

Analysis of the print media in Serbia
January - March

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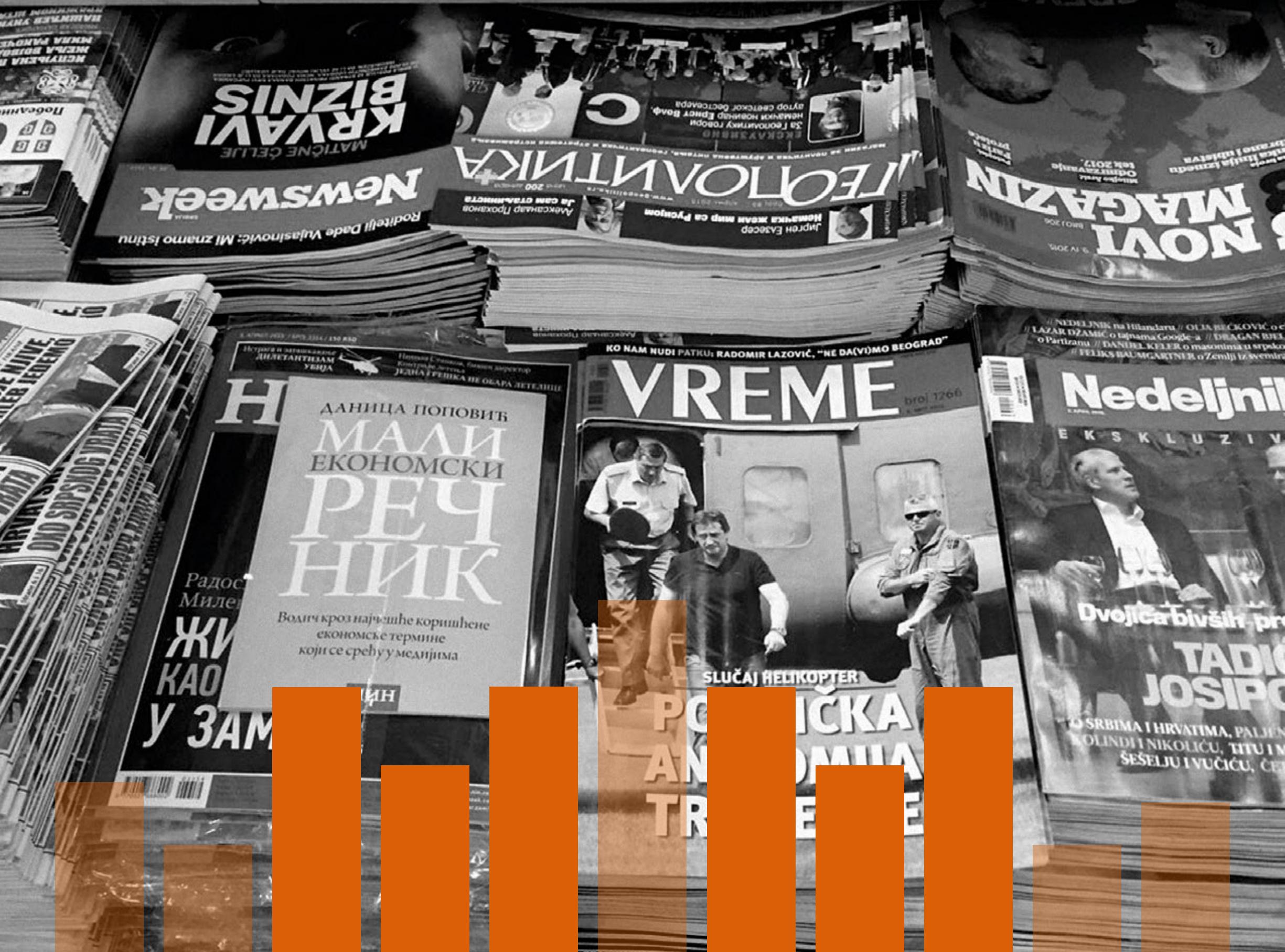
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1

Introduction

NIKOLA SAMARDŽIĆ

INTRODUCTION

The print media in the Republic of Serbia are a part of the socio-political system, culture and communications. This general framework is, in principle, defined by the competence and the character of state institutions, cultural policy and cultural reality, professional and ethical standards. The state is obliged to respect the rule of law, personal freedoms and collective identities. Journalist associations have undertaken in their Articles of Association to comply with and support the highest professional standards.¹ The Republic of Serbia has, *inter alia*, decided that it will gradually adopt and comply with the *acquis communautaire*, the EU *acquis*, one of the most significant legal and political principles of European integration, a set of norms, rules and values which are, in political terms, unnegotiable.

The position and character of the media in Serbia have been defined by the established parameters of political, economic and cultural freedoms, the rule of law and the independence of state institutions. The media liberalization in the eighties, when the Yugoslav and the Serbian public started the discourse about freedoms and human rights, was temporarily discontinued in the nineties, through repression or marginalization of the independent media. Wavering of the permanent financial support to independent media after the year 2000 has contributed to the applause of market demands, poor, underdeveloped, fragmented and prone to manipulation. Unsuccessful democratization has produced an incomplete, ineffective and failed country. Regardless of their ownership structure, the media at the same time reproduce and reshape the reality. The role of the media was particularly evident in the part of the public policy environment which reveals the disorganization and inefficiency of state institutions. The media, at the same time, divide and create the reality of adverse economic conjuncture, low level of general education, literacy and professional competences, slow implementation of economic, political and cultural freedoms, non-integration into the European system. The media have been daily closing some of the important routes to neighborly, European and Euro-Atlantic integration, and have been daily opening the chances to commitments which keep Serbia in the European periphery. "A sincere nationalism, constructed authoritarian personality type, mere conformism or just a lack of knowledge about a different type of journalism, have created the media environment in which a serious analysis, expert commentary or research texts are at the level of incident."²

1. Code of Journalists of Serbia, 2006 (<http://www.uns.org.rs/sr/kodeks-novinara-srbije.html>). Journalist Association of Serbia (Udruženje novinara Srbije (UNS)) and Independent Journalist Association of Serbia (Nezavnisno udruženje novinara Srbije (NUNS)) have adopted this Code as an ethical standard of professional conduct of journalists.

2. Katarina Ristić, Media Discourse on War Crime Trials in Serbia, 2003-2013, Fund For Humanitarian Law, Belgrade, 2-3.

Whether annual or periodic, thematic reports on the state of the media in Serbia submitted by the EU, OSCE, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, the Fund for an Open Society, Reporters without Borders, State Department etc. indicate the professional or ethical failures which make the media neither incentive nor creative partners in the formulation and implementation of democratic, liberating, socially responsible and integrative public policy. The reports are, however, mainly engaged in the ownership structure of the media and advertisers, tabloidization or relationships with the executive authorities, neglecting the issues of the value analysis and discourse analysis in the context of social and political priorities.³ The government and the opposition, the NGOs sector and the media representatives themselves are all dissatisfied with the media. The hate speech in the media is considered the most intimate frame of relationship with readers. The credibility and the public role of the media are marginalized by the affairs which not only reveal the details of crime and corruption but primarily exercise public pressure on individuals and institutions. The media at the same time initiate, spin and then cover up the events whose victims are the public policy, public budget and public morality, general system of values or targeted individuals.

Mediameter

One of the joint projects which the *Public Policy Institute* implemented with the *Ebart Media Archive*, proved that it was extremely difficult to comment on the media situation in Serbia, due to the fact that there was no statistical information on media reporting which may be used in the analysis. This was just the reason why, in consultations with the independent experts following this area, the representatives of the *Ebart Media Archive* and the *Public Policy Institute* adopted the decision about launching a **Mediameter**, quarterly analysis of the print media in Serbia.

Mediameter is a research and scientific-expert project which, through the analysis of value judgments and thorough the discourse analysis, monitors the development of the print media in Serbia. The research hypothesis, which had no impact on the statistical, professional and scientific analysis, was based on an important premise that there are a significant number of daily newspapers and weeklies in the market, but, at the same time, the lack of quality news, research and analysis is noticeable, especially compared to the European practices and standards.

Mediameter is aimed at improving the professional and ethical standards of media reporting and analysis. The report is a scientific and professional support to all public policy participants. Support to the media, government, opposition, analysts and the public.

The research methodology has been prepared by a team with extensive experience in this

3. Human Rights in Serbia: 2013. Primordial Resistance to Liberal Values. The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Belgrade, 2014, 239-276.

field in accordance with the highest scientific standards. The result of the **Mediameter** is a database which can be used by all participants in public life when analyzing the Serbian media. This report does not evaluate the editorial policy of the media nor does it state value judgments. This report is a scientific analysis aimed at terminating the practice of arbitrary interpretation of media contents. The lack of statistical data and facts on the print media in Serbia has led to the constant improvisation when talking about the state of the media, media freedom and editorial policy. The same questions can be answered in diametrically opposed ways depending on the viewing angle.

We believe that the **Mediameter** would encourage other participants to launch similar projects, thus eventually making it possible to assess the state of the media in Serbia as accurate and reasoned.

Approach

The project **Mediameter** was intended to provide the professional and scientific analysis of the professional aspects of the print media editing, including their ability or inability, willingness or unwillingness to monitor, support or criticize the following important trends and elements of public policy:

- attitude towards EU, the USA and Russia,
- attitude towards the neighboring countries and the region,
- attitude towards economic changes: model of liberal economy, planned (state) economy, privatization, investment and banking,
- attitude towards the NATO, alliance with Russia and military neutrality,
- attitude towards the past,
- attitude towards the social values: corruption as a fate or as a part of the system,
- attitude towards science, education, health, army, police, judiciary system, church,
- attitude towards the current government and opposition.

The scientific and expert analysis is focused on the daily and weekly press, which has the greatest impact and largest circulation. Members of the public who are directly interested in all topics of importance for society, and who become the creators of public opinion in their environment, are daily informed from these media. Starting from the enormous influence of the daily and weekly press on public opinion, **Mediameter** included exactly those media in its first analysis.

In the reports to come, **Mediameter** will deal with other media, primarily with the contents of informative online portals.

The "ID card" will be determined for all of the media and its changes will be monitored with regard to the following: diversity of columns, accuracy, most frequent personalities and topics, quantitative analysis – stability of columns and possible changes in the structure.

The media attitudes will be determined by analyzing the overall editorial policy, cover page

texts, main authors, selection of topics and the manner of dealing with them and placing them to the public.

Mediameter is particularly aimed at:

- the media and the public,
- the diplomatic community and foreign investors: media performances are the reflection of general social, political and economic performances of each individual community,
- all actors of public policy which lacks timely, scientific and expert analysis of media reporting.

Our intention is to make this report a permanent and credible, professional and valuable corrective, overview of the situation with no intermediaries.

2

Method
and sample



METHOD AND SAMPLE

Method

Every form of social communication, including the media communication as well, consists of three elements:

1. message transmitter
2. message recipient
3. message contents¹

It is this third element – message content – which will be the subject of our analysis. A message is “any symbolic content, which has a specific meaning or at least its transmitter assumes so, and is sent with an intention”² to a message recipient, who is also the active creator of meaning.³ Of course, within the scope of this research, a special attention will be paid exactly to those symbolic meanings which open up the possibility for the creation of certain interpretative (ideological and political) curvature with regard to the currently existing social and political coordinates of everyday life. The research team of the Mediometer project has sought to analyze and reconstruct the elements of those (public and hidden) messages by applying and combining two research methods: content analysis and discourse analysis. In the interpretative sense, for the purposes of better organization of the text offered to readers for inspection, the analysis is divided into two stages: quantitative and qualitative.

The methodological approach to content analysis will be applied to only one part of our analysis, the quantitative part. The applied methodological approach could be defined as “analysis of a set of objects (i.e. cultural artefacts)... by their systematic counting and/or by interpreting the themes contained in them.”⁴ In that sense, particularly analyzed were those cultural artefacts which are the product of the following:

- a. the impact of hegemonic cultural and political forms in accordance with which certain social actors (consciously or unconsciously) act;
- b. the impact of various social organizations (political parties, institutions of the system, public institutions...)

1. Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Allyn and Bacon, 2001, 243

2. Vojin Milić, *Sociološki metod [Sociological method]*, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Beograd, 1996, 571.

3. Denis McQuail, *Stari kontinent – novi mediji [Old Continent – New Media]*, NOVA, Beograd, 1994.

4. Shulamith Reinharz, “Feminist Content Analysis”, in: S. Reinhartz (ed.), *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1992, 146

c. (c) activities of individuals

Of course, the very interpretation of these contents represents a certain cultural artefact.

The qualitative part of the analysis has been derived with the help of the discourse analysis. An attempt has been made during work to reconstruct certain cultural artefacts which constitute the elements of possible (both explicit and implicit) meanings exactly through the discourse analysis.

Like any discourse analysis, ours was focused on the language and meanings produced by the use of language through written text. Because, language is not a neutral medium used “only” for communication and exchange of information. Language is a social field where our knowledge of the world around us is actively shaped. In this sense, the authors of this analysis as well have sought, with the help of discourse analysis, to treat the language, used within the various collected, primarily, empirical matter, not as a mere reflection of reality, but as a medium which constructs and organizes that reality for us.⁵ In that regard, this analysis treats the language and text as a place where the social meanings are articulated and reproduced, and where certain social (personal, professional, political and cultural) identities are formed.

A discourse analysis of the empirical matter was focused on two central themes, on the one side on:

- a. interpretative context⁶ within which each individual text which constitutes a part of our analysis originated, and on the other side,
- a. rhetorical organization of the text⁷

In this particular case, the interpretative context relates to the social and political circumstances within which each individual text from our sample originated, because each text was written in a sort of a specific social context to which the authors (whether consciously or unconsciously) always adapt. In this sense, the research of the interpretative context implies a certain kind of search for meanings which may be found and understood only if the analysis also goes “beyond the text”⁸ and searches for interpretation which arises from a particular, social, cultural and political context within which the text is created. On the other side, the analysis of the rhetorical organization of the text means searching for a specific matrix of arguments, which stems on the one side from the actual choice of the interpretative strategy of the text author, and on the other side from a specific evaluative, political and/or ideological discourse within which the author acts and thinks.

5. Fran Tonkiss, „Analysing discourse”, in: C. Seale (ed.), *Researching Society and Culture*, Sage Publications, London, 1996, 246

6. Idem, 249

7. Idem, 250

8. Idem, 249

As emphasized in the introductory text, the initial step in this analysis is the reconstruction of a hegemonic cultural, economic and political structural matrix of the society within which the studied newspaper articles originated. The assumption of this research is that it is only the understanding of a broad social and political context which can result in understanding of certain aspects of the media messages themselves, as well as their projected social and political role and the expected impact on society. Because, as social actors, we are constantly oriented to the *interpretative context* within which we find ourselves, and construct our own discourse in order to adjust it to the context. Also, only through the understanding of a certain broader (social) and narrower (media) context of the moment that we study can we understand some of (both explicit or implicit) intentions of certain social actors involved in the process(es) of media production. That hegemonic concept of reality, which can be reconstructed from various types of newspaper articles, everyday practices and contents of their interpretations testified by the articles which constitute the sample of our research, and also the individual social actors who speak through them, affect the broader social understanding of certain political events and circumstances, because they unconsciously inscribe in our understanding the meanings which are not inherent in themselves, outside the predefined hegemonic evaluative coordinate system through which, in a certain way, we participate in a collective (political and social) life of the society whose part we are. Because, as Alfred Schütz said, "Meaning [...] is not an inherent property of certain experiences which occur within the flow of our consciousness, but is the result of interpretations of past experiences which we reflectively consider from the current Now".⁹ We would like to add – all in accordance with certain hegemonic preliminary concept of reality which shapes our thinking and perception, thus forming a distinctive coordinate system of "meanings" which make us more sensitive to certain themes and practices of everyday life, or less sensitive or even blind to some others. In this sense, a particularly important part of this research is reconstruction of these value positions and meanings promoted by the certain media through their editorial policies and thorough the coordinates of media reality they enter.

