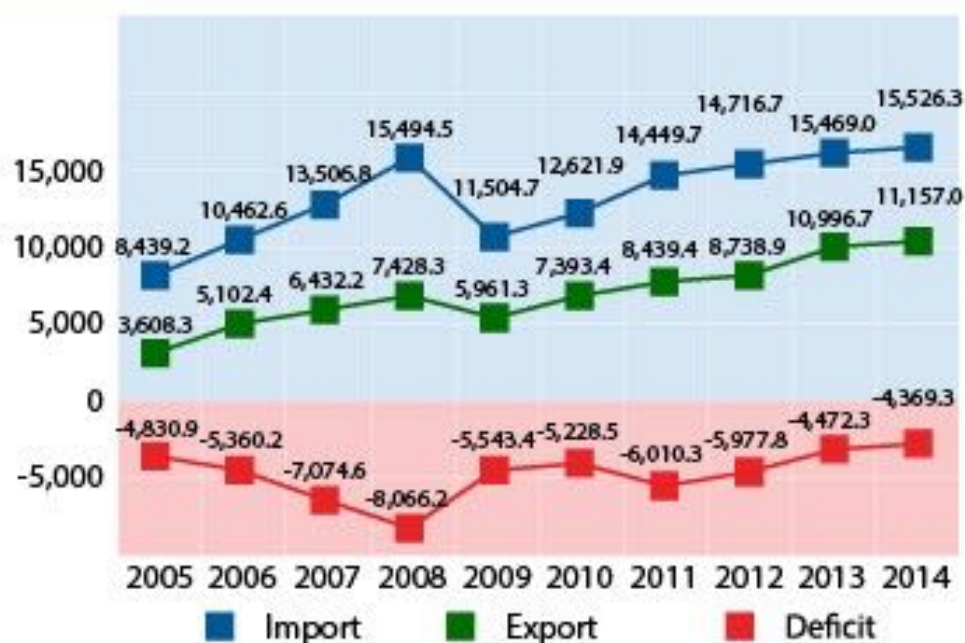


Appendice I: Nabucco and South Stream pipelines. Source: Wikipedia



Appendice II: Foreign Direct Investment by sector in the Serbian economy. Source: Serbia Investment and Export Promoting Agency.

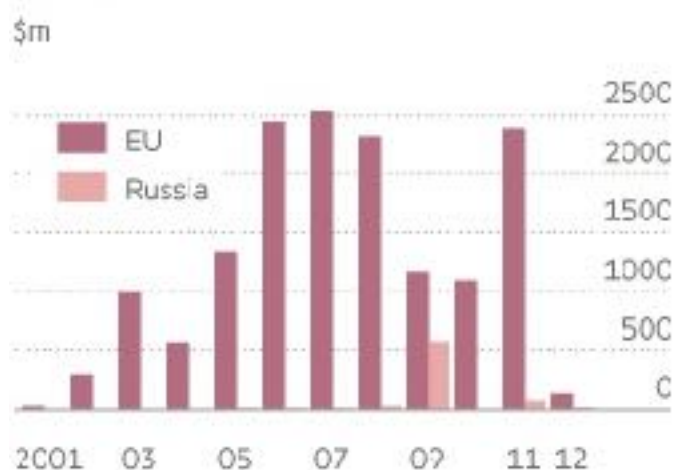
Foreign trade for period from 2005 to 2014 (in EUR mill)



Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, February 05, 2015

Appendix III: Foreign Trade for period from 2005 to 2014 in EUR mil. Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

Foreign direct investment flows into Serbia



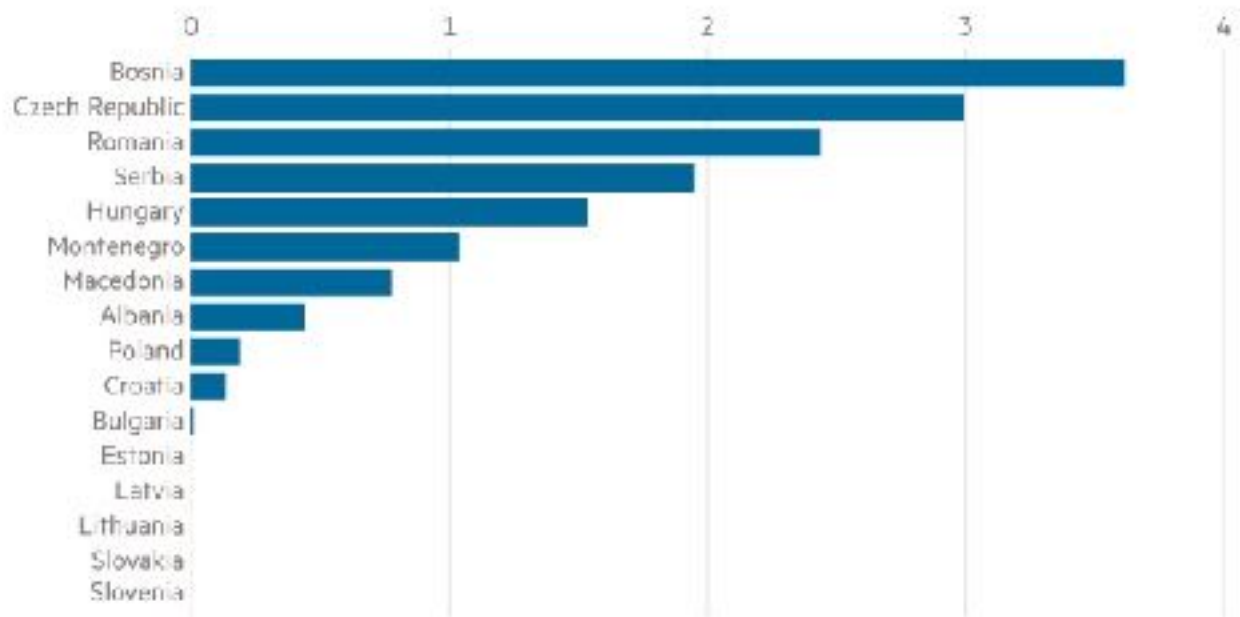
Source: UNCTAD

FT

Appendix IV: Foreign direct investment flows into Serbia: EU and Russia for the years between 2001 and 2012. Source: UNCTAD.