Sample

The main idea of the project Mediameter is that it would try to reconstruct the media reality coordinates of the Serbian daily media in print in as they could be read from the texts which are positioned (in whole or in part) on the front page, and which speak, in different ways, about the current political events and the situation in Serbia and in the world. A sample of daily papers has been made based on the two criteria of selection – the biggest circulation and highest reputation of the print media. The information on circulation of daily newspapers has been taken from the research made by IPSOS.¹⁰ A front page is a part of a newspaper which the readers mostly associate with the identity/recognizability of the media. It is often

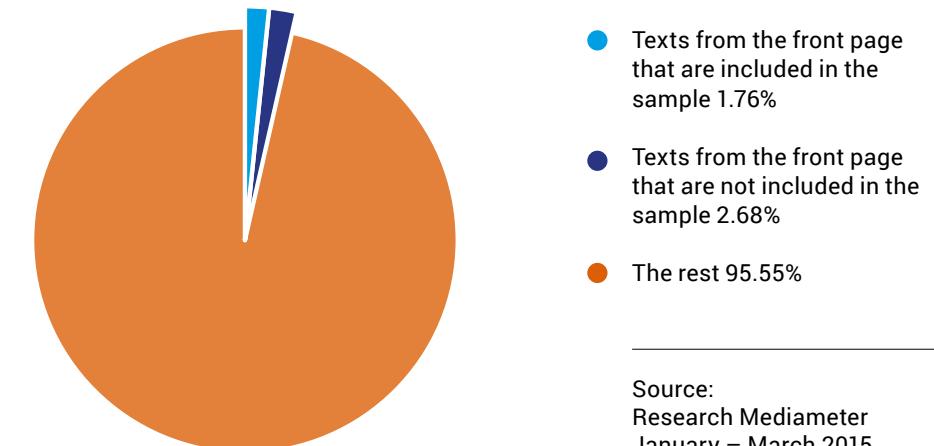
9. A. Šic, „O višestrukim stvarnostima [About multiple realities]“, in: I. Spasić (ed.), *Interpretativna sociologija*, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Beograd, 1998, 89

10. Research into the average daily circulation of the daily press has been conducted for the period 29th December 2014 to 15th February 2015, population total 12+

responsible for the first impression, our possible affection or aversion which we form about a print edition. The front page creates contact not only with the readers of a certain newspaper but also with the people who may never take that newspaper in their hands. Through newspaper and TV advertisements and window displays of newspaper shops, the front page comes in contact with the audience wider than the readership of any daily newspaper, thus forming, in a certain way, public picture of a newspaper which symbolizes its editorial policy, value orientation and focus on a certain readership. For all the above reasons, front pages of daily newspapers included in our sample are in the focus of the project Mediameter.

Although the front page texts represent a small percentage of the total number of texts contained in certain daily editions of newspapers, this analysis treats them as a kind of litmus test for the understanding of certain editorial policies of daily newspapers from our sample. Charts 1 – 7 present the percentage share of the total number of texts found on the front pages and included in the sample of our research with regard to the total number of texts contained in the analyzed issues of individual daily newspapers in the period from 01st January to 31st March 2015.

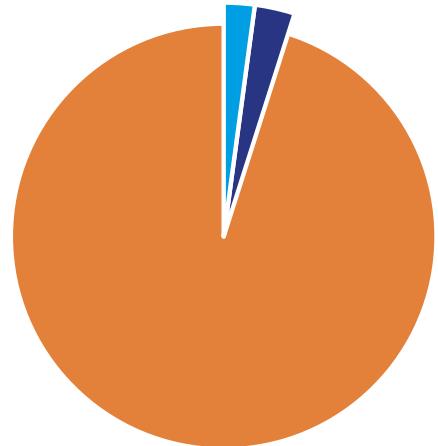
Chart 1 – Večernje novosti¹¹



Source:
Research Mediameter
January – March 2015

Source: Research Mediameter January – March 2015

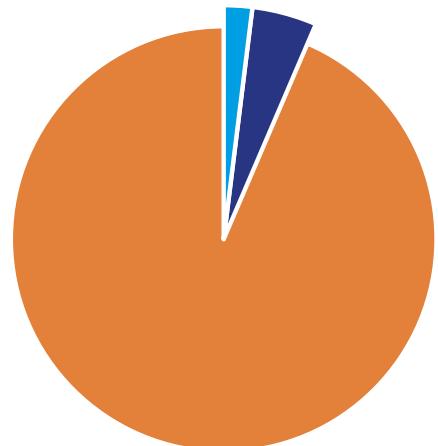
11. For more information see Table 40 in Appendix.

Chart 2 – *Informer*¹²

- Texts from the front page that are included in the sample 2.50%
- Texts from the front page that are not included in the sample 3.09%
- The rest 94.40%

Source:
Research Mediameter
January – March 2015

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Chart 3 – *Alo!*¹³

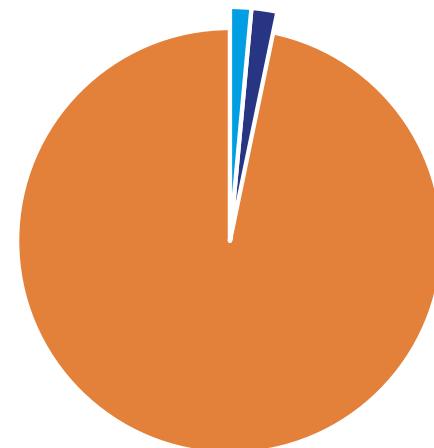
- Texts from the front page that are included in the sample 2.01%
- Texts from the front page that are not included in the sample 4.43%
- The rest 93.54%

Source:
Research Mediameter
January – March 2015

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

12. For more information see Table 41 in Appendix.

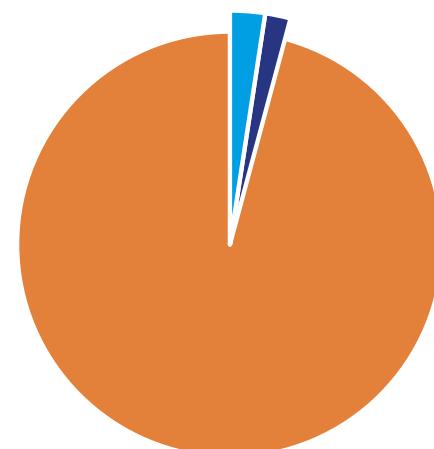
13. For more information see Table 42 in Appendix.

Chart 4 – *Blic*¹⁴

- Texts from the front page that are included in the sample 1.64%
- Texts from the front page that are not included in the sample 2.14%
- The rest 96.21%

Source:
Research Mediameter
January – March 2015

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Chart 5 – *Politika*¹⁵

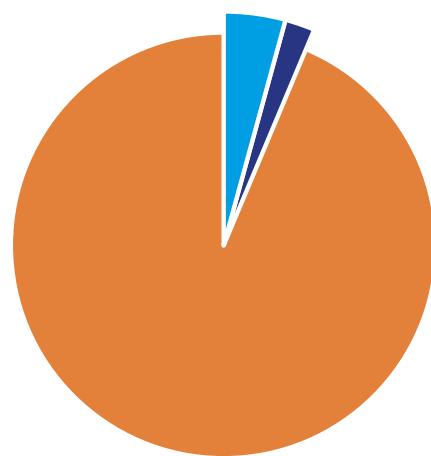
- Texts from the front page that are included in the sample 2.71%
- Texts from the front page that are not included in the sample 2.47%
- The rest 94.80%

Source:
Research Mediameter
January – March 2015

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

14. For more information see Table 43 in Appendix.

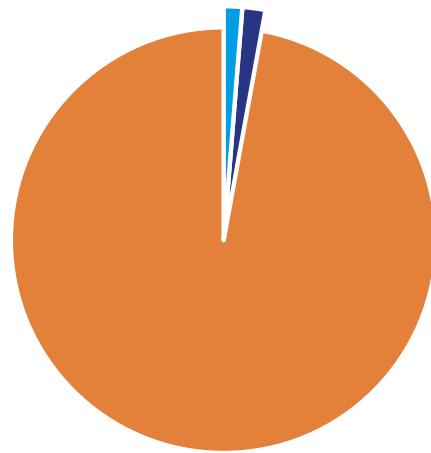
15. For more information see Table 44 in Appendix.

Chart 6 – Danas¹⁶

- Texts from the front page that are included in the sample 4.11%
- Texts from the front page that are not included in the sample 2.75%
- The rest 91.76%

Source:
Research Mediameter
January – March 2015

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Chart 7 – Kurir¹⁷

- Texts from the front page that are included in the sample 1.61%
- Texts from the front page that are not included in the sample 1.89%
- The rest 96.49%

Source:
Research Mediameter
January – March 2015

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

The total number of analyzed texts in all seven media included in the sample of our research amounts to 1360, and that number represents an average of 45.54% of front page texts and 2.25% of the total number of texts.

Particularly interesting seems the analysis of the distribution of sections within which the texts from our sample have been published because it reveals the editorial strategies through which certain political contents are introduced, discussed and interpreted within the studied media representations.

16. For more information see Table 45 in Appendix.

17. For more information see Table 46 in Appendix.

Table 1 – Večernje novosti

Newspaper: Večernje novosti / section	Total number of front page articles	Total number of selected front page articles	Total number of articles not selected
daily news	106	12	94
society	97	48	49
politics	65	62	3
economics	51	40	11
current events	40	15	25
reportage	22	2	20
culture	19	1	18
interview	18	13	5
world	16	7	9
life plus	16	0	16
sport	15	2	13
news Belgrade	10	3	7
addition doctor in house	10	0	10
spectacle	7	1	6
BGD 011	6	0	6
Belgrade stories	6	0	6
sport plus	6	0	6
tragedy in Surčin	5	4	1
TV News	5	0	5
human destinies	3	1	2
region	3	0	3
feuilleton	2	0	2
action	2	0	2
confessions	2	1	1
other side	2	1	1
events	1	0	1
in memoriam	1	0	1
TOTAL	536	213	323

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 2 – Informer

Newspaper: Informer / section	Total number of front page articles	Total number of selected front page articles	Total number of articles not selected
breaking news	143	114	29
news	96	28	68
show time	54	1	53
entertainment	1	0	1
sport	30	2	28
TOTAL	324	145	179

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 3 – Alo!

Newspaper: Alo / section	Total number of front page articles	Total number of selected front page articles	Total number of articles not selected
current news	86	68	18
news	140	45	95
VIP	122	7	115
sport	40	1	39
Mourning day	1	1	0
TOTAL	389	122	267

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 4 – Blic

Newspaper: Blic / section	Total number of front page articles	Total number of selected front page articles	Total number of articles not selected
100 most powerful	2	0	2
300 most powerful	3	1	2
current news	3	2	1
archive	2	0	2
Belgrade	15	0	15
dossier	1	0	1
society	43	17	26
economy	26	23	3
phenomenon	2	0	2
daily news	51	3	48
culture	15	2	13
politics	43	43	0
sport	33	1	32
human destinies	4	1	3
world	7	1	6
topic of the day	86	73	13
topic of the week	8	4	4
in focus	2	1	1
time machine	1	1	0
entertainment	56	2	54
TOTAL	403	175	228

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 5 – Politika

Newspaper: POLITIKA / section	Total number of front page articles	Total number of selected front page articles	Total number of articles not selected
world	95	40	55
society	92	48	44
economics	67	57	10
politics	58	54	4
events of the day	57	47	10
culture	31	3	28
daily news	28	15	13
daily addition	20	0	20
Belgrade	17	3	14
Serbia	14	2	12
reading room	13	0	13
sport	13	0	13
topic of the week	12	7	5
personalities	10	8	2
region	9	6	3
front page	7	4	3
spectrum	7	0	7
views	5	2	3
TV guide	5	0	5
feuilleton	3	1	2
consumers	3	0	3
Belgrade daily news	2	0	2
TOTAL	568	297	271

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 6 – Danas

Newspaper: Danas / section	Total number of front page articles	Total number of selected front page articles	Total number of articles not selected
Belgrade	1	1	0
Christmas	1	0	1
dialogue	2	1	1
business addition	30	9	21
Danas special addition	4	0	4
Danas addition	2	0	2
Danas weekend	22	3	19
event of the day	1	1	0
society	66	43	23
economics	41	36	5
globe	50	23	27
culture	31	5	27
interview	1	1	0
front page	4	2	2
health	1	0	1
politics	128	122	6
periscope	1	0	1
law today	30	25	5
scene	6	0	6
sport	25	1	24
topic	1	1	0
scales	8	0	8
TOTAL	456	274	183

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 7 – Kurir

Newspaper: KURIR/section	Total number of front page articles	Total number of selected front page articles	Total number of articles not selected
society	22	11	11
economics	8	8	0
daily news	39	4	35
culture	4	0	4
planet	4	0	4
politics	39	38	1
sport	12	0	12
stars	62	2	60
topic of the day	101	71	30
TOTAL	291	134	157

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Even by a quick inspection of the presented tables 1-7, it is evident that the structure of the analyzed daily newspapers follows the two different logics. The largest number of analyzed papers follows the traditional structure of sections typical of daily newspapers . *Večernje novosti*, *Politika*, *Danas*, *Blic*, and even *Kurir* to a certain extent, follow this traditional matrix of daily newspaper structure. However, the daily newspapers *Informer* and *Alo* significantly differ from this matrix, making a step towards the new hybrid genre of tabloids which, in various ways and to a different extent, gradually conquers parts of the media space in Serbia. This new structure loses the traditional division of news to that concerning politics, society, economics, culture etc. and they are all combined into a provisional section of news, with an emphasis placed on entertainment contents such as the information on celebrities, entertainment and sports. Thus shaped structure of a paper sends a clear message on required professional qualifications of journalists, within which the strictly expert knowledge such as the expertise in the interpretation of economic issues, foreign policy or any other, is no longer required, and probably even not welcome. Of course, even in such media, the largest number of selected articles contained in the sample of our research were published just within the sections of news and current events/topic of the day. In all other newspapers, the largest number of articles included in the sample of our study were published in the section of politics, with an exception of the daily newspaper *Politika* where slightly more articles were published in the section Economics.

The following analysis will try to reconstruct the policies of media reporting on current events through the analysis of share of certain newspaper genres, structure and frequency of appearance of certain (individual and collective) social actors, structure of topics of front page texts and the analysis of direct reasons for the introduction of certain topics in the media discourse, just as those reasons were interpreted within the individual newspaper narratives without analyzing their possible (in)accuracy.

3

Research
results



ISIDORA JARIĆ, DANICA LABAN

RESEARCH RESULTS

Share of Journalism Genres

Analysis of the genre structure of seven daily newspapers identified the obvious dominancy of reports, as the holders of the most important information. This dominancy varies: from 44.11% in *Politika* to even 81.38% in *Informer*. News, as the main holder of informativeness of each of the media significantly lags behind in share with the average score of 12.72 percent. Interviews are in the third place (10.96%), articles are in the fourth place (7.50%) and commentaries in the fifth place (6.62%), while all other genres (reportage and hybrid forms) are negligibly present in newspapers, below one percent.

Table 8 – Share of different genres in reporting in 7 analyzed media

Genre	Total number	% share
Report	832	61.18%
News	173	12.72%
Interview	149	10.96%
Article	102	7.50%
Commentary	90	6.62%
Reportage	10	0.74%
Hybrid form	3	0.22%
Form not clearly defined	1	0.07%
TOTAL	1360	100.00%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 9 – Distribution of journalistic forms per media

Genre	Alo!	Blic	Danas	Kurir	Informer	Politika	Večernje novosti
Report	74	111	142	97	118	131	159
News	37	40	48	19	17	9	3
Interview	2	13	49	11	4	40	31
Article	2	2	10	6	3	59	20
Commentary	4	3	24	1	3	55	
Reportage	3	2	1			3	1
Hybrid form		3					
Form not clearly defined		1					
TOTAL	122	175	274	134	145	297	214

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Report

Report, which is undoubtedly the most common form of journalistic expression, implies a wide and developed reporter-journalist network, or the possibility to interpret every event which is of public interest and/or can attract the public attention in the shortest time. The manner in which this journalistic form is placed, indicates numerous technical and technological problems faced by the certain media, especially in the area of human resources, so that a number of reports were noticed where not even the minimum of professional standards were respected.

A report is differently conceptualized in the analyzed media. *Politika* and *Danas* mainly respect the standards of professional journalism while writing in this journalistic form, and most reports are value-neutral (14% of reports in *Politika* and 8% in *Danas* are value-colored). In *Blic* and *Večernje novosti* the reports are mainly neutral, while in the remaining media the value context and the attitude of journalist/editorial staff can be clearly perceived (73% of reports in *Informer*, 55% in *Alo!* and 57% in *Kurir* have been classified as negative or positive).

Also, a great deal of information originating from unnamed sources is noticeable in all the media and genres (unnamed sources are the second most frequent actors in all journalistic forms, with a total of 218 appearances). This is where the share of the newspapers *Informer* and *Alo!* is the largest, particularly when the form of report is concerned (about 63% in *Alo!*, while about 52% of reports in *Informer* contain the information received from unnamed sources). *Politika* on the other side uses unnamed sources in only 1.5% of reports (total), while *Večernje novosti* does not come to information in this way.

When it comes to the sources of information, the Code of Journalists of Serbia (section VI) clearly prescribes the conditions in which the use of unnamed sources is possible and unequivocally states that the "Invention of anonymous sources accounts for a serious violation of the standards of professional conduct of journalists". Although the professional, self-regulation document defines the conditions in which the information received from unnamed sources can be used, *Alo!*, *Informer*, *Blic* and *Kurir* use this possibility to the extent which is not in the standards of professional reporting, thus expressing the information which is impossible or very difficult to verify and on the basis of thus obtained information they construct messages.

Table 10 – Share of “unnamed sources” in reports of 7 analyzed media

Media	Number of reports	Quoting of unnamed sources	% share in total number of reports
Alo	74	47	63.51%
Informer	118	61	51.69%
Blic	111	52	46.85%
Kurir	97	33	34.02%
Danas	142	19	13.38%
Politika	131	2	1.53%
TOTAL	673	214	

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

With this way of reporting, *Kurir* and *Informer* create a special journalistic form, which is classified as a report, but also contains the elements of an article. This form includes the news, as the basis, which usually originates from an unnamed source, and is further elaborated through the views and opinions of named analysts and experts, who, just like the data possibly presented by the media, only confirm the initial hypothesis.

Another key observation in connection with reports relates to the general one-sidedness of presented information, or preparation of reports on the basis of the news/statement from only one or several sources who share the same or similar viewpoint (*Večernje novosti*, *Politika*), which is the additional reason for the presence of a large number of unbalanced¹ texts.

1. Balance is the way in which the journalist approaches the topic. Balanced text implies a balanced and objective approach to the topic and interlocutors and the integrity of information.

Table 11 – Balancing of texts in 7 analyzed media

Report	Balance	
	yes	no
Blic	58	53
Kurir	19	78
Večernje novosti	24	135
Alo!	12	62
Informer	14	104
Politika	46	85
Danas	96	46
TOTAL	269	563
TOTAL		832

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Other Journalism Forms

The highest percentage of articles (19.87%) are published in *Politika*, which is in accordance with its structure and share of sections. When the share of this form is concerned, the second place belongs to *Večernje novosti* (9.39%), while in all other media, this genre is represented to a negligible extent. It can be concluded that an article, as a classic journalistic form, without which it is unconceivable to talk about the research journalism, is seriously behind other forms.

Another influential journalistic form, a commentary, has found its place in *Politika*, where it holds the third place as a genre, and is present with a total of 18.57%. This is an extremely high percentage in every respect and represents the intent of *Politika* to rely on reputation of its authors much more when building its own image. Of course, that does not mean that only *Politika* has strong and determined attitudes towards current problems and events, because it can easily be achieved by publishing certain reports and news, but it means that this medium attaches greater importance to the commentary. Commentary is, to a considerable extent, also present in *Danas* with 8.75%. Another peculiarity was noticed during this analysis of content – emergence of editorial comments on front pages of newspapers. In this period, front pages of *Politika* published four comments, two in *Informer* and one in *Blic*, which raises the question whether certain events deserve that much attention that editors have to comment on them on front pages of their newspapers or whether it is just a personal opinion and the reflection of editorial policy. This practice dates back to early nineties of the last century, when the then chief editor of *Politika*, Aleksandar Prlja used to publish his comments on the front page of the newspaper, and shows that some customs and experiences

can easily be brought back and applied, and that the spirit of the Serbian journalism in print is very eclectic, but also adaptable to various political and market challenges.

Another very important segment of understanding the editorial policy of a daily newspaper is its attitude towards interview as a form. Interview comprises multiple agendas and often represents a kind of comment to various events and relationships. The largest number of interviews can be found in the daily newspapers *Danas* (17.89%) and *Večernje novosti* (14.08%). The selection of interviewees in the above media always has a certain social and political message, which is a reflection of the editorial policy.

The data on the under-representation of reportage, only ten of a total of 1360 texts, is also not surprising. Reportage has been less present in newspapers for more than twenty years, and with the development of the Internet and web journalism, it gets completely new forms and place and it shifts from the daily political journalism towards the weekly and monthly press and fiction.

There are many interesting details related to this research, which reveal some secret editorial successes or failures. *Blic*, for example, is dominated by reports, then news and finally interviews. Commentaries are poorly represented. At the same time, *Blic* has the longest list of people mentioned. The need to create, in an undefined form, a list of the most influential people in Serbia according to various parameters is a part of the very essence of the editorial policy of this paper. *Alo!* has the largest number of reports and news, which is completely in accordance with the popular concept of this paper, while *Politika* and *Večernje novosti* kept the traditional concept of both sections and the use of journalistic forms.

Table 12 – Distribution of journalistic forms per media

Genre	Alo!	Blic	Danas	Kurir	Informer	Politika	Večernje novosti
Report	74	111	142	97	118	131	159
News	37	40	48	19	17	9	3
Interview	2	13	49	11	4	40	31
Article	2	2	10	6	3	59	20
Commentary	4	3	24	1	3	55	
Reportage	3	2	1			3	1
Hybrid form		3					
Form not clearly defined		1					
Total	122	175	274	134	145	297	214

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Actors

The media in Serbia, at least according to the analysis of the empirical material collected from front pages, are mainly dealing with the political events in Serbia. Even 68.54% of a total number of actors who are the subjects of front page texts, are the political actors holding various positions inside the political life of Serbia (see Table 13. and Tables 14, 15, 18 and 19. which deal with the distribution of frequency of appearance of certain individual actors). If we add to this number the texts dealing with the collective political actors who act within the borders of the Serbian society, the percentage of their share increases to 75.70%. If, however, we add to this percentage the texts referring to unnamed sources, who also cover the topics from political life of the Serbian society, the share of these texts in the total number of texts from our sample reaches the whopping 86.33%.

Table 13 – Total distribution of actors who appear in the texts included within the scope of our sample (expressed in absolute numbers).

Actors		Number of appearances
1. Political actors		2561
1.1 Internal actors		2188
1.1.1 political actors - individual		1981
1.1.1.1 Members of the Serbian Government/ruling parties		1410
1.1.1.2 opposition		309
1.1.1.3 political figures outside the Government of the Republic of Serbia		262
1.1.2 political actors - collective		207
1.2. Foreign actors		373
1.2.1 political actors - individual		300
1.2.2 political actors - collective		73
2. Economic actors		111
2.1. Internal		66
2.1.1 economic actors - individual		23
2.1.2 economic actors - collective		0
2.2. Foreign		22
2.2.1 economic actors - individual		0
2.2.2 economic actors - collective		22
3. Unnamed sources		218
Total		2890

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Tables 14, 15, 18 and 19 show the distribution of frequency of appearance of individual political actors acting within the political scene of the Serbian society. Political actors who are members of the Serbian Government and ruling parties are significantly more prevalent on the front pages (71% compared to 28.82% of opposition actors and those who do not belong to the current Serbian Government).

Table 14 – Distribution of frequency of appearance of individual political actors from the Serbian Government/ruling parties

1.1.1 Serbian Government/ruling parties	Number of appearances
Aleksandar Vučić	446
Tomislav Nikolić	188
Ivica Dačić	138
Bratislav Gašić	100
Zorana Mihajlović	80
Nebojša Stefanović	75
Aleksandar Vulin	65
Rasim Ljajić	37
Nikola Selaković	35
Dušan Vujović	34
Srdjan Verbić	31
Aleksandar Antić	30
Kori Udovički	30
Zlatibor Lončar	30
Željko Sertić	28
Ivan Tasovac	23
Siniša Mali	22
Marko Đurić	21
Velimir Ilić	18
Jadranka Joksimović	18
Radomir Nikolić	18
Maja Gojković	17
Danijel Nikolić	9
Total	1493

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

In the analysis we present, the ways in which certain actors were presented in individual texts from our sample were marked in three different ways, taking into account both the text, but also the textual equipment of the text (headline, title and subtitle). *Neutral* presentation of certain actors was assigned to those texts where the authors of texts/journalists do not take up the value attitude towards certain actors, but try to present certain facts which are the subject matter of text in a relatively neutral and balanced way. *Positive* presentation was assigned to those interpretations where the journalists, through their method of presentation of certain actors, express clear sympathy and positive attitude towards them. *Negative* presentation was assigned to those interpretations in which the journalists, through their method of presentation of certain actors, express clear antipathy and negative attitude towards certain actors.

Table 15 – Value context of appearance of individual political actors from Government of Serbia

1.1.1 Government of Serbia	positive	% share in number of appearances	neutral	% share by value context	negative	% share by value context
Aleksandar Vučić	25	5,61%	410	91,93%	11	2,47%
Tomislav Nikolić	2	1,06%	146	77,66%	40	21,28%
Ivica Dačić	1	0,72%	129	93,48%	8	5,80%
Bratislav Gašić	0	0,00%	85	85,00%	15	15,00%
Zorana Mihajlović	2	2,50%	65	81,25%	13	16,25%
Nebojša Stefanović	4	5,33%	68	90,67%	3	4,00%
Aleksandar Vulin	3	4,62%	52	80,00%	10	15,38%
Rasim Ljajić	0	0,00%	37	100,00%	0	0,00%
Nikola Selaković	1	2,86%	28	80,00%	6	17,14%
Dušan Vujović	1	2,94%	30	88,24%	3	8,82%
Srdjan Verbić	0	0,00%	23	74,19%	8	25,81%
Aleksandar Antić	2	6,67%	28	93,33%	0	0,00%
Kori Udovički	1	3,33%	28	93,33%	1	3,33%
Zlatibor Lončar	2	6,67%	25	83,33%	3	10,00%
Željko Sertić	0	0,00%	25	89,29%	3	10,71%
Ivan Tasovac	0	0,00%	21	91,30%	2	8,70%
Siniša Mali	1	4,55%	21	95,45%	0	0,00%
Marko Đurić	0	0,00%	21	100,00%	0	0,00%
Velimir Ilić	0	0,00%	18	100,00%	0	0,00%
Radomir Nikolić	0	0,00%	17	94,44%	1	5,56%
Jadranka Joksimović	0	0,00%	17	94,44%	1	5,56%
Maja Gojković	1	5,88%	14	82,35%	2	11,76%
Danijel Nikolić	0	0,00%	1	11,11%	8	88,89%
Total	46		1292		137	

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

As we can see from Table 15, the main actor of daily newspaper front pages in Serbia is Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, about whom the media from our sample report mainly in a neutral (91,93%) or in a positive way (5,61%). He appears 446 times as a actor of front page texts, which is twice as much as the next ranked actor. The largest frequency of his appearance expressed as an absolute number can be noticed in the daily newspapers *Danas* (95) and *Politika* (91) (see Table 16). However, expressed in relative numbers of percentage share of texts in which he appears as an actor compared to the total number of selected texts from the same individual newspaper, we can see that he is most represented in *Blic* (even 44% texts from our sample deal with Vučić) and daily newspaper *Alo!* (38% texts) (see Table 17). Expressed as a percentage, the highest share of positive texts about him can be recorded in the daily newspaper *Informer* (where we find even 25% of front page texts about him which are expressed with positive connotations) and *Kurir* (16,28%), and negative in the newspaper *Danas* (6,3%) or 6 texts in the first quarter of the year 2015.

Table 16 – Frequency of appearance of Aleksandar Vučić in individual daily newspapers

Aleksandar Vučić	Number of texts	%	positive	%	neutral	%	negative	%
Danas	95	21.30%	2	2.11%	87	91.58%	6	6.32%
Politika	91	20.40%	0	0.00%	91	100.00%	0	0.00%
Blic	77	17.26%	1	1.30%	72	93.51%	4	5.19%
Večernje novosti	53	11.88%	2	3.77%	51	96.23%	0	0.00%
Alo	47	10.54%	3	6.38%	43	91.49%	1	2.13%
Kurir	43	9.64%	7	16.28%	36	83.72%	0	0.00%
Informer	40	8.97%	10	25.00%	30	75.00%	0	0.00%
Grand Total	446	100.0%	25		410		11	

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 17 – Number of appearances of Aleksandar Vučić compared to the total number of texts in certain newspapers

Aleksandar Vučić in the media	Number of appearances	Total number of front page texts	% share compared to the total number of texts
Blic	77	175	44,00%
Alo	47	122	38,52%
Danas	95	274	34,67%
Kurir	43	134	32,09%
Politika	91	297	30,64%
Informer	40	145	27,59%
Večernje novosti	53	213	24,88%
Grand Total	446	1360	

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Most negatively connoted texts, even 40, relate to the current President of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolić. We can add to this number the negatively connotated texts about the members of this immediate family – son Radomir Nikolić (7 texts) and wife Dragica Nikolić (6 texts), which indicates the current relatively poor image of the actual president of Serbia within the media reality of Serbian daily newspapers. However, expressed in percentages, the highest score of negatively noted articles are about Danijel Nikolić, Serbian government employee, who became famous in Serbian media reality for his traveling to Thailand. Even 88.89% of articles about Danijel Nikolić which appeared on front pages has negative connotations. Second place takes Minister of Education, Science and Technological Development of whom even 25.81% of texts speaks in a negative way (see Table 15).