China's infrastructure investments in the 16+1

Total infrastructure investment (announced) by country, 2012-16 (\$bn)



Sources: CSIS; FT research

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Appendix V: China's infrastructure investments in the 16+1 (east European countries). Note that the first former Yugoslav country is not Serbia but Bosnia. Source CSIS.

Part II: Russia using the security and military issues related to the Balkans to maintain and strengthen when possible her influence on Serbian Affairs.

The breakaway of Yugoslavia happened through wars, terrors and for the first time since the end of the WWII, the neighbouring European people were unfortunately able to read on the news the words of "war crimes", "religious or ethnic cleansing". And a special international court was even created, some fifty years after the trial in Nurnberg. The collapse of Yugoslavia and the way it happened brought insecurity and instability in the region.

Dealing with security, Serbia and Russia have once again the same aims and concerns when considering the case of Kosovo-Metohija and the issues of radical islam in the Balkans. Russia and at first President Vladimir Putin are very well and since long time aware about the question of radical islam - and terrorism going with it at some stage - as Mr Putin remains the one who, through Russian eyes, fought and eradicated terrorism in Chechenia. Indeed, since the 1990s, Russia is in constant fight against terrorism, in Caucasus and since recently also with neighbouring countries in the Central Asian region. That has been among the main reasons for the Russian military intervention in Syria in 2015. it has also been the first time Russia openly and directly sent troops in a muslim country after the very humiliating defeat in Afghanistan. As known, terrorism is somehow global with organisations sharing targets and ideology, terrorism in Kosovo and Bosnia is directly linked with Caucasus. Many jihadists during the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo were veterans of other fights in Caucasus or even for the oldest in Afghanistan and it was (and still remains) more or less the same network.

However, the main Russian fear in the region is certainly not terrorism (although it is a very serious one as explained) but rather the NATO « expansionism ». Many Russian observers explained that the NATO (mainly French and British driven) intervention in Libya and the chaos which resulted from that action, is one of the reasons why President Putin changed his foreign policy towards the West and the NATO enlargement⁵⁸. Russia is not welcoming Western Balkan countries joining NATO and sees Serbia in a special position in that case, the ONE not to join.

Looking at the current situation in the Balkans and regarding the two last points above, Russia keeps assessing Serbia as a key actor for keeping the region safe and stable. As NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said in 2017 a "strong Serbia means more stability in Western Balkans"⁵⁹.

⁵⁸Relman, E. (February 24, 2017). "The US intervention in Libya was a key turning point for Putin in his attitude toward the US", Business Insider.

⁵⁹EWB. (November 15, 2017) "Stoltenberg: Strong Serbia means more stability in Western Balkans" European Western Balkans.

This comment should be supported from all parts but do not mean the same for the two camps, each trying to Bring Serbia on their side. Russia is also one of the world's biggest weapons exporters would and would like to make the Serbian army more dependant from Russian equipments as it has been for decades, a more friendly Serbia toward Russia and have more control to make her never joining NATO and be the supporter Russia needs in the region.

I: Serbia and Russian having the same agenda concerning the security threats in the Western Balkan region

Dealing with physical security, it is important to remind that three components remain of critical importance, being: access control, surveillance and testing. Each of them and from these perspectives make security issues in the Western Balkan region, and more especially in Kosovo and Bosnia, a real matter of National Security for Russian elite. Considering in that case National Security for a State is taking all appropriate actions to protect the state and its citizens towards every type of crisis, such as military, diplomatic, economic, environmental or strategic ones. For questions related to instability and insecurity of the region it is important to understand how Russian institutions and elites are working. Different clans within the Russian ruling class are at work there and one of these clan is called the "siloviki". It means in Russian « ***the one coming from the organs*** » which covers the intelligence services, military and any other security services. The "siloviki" and among them President Putin are in constant struggle to keep power⁶⁰ and to legitimise how they manage the country and more especially the importance they give to the security services, in terms of capacities and powers. In 2007 Russian spent US\$ 35.2 billion only for defence when they increased up to 58.6 billion for the fiscal year 2015. Whereas the population is not very rich and people seem less keen to follow the government decisions as it was under the USSR regime, politicians in power must explain why they spend so much on military, why did they intervened in Syria, in Ukraine and in Georgia. The main rhetoric used is the fact Russia is as a "besieged fortress". Russian elite presents Russia as being threatened by both the NATO/Western powers and in another hand the terrorist groups. And they present the Balkans and more especially Kosovo and Bosnia as the best examples of that fears.

I/A: Terrorism as a weapon of destabilisation: the case of Kosovo.

According to the New York Times, in 2006, 314 citizens from Kosovo were identified as fighting alongside ISIS in Iraq or in Syria⁶¹. With a population of 1.8 million inhabitants and 200,000 among the total are Serbs Orthodox, it makes Kosovo the highest per capita ratio for natio-

⁶⁰Staun J. (2007) 'Siloviki vs Liberal Technocrats: The Fight for Russia and its Foreign Policy', Danish Institute for International Studies, Report No. 2007:9

⁶¹Gall, C. (May 21, 2016). "How Kosovo was turned into fertile ground for ISIS", The New York Times

nals joining ISIS. The second country after Kosovo being Bosnia, another Western build-up in the region.

Since the withdrawal of the Yugoslav army in 1999, extremism in Kosovo has been on constant rise. Indeed, as the US saw in Kosovo a real and easy opportunity to build a new democratic liberal country in the region, Saudi clearly targeted Kosovo with the aim to spread Wahhabism at the door of Europe. Saudi Arabia started giving many scholarships for Imams from the whole region and they are now bringing changes in the region with this vector. The Islam practised in the Balkans for centuries is coming from the Ottoman invasion and colonisation and has nothing to do with Wahhabism. Also people from the Balkans and more especially in Western Balkans are for a majority Slaves and they adopted Islam without changing their cultural traditions. In Bosnia for example, mixed marriages were very common and muslims used to keep very moderate.

As already stated in our introduction, Russia has been directly concerned by the growth of extremism in the region for long now, as during the two wars in Chechenia, terrorists groups received supports and fighters from Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania.