Table 18 – Distribution of frequency of appearance of individual political actors from opposition and value context

1.1.2 Opposition	Number of appearances	positive	% share in value context	neutral	% share in value context	negative	% share in value context
Vojislav Šešelj	69	0	0,00	57	82,67%	12	17,39%
Boris Tadić	67	0	0,00%	62	92,54%	5	7,46%
Bojan Pajtić	65	0	0,00%	53	81,54%	12	18,46%
Borisav Stefanović	45	0	0,00%	38	84,44%	7	15,56%
Zoran Živković	25	0	0,00%	22	88,00%	3	12,00%
Vojislav Koštunica	23	0	0,00%	22	95,65%	1	4,35%
Čedomir Jovanović	20	0	0,00%	15	75,00%	5	25,00%
Total	314	0		269		45	

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

As the Table 18 shows, in the collected empirical material from the sample we did not find any text that is consciously interpretative positively inclined and talks about some of the oppositional political actors. The highest percentage of negative connotated texts is noted in the case of Čedomir Jovanović (25% of articles in relation to the total number of texts about him) and Bojan Pajtić (18.46%).

The most frequently mentioned actor among the political figures who are not members of the Serbian government nor the opposition is Ljubiša Diković, with 49 articles and that is direct result of media reporting about the "helicopter crash". However, the most frequently mentioned in a negative context is the Governor of the National Bank of Serbia Jorgovanka Tabaković (even 41.03%).

Table 19 – Distribution of frequency of appearance of individual political actors outside the Serbian Government

Political figures	Number of texts	positive	%	neutral	%	negative	%
Ljubiša Diković	49	0	0.00%	48	97.96%	1	2.04%
Saša Janković	43	0	0.00%	38	88.37%	5	11.63%
Jorgovanka Tabaković	39	1	2.56%	22	56.41%	16	41.03%
Zoran Đindjić	34	1	2.94%	33	97.06%	0	0.00%
Slobodan Milošević	29	0	0.00%	29	100.00%	0	0.00%
Andrej Vučić	23	1	4.35%	22	95.65%	0	0.00%
Dušan Janjić	21	0	0.00%	21	100.00%	0	0.00%
Branko Radun	21	0	0.00%	21	100.00%	0	0.00%
Milorad Veljović	14	0	0.00%	11	78.57%	3	21.43%
Total	273	3		245		25	

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Significantly fewer are those texts dealing with collective political actors relevant for the Serbian political scene who are represented with less than 10% among the intra-political social actors (9.46%). Table 20 lists all the actors classified in this category from our sample together with the frequency of their appearance.

Table 20 – Distribution of frequency of appearance of domestic collective political actors

1.2 political actors – collective	Number of appearances	positive	% share in value context	neutral	% share in value context	negative	% share in value context
Serbian Government	89	1	1.12%	84	94.38%	4	4.49%
Democratic Party	27	1	3.70%	23	85.19%	3	11.11%
Serbian Progressive Party	26	0	0.00%	23	88.46%	3	11.54%
National Bank of Serbia	20	0	0.00%	19	95.00%	1	5.00%
Ministry of Defence	18	0	0.00%	17	94.44%	1	5.56%
National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia	15	0	0.00%	15	100.00%	0	0.00%
Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development	12	0	0.00%	12	100.00%	0	0.00%
Total	207	2		193		12	

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

A significantly smaller percentage of front page texts talk about the foreign political actors (only 13.66% of the total number of texts). The protagonists of those texts are more often individual actors / individuals (in 80.42% cases) than those collective (19.57%) (see Tables 21 and 22).

Table 21 – Distribution of frequency of appearance of individual foreign actors

2.1 Foreign actors – individual	Number of appearances	positive	% share in value context	neutral	% share in value context	negative	% share in value context
Vladimir Putin	62	3	4.84%	57	91.94%	2	3.23%
Kolinda Grabar Kitarović	50	1	2.00%	41	82.00%	8	16.00%
Angela Merkel	37	2	5.41%	34	91.89%	1	2.70%
Aleksis Cipras	31	3	9.68%	27	87.10%	1	3.23%
Majkl Devenport	21	0	0.00%	19	90.48%	2	9.52%
Ivo Josipović	21	0	0.00%	21	100.00%	0	0.00%
Majkl Kirbi	15	1	6.67%	13	86.67%	1	6.67%
Barak Obama	14	0	0.00%	14	100.00%	0	0.00%
Petro Porošenko	13	0	0.00%	13	100.00%	0	0.00%
Viktor Orban	12	0	0.00%	12	100.00%	0	0.00%
Total	276	13		553		35	

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 22 – Distribution of frequency of appearance of collective foreign actors

2.2 foreign actors – collective	Number of appearances	positive	% share in value context	neutral	% share in value context	negative	% share in value context
Haški tribunal	22	0	0.00%	21	95.45%	1	4.55%
NATO	26	1	3.85%	21	80.77%	4	15.38%
OEBS	15	0	0.00%	14	93.33%	1	6.67%
Njujork tajms	10	0	0.00%	19	100.00%	0	0.00%
Grand Total	73	1		75		6	

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Even a cursory overview of the frequency of appearance of certain actors on the front pages of the selected daily print newspapers included in our sample makes it possible to clearly notice the poor balancing of journalistic reporting which treats the issues from the area of the domestic and foreign politics with unequal interest. The fact that foreign actors are present on the front pages of the daily newspapers in Serbia in a significantly lower percentage (13.66% compared to 75.70%) shows that the local media are focused on the field of domestic politics, which, in the interpretation of certain daily newspapers, often takes the form of fiction, which will be discussed in more detail in the part of the analysis dealing with the interpretation strategies in the media treatment of certain topics. The reasons for the evident lack of interest for economic actors and their understanding of the social, economic and political situation in Serbia and in the world, remains unclear (only 3.84% of the total sample belongs to economic actors), especially as the narratives of many politicians mainly emphasize the economic issues and the economic consolidation as the key elements of future development strategies of the Serbian society (See Table 13).

The second place according to the frequency of appearance belongs to a actor who is, in narrative additions of daily newspaper journalists, stated under the pseudonym "unnamed source" or alternative pseudonyms such as "source of *Kurir*", "source known to the editorial staff" (even 218 texts from our sample mention unnamed sources, see Table 13). Frequency of appearance of this type of suspicious² interlocutors/sources of information is not equally represented in all daily newspapers³, which is an illustration of different editorial policies that implement the general principles of professional ethics presented in the *Code of Journal-*

2. In terms of their transparency, accessibility for verification of certain information, internal motivation to take part in the interpretation of certain events, opening and/or clarification of certain affairs and the like.

3. For example, the largest number of "unnamed sources" can be found in the daily newspaper *Informer* (61), then in *Blic* (52), *Kurir* (47) and daily newspaper *Alo* (33). The journalists of *Vечерње новости* relied on this type of sources in none of the analyzed texts, while the journalists of the daily newspaper *Politika* did it twice.

*ists of Serbia*⁴ in different ways. In a certain way, the tendency to use anonymous sources⁵, as evidenced by the data on the frequency of their appearance in case of certain media, follows the logic of colloquial division of daily newspapers to those with a dominant tabloid character and those intending not to be that. Unfortunately, according to the data from our sample, resistance to comprehensive external and internal processes of tabloidization and turning of the media into show business proved to be extremely complicated professional task with an uncertain outcome in the media environment of Serbia.

All the above is a painful testimony of the state of the media in Serbia which, with its curved reporting where certain social actors (in this particular case the politicians) become almost sole actors of the media reality, while some others become completely suppressed and marginalized, distorts the coordinates of everyday reality beyond recognition. Thus, the media reality becomes a simulacrum in which its protagonists have no other option but to simulate their own intentions, motives, ideas, development strategies and positions, all to the ultimate limits of simulation which deconstructs the very identity of the actors translating it to a suspicious "unnamed source".

4. *Code of Journalists of Serbia* was adopted in 2006 by the Independent Journalist Association of Serbia and Journalist Association of Serbia. In 2013, the Journalist Associations amended the Code by introducing the provisions on the prevention of corruption and conflict of interest. The adoption of this Code has been recognized within the professional community of journalists as a significant contribution to the strengthening of the media self-regulation and improvement of ethical standards, free and independent journalism.

5. For example, Chapter VI regulating the "Relationship to sources of information", paragraph 3 of this Code says: "A journalist shall comply with the request for anonymity made by a source of information. Inventing of anonymous sources is considered a serious violation of the standards of professional conduct of journalists.

Guidelines:

- Use of anonymous (confidential) sources of information is generally not recommended, unless there are no other methods to obtain the information of the utmost public importance.
- Often, the use of unnamed sources of information simply enables the source of information himself/herself or the journalists/media to present inaccurate, incomplete and insufficiently verified information. Should the hiding of the sources of information prove to be a camouflage for their absence, the credibility of the journalists/media will be seriously undermined.
- Anonymity/confidentiality should be provided to those sources of information who can provide the firsthand information, or for the documents which directly confirm, or inherently represent the information of great public importance.
- The editor is, together with the journalist, required to check the reasonableness of the use of anonymous (confidential) sources of information. In this regard, it is necessary that at least one editor should know and protect the identity of an anonymous source.
- If a source of information requires that the journalist should not reveal his/her identity to the editor, such a request should be rejected" (*Code of Journalists of Serbia*, 2013:20-21)

About Causes and Actors

How are the topics initiated or what events and actors generate the largest number of texts in newspapers? Is it just about the events themselves, which in most cases cannot be foreseen, or something else?

Topics designed by editorial staff are, very convincingly, on top of the causes (total 35.88%). Topics created by editorial staff, in this case are not contribution to the investigative journalism, but only tendency of the media to construct events in which they promote their own agendas and values. This is shown by the fact that, of the 396 relevant articles, 180 are neutrally stained, while 216 or 54.45% has clearly highlighted value statement (196 negative and 20 positive). Unnamed sources are: an actor of importance in 127 articles, compared to previously mentioned 396 articles (32.07%), which refers that we cannot check information that are placed on this occasion.

The second place belongs to the events initiated by foreign factors (13.24%), statements made by other relevant actors are in the third place (10.00%) while the fourth place belongs to the events initiated by the Government of the Republic of Serbia (7.65%). All other causes (events or statements made by various actors) are much less frequent. However, it is very interesting how they differ from newspaper to newspaper.

Table 23 – Distribution of causes in all analysed media

Cause	Number of appearances	% share
Topic designed by editorial staff	488	35.88%
Event initiated by foreign factor	180	13.24%
Statement made by other relevant actor	137	10.00%
Event initiated by the Government of the Republic of Serbia	104	7.65%
Event initiated by the Prosecutor's Office/court	58	4.26%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

It can be noticed that the topics designed by editorial staff are not dominant only in *Politika* and *Večernje novosti*. Instead, the most influential events are those initiated by foreign factors. Maybe it is just this initial difference in editorial approach which best shows the difference between "younger" and "older" newspapers. A solid editorial concept, which requires precise separation, and thus the planning of sections, seems not to allow for this kind of "imaginative freedom" of topic creation by editorial staff themselves, which is particularly noticeable in newspapers with evident influence of tabloidization.

Let us have a more detailed look at the situation per newspapers. We will start from newspapers where the designing of topics by editorial staff is the largest.

Alo! – even 75.41 percent of topics in this newspaper are designed by editorial staff itself. Such a situation leaves very little space for other causes. The Government of the Republic of Serbia initiates 4.92 percent, statements made by other relevant actors 4.10 percent and external factors only 3.28 percent of texts, just as the Prime Minister's statements (3.28%).

Table 24 – Distributions of causes in *Alo!*

Alo!	number of appearances	% share
Topics designed by editorial staff	92	75.41%
Events initiated by the Government of the Republic of Serbia	6	4.92%
Statements made by other relevant actors	5	4.10%
Events initiated by foreign factors	4	3.28%
Prime Minister's statements	4	3.28%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

When *Blic* is concerned, 52.57 percent of topics are designed by editorial staff. The Government holds the second place with 8.57 percent, then foreign factors with 8.00 percent, and then statements made by other relevant factors with 6.86 percent. Statements made by the representatives of the Government and the Prime Minister are equally represented and generate 3.43 percent of texts each.



Alo!, 11th March 2015

Table 25 – Distribution of causes in the newspaper *Blic*

Blic - cause	number of appearances	% share
Topics designed by editorial staff	92	52.57%
Events initiated by the Government of the Republic of Serbia	15	8.57%
Events initiated by foreign factors	14	8.00%
Statements made by other relevant factors	12	6.86%
Events initiated by ruling parties	7	4.00%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015



Blic, 23rd January 2015

Kurir is in third place when it comes to designing the topics of texts by editorial staff – total 44.03%. Statements made by other relevant factors take a high second place in *Kurir*, with 15.67%, followed by events initiated by the Government with 7.46%. Statements affecting the contents of the newspaper are as follows: those made by the representatives of the Government with 4.48% and those made by the Prime Minister with 2.24%.

Table 26 – Distribution of causes in the newspaper *Kurir*

Kurir	number of appearances	% share
Topics designed by editorial staff	59	44.03%
Statements made by other relevant factors	21	15.67%
Events initiated by the Government of the Republic of Serbia	10	7.46%
Events initiated by ruling parties	7	5.22%
Statements made by the representatives of the Government of the Republic of Serbia	6	4.48%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015



Kurir, 15 March 2015.

As for *Informer*, exactly 40 percent of topics are designed by editorial staff. As in *Kurir*, other relevant actors take second place in *Informer* also with 17.93 percent, followed by: external factors with 10.34% and reports from other media with 6.21 percent. When the statements are concerned, representatives of opposition have advantage with 4.83 percent and the Prime Minister with 4.14 percent.

Table 27 – Distribution of causes in the newspaper *Informer*

Informer	number of appearances	% share
Topics designed by editorial staff	58	40.00%
Statements made by other relevant factors	26	17.93%
Events initiated by foreign factors	15	10.34%
Reporting by other media	9	6.21%
Events initiated by the Prosecutor's Office/court	8	5.52%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

When *Kurir* and *Informer* are concerned, we could conclude that "other relevant actors" account for an aid in completing the area generating the texts by editorial staff. Other relevant actors are undoubtedly planned and selected by editorial staff. If we add these two categories, we will get approximately the same results - *Kurir* ($44.03 + 15.67 = 59.70\%$), *Informer* ($40.00 + 17.93 = 57.93\%$).