It is of importance to remember the history of terrorism in Kosovo did not start with ISIS as sometimes mentioned but independence of Kosovo and its history since have been strongly linked with terrorism. The current Kosovar political elite was one body with the Liberation Army of Kosovo (UÇK), a terrorist group which committed crimes in Kosovo and elsewhere. There should be no doubt about the nature of UÇK as a terrorist group as Robert Gelbart, the US special envoy of US President Bill Clinton in the Balkans described the group as "without any question, as terrorist"⁶². Nowadays and the independence of Kosovo being on its way, UÇK within its different names, is still a threat to the region, in fighting to establish their nationalist dream of a "*great Albania*". In 2001, following the war in Kosovo, the Liberation Army of Preševo, Medveda and Bujanovac (UÇPMB) started an armed conflict with the same goal as in Kosovo to destabilise Serbia. They also killed Serbian politicians with Albanian origins Zemail Mustafi for being opposed to UÇK and more globally the Albanian mafia. However, without the support of NATO UÇK enjoyed in Kosovo, they would have been unable to do anything and once the Yugoslav army had authorisation to enter the region bordering Kosovo, they would certainly have eradicated the terrorist group. Tensions are still very high as in 2013 for example when nationalist politicians erected a statue celebrating UÇK.

⁶²Prepared by Moran, M. (2006) "Terrorist Groups and Political Legitimacy", Council on Foreign Relations

Same situation occurred also in Macedonia which is, like Serbia, having an important Albanian minority in the country. The role played by the US there is still very uncertain and certainly ambiguous and US Army instructors were reported acting on both sides, supporting the Macedonian Army and the Albanian terrorists.

Conflicts on the border between Macedonia and Kosovo happened as in May 2015 where 8 Macedonian Police Officers were killed in a fighting in an ethnic Albanian part of the town of Kumano-vo.

As said previously, the American influence in the region looks established and questionable as a source of many conflicts. This is also illustrated in 2017 when US Senator Dana Rohrabacher chairing the House of Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Europe said: "Macedonia is not a country [...] kosovars and Albanians living in Macedonia should be part of Kosovo [...] should be part of Bulgaria or any other country to which they are related"⁶³. It is in fact certain that the US were since long using ethnic divisions between Serbia, Macedonia and Albania to destabilise the region, especially by supporting the Albanian nationalists in building the "great Albania".

I/B: Presence of ISIS in Bosnia and how is Russia using it for its own rhetoric.

The case of Bosnia is very similar to what happened in Kosovo. The war for independence went as for Kosovo and supported by Islamic countries such as the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia once again. After the defeat in Chechnya against Russian forces, jihadists were looking for another battlefield and they saw Bosnia as a very good opportunity for fighting an Orthodox country and spreading its terrorist networks closer to Europe. President of Bosnia Alija Izetbegović who was put in jail for having written an "Islamic declaration" claiming the instauration of Sharia law in the Balkans welcomed them as he needed fighters. Indeed, the Army of Bosnia was in lack of fighters with good experiences and the jihadists came with their recent knowledge and experiences gained in Afghanistan and Caucasus. President Izetbegovic welcomed Oussama Bin Laden and even granted him with the citizenship of Bosnia. All was done under the agreement and the help of the American troops which will, few years later, in 2001, start to understand the mistake they did.

⁶³Gramer, R. (February 9, 2017). "GOP Lawmakers says Macedonia is not a country, Macedonia goes ballistic", Foreign Policy.

After supporting Oussama Ben Laden, American authorities soon started a war to catch him and spent more than 15 years before to finally kill him in a special operation in Pakistan.

Rapidly after they were deployed, jihadists did not agreed to fight alongside with Bosnian soldiers as they considered them as "unexperienced fighters and bad muslims". They then formed different units such as the 7th muslim brigade and the 'Black Swans'. According to the British newspaper "The Telegraph", ISIS settled "smaller scale training camps in the EU and Balkan countries" and "could look to recruit refugees"⁶⁴. An article dated 6 February 2017⁶⁵ is very interesting in the way it illustrates a disagreement among actors. Vlado Azinovic, an expert in terrorism in Bosnia and member of the Atlantic initiative had a different point of view from Djevad Galijasevic giving an interview to Sputnik Serbia, a Russian own newspaper. In fact here, the American point of view trying to lower the importance of terrorists networks in Bosnia was directly opposed to another expert interviewed by Russian newspaper saying the exact opposite and also explaining that the US and Bosnian authorities were doing nothing to tackle the terrorists groups in Bosnia. It looks again easy to question the rôle played by the US in Bosnia and in Kosovo too. Facts are that the rôle the US played there is not clear, transparent and their support to groups linked to terrorism seems confirmed in the fact that they provided to them equipments, trainings and technical support. On another hand, Russia was aware of that situation and reacted by over-estimating threats posed by terrorists groups and their activities in the whole area and pointing out the ambiguous and dangerous games played by their US counterparts and the responsibilities going with it. Currently and despite what Vlado Azinovic said, Bosnia remains currently in great danger due to terrorist activities in the region. The EUROPOL's January 2016 report states "**Changes in modus operandi of Islamic State terrorist attacks**" explained that training camps are still there and operating in the Balkans and that terrorists are being taught interrogation-resistance techniques and simulating combat experience. Another article written in 2016 by Dr. Gordon N Bardos for the "American Center for Democracy" explained that: "Although Western intelligence agencies never labelled [the mudžahedin activities] in Bosnia an al-Qaeda jihad, it is now clear that this is exactly what it was"⁶⁶.

⁶⁴Mulholland, R. (April 30, 2016). "Muslim radicals in mountain villages spark fears in Bosnia", The Telegraph.

⁶⁵Rose, E. (February 06, 2017). "Experts scorn claim that Bosnia is terrorist haven", Balkan Insight.

⁶⁶Gordon, N, bardos. (September 16, 2016). "The Balkans ISIS Training Grounds" American Center for Democracy

To conclude this part, the three following main points are to be clearly and strongly underlined. The first as we explained and spoke about remains that terrorist activities remain high in the region for different reasons and following different ideologies. Even if Albanian terrorism is still supported by islamic extremist organisations, the main reason for that is not religious but rather ethnic and the Albanian nationalism with the dream of building the "greater Albania". However, it is clear that Islamic extremists from outside or already in place could size the opportunity for opening a new « front » and expand their networks by taking over Albanian extremists groups as many of them are already muslims. This scenario should not be ignored.

Although a real threat to Russia, the problem of terrorism can also be estimated a situation to take some benefit from if used and played nicely. Indeed, Serbia and the Serbian citizens in Bosnia and in Kosovo are the main victims of these terrorist activities and Serbia is then very concerned about that issue. It is thus very easy for Russia to blame NATO for what is currently happening as the situation worsened due to the NATO intervention. This is an easy way with a proper propaganda to keep the Serbian population on its side. Also, for both cases of Kosovo and Bosnia, Russia keeps a potential tool of threatening or increase tensions and start a new conflicting situation in the region. Bosnia has been and remains a very fragile state, still split and divided between the Serbian Republic (Republika Srpska) composed of the Orthodox Serbs and the "Federation" with the Muslims and the catholics Croats. President of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik, a friend of President Putin, often says he is prepared for everything that can happen in Bosnia, even the worst⁶⁷.

Looking at the past in the Balkans, wars have always been very easy and fast to start and since the 1990's NATO created in fact many more occasions for Russia to start provoke tensions . So for Russia it is a win-win situation as the Siloviki use the threat of terrorism in the region to support their own rhetoric; They helped Serbia which is truly and rightly concerned about that problem, they keep Serbia and Serbian people on their side and should the situation gets worse, could keep blaming the US and NATO with some reasons. Doing this also means keeping Serbian population on her side, increase her influence on the population and have some tools to have Serbian authorities more flexible and keen to hear (if not totally adopted) the Russian political visions such as not joining NATO for example. This is also diplomacy⁶⁸.

⁶⁷Bohacek, P. (March 26, 2014). "Is Republika Srpska about to be the next Crimea?" Vice News.

⁶⁸Kseniya Kirillova. (January 24, 2017). "Plans for a "great Serbia" and the Kremlin's hybrid war in the Balkan", EuromaidanPress.

II: Russia assesses NATO enlargement in the Balkans as an aggressive development.

In an interview with the American filmmaker Oliver Stone, Russian President Vladimir Putin said about NATO enlargement: "we are forced to take countermeasures - that is, to aim our missile systems at those facilities which we think pose a threat to us"⁶⁹.

Even if NATO activities in the Balkans are not directly bordering Russian territory, Russia looks afraid to see NATO growing with new comers joining as full members. If Russia did not really take any action to prevent and stop Montenegro to join NATO, such a case would be no doubt totally different if Serbia would be involved. Serbia is the only potential Russian ally in the western Balkans and Serbia joining NATO would be a strong disappointment for Russia. Currently playing a very uncertain game with Turkey, Russia is also considering Serbia and Bosnia has two potential opportunities with capacities to stop NATO expansion.

This question and the developments that may come in the future is a reliable way to monitor and assess the influence Russia will keep, increase or at contrary will lose in the area and facing NATO. In case Bosnia will join NATO in the near future it would be a clear signal of the decline of Russian influence in the Balkans. Would Serbia join, it would most likely reduce this influence to nil and another sign Russia is losing her rôle in this area. We are still far from this « worst case scenario » since the Serbs are in majority against NATO and do not consider Serbia joining a positive development.

II/A: NATO expansion in the Western Balkans region and how Russia have dealt with it.

The first Republic of the former Yugoslavia who joined the military alliance (NATO) is Slovenia in 2004, followed by Croatia in 2009. Both countries are also nowadays part of the European Union. Montenegro joined NATO in 2017 and is on its way for joining the EU as well. Russia did not care too much about Slovenia and Croatia to join NATO. Considering both countries have never been in her sphere of influence and never had particular relationships with Russia but were by tradition more influenced to Germany and linked to Europe by this country. Furthermore, none of the two could have been considered a threat to Russia. None represented a military power and them joining NATO and the EU was not a major concern. Actually, in a broader context, Russia is having good relations with NATO countries in the Balkans, Greece and even Turkey which is illustrated by

⁶⁹Filipov, D. (November 21, 2016) "Putin says Russia planning countermeasures to NATO's expansion" The Washington Post.

the sell of S 400 anti-aircrafts batteries missiles and missiles technology to Turkey (the delivery should occur in 2019).

The case of Montenegro is interesting in a different way, as it is the country which stayed along with Serbia until 2006 and still remain ; many people in Serbia and in Montenegro believe they are the same people and they should live in the same political entity. Also, contrary to Slovenia and Croatia, Montenegro did not fight with Serbia. More, Montenegro was even bombed during the NATO bombing in 1999. In 2017, few days before Montenegro acceded NATO, US Senator John McCain said that: "the State of Montenegro is carrying the democratic aspirations of free people in Southeastern Europe". Saying that is forgetting that Milo Djukanovic is ruling the country since its independence in 2006 and even before, since 1991⁷⁰. According to the British newspaper « The Independent », the Djukanovic family has around EUR 12 million due to cigarettes traffickings and shadow financial operations. In 2004, Italy even issued an international warrant against him but with the independence of Montenegro in 2006, he kept himself a special status with immunity.

The Montenegrin adhesion to NATO itself is discutable in the fact that in 2008, according to the US Embassy in Podgorica, support for accession was "just 28 percent [...] majority of citizens remain sceptical"⁷¹. Russia could have certainly taken some actions to prevent such move, but nothing happened. In 2015, Turkey shot down a Russian jet operating in Syria and Russia immediately took counter measures. The main Russian action was to legally deter and ban Russian tourism in Turkey, with big negative economical impact for Turkey.

In the case of Montenegro again, Russia did not really take anything serious action attempting to stop Montenegrin accession to NATO. The few actions Russians did were under Serbian cover as Montenegro joining NATO was not in the Serbian interest as well. Considering NATO both countries have the same interest of keeping the alliance out even if in the case of Serbia, many of its neighbours are members of the organisation (Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and Montenegro) and the others are willing to join (Macedonia) or in talks to join (Bosnia). Since Montenegro joined, Russia has a good excuse for asking Serbia to cooperate more in the field of defence and to sell more weapons to the Serbian army. Russia is also using the fact Serbia is concerned by the NATO influence in Macedonia and Bosnia and like in the case of Montenegro, Russia could use

⁷⁰Blum, E. (21 Mars 2018), "Au Monténégro, le retour de Milo Djukanovic", Liberation.