Danas designs 39.05 percent of topics by editorial staff, immediately followed by other relevant actors with 14.23 percent, then external factors with 13.87 percent, events initiated by the Government with 6.93 percent, statements made by the representatives of the Government with 4.38 percent, the Prosecutor's Office/court with 3.28 percent and Prime Minister's statements with only 1.48 percent.

Table 28 – Distribution of causes in the newspaper *Danas*

Danas	number of appearances	% share
Topics designed by editorial staff	107	39.05%
Statements made by other relevant factors	39	14.23%
Events initiated by foreign factors	38	13.87%
Events initiated by the Government of the Republic of Serbia	19	6.93%
Statements made by the representatives of the Government of the Republic of Serbia	12	4.38%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

In *Politika*, only 18.18% of topics of texts are designed by editorial staff. Events initiated by foreign factors take the first place with 21.21%, then statements made by other relevant factors with 8.42%, events initiated by the Government with 6.06%, reports of other media 5.72% and statements made by the Prime Minister with 5.72%.



Danas, 14th January 2015

Table 29 – Distribution of causes in the newspaper Politika

Politika	number of appearances	% share
Events initiated by foreign factors	63	21.21%
Topics designed by editorial staff	54	18.18%
Statements made by other relevant factors	25	8.42%
Events initiated by other relevant actors	23	7.74%
Events initiated by the Government of the Republic of Serbia	18	6.06%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

*Politika, 8 February 2015.*

Designing of topics by editorial staff is least present in *Večernje novosti*, only 12.21 percent. As in *Politika*, events initiated by foreign factors account for 19.25 percent, then the Government with 14.55 percent, the Prosecutor's Office/court with 10.33 percent and statements made by other relevant factors 4.23 percent. Statements made by the Prime Minister, representatives of the Government and EU generate less than one percent of texts.

Table 30 – Distribution of causes in the newspaper *Večernje novosti*

Večernje novosti	number of appearances	% share
Events initiated by foreign factors	41	19.25%
Events initiated by the Government of the Republic of Serbia	31	14.55%
Topics designed by editorial staff	26	12.21%
Events initiated by the Prosecutor's Office/court	22	10.33%
Events initiated by other relevant actors	13	6.10%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Based on the above, we can see a quite obvious difference between the influence of external and internal (domestic) factors on the launch of the topics. Newspapers such as *Politika* and *Večernje novosti* pay much more attention to what comes from foreign factors, which directly relates to Serbia. The attitudes towards EU, the Brussels Agreement, the Hague Tribunal, the attitudes towards our neighbors, the election results in Greece, these are all the topics constantly present in these two newspapers.

Statements made by the executive authorities – whether those made by the representatives of the Government or by the Prime Minister, do not generate a large number of texts. The Prime Minister appears in *Politika* most frequently and the least frequently in *Danas*. This, of course, does not necessarily say anything about their context and intonation.

Topics

Within the scope of this research, topics are broader formulated in order to clearly define the areas of media interest. Each of 1360 texts has been classified only within one dominant topic, while it was possible to record multiple elements contained, which are, both in terms of topic and in terms of volume, less important (frequency of elements per one medium in relation to all the media analyzed in this paper are listed in Appendix, see Tables 48-55) and thus more precisely formulate the topic (example: if a text deals with the strike of education workers, and the focus is on the loss of classes, the topic of the text was marked as *education*, elements *education* and *social issues/social policy*, while, if the medium focused on the protest itself and the conflict with the relevant Minister, the topic would be formulated as *social issues/social policy*, and elements would include *social issues/social policy*, *education* and *activities of the Serbian Government*).

Frequency of Topics

The topic *political life in Serbia*, which includes the activities of all political actors at all levels of government, excluding the *activities of the Government of the Republic of Serbia*, *activities of the Prime Minister* and *activities of the President of Serbia* has certainly occupied the most space on front pages of daily newspapers (13.90%). All of the above topics together occupy 33.68% of front page space and they are mostly differently treated by the media (See Tables 22-32, 35-38, 40). The second and fourth place belong to the topics *economy* and *commerce* with the joint frequency share of 14.63%. *The Hague/war crimes* is also a topic of interest which occupies 4.34% of space. When we talk about value context, four political topics in all media are presented negative in 37.99%, positive in 5.24% and neutral in 56.77% of articles. Articles about the economy in the majority has a neutral character – 65.65%, 24.43% are negative and 9.63% are neutral and similar situation is with topics about economics – 79.41% neutral, 13.24% negative and 7.35% positive. In 61.01% of articles the Hague tribunal is presented neutrally, while in 35.59% has a negative connotation.

Table 31 – Distribution of topics and value context in all analized media

All media	Number of appearances		positive	%	neutral	%	negative	%
Political life in Serbia	305	22.43%	4	1.31%	161	52.79%	140	45.90%
commerce	131	9.63%	13	9.92%	86	65.65%	32	24.43%
Activities of the Government	82	6.03%	8	9.76%	62	75.61%	12	14.63%
economy	68	5.00%	5	7.35%	54	79.41%	9	13.24%
The Hague/war crimes	59	4.34%	2	3.39%	36	61.01%	21	35.59%
army	58	4.26%	0	0.00%	49	84.48%	9	15.52%
Regional cooperation/relations in region	54	3.97%	1	1.85%	32	59.26%	21	38.89%
Kosovo/relations between Belgrade and Priština	53	3.90%	0	0.00%	32	60.38%	21	39.62%
media/freedom of media	49	3.60%	3	6.12%	20	40.82%	26	53.06%
Prime Ministers activities	46	3.38%	11	23.91%	32	69.57%	3	6.52%
	905		47	12,95%	564	90,67%	294	7,25%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Distribution of Topics per Media

In *Blic*, four of the above political topics, occupy half of the space (49.71%) of all front pages in the period January – March 2015. In 51.92% of the above texts, the topic *political life in Serbia* has a negative value context, *Prime Minister's activities* have been presented in a neutral way, as well as the majority of texts the topics of which include the *activities of the Serbian Government* (75%). However, in *Blic*, as in most of the other media, *activities of the President of Serbia* have a negative connotation (all 8 texts). The third topic of interest in *Blic* is *commerce* or the activities of domestic and foreign companies 8.57% (80% in neutral, 13.33% in negative and 6.66% in positive context). This newspaper has also dealt with the topic of *army* – 8% (information related to the helicopter crash), *education* – (4 texts mainly initiated by the strike of education workers) and *economy* – 6.86% (fiscal policy and international economic relations).

Topics related to the EU, NATO integrations and Russia are represented in a small number, with a total of 5 articles in a neutral context. The similar situation is with articles about Kosovo and

regional relations (4 articles in neutral context and one in negative which refers to Kosovo/relations between Belgrade and Priština). *Blic* editorial staff treats articles mostly in a neutral context (68.00%), while 30.28% of topics has negative connotation and 1.71% positive.

During the period January – March 2015, *Kurir* has not published any article about the EU. About NATO integrations, Russia and regional cooperation only one article in neutral context was published. The agreement with the IMF was also mentioned in one text, in positiv context. Texts are treated almost equally negative and neutral (45.52% and 44.77%), while 9.7% topics are interpreted in positive context.

Table 32 - Distribution of topics in the newspaper *Blic*

<i>Blic</i>	Number of appearances		positive	%	neutral	%	negative	%
Political life in Serbia	52	29.71%	1	1.92%	24	46.15%	27	51.92%
Activities of the Government	20	11.43%	0	0.00%	15	75.00%	5	25.00%
commerce	15	8.57%	1	6.66%	12	80.00%	2	13.33%
army	14	8.00%	0	0.00%	11	78.57%	3	21.43%
economy	12	6.86%	0	0.00%	10	83.33%	2	16.67%
Activities of the President	8	4.57%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	8	100.00%
Activities of the Prime Minister	7	4.00%	0	0.00%	7	100.00%	0	0.00%
education	4	2.29%	0	0.00%	3	75.00%	1	25.00%
The Hague/war crimes	4	2.29%	0	0.00%	3	75.00%	1	25.00%
Judiciary, activities of judicial authorities	4	2.29%	0	0.00%	3	75.00%	1	25.00%
TOTAL	140		2	7,14%	88	62,85%	50	35,71%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

The four dominant topics are also represented in *Kurir* in 53.37% of texts, where the *political life in Serbia* has been presented in a negative way in 56% of texts, *Prime Minister's activities* have been presented in a neutral or positive context, *activities of the Serbian Government* mostly in neutral context, while the *activities of the President of Serbia* have been presented in a negative context in 7 out of 8 texts where this is the predominant topic. *Kurir* attaches greater attention to *crime* – 7.46% (including texts on elite prostitution, economic crime, kidnapping and extortion) and to the topic *Judiciary, activities of judicial authorities*, which is due to the following of a number of trials against prominent businessmen and various perpetrators of other crimes. *Commerce* is in the 6th place and is represented in all three value contexts.

Table 33 - Distribution of topics in the newspaper *Kurir*

Kurir	Number of appearances		positive	%	neutral	%	negative	%
Political life in Serbia	50	37.31%	2	4.00%	20	40.00%	28	56.00%
crime	10	7.46%	1	10.00%	4	40.00%	5	50.00%
economy	8	5.97%	0	0.00%	6	75.00%	2	25.00%
Activities of the Prime Minister	8	5.97%	3	37.50%	5	62.50%	0	0.00%
Activities of the President	8	5.97%	0	0.00%	1	12.50%	7	87.50%
commerce	7	5.22%	2	28.57%	2	28.57%	3	42.86%
Activities of the Government	6	4.48%	0	0.00%	4	66.67%	2	33.33%
media/freedom of media	5	3.73%	1	20.00%	1	20.00%	3	60.00%
Judiciary, activities of judicial authorities	4	2.99%	0	0.00%	3	75.00%	1	25.00%
The Hague/war crimes	4	2.99%	1	25.00%	1	25.00%	2	50.00%
	110		10	9,09%	47	42,72%	54	49,09%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

On the front pages of *Informer* three political topics occupy 27.59% of the space. The fourth political issue, the activities of the President of Serbia, is not represented in any article. The second important topic in *Informer* is media/media freedom (13.79%), then economy (10.34%), crime (5.52%) and corruption (5.52%), while regional relations are in sixth place, presented in negative context in 85.71% of articles. Topics about foreign policy, war crimes and Euro-Atlantic integration are on 13.8% of *Informer's* front pages. In 75% of the articles European Union is presented negatively, in 25% positively and international relations are in 100% of the articles represented in negative context. The value judgment about Russia is 100% positive, while the topics about Hague/war crimes are represented in 3 negative and in one neutral article. Topics about NATO/NATO integration are in *Informer* represented in one negative and one positive text. The second place belongs to the topic *media/freedom of the media* (13.79%), followed by *economy* (10.34%), *crime* (5.52%) and *corruption* (5.52%). Editorial staff/journalists of *Informer* unambiguously express personal views in a majority of texts, openly commenting on the events and actions and attitudes of actors. There is no balance with regard to the selected topics, and even 71.03% of the texts are value determined – 13.10% in positive and 57.93% in negative context.

The largest number of critical texts in *Informer* were written about the media (80% negative), political life (77.14%) and regional relations (85.71% of negative texts), while all four texts published on the topics related to Russia and economic activities and two texts about the *Prime Minister's activities* have been written in the positive context. Overall, in *Informer* there is no balance with regard to the selected topics, and even 71.03% of the texts are value determined – 13.10% in positive and 57.93% in negative context.

Table 34- Distribution of topics in relation to the value context in the newspaper *Informer*

Informer – value context	Number of texts	%
positive	19	13,10%
neutral	42	28,97%
negative	84	57,93%
	145	100,00%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 35 - Distribution of topics in the newspaper *Informer*

Informer	Number of appearances	positive	%	neutral	%	negative	%	
Political life in Serbia	35	24.14%	0	0.00%	8	22.86%	27	77.14%
media/freedom of media	20	13.79%	0	0.00%	4	20.00%	16	80.00%
Commerce	15	10.34%	4	26.67%	4	26.67%	7	46.67%
crime	8	5.52%	0	0.00%	5	62.50%	3	37.50%
corruption	8	5.52%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	8	100.00%
Regional cooperation/relations in the region	7	4.83%	0	0.00%	1	14.29%	6	85.71%
economy	7	4.83%	3	42.86%	3	42.86%	1	14.29%
Judiciary, activities of judicial authorities	6	4.14%	1	16.67%	3	50.00%	2	33.33%
Russia/relations with Russia	4	2.76%	4	100.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
police	4	2.76%	2	50.00%	2	50.00%	0	0.00%
	114		14	12,28%	30	26,31%	70	61,40%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

On the *Alo!* front pages, in period January – March the smallest number of topics are covered, only 21. Political topics, economy and crime account for more than 60% of front pages in the newspaper *Alo!*. As in other tabloids, the majority of texts are value colored, so that 72.41% of political topics and 54% of economic topics are interpreted in a negative context (see Table 36). Any article in front pages of *Alo!* was published about Kosovo, EU matters and issues related to Russia. Just one article was about crisis in Ukraine in neutral context, while the questions about the Hague Tribunal were treated in two articles in negative connotation.

Approach that *Alo!* has about the way of treating topics in value context is similar to the other tabloids, so that 56.55% of topics are presented negative, 41.8% neutral and 1.63% positive.

Table 36 - Distribution of topics in the newspaper *Alo!*

<i>Alo!</i>	Number of appearances	positive		neutral		negative		%	
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Political life in Serbia	58	47.54%	0	0.00%	16	27.59%	42	72.41%	
Commerce	11	9.02%	0	0.00%	6	54.55%	5	45.45%	
crime	9	7.38%	0	0.00%	6	66.67%	3	33.33%	
Activities of the Prime Minister	6	4.92%	0	0.00%	6	100.00%	0	0.00%	
Army	5	4.10%	0	0.00%	3	60.00%	2	40.00%	
Economy	5	4.10%	0	0.00%	2	40.00%	3	60.00%	
Activities of the President	4	3.28%	0	0.00%	1	25.00%	3	75.00%	
Entertainment/show business	3	2.46%	0	0.00%	1	33.33%	2	66.67%	
Education	3	2.46%	0	0.00%	1	33.33%	2	66.67%	
Healthcare	2	1.64%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	2	100.00%	
	106		0	0	42	39,62%	64	60,37%	

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

The approach of *Politika* is evidently different than that of the above presented media. Political topics occupy only 18.52% of space, with most attention paid individually to economic activities – 13.80%, while the economic issues are represented in 7.07%. Dominant topics in *Politika* include *EU/policy of the European Union* (8.08%), *international relations* (5.72%),

Kosovo/relations between Belgrade and Priština (5.39%), *The Hague/war crimes* (4.71%) and *Russia/attitude towards Russia* (4.04%). The above topics are often value colored (*international relations* – 41% negative, *EU/policy of the European Union* – 16.66% negative; 4% positive, *Russia/attitude towards Russia* – 16.66% positive; 8.3% negative, *Kosovo/relations between Belgrade and Priština* – 31.25% negative and *The Hague/war crimes* - 50% texts with negative value context), or the attitude of the journalists/editorial staff has been expressed, both about the foreign policy of Serbia and the international relations, and about the issues of war crimes and relations between Belgrade and Priština. Overall, in *Politika* topics are presented in neutral context (76,43%), while valued colored topics are presented positively 4,37%, and negatively 19,52%.