⁷¹Blain, H and Benson, R. (June 5, 2017), "NATO expansion in the Balkans: a dangerous gamble" Open Democracy.

Serbian political channels and networks rather to risk using her own assets which are well identified and under scrutiny. Although not related directly to the topic, the possible (very likely) involvement of Russian services in the victory of Mr Trump in the US and the assassination of a former defector in UK have brought all Russian services under investigation and monitoring from the West.

II/B: How is Russia using Serbian connections to achieve her goals in Bosnia.

Russia does not agree and support the fact NATO is expanding in the Balkans and they take benefit of the fact Serbia is concerned and afraid by the situation to use their various connections rather to use Russian ones. Should a problem occur while conducting an operation of destabilisation, Russia would not be directly involved and would be covered.

In the case of Bosnia, it is very easy for Russia to take action with a very large autonomy in Republika Srpska as President Milorad Dodik is a very close friend of President Putin and the republic is under Russian control for various reasons. Bosnian's accession to NATO is currently blocked due to Republika Srpska. As we know, Bosnia is divided and the Serbian part of Bosnia is totally against NATO in the country.

The two main factors for that are the state of mind of the population itself and the government of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia remains very hostile.

In 2017, Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik said: "he will seek to block efforts for the country to one day become a member of NATO", he added that for him: "Bosnia should stay neutral, in line with Serbia".

Since the war, the country and the people are very divided. The suffering from the war are still present and remaining in all communities and the role NATO played in Bosnia (but also in Kosovo) is clearly not appreciated and understood by the Serbian population in Bosnia. Joining NATO will certainly not bring peace but would most likely create more instability and divisions. Serbs of Bosnia feel as being victims of the war and it is common to see in villages inside Republika Srpska tribute to Serbian General Ratko Mladic.

The issue of war criminals during the former Yugoslav war is still of importance in Bosnia and all communities consider their soldiers and those who committed crimes not as criminal but as defenders and somehow heroes. And Serbs do not understand why whereas most (if not all) major Ser-

bian criminals were found guilty and sentenced, with a different treatment and justice for Croats or Bosnians ones.

The case of Ante Gotovina, a Croat general who fought in Croatia against Serbs is very significant. Even if he did not committed any crime against the Serbs of Bosnia, they still feel united and show solidarity for the victims. First sentenced for 24 years of Prison, he was finally found innocent which provoked a very strong reaction from Carla Del Ponte, the ex-chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, saying: "unbelievable. I cannot accept it. I feel full solidarity with the Serb victims of the crime. The crime, that we backed up with hard evidence." She is also the one who strongly pushed the EU, Croatia and even the Vatican for putting Gotovina in jail. She had the same reactions concerning the verdict of the former KLA war criminal Ramush Haradinaj.

The Serbs in general, wherever they are, in Kosovo, in Croatia, in Bosnia or in Serbia felt victim of that and often say they were the only ones whose leaders have been convicted for the crimes Serbs committed with a different treatment for the ones in the other side. It is of course not full reality and true since some Croats and Muslim Bosniaks were convinced as well and faced the same trials and sanctions (are now jailed). But it remains that major criminals which fought against Serbs are still not in prison, regardless where they fought, in Croatia, Bosnia or Kosovo. The Serbs also found very unfair that they were always (and still remain) the ones to be blamed for the war when the situation was of course much more complex. It is true Serbes were involved in all conflicts but they were of course the only ones to be and should not be the only ones blamed.

It is of critical importance to understand the feelings Serbian people of Bosnia and assess how such feelings can be analysed and manipulated by experts to shape their ways of thinking and bring them to the behaviour expected. Russian services are excellent for this and have always used this expertise, either in Russia (and the USSR before) or overseas and everywhere in the world. Blocking NATO enlargement to some new comers is certainly in the range of their possibilities.

According to Julian Borger writing for "the Guardian", Russians are training and giving various facilities to Serbian ultra nationalists groups such as one named "Serbian Honour"⁷². The leader of the group, Bojan Stojkovic is a former Serbian paratrooper who had been trained in Moscow and even received Russian awards. Dragan Mektic, the Bosnian security minister said the goal of the

⁷²Borger, J. (January 12, 2018). "Russian-trained mercenaries back Bosnia's Serb separatists" The Guardian.

group could be to make a militia fully loyal to Dodik and "possibly intervene if the opposition seeking to obstruct the functioning of the authorities". If we consider Russia, she really tried to make a coup in Montenegro in February 2017, and we can legitimately agree that Russia is getting its pawns ready for a possible change in Bosnia as they did in Ukraine for example. Russia has less experience than the US in doing coloured revolutions but Montenegro could be considered as a try and Bosnia could be the next one on the list.

In Bosnia, it is important to note that Russia is using military or close to military options to turn the situation in her advantage. In that case, Russia is not able to use soft powers, as the US are doing all around the world. The second asset, an easy and very efficient one Russians are using is corruption. As we mentioned in the previous part, corruption is largely used by Russians and this is in the case in Bosnia. President Dodik is suspected of money laundering and he was even indicted by a German State prosecutor in 2012 for his involvement in the Hypo Alpe-Adria-Bank International. It was later confirmed by Valentin Inzko, the high representative in Bosnia as well⁷³.

⁷³Bilefsky, D. (February 24, 2009). "Bosnian Serb leader accused of corruption" The New York Times.

III: The importance of the defence industry and the military cooperation

In 2013, Serbia became Observer at the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). It is according to its Secretary General at that time Nikolai Bordiougine: "an international event [...] strengthening the authority of CSTO"⁷⁴. Indeed, while several members had left CSTO (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan) Serbia is the only country not coming from the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent State) which took an observer seat in the organisation. The same year, following the Serbian diplomatic move, the Russian Minister of Defence Sergueï Choïgou said Russian defence industry will signed deals to equip the Serbian army.

III/A: The Russian defence industry in Serbia

In 2016, Russian and Serbian authorities reached an agreement about the sell of six MIG-29 fighter planes and thirty T-72 main battle tanks for the Serbian Army. Prime Minister at that time, Vucic said : "It is important to protect our freedom and our sovereignty". The deal was not very well welcomed by the west and specially the USA but the real point of the deal was not the equipment since many NATO countries already buy from Russia (Bulgaria, Hungary and Turkey for example), but the price. The normal price for the six MIG-29 is around EUR 575 million but Serbia bought them for between EUR 180 and 230 million⁷⁵. Talking about the deal, President Vucic said: « Since the NATO aggression we need being safe, now we will be able to defend ». The same year, Vucic announced the start of negotiations to buy six Russian helicopters Mi-17 type, whereas Serbia already got two in June 2016. This brings to consider three important facts : Serbia is buying weapons when the other countries of the Balkans do not really spend money in military purchase (President Trump complaining at the last NATO summit that many members do not reach the requested budget they should for their defence). Many still buy Russian weapons (from Russia or Belarus) and the prices they get are always very competitive with a fairly good technology available. However, the Russian defence industry has put in place a politic not only with Serbia. Keeping Serbia as a customer is one side of it, keeping some pressure attempting to divide NATO members by competing in the purchases of weapons with some success are all benefits. This is strongly efficient with

⁷⁴(April 12, 2013). "La Serbie, avant-poste de la sécurité collective", Sputnik.

⁷⁵(December 23, 2016). "La Russie vend du matériel militaire à la Serbie à prix d'ami et se replace dans les Balkans", Le Monde.

Turkey which has some concerns in Syria and wonders which game the US and several NATO members are playing there. As a result of this efficient strategy, Russia is selling aircrafts and tanks to Serbia and very high advanced anti-aircraft S 400 technology to Turkey, an important NATO pivot in the Middle East region.

As mentioned previously, the important fact under discussion there is not that Serbia is buying weapons from Russia. Other NATO countries buy Russian weapons and it is not a major problem for the alliance. But the fact Serbia is buying weapons to Russia is an important one for the Balkans. There is no military power in the Balkans and every country except Serbia is linked and fully dependent on NATO for its own Security. Indeed, the fact Serbia is buying offensive weapons such as tanks and aircrafts must be underlined. We can say Russia has two goals linked with the military in Serbia.

The first goal of Russia is to make the Serbian military strong enough and all equipped from Russian weaponry. The second task would be to make or keep the Serbian Army very close to Russia. As a strategy, Russia seeks to bring the Serbian military to a level and capacity to deter any action from any neighbour, and we are here considering terrorist limited actions aiming at destabilising the country as experienced in the past with UCK. This can easily be reached since requiring small equipment, intelligence and training capacities. Taking advantage of the troubled situations in the area, a strong Serbian army would pose a potential threat and bring some pressure on NATO and the EU at a time when many other cases in the world require their attention and efforts (Syria, Libya, immigration and other terrorists « fronts » like Yemen, Afghanistan). In that case, with a minimum effort, Serbian defence renewed capacities would present a threat for NATO as it could be the case with Turkey. It would take a lot of time for Serbia to counter the russification of the Serbian army and get out of the Russian sphere. In fact, buying military equipment means more than just buying equipment.

For example (and Russia knows it very well), when a country buy high technology equipment, they do not only buy equipment but also staff, instructors, trainings going with it. Serbian pilots must be trained and get appropriate qualifications and since the aircraft are Russian, they will get them from and with Russian military expertise. It means Serbian pilots will have close and good ties with Russian pilots, Serbian pilots will be formed according to Russian techniques and procedures⁷⁶. Russian defence industry and the authorities know Serbia will never have huge needs and will never be a good client as India, Iran or Turkey for example. Serbian can even be a challenger since they also

⁷⁶(March 29, 2017). "Why buying Mig-29 fighter jets from Russia is exactly what Serbia needs", Sputnik.

sell weapons in Africa (Zastava arms among the most famous Serbian defence industries). The main point for Russia offering very good prices when selling their equipment to Serbia is to have a bigger influence in the Serbian forces by having military drills and increase cooperation together. Also Serbia buying military equipments from Russia make the Serbian Army dependent from Russia, as for example, the missiles used by the jets are only produced by Russia.

While dealing with military and defence industry in Serbia, Russia is fulfilling the two goals described above and all benefits, putting pressures on NATO and making Serbia dependent military, then easier to manoeuvre and control if needed. And this is exactly what Russia is doing with Belarus as well.

III/B: The military cooperations between the 2 countries.

As said previously, Serbia is the only country not coming from former USSR arena who joined the CSTO as an observer. Russia can also count on its local pro-Russian analysts and politicians (such as the nationalist MP Aleksandar Šešelj) often asking for Serbia to join CSTO⁷⁷. However, Serbia proclaimed a doctrine of military neutrality in 2007 and since now every government strongly advocated on remaining neutral and not moving forward either NATO or the CSTO.

In 2015, Russia organised "slavic Brotherhood", a military exercise to be held every year between Russia, Belarus and Serbia⁷⁸. The first edition of the military drill was taking place in Krasnodar Krai, not so far from the borders with Georgia and Ukraine. The second edition in 2016 was organised in Serbia, at the same time NATO was carrying military exercises in Montenegro. The last edition was completed few days ago and was held in Russia for 10 days.

According to the Russian Ministry of Defence, the 2018 edition of Slavic brotherhood involved 700 Russian troops 250 from Belarus and around 50 from Serbia. All of them were coming from paratroopers and special forces.

The number of Serbian troops present has always been around 50 for every edition but the drill is not targeting conventional troops but rather special forces and the focus is about getting special techniques and adopting common procedures. The fact the best Serbian troops are taking part in that

⁷⁷March 28, 2018). "Serbian MP calls parliament to discuss country's membership in CSTO", EurAsia Daily.

⁷⁸(June 9, 2017). "Slavic Brotherhood against NATO". Warsaw Institute.

exercise since 2015 means they developed very good ties with other participants. After having explained how Russia was supplying equipment as aircrafts especially to Serbia in order to increase its links with Serbian forces, it can also be shared that Serbian special forces are working very closely with Russian ones.