Table 37 - Distribution of topics in the newspaper *Politika*

<i>Politika</i>	Number of appearances	positive		%		neutral		%		negative		%	
		positive	%	%	neutral	%	%	negative	%				
Commerce	41	13.80%	2	4.88%	30	73.17%	9	21.95%					
Political life in Serbia	38	12.79%	1	2.63%	30	78.95%	7	18.42%					
EU/policy of the EU	24	8.08%	1	4.17%	19	79.17%	4	16.67%					
Economy	21	7.07%	1	4.76%	18	85.71%	2	9.52%					
International relations	17	5.72%	0	0.00%	10	58.82%	7	41.18%					
Kosovo/relations between Belgrade and Priština	16	5.39%	0	0.00%	11	68.75%	5	31.25%					
The Hague/war crimes	14	4.71%	0	0.00%	7	50.00%	7	50.00%					
Activities of the Government	13	4.38%	1	7.69%	10	76.92%	2	15.38%					
Army	13	4.38%	0	0.00%	12	92.31%	1	7.69%					
Russia/attitude towards Russia	12	4.04%	2	16.67%	9	75.00%	1	8.33%					
	209		8	3,82%	156	74,64%	45	21,53%					

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Similar to *Politika*, *Večernje novosti* pays the greatest attention to economic issues (9.86%) on its front pages. Political topics occupy 23% of space, and it is also interesting to note that this newspaper published only one text on the *activities of the President of Serbia*, and that in a positive connotation. The issues of Kosovo (8.45%), the Hague and war crimes (7.98%), regional relations (7.51%) and the European Union (3.29%) are given greater importance in *Večernje novosti*, and the attitude of the editorial staff is unambiguous and clearly visible in a majority of texts – 68.75% of texts about the regional relations are in a negative context, as well as 77.77% of texts with the topic of *Kosovo/relations between Belgrade and Priština*. The opinion regarding the issues of The Hague and war crimes is expressed in a negative context in 35.29% of texts, while 57.14% of texts about the European Union also express the negative attitude of the editorial staff.

Večernje novosti are expressing clear value attitude about topics in 40,83% (positive 10,32%, negative 30,51%) while 59,15% of the topics are in neutral value context.

Table 38 - Distribution of topics in the newspaper *Večernje novosti*

Večernje novosti	Number of appearances	positive	%	neutral	%	negative	%	
Commerce	21	9.86%	4	19.05%	13	61.90%	4	19.05%
Political life in Serbia	19	8.92%	0	0.00%	15	78.95%	4	21.05%
Activities of the Government	19	8.92%	5	26.32%	13	68.42%	1	5.26%
Kosovo/relations between Belgrade and Pristina	18	8.45%	0	0.00%	4	22.22%	14	77.77%
The Hague/war crimes	17	7.98%	0	0.00%	11	64.71%	6	35.29%
Regional cooperation/relations in the region	16	7.51%	0	0.00%	5	31.25%	11	68.75%
Judiciary, activities of judicial authorities	12	5.63%	0	0.00%	8	66.67%	4	33.33%
Activities of the Prime Minister	11	5.16%	5	45.45%	6	54.55%	0	0.00%
Social issues/social policy	10	4.69%	0	0.00%	8	80.00%	2	20.00%
Civil society	8	3.76%	0	0.00%	6	75.00%	2	25.00%
	151		14		89		48	

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

The majority of texts published on the front pages of the daily newspaper *Danas* deal with the topics in a neutral value context (86.13%), which should also be the standard of professional reporting. Political issues are represented in 31.01% of texts, while equal attention is paid to economy and the activities of the Serbian Government (7.66% each), regional cooperation/relations in the region (6.93%), economics and Kosovo issues (5.47% each).



Večernje novosti, 6 January 2015.

Table 39 - Distribution of topics with regard to the value context in *Danas*

Danas – value context	274	%
positive	8	2,92%
neutral	236	86,13%
negative	30	10,95%
	274	100,00%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Political topics are represented in 31.01% of articles, while similar attention is paid to economy and the activities of the Government of Serbia (7.66%), regional cooperation/relations in the region (6.93%), economics and the Kosovo issue (5.47%), mostly in negative context (see Table 40). *Danas* pays attention on EU in total of 19 articles (11 about EU integration of Serbia and 8 about EU in general), of which 73.68% in neutral, 15.78% in negative and 10.52% in positive context. The Hague Tribunal issue is interpreted in 14 articles, only neutral.

Table 40 - Distribution of topics in the newspaper *Danas*

Danas	Number of appearances	positive	%	neutral	%	negative	%	
Political life in Serbia	53	19.34%	0	0.00%	48	90.57%	5	9.43%
Commerce	21	7.66%	0	0.00%	19	90.48%	2	9.52%
Activities of the Government	21	7.66%	1	4.76%	19	90.48%	1	4.76%
Regional cooperation/relations in the region	19	6.93%	1	5.26%	17	89.47%	1	5.26%
economy	15	5.47%	0	0.00%	15	100.00%	0	0.00%
Kosovo/relations between Belgrade and Priština	15	5.47%	0	0.00%	14	93.33%	1	6.67%
The Hague/war crimes	14	5.11%	0	0.00%	14	100.00%	0	0.00%
Army	13	4.74%	0	0.00%	12	92.31%	1	7.69%
Achievement of requirements/standards for EU integration	11	4.01%	1	9.09%	9	81.82%	1	9.09%
media/freedom of media	11	4.01%	1	9.09%	8	72.73%	2	18.18%
	193	4	2,07%	175	90,67%	14	7,25%	

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Media/Freedom of the Media

The topics about media/media freedom are particularly interesting because in the analyzed media they are interpreted in diametrically opposite way. Some of the media paid more attention (*Informer* – 20 articles, second most represented topic), while the others did not covered this topics (*Večernje novosti*). Media freedom is interpreted in different ways: as a large (misused) freedom or reduced (stripped) freedom of expression.

Informer is very critical with the idea of existence of censorship and threats of media freedom. That newspaper has published in this period a total of 16 negative articles on this topic, more than all other dailies together. *Politika* had 4, and *Kurir* 3 negative articles on this topic, *Danas* had 2 and *Alo!* one.

The conflict between *Kurir* and *Informer*, which was stimulated with false information about Croatian president Kolinda Grabar – Kitarović that was published, unfolded over the front pages of these two dailies. This was obviously a cause for a private settlement between the first people of these newspapers.

This practice undeniably reduces the media space for normal public debate on substantive issues in the Serbian media, especially on journalist's problems. Media freedom is something that cannot depend on the personal whim of editors or media owners, but the total social awareness of the importance and nature of freedom of expression.



Informer, 19 January 2015.

Conclusion

As shown in the present analysis, there are significant differences between the print media (daily newspapers) in Serbia. They are primarily due to the various professional equipment and abilities of the media themselves to produce the objective, timely and relevant information. The limitations faced by the majority of the media in Serbia are the result of various factors: economic position of the media, different editorial policies, social and political atmosphere and professional competences of journalists and editors themselves. The editorial policy is often the consequence of the lack of the infrastructural equipment of the media, the inability, questionable competences but also the hard financial position of journalists themselves. For these reasons, a lot of the media, their editors and journalists, defer to the choices of "least resistance", flirting or even fully meeting the expectations of the audience and various centers of political and financial power, with no or very little critical and professional distance. Regardless of the fact that the media space of Serbia has no "forbidden topics" and/or "forbidden persons", based on this analysis we could say that there are two main problems which lead to the distorted picture of reality of everyday life entered by the media in the public space of Serbia. Those problems concern as follows: (a) on the one side, excessive and, in reality of everyday life, unfounded overemphasizing of the significance of certain actors and topics (among which, those which are the editorial staff authorship contributions should be particularly emphasized), (b) on the other side, the practice of dealing with different topics which promote the colloquial and vulgar vocabulary, triviality, mystification of sources and typical dealing with personalities and topics, which is exclusive in its character and does not allow any doubts or arguments (for or against) which are mostly of a personal nature. Personal attitudes of journalists and editorial staff, use of unnamed sources in texts and the way in which the information is constructed, are only the consequences of the lack of interest of the public and professional community of journalists for these problems. Ignoring of the long duration of those non-professional "journalistic" practices has led to the emergence of "new hybrid trends" in the Serbian journalism, one of the main features of which is the absence of the idea of responsibility for the views expressed in the public space. That is how the lack of professional competences, combined with the lack of awareness of social responsibility and lack of elementary decency in public speech, become the market comparative advantage of certain media⁶ in a dysfunctional society of Serbia.

6. As evidenced by the high circulation of the daily newspaper *Kurir*, for example.

APPENDIX

I Tables

Table 41 – Sample Večernje novosti

Sample -Večernje novosti		
Front page texts included in the sample	213	1.76%
Front page texts not included in the sample	323	2.68%
Other	11512	95.55%
Total texts	12048	100.00%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 42- Sample Informer

Sample -Informer		
Front page texts included in the sample	145	2.50%
Front page texts not included in the sample	179	3.09%
Other	5467	94.40%
Total texts	5791	100.00%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 43- Sample Alo!

Sample -Alo!		
Front page texts included in the sample	122	2.02%
Front page texts not included in the sample	267	4.43%
Other	5626	93.53%
Total texts	6015	100.00%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 44 - Sample Blic

Sample -Blic		
Front page texts included in the sample	175	1.64%
Front page texts not included in the sample	228	2.14%
Other	10251	96.21%
Total texts	10654	100.00%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 45 - Sample Politika

Sample -Politika		
Front page texts included in the sample	279	2.71%
Front page texts not included in the sample	271	2.47%
Other	10362	94.80%
Total texts	10930	100.00%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 46 - Sample Danas

Sample - Danas		
Front page texts included in the sample	274	4.13%
Front page texts not included in the sample	183	2.73%
Other	6087	91.75%
Total texts	6634	100.00%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 47- Sample Kurir

Sample - Kurir		
Front page texts included in the sample	134	1.61%
Front page texts not included in the sample	157	1.89%
Other	8008	96.49%
Total texts	8299	100.00%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 48 – Distribution of elements in 7 analyzed daily newspapers

Summary of elements – all media	number	%
political life in Serbia	459	13.90%
economy	272	8.23%
activities of the Government of the Republic of Serbia	267	8.08%
economics	181	5.48%
Prime Minister's activities	159	4.81%
EU/European Union policy	149	4.51%
Kosovo/relations between Belgrade and Priština	143	4.33%
regional cooperation/relations in the region	140	4.24%
judiciary, activities of judicial authorities	130	3.94%
Russia/attitude towards Russia	129	3.91%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 49 – Distribution of elements in the daily newspaper Kurir

Kurir – summary of elements	number	%
political life in Serbia	79	27.82%
activities of the Government of the Republic of Serbia	21	7.39%
economy	21	7.39%
Prime Minister's activities	15	5.28%
activities of the President of Serbia	15	5.28%
judiciary, activities of judicial authorities	15	5.28%
crime	14	4.93%
economics	12	4.23%
corruption	12	4.23%
army	9	3.17%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 50 – Distribution of elements in the daily newspaper Večernje novosti

Večernje novosti - summary of elements	broj	%
activities of the Government of the Republic of Serbia	66	9.82%
economy	49	7.29%
regional cooperation/relations in the region	47	6.99%
Prime Minister's activities	40	5.95%
Kosovo/relations between Belgrade and Priština	40	5.95%
EU/European Union policy	36	5.36%
judiciary, activities of judicial authorities	35	5.21%
The Hague/war crimes	35	5.21%
political life in Serbia	35	5.21%
social issues/social policy	34	5.06%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 51 - Distribution of elements in the daily newspaper Alo!

Alo! - Summary of elements	number	%
political life in Serbia	72	38.92%
economy	17	9.19%
economics	13	7.03%
Prime Minister's activities	12	6.49%
crime	11	5.95%
activities of the Government of the Republic of Serbia	5	2.70%
police	5	2.70%
army	5	2.70%
activities of the President of Serbia	5	2.70%
media/freedom of the media	5	2.70%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 52 - Distribution of elements in the daily newspaper *Informer*

Informer – Summary of elements	number	%
political life in Serbia	58	19.73%
media/freedom of the media	29	9.86%
economy	28	9.52%
judiciary, activities of judicial authorities	21	7.14%
corruption	18	6.12%
activities of the Government of the Republic of Serbia	14	4.76%
crime	13	4.42%
EU/European Union policy	12	4.08%
economics	12	4.08%
regional cooperation/relations in the region	9	3.06%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 53 - Distribution of elements in the daily newspaper *Politika*

Politika – summary of elements	number	%
economy	82	9.33%
activities of the Government of the Republic of Serbia	75	8.53%
EU/European Union policy	71	8.08%
economics	65	7.39%
political life in Serbia	60	6.83%
social issues/social policy	51	5.80%
Russia/attitude towards Russia	48	5.46%
international relations	46	5.23%
Kosovo/relations between Belgrade and Priština	39	4.44%
Ukraine crisis	37	4.21%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 54 - Distribution of elements in the daily newspaper *Danas*

Danas	number	%
political life in Serbia	81	13.09%
economy	48	7.75%
activities of the Government of the Republic of Serbia	45	7.27%
Kosovo/relations between Belgrade and Priština	38	6.14%
achievement of objectives/standards for EU integration	36	5.82%
Russia/attitude towards Russia	35	5.65%
regional cooperation/relations in the region	34	5.49%
economics	33	5.33%
media/freedom of the media	28	4.52%
EU/European Union policy	27	4.36%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

Table 55 - Distribution of elements in the daily newspaper *Blic*

Blic – summary of share of elements	number	%
political life in Serbia	73	20.00%
activities of the Government of the Republic of Serbia	41	11.23%
Prime Minister's activities	32	8.77%
economy	26	7.12%
economics	25	6.85%
army	16	4.38%
activities of the President of Serbia	15	4.11%
Kosovo/relations between Belgrade and Priština	14	3.84%
judiciary, activities of judicial authorities	12	3.29%
Russia/attitude towards Russia	10	2.74%

Source: Research Mediameter January - March 2015

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4

Discourse
analysis



DEJAN VUK STANKOVIĆ

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse analysis is a critical interpretation of the text sense and significance that is aiming to establish a sensible balance between the content of the text and a group of political, economic, cultural and wider social circumstances. In addition to creation and structure of the text, the discourse analysis considers a series of practical outputs the text produces in certain social and political moment. Discourse analysis of print media stipulates the significance of column and comment influence to a specific layer of public, so called, capillary public, including groups of different *opinion makers* (journalists, analysts, politicians, non-government organizations, cultural and educational elite). At the same time, by pointing out key political stands and argumentative flows and plots, columns and commentators direct the flow of media reporting in influential electronic media. Specifically, columnist journalism asserts a sum of positions, arguments and conclusions that present preferable or non-preferable view to certain political, economic, cultural and other broad social events and processes.