Surprisingly, in 2016, Serbia carried out 116 joint military activities with NATO, 90 bilateral military activities with the USA and only 17 with Russia⁷⁹. However, the Serbian news prefer to speak about the military exercises conducted with Russian army than with US or/and NATO. Also it is important not to randomly compare the numbers. For example, Serbia is carrying military exercise with Greece, the best Serbian ally in the Balkans but since Greece is part of NATO, it is seen as a Serbian-NATO military drill, which is not really the case and looks abusive. It is also important to look at the troops and equipment which take part in the exercises. Russian forces conducted less exercises with Serbian army but they included high technology and major equipment (aircrafts and tanks) and special forces. Serbia is also taking part and involved in NATO, UN and EU mission of security and safety as in Lebanon, Cyprus and various African countries. Some missions do not include huge manpower, as for example 1 in Liberia, 3 in Mali, 5 in Somalia. Military drills conducted with Russia are very specified and included a bit more people and very special and highly trained units.

⁷⁹Dragoljo, S. (August 31, 2016). Serbian Army trains more with NATO than Russia”, Balkan Insight.

This part aimed at explaining and illustrating how Russia keeps using the security situation in the western Balkans as a tool to influence Serbian agenda and priorities. As we explained, Russia is legitimately worried by the global situation in Kosovo, Macedonia and Bosnia. Terrorism, radical islam and Albanian nationalism are used in a way to destabilise the region as it was 20 years ago during the break-up of Yugoslavia.

However it is very interesting and important to notice that Russia has the capacities to influence Serbian agenda and make it closer to the Russian one. In fact many in Serbia, Europe and Russia always consider normal Serbia to be following Russia and having same politics. However, it was not always the case and for example, former Serbian President Boris Tadic said : "Russians are not fiable partners" and during his time Serbia had a strong pro-EU and NATO policy and kept firmly opposed to Russia in the region. He is the President who sent General Ratko Mladic to the Hague and he even blamed Russian Intelligence Services for having tried to hide Mladic in Russia. It is clear, like for Ukraine or Georgia, that Serbia could potentially have a pro-Western politics.

The focus of that part was about physical security and military cooperation between both countries. Using the negative and worrisome security developments in the region (mainly caused by NATO/ EU interventions and actions from the past), Russia persuaded Serbia to build a strong military in the region and keep Russia as her main contributor and supplier. Also Russia is very rightly taking control over the important strategic units of the Serbian army. As we explained earlier, when Russia is almost "giving" aircrafts to Serbia the plan behind is to have total control over Serbian pilots by training them and building full cooperation and procedures in operational environment.

As illustrated, Russia is playing two fully complementary games to keep the Serbian army an ally and in the sphere of influence: supply them with high technology and building a good cooperation between the two armies. Russia knows Serbian army is the only army which can be favourable to Russian interests and Serbian authorities potentially be the most friendly and supportive to Russian politics and interests.

Russia keeps trying in Serbia to control strategic spots as they dont have numerous means and capacities to counter US and EU investments in the country. Russia is acting on few Serbian sectors (gas, army...) but they are fully committed on with the clear ambition to control them. Russia knows that in case of trouble, which can unfortunately happen in the region, Serbian army will be on Russian side. The last factor is important, because while some Serbian politicians (usually ba-

cked by US politicians) are talking about Serbian joining NATO, by that time it is not impossible that the Serbian army will be fully Russian-linked by many ways we introduced. In that case it means NATO itself would be keen to reject or deter Serbia to join NATO since the organisation already has armies having sympathies toward Russia such as Greece for example, Turkey recently and Hungary. It is understood all these armies inherited from the former USSR and Warsaw Pact have problems and are under NATO monitored reconstruction but they still have some capacities. Greek and Turkey militaries are both numerous, well equipped and trained. NATO is also a political body where every country is voting and having a pro-Russian member inside NATO would make a kind of "Trojan horse". Even if we can seriously doubt Serbia and Greece would even have friendly relations with Turkey (more especially on a military level), the three countries could help Russia by any means such as giving intelligence reports, blocking or jeopardise NATO actions.

Conclusion:

As a general conclusion, Russia obviously mainly focused on two domains to strengthen her position in Serbia and through it, somehow, in Europe: the energy system and the military and defence questions.

Russia has proven very efficient in the two domains. Playing more on one or the other of them, most often with the two and benefiting of the very troubled situation in the Balkans, Russia achieved her goals, although the situation can change in the future. Security rhetoric is excellent for Russian elite. The old picture of a Russian fortress besieged by NATO and that the country is threatened of destruction. Serbia is then a very good (if not the best) example since Russian people can refer to their "orthodox Serbian brothers".

Russia is also playing the game with other cards which are very less important than the energy, economy, the military and defence but it appears important to mention few words about them in an extended conclusion.

Should the required size of this document have allowed it, among these factors the spreading of Pan-Slavism and using the Orthodox revival in Serbia would have been more detailed because directly linked to the roots of the Serbian folk.

Since years now, President Putin has been constantly using the Russian Orthodox Church as a « Trojan horse » to make Moscow "the third Rome". Promoted by Russian ideologue Dugin, "pan-Slavinism" is promoted alongside with a "Orthodox revival" incarnated by the Kremlin.

The idea of the « third Rome » appeared in the fifteen century, after the first Rome collapsed long time ago and after Constantinople (here called the second Rome) disappeared in 1453. As a consequence, the Orthodox leadership went vacant. It is also important to understand that in the Orthodox religion, every Orthodox movements as its own church. Being split with its many churches is critical in a geopolitical game and more especially in the former Yugoslavia. Serbia is for the time being the only country having an Orthodox Church for all the orthodox faithful from the former Yugoslavia, including Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia. The 2 other Orthodox Churches in the region are the Bulgarian and the Greek ones.

More than using Orthodox Church (what Serbia is for example doing in Montenegro or in Kosovo), being the third Rome can also be used in geopolitical purposes and could for example justify some interventions, as Russia used the excuse of "protecting Russian minorities". In the past and for long, before the 1917 revolution, the Russian Church was often solicited by other countries with Orthodox Churches (under Ottoman rule) for providing them material supports.