In addition to analysis of articles on the front pages of daily newspapers that have already been processed, in this area subject of analysis includes editorial columns, commentaries and interviews in daily newspapers and weekly magazines. The selection was performed for the purpose of precise and complete understanding of complex dynamics in the relationship between the media and politics in the present political moment. Namely, owing to these media content the standpoint and arguments of political options are clearly defined, their political orientation regarding values is recognized and the attitude of influential part of print media towards the daily politics is evaluated. It is especially important to state that the necessity of critical analysis of columns and comments is important for determination of public politics gaining intellectual elaboration and support in media and political field.

The starting point of the analysis is basically a self-evident position – columnist activity of journalists or external associates contributes to the crystallization of political and value judgments. This type of journalist activity, directly and indirectly, establishes the coordinates for complex and mostly contradictory political reality understanding.

In addition to aforementioned the second initial presumption of the discourse analysis is suggested in the introduction of this study. It is in the spirit and title of the five-fold relativity thesis that is supported, articulated and founded in relevant instance by the print media in Serbia. It is a relativity paradigm of Euro-Atlantic integrations, followed by the democratic and liberal values, principles and practices, relativity of values and methods of market economy functioning, ideal of rule of law through derogation or exclusion of systematic and open writing on the size of corruption in the society, as well as general values of enlightened society and its cultural and civilization norms and practices.

The relativity effect in the given five fields is prompted by the writing style that produces and perpetuates the state of constant political, cultural and wider social conflict. The fundamental difference of positions that are mutually conflicted to complete exclusion testifies not only on the style of current journalism, but on the status of firm division in the political and value context. In other words, it is the evidence of division that is always renewed and constantly returns as a determination of the spiritual and political moment.

In print media, as a rule, the effective language used includes accusations and counter-accusations, colored with strong and frequently emphasized rhetoric suggestion. The effect of the rhetoric suggestion brought in the written text undermines every initiative, idea, project, given political and economic decision with outstanding determination. Specifically, it is a language that makes each and everybody problematic and a subject of dispute. Even a glance at writing of the print media in Serbia shows that in the last three months there was not an event that was not described as problematic or disputed (sales of the Železara Smederevo (steel plant in town of Smederevo), Belgrade Waterfront project, attempt to establish fair regional relations with Croatia and Kosovo, reform of public finance and IMF agreement...).

On a very diversified media scene in print media the overwhelming and dominant style is the one that is quick to accuse, and skip to mention, cover up, hide or bend the facts. The output of the mentioned style is the creation of political and value confusion atmosphere. This state is always accompanied by the narrowing or cancellation of space for rational and critical debate.

The status of value and intellectual confusion implies the cancellation of consensus on general political and historical goals. At the same time, it excludes the value criteria for the performance of leading public policies evaluation. The spirit of conflict and absence of elementary consensus on values and goals of public politics is present in all major areas of politics. In print media, and media in general, it is based on the matrix of previously assigned roles that make the core of the interpretation framework. This matrix is applied to the key participants in the political process. Print media is dominated by the spirit of clear, fixed, almost insurmountable divisions to reformists and anti-reformists, the corrupted and honest, traitors and patriots, democratically legitimate and democratically disputed, competent and incompetent, losers and winners.

The assigned roles matrix is distinctly present in the media construction of image process that is constantly confirmed in the often cruel medial and political struggle. The mentioned communication form directly or indirectly undermines every form of rational and tolerant dialogue. Image conflict that is dominant in the Serbian public and political area is a testimony on the absence of stable institutional order based on liberal and democratic values, weak public and political culture exemplary to this type of political order as well as practice that in the sphere of media and politics gradually erases and cancels sound competition of ideas and political solutions and ideas.

Reducing the media and political life to leader's and party's image conflict is a relevant influence to a spirit of relativity regarding all ideological and value orientations. This specific form of political reduction produces preconditions and justifies the practice of non-principal

and unforeseeable political decisions.

In the conditions of relativity spirit that lies on the media and political matrix of assigned roles in the social and political debate, any innovative, emancipated, modern and pro-European public politics is easily and efficiently questioned and every reform move is not accepted, stigmatized, obstructed and rejected in practice. It is understood that mentioned deep chaotic and confusing media and political constellation is enabled by the unsuccessful transition of the last fifteen years, historical and civilization downfall of the nineties, communism legacy and modest liberal and democratic traditions of the Serbian society and state.

General Media and Political Framework – Image of Main Political Actors in Print Media

INTRODUCTION: POLITICS AS MEDIA IMAGE CONFLICT

Outside of these undisputed general factors influencing the media scene it should be stipulated that its directly visible character is shaped by specific themes, within which and owing to which, a political plot is produced and continuously renewed regarding the relations of the government and opposition in the print media.

As we have already mentioned in the plot of complex media and political relations, an interesting and relevant status is given to the editorial columns and comments in weekly magazines. Editor's columns are a sort of a mirror of approaches, standpoints and arguments that are formed in the Serbian society regarding hard and open issues Serbia faces for years, day in day out.

Within the discourse analysis we shall blueprint the general theme framework describing the construction of images of key political actors in the democratic process – the government and the opposition. It should be noted that the presentation of image of political actors represents an analysis of certain media and political constructions with the sense not closely related to the issue of its logical consistency or factual soundness. Media and politics constructions in the public fields are here observed from the position of the method they are created by, reason for creation and performance they attempt to accomplish. In this context, it should be stated that the politics understood as the game of "images" is not an item of traditionally understood notion of the truth including logical consistency of standpoints and their correlation to the facts, but is mere propaganda, its power to convince to the acceptability or non-acceptability of certain patterns of political thinking and acting. Therefore the review of construction of images of main actors should be seen exclusively in the context of daily political and ideological disputes.

The second analytical step shall present media interpretation of a series of events that were subject to frequent media interest. Through the merging of general theme framework that is referred to the relations of the government and the opposition, as well as insight into different interpretations of the series of media relevant events, we shall form a factual and value reasoned insight into the complex dynamics of political and media relations in Serbia.

Similarly to other developed democratic countries Serbia also shows a division to pro-government and anti-government print media and weeklies. Despite the discourse on censorship and oppression of freedom of media in Serbia there is a diversity of texts, comments and interviews in which different participants of political and public life openly take and defend their political positions. However the existence of minimum conditions for the freedom of opinion and expression as well as pluralism of standpoints that is derived from it does not create space for open critical and rational debate. Instead of a public understood in accordance with the public mind model, or "communication community" dominated by "non-forced argument authority" as put by Habermas, Serbian public discourse is exclusively charged with controversy. It is a field of battle for basically hermetic and mutually rationally immeasurable, political, economic and wide social and cultural concepts.

It should be stated that despite the domination of the government in institutions and public domain, primarily, of the Prime Minister¹ over the opposition, in a part of print media that includes columns, comments and interviews there is an incomparably larger share of so-called opposition and critical expression towards the government. In this segment of journalism the affirmative position towards the government is far less present than negative, which is the confirmation of the thesis on principal pluralism of media space. However, comparable analysis of domestic weeklies shows that there is not one presenting the articulation of pro-government political position. Support to government public policy appears in fragments in certain weeklies on different subjects, but in no circumstances it can be said that there is a weekly intellectually and through media articulating the given politics, or participating in the constitution of the world view that basically supports political government. On the other hand, positions that are nurtured by the critical part of Serbian public have not just a larger presence, but comprehensive, far more developed value and political position.

Likewise, it is clear that the expression of the critical opinion towards the government is generally speaking on a significantly higher professional level and it frequently seems rationally more persuasive. This position is supported by the journalism genres that are used in expressing critical, or, pro-government position. While the pro-government part of media usually uses reports as their form of communication with the reader, the critics of government politics use different and professionally more perfect techniques and forms of communication, such as article, comment, interview.

1. "All surveys, not just ours, show the supremacy of Aleksandar Vučić and SNS. This is confirmed by these local elections. The party is constantly over one half of identified voters" Srđan Bogosavljević, "The Opposition Should Change," *Novi Magazin*, no. 197, page 19

Identically, with pro-government columnists the affirmation discourse has intellectually simpler, direct, less perfect from the aspect of journalism but more persuasive from the aspect of propaganda effect. The most frequent form of affirmation of government politics in columns is the model of defamation of the opponent on the political and public stage. Still, this writing strategy has its measurable and persuasive influence to the public opinion. Judging from the tendencies in voting habits of citizens the mentioned discourse manages to maintain the positive identification with the key actor of government politics, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić. In support of the aforementioned thesis stands the balance of power in the voting body showing strong supremacy of the government. However developed the opposition and critical position in print media is not a sufficient base for the mobilization of the voters.

Thematic framework of the opposition discourse is determined by two mutually and substantially connected topics:

- 1) dictatorship of the most powerful politician in Serbia Aleksandar Vučić
- 2) censorship and oppression of media freedom

These two topics are followed by a range of disputing attitudes ranging from the thesis of non-competence, over the thesis on unclear foreign policy preferences of the current government, to the statements on internal instability characteristics to the key party in government as well as the ruling coalition.

Thematic framework for the pro-government politics is based on two writing and reporting motifs:

- 1) moral and political baseness of the opposition and
- 2) emphasizing the position on political legitimacy of the government's politics for which public opinion surveys are abundantly used that continuously reproduce the position on dominant support to the government over the fragile and fragmented opposition.

Government's Image – authoritarian, internally unstable, incompetent, without clear geo-political orientation

The image of the government in comments and columns in Serbian weekly papers is actually an image of Aleksandar Vučić, main protagonist of government's politics. The construction of Vučić's negative image is very detailed and comprehensive. It strives to dispute carefully built positive image of Vučić. Its determination, energy and entrepreneurship is translated into authoritarianism, intolerance and aggression. The image of the politician that is devoted to solving problems is disputed by the thesis on impossibility of its economic and political projects and pro-European direction is undermined by the thesis on authoritarian form of rule.

The contours of his patriotic and sometimes pro-Russian positions is interpreted in two ways: as the residue of past radical politics or as a shape of media manipulation that ena-



Vreme, 26th February 2015

bles contact with former, radical and nationalistic but very disciplined part of voters with distinguished tendency to follow the leader. In addition, Vučić's personal propensity to polemics in public appearances is disputed with the position on lack of tolerance in the discourse and insufficient democratic temper that allegedly encourages the brutalization of the public and political field.

Primer Minister's critics support the position on lack of democratic values with extreme emotional reactions that usually come from the Prime Minister himself, as reaction to statements from political opponents. Vučić's psychological profile and media and political behavior is accompanied with its alleged tendency to constant manufacturing of enemies and its continuous and intensive stigmatization. The censorship and oppression of freedom of media takes a special place in political and public debates in the last couple of months. The basic goal of negative image construction of Aleksandar Vučić designed in such manner is to present irrational character of his personality and government. "Vučić's government is a personal government that every normal person should be afraid of."²

Vučić's portrait in opposition media responds to the image of a freakish dictator that rules the country with means of media "terror" and manipulation.³ This projection of his image in media space remains despite all known and relevant facts. Therefore, regardless of the political evolution from radical nationalist towards European politician of moderate conservative beliefs, the image of Vučić is the portrait of authoritarian who has, using media with much skill, benefited from the unsuccessful transition.

The saga on Vučić's dictatorship is drowned in the wider, completely pessimistic image of the current status of Serbian society and state. The flow of historical movement has its characteristic dialectics that was presented in the New Year's edition of *N/N* by Prof. Miodrag Zec, reviewing 2014, the year of the political rise of Vučić: "For me this is one of the series of years of losing ground beneath our feet. This is a software of continuous loosing ground and simultaneous distancing of the better future. Its like a religion, heaven will come one day, but no one is in a hurry to reach it because it is clear it is an illusion. This is the entire doctrine. And this illusion functions, and the politicians follow instincts and speak what we wish to hear. The illusion is their political product. We are in continuous decline".⁴

In the pessimistic framework of historical development and greyness of actual moment the thesis on authoritarianism of the regime seems sensible from the position of the presumed liberal and democratic discourse. Therefore, it is necessary to determine whether there is a wrong political course and practice in Serbia, that is, is there, and if yes, to what extent, an anti-democratic and authoritarian form of government on the scene.

2. Olja Bećković, „Every rational person should be afraid of him," interview with Tamara Skrozza, *Vreme*, no. 1253.

3. Svetislav Basara, „Management of emotions," *N/N*, 1.01.2015.

4. „We got just where we started to" Miodrag Zec discussion with Vojislav Žanetić and Ante Tomić, *NIN*, no. 3340, page 8

Prof. Vesna Rakić – Vodinelić testifies that Aleksandar Vučić represents an authoritarian that understands the practice of government as an expression of personal will in an interview to *N/N* weekly named: "Prime Minister does not tolerate control". "I am completely assured that Prime Minister Vučić knows very well what is democracy in theory, what is the rule of law, he knows the mechanisms. But, as a politician he simply feels he should not use this knowledge, he should not be under anybody's control, he should not care of the rule of law because he saw that in another way, by acting outside the institutions of the rule of law, he is very successful."⁵

Vučić's authoritarian practice of government is not a self-made creation but a continuation of a long line of ruling patterns established in the past, starting with the King Aleksandar Karađorđevic, passing onto Josip Broz and Slobodan Milošević. "Throughout our history we have had more of those that were authoritarians or dictators, starting from Aleksandar, through Tito, Milošević, to present day."⁶

Authoritarianism and dictatorship motif is present in a number of headlines, where several of them should be mentioned in order to use them to factually confirm the basic thesis on the image construction of Aleksandar Vučić as the political actor deprived of democratic regard. In this sense, we should mention the interview of journalist Bojana Lekić in *Vreme* magazine on February 5th 2015.

In an interview for the *Vreme* weekly titled "Fear Rules Serbia" Bojana Lekic explicitly states that the practice of government in Serbia is such that there is an undoubted tendency towards concentrating entire authority in one person, which *de facto* suspends the constitutional order that lies on the principle of division and balance of three government bodies: "The concentration of power in the hands of one person is dangerous, whatever the name of that person is... when all of this power is in the hands of one man, and those that have the obligation to control it have no desire to meet their obligation – this is very dangerous".⁷

The construction of Vučić's negative image is accomplished through the position on its fundamentally anti-European politics internally. Vučić's anti-European sentiment is not seen in the withdrawal from the Geo-political determination towards EU, but it is related to the lack of freedom of thinking and expression, that is, existence of independent and free media. The representative of this thesis is Vladimir Pavićević, PhD, docent on the Faculty of Political Sciences and MP of the oppositional New Party (*Nova Stranka*) in the Serbian Parliament.

In an interview for the *Novi Magazin* weekly, Pavićević claims: "... it is true that Vučić formally states that the place of Serbia is within the European Union, but everything that is going on internally in Serbia is opposite to this proclaimed goal. The European idea, namely, lies on certain principles: that there is a secure rule of law within the country, freedom of expression,

5. Vesna Rakić Vodinelić, „The Prime Minister does not tolerate control," interview, *N/N*, no. 3345, page 18

6. Idem, page 19

7. Bojana Lekić, "The Fear is Spreading over the Society," interview with Tamara Skroza, *Vreme*, no. 1257, page 13

fee media, a type of strong political pluralism, and we, in Serbia, have just the opposite. Instead of rule of law we have a rule of a man."⁸

Contributing to the thesis that Vučić is anti-European, Pavićević states the thesis on brutalization of media and debates in the Parliament. In both important spheres of political life Pavićević sees no improvements. Moreover, Vučić remained the same Vučić from the nineties when he questioned and accused with harsh language each politically disputed opponent. Brutalization is both verbal and in actions having in mind incidents on local elections in Serbia.