The main existing reason and why every other churches accepted Rome and later Constantinople as the supreme authorities was because they were able to protect them all, keep unity and show stronger by the size. In its aim to be the "third Rome", Moscow must be able to protect the Orthodox wherever they live. Since the intervention in Syria, Russia has often appeared as the protector of the Orthodox in the Middle East. In the case of the Balkans the situation is a bit different but the rhetoric is still the same and still used by the Kremlin, more especially the Serbian Orthodox spread all around the area.

It has been mentioned many times Russia has a historical past in the Balkan region and more with Serbia. When asking Serbian people why is Russia keeping connexions in Serbia, the favourite answer remains "because of history and religion".

Due to their common religion as roots, both countries started having relations very early. While Russian was being conquered by the Mongols in the XII century, Serbia sent some clerics to take care of some ancient Russian holy books and provided spiritual support to Russian.

And when the Ottoman invaded the Balkans, Serbian naturally seek support from Russia and the Tsar Peter the Great welcome some Serbs to fight in the Russian army. In return of fighting for Russia, the Tsar gave to the Serbs lands in the Russian Empire (nowadays located in the Eastern part of Ukraine).

French Professor Henri Gaidoz also explained that the Russian impératrice Anne created a Serbian cossack regiment in 1727 and used them for the conquering Ukraine. Serbian historians estimate that over 100.000 Serbs left Serbia, more especially after the great migration in 1690 due to brutal ottoman rules and found asylum in the Russian empire.

Russia often engaged with the Ottoman to let the Serbs have their own Church and to grant them more freedom. In 1810, Russian army under General Kutuzov went fighting the Turks and sent weapons, equipments and ammunition to the Serbs and pushed them to start revolts against the Ottomans. However, due to the Napoleon Russian campaign, two years later, Russian could not fight the Turks any longer and withdrew from supporting the Serbs. However, every Serbian revolts

which happened during the nineteenth century was supported by Russians even they never sent many troops. In 1875, the Serbs started another revolt against the Ottomans and approximately three thousands Russian volunteers went in Serbia to fight with them. And finally, during World War one, while Serbia was resisting alone, Tsar Nicholas the second threatened the British to join the French expeditionary forces to open a new front in the Balkans by supporting Serbia.

The old links between the two countries have often been celebrated, mainly in Serbia, by the Church and some conservative parts of the Serbian society. Even if the relations went worse after the 1917 revolution, with a pick in 1948, Russia has kept using the old historical memories and ties to attract some Serbian people on her side.

Since President Putin is successfully playing on both USSR heritage and former Tsarist glorious past, one Ukrainian from the East can easily come to support Russia due to former communist ties and a Serb will keep a good picture of Russia due to older common history. In its sphere of influence and even further, Russia knows which historical rhetoric to use in order to attract people and make them keen to support Russia. In November 2011, twenty-one thousands Serbs from Kosovo symbolically asked for Russian citizenship as they explained "not trusting Belgrade anymore in supporting the Serbs in Kosovo". That good example also shows the limits of using such rhetorics because Russia was of course not able to provide them with the Russian nationality. Russia is good for looking as and being viewed as the protector of Serbian Orthodox but the current world and the Russian weaknesses do not allow her to go further and pursue any concrete actions.

Since President Putin decided to push his foreign policy and make it more aggressive toward the West, Russian Orthodox Church and Orthodoxy in general started using a tool used by the Kremlin. Religion can be a fantastic soft power if known how to use it and do it well. Developed in 1977 in its book "Power and Interdependence", Joseph Nye (a prominent American in political sciences and theoretician of the idea of "soft power"), explained the possible importance of religion in soft power and international affairs. Saudi Arabia does it in many Muslim countries, use the fact Mecca is on its territory ; Iran is also doing it with Shia muslims in Syria or in Lebanon for example. The Vatican is also using religion for achieving some of its own goals in Catholic countries. During the colonisation and the conquest of Africa, religion was also an important tool and vector used for keeping the indigenous people on your side and limit the revolts.

It is however important to keep in mind that dealing with Orthodoxy is very hard since it is a very divided religion. Many countries have different Churches and they don't all have good relations. For example, Ukraine has different churches, one depending from Russia and some depending from Kiev directly. It means both churches do not have the same agenda and keep some rivalries between them. In the case of Serbia, Serbian and Russian Orthodox Churches have very good relations.

It is also important to explain that there are some wishes in the Balkans to create other orthodox churches such as the church of Kosovo, in Macedonia and the one of Montenegro for example. The idea behind is to by-pass the influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the region. Through its Church, Belgrade can keep the hand on its national minorities across former Yugoslavia republics and by that keep threatening local governments.

As previously explained in the first part dealing with economical factor, Russia is mixing religious and historical factors with many other matters, such as business, economy and security.

For example Russia gave all the necessary funds (\$4 million) to finish the fresco of the Saint Sava cathedral in Belgrade. It can easily be assumed that when the Cathedral will be finished and inaugurated, President Putin will be treated as a hero by Serbian Orthodox priests and by the local population. It will give him and to Russia an important credit. If you compare with what the European or the American are doing, they spend a way more money but it is not as visible as what Russia is doing. It is also true, European and even more for the US cannot use historical common roots with Serbian to promote anything as everyone in Serbia still remember the NATO bombing and what happened in Kosovo-Metohija.

Russia, contrary to other countries involved in Serbia and among them China, the EU and the USA has the great advantage of having an important part of the population on its side. Also Russia does not look doing much in Serbia but is actually involved in several actions as we saw it through that paper. Rather than the EU and the US are coming in Serbia trying to pursue political actions by influencing Serbian politics and population, Russia is coming neutral, able to deal with the radicals and the democrats as they know what to say and how to behave with both parts of the Serbian politicians. As demonstrated in that paper that Russia made very important deals with pro-Russian politicians but also with pro-European politicians. This is the answer to the question : Why and how were they able to do that ?

While Serbia could appear a « non-aligned » country in the disputed area of the Balkans more globally, China is slowly entering the region, as they already did in Africa, with funds, investments, projects and the will to build (and later) control the infrastructure. Maybe the future of the Balkan is to be seen under the eyes of the Chinese, if Russia or the West do not make the deal before.

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