On a verbal plane brutalization is recognized through the treatment of political opponents as enemies, while the brutalization in the domain of party's politics is seen in the application of violence in the elections all over Serbia: "There is almost no speech from the delegates of Progressive Party in which they did not present any criticism coming from opposition as pure hate. Hate exists between enemies. For the last two and a half years the Progressive government has significantly downgraded our country, I think this is a type of brutalization of our society. Brutalization of society means that now violence is seen as a legitimate instrument when it is estimated as convenient. This happened in Mionica when the candidate of Democratic Party for the municipality president was beaten on election day."⁹

Contribution to the construction of negative image of Aleksandar Vučić and the Government of Serbia in the public opinion of Serbia was provided by sociologist Jovo Bakić. In addition to aforementioned position on authoritarianism of Vučić rule, Bakić introduces some new, morally and politically problematic characteristics of politics of the Government of Serbia, such as subordination of Serbian economy to the interest of capitalist oligarchy as seen in IMF and The World Bank: "ruler that is happy to follow orders from the center of the capitalist world system without obediently"¹⁰

Another premise of Vučić 's critics is alleged reduction of politics to effective media presentation in public: "Permanent campaign and propaganda complement the authoritative form of government... Politics of the government is turned into constant public relations, there is no ideology or serious politics there, but only propaganda of one person through obedient means of mass communication.. it is necessary to master the persuasion skill that a lie is the truth. The people should accept all measures adopted against it without grumbling and with strong belief in the genius Prime Minister, that assures them that it is all for the good of the people, actually."¹¹

In addition to aforementioned motifs in his criticism of the government Bakić points to the issue of thesis on political legitimacy of government: "When it comes to the support for

8. Vladimir Pavicević, "Vucic Causes Incidents," interview with Mijat Lakicevic, *Novi Magazin*, no. 194

9. Idem

10. Jovo Bakić, "On Blair, Lies and Prime Minister's Servants," interview with Zora Drčelić, *Vreme*, no., page 14

11. Idem, pages 14-15

Aleksandar Vučić, it is not as large as usually though. It is approximately one quarter of adult citizens. Why? Because approximately one half of citizens are disappointed and do not support anyone. They are indifferent and still not in the state of anger when they must act against the authority."¹²

Bakić criticizes the current government for the principle of negative selection in staffing in state bodies and public companies. It is, as Bakić said, a principle of selection of morally and professionally questionable persons that can then easily be blackmailed or intimidated. Staffing is a combination of loyalty, moral imperfection of selected function holders and manipulation by the authority. The birthplace of their loyalty to the Prime Minister and SNS is their moral imperfection, that is, the fear that it shall come to light."Aleksandar Vučić probably knows best who is he surrounded with. These men are usually with very limited capacity and very questionable moral. It is not rare that in the past some of them participated in nearly criminal or criminal activities."¹³

Thesis on the brutalization of the political and public field as one of the manifestations of the authoritarian or dictator politics of Aleksandar Vučić is especially developed by the claim of "constant production of enemies". The thesis on producing enemies belongs to the form of political discourse towards the government joining two premises: the first one, in theory, regarding the authoritarian regime that constantly generates enemies and establishes and maintains authority through violence. The mentioned premise for used for a long time for critical examination of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in the 20th century. Then, collective regimes of oppression and violence were opposed by the order of democracy and freedom.

The other premise is connected to the story on creating enemies in the political arena and it is local, that is, it relates to the alleged reactivation of Vučić's real radical nature that remain the same despite the democratic facade and European rhetoric. Moreover, to achieve the required motivational effect to opponents of the politics of the nineties, Vučić is identified with Slobodan Milošević in some printed and electronic media.

"The meeting place" of the aforementioned premises is the thematic number of weekly *Vreme* from February 5th 2015. The front page of the weekly contains the image of the Wanted poster presenting critics of Vučić from the political and public life (businessman Miroslav Mišković, journalist Olja Bećković, ombudsman Saša Janković, OSCE PR Dunja Mijatović, Michael Davenport, Head of the EU Delegation in Serbia, and others).

The main story in the said number of *Vreme* weekly was named "Production of Enemies" by Momir Turudić. The basic thesis of the text is that Vučić 's mechanism of rule comprises of constant production of enemies. However the production of enemies is the only and exclusive mechanism of Vučić 's government, claims Turudić: "...everybody could wonder why

12. Idem

13. Idem

Vučić and his followers make such a drama of each question or the slightest criticism. The answer lies in the basic technology of Vučić's rule. Creating enemies for achieving goals is not his invention, the history is full of such examples and more regulated, developed and richer societies are not immune to that. Lately, we can remember how USA after the fall of communism looked vigorously for the new arch-nemesis (and found it in terrorism), we can see Erdogan and Orban fighting real and imaginary monsters. The difference is, however, that in mentioned societies the production of enemies is merely one of the instruments of the government, that has something else to offer its citizens. With Vučić, there is nothing else, so the only adequate comparison is with the rule of Milošević on this territory. He also has a huge support of the people, he was also applauded with standing ovations when he visited Parliament, the level of obsequiousness of his associates was also disgusting, he had support meetings, many claimed that if you do not love Milošević you do not love Serbia, but it still went sour."¹⁴

The image of authoritarian practice of government that is based on the arbitrariness of the ruler is supplemented in print media in two ways: by narrative on the omission of great results of the Government or production of enemies. Judging from this media and political optics the government seems to seek to introduce censorship in media. The reason is obvious: enemies from the public should be eliminated in different ways, through exclusion from the media sphere or through minimizing their influence or constant stigmatization by politically suitable media.

The censorship story fits into the overall portrait of Vučić in the media space in Serbia. It is to some extent initiated by the arguments of Vučić with the research network BIRN, ombudsman Saša Janković, OSCE PR Dunja Mijatović, European Commission PR Maja Kocijančić and the EU Ambassador in Serbia Michael Davenport. This topic was covered by a series of media, although the most interesting approach was the one *Vreme* weekly used on February 26th 2015.

Before we begin analyzing the content of this weekly we should draw your attention to the statement of the European Commissioner for Neighborhood Policy, Austrian diplomat Johannes Hahn. Regarding the claims on the presence of censorship in Serbian media he stated: "We need evidence for the violation of freedom of media in Serbia. The rumors are not enough."

After this statement from Hahn the critics of the Vučić's government tried to renew and make more persuasive the discourse on the suffocation of the freedom of media. The strategy of persuading the readers was initiated by the aforementioned weekly *Vreme* by a suggestive front page. It was a combination of an illustration and a photo. The center of the page contains the framed photo of a Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić while the rest of the page presents dark blue wall on which, as if it were a classroom table, Vučić's opponents regarding the freedom of thought and expression were named and crossed out: European

14. Momir Turudić, "Production of Enemies," *Vreme*^a, no. 1257, page 6-7

Commission, *Vreme*, *Uticak nedelje*, Balkan Investigative Reporters Network (BIRN). The hint to Hahn's statement is clear. He supported Vučić in a fight with the defenders of free thought and expression. Therefore, it is suggested that the position of Hahn is unacceptable and the need to diminish his claims rises.

The main text in the mentioned number of *Vreme* weekly, signed by Tamara Skroza is dedicated to the subject of censorship and dictatorship and is named "Censorship or Dictatorship". The goal of editors and authors is to, despite the position of Hahn, unambiguously prove that there is an open censorship in Serbia.

The text of the journalist is a combination of individual analytic and critical processing and interpretation of the theme and dialogue with credible interlocutors. The author starts with the intention to solve the issue of censorship in Serbia by calling on conventional academic definition of this term. After this, she concludes it does not correspond to current facts: "if we consult literature it seems that the notion of censorship is put very strictly. in accordance with some authors it is "a control of media and ideas appearing in society", while others explain it as "violation of freedom of speech, public discussion and flow of damaging, sensitive, politically incorrect information, or information the government finds inappropriate." To be fair, what is going on in Serbia is not completely like total control."¹⁵

Even the interlocutor of Tamara Skroza, experienced journalist and editor Slaviša Lekić noticed that there is no classic censorship such as the one in socialism. Censorship today is not preventive, or suspending censorship used in times of "socialism with human face". We now see elegant, subtle suspension of different opinion and a series of secret measures, procedures and protocols that have turned editorial staffs into PR agencies serving Aleksandar Vučić. So, not Serbia, Government of Serbia, government in Serbia or the ruling SNS, but strictly – Vučić! If I were to be a bit rough, I would say that we now see a sanitation of media in Serbia, but I wouldn't want to use such a term in daily political purposes."¹⁶

Since the censorship could not be proven based on conventional scientific definition the text author Tamara Skroza suggested the renaming the term censorship into manipulation: "if we call all of this political media manipulation it seems that the theory is working for us."¹⁷ With all aforementioned the author filled the argument void with the logically unsustainable and very suggestive statement from Christian Mir from the organization *Reporters Without Borders*: "The censorship is not direct. It is not transparent, but it can be easily proven."¹⁸

The print media constructing the image of Vučić as an autocrat censoring and manipulating media have asked the question why EU sends contradictory messages on the status of democracy and human rights in Serbia. The answer was easily and quickly found. Due to

15. Tamara Skroza, "Dictatorship or Censorship," *Vreme*, no. 1260, page 4

16. Idem, page 4

17. Idem, page 5

18. Idem, page 6

dominant foreign policy orientation of the government – aspiration towards EU. Before and above all, due to acceptance and application of the Brussels Agreement that should arrange the relationship between Serbia and Kosovo.

This understanding of the relationship between the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić and EU is summed up in the words of the famous journalist Olja Bećković, the author of the renowned TV show *Uticak nedelje* (Impression of the Week): "The whole European Union is behind this. They gave him the green light for this. Complete the task we have given you, and you now you cannot do this with open public in your country. Therefore, feel free to "strangle those chickens", do it, give us Kosovo and everything else you claim you will not give. In a year or two, they will appear and shout: Ah, dictator! And then they will turn him over. Now, they do not see, do not know, haven't noticed."¹⁹ Specifically, in accordance with this claim, Vučić's readiness to cooperate with the West regarding Kosovo has created space for applying anti-democratic and anti-liberal practice in the institutions of the system and political life, and in the media.

The positions on the political order and censorship of the media we see in columns and interviews of journalists and public persona are a relevant match to the positions the opposition parties state in public, primarily Democratic Party (Demokratska stranka) and Social-democratic Party (Socijal-demokratska stranka). This similarity is striking and direct. It leads in the direction of affirmation of initial thesis on the spirit of endemic division present in public and political life continuously repeating the conflict of completely opposite concepts and attitudes.

In an interview for *Vreme* weekly the leader of Democratic Party Bojan Pajtić repeated the position of the editor, commentator and representatives of the scientific and artistic elite that are critical to current government several times. Dictatorship, censorship, anti-European sentiment, brutalization of the public and political area, entire range of subjects in question gets developed in Pajtić's political optics. The understanding of the political opponent as an enemy, which is a thesis of one of the mentioned texts, is fully supported by Pajtić's position on the treatment of the opposition in political life of Serbia. The position on bigotry towards members of the opposition, especially members of Democratic Party, is clearly stated by Pajtić in its interview for *Vreme* weekly, in February 2015: "if you are a DP member you are worst than the Devil himself, psychopath, insane person, homosexual, traitor..."²⁰

The leader of DP negates every possibility of Vučić's transformation and the party he is leading and explicitly claims: "In real life, Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska Napredna Stranka) says it stands for the rule of law, and then they expose the Ombudsman to media, public lynch for doing his job, or use the justice system to persecute opposition, they announce a democratic country, in general, and then manipulate media and it is clearly impossible to appear anywhere if you are in the opposition, either your statements are out of context or

19. Olja Bećković, "Reasonable people should be afraid of him," interview with Tamara Skroza, *Vreme*, no. 1253.

20. Bojan Pajtić "We Are Living Groundhog Day Every Day" interview with Zora Drčelić, *Vreme*, no. 1258, page 16

your are put in negative context, they speak of a democratic country yet they beat political opponents, they speak of the socially responsible country and they, over the backs of the middle class, the most productive part of the population, they reduce wages, pensions, and this effect shall not lead to the filling the budget but to further devastation of those that are expected to change this country. Therefore Serbian Progressive Party (SPP) is purely declarative regarding those thesis, basically, we are seeing the restoration of the same rule model we saw in the nineties. This government has made huge fouls not only in political relations with other countries but regarding European values. I have asked from the members of the European Parliament and members of the European Commission to open negotiations as soon as possible regarding points 23 and 24 referring to the rule of law, freedom of media, human rights."²¹

In an interview for the *Nedeljnik* weekly the leader of SDP, Boris Tadić, disputes the government of Vučić from the standpoint of lack of competence of staff put on important government positions, and starting from the position that the government wishes to rule without institutional control and any criticism in public. These remarks from Tadić are very clear. "If you see the persuasive power of Vučić as his ability to persuade some of the least competent individuals to join politics, so special power is required here. Incompetent individuals are one of the largest problems Vučić has today."²² At the same time, the government of Vučić is an example of incompetence and aversion to control. The case of ombudsman is a clear announcement of a problem, for the government shows a tendency of establishing a system of rule without any criticism and shows that it does not understand the system of government control, and through the reactions of the Government and its representatives we see they do not understand the concept of a democratic state.²³

The following important aspect of the government's image in public is its internal instability and fragility. This political narrative is present in a series of print media. The stipulation is put on the conflict between the SPP leader Aleksandar Vučić and SPS leader Ivica Dačić, and disputes between the Minister Zorana Mihajlović and President Tomislav Nikolić and its cabinet. This subject is present in the first three months of the current year but it is actually initiated since the change of government in 2012. The goal of these headlines is not merely to inform the public on the status of the government and the relations in the ruling coalition, but to induce the spirit of conflict and political intrigue. This creates the effect of the internal instability of the government, constant divisions and discord that are the consequence of political actor's wish to accumulate as much power as possible. The image of internal conflicts lowers the reputation of the ruling coalition leader, shows a fragile character of political agreement and prompts the stories on possible changes in discourse of state policy. The final item is especially important for the alleged or real rivalry between the Prime Minister and the President. The focus in this, in accordance with the media, latent argument is the al-

21. Idem, page 12

22. Boris Tadić, "My clash with everyone," interview with Veljko Lalić and Nenad Cukulović, *Nedeljnik* February 5th 2015, page 29

23. Idem, page 32

leged Vučić's pro-European path that is in conflict with Nikolić's pro-Russian leaning. In light of complex circumstances related to the Geo-political position of Serbia and the direction of its foreign policy orientation, it becomes clear that the Nikolić- Vučić conflict does not destabilize the rule of SPP domination, but can potentially change the course of foreign policy. This is how the disputes on relation between the Government – President, more accurately Ministers – President's Cabinet, open space for different criticism and speculations on the character of foreign policy activities of Serbia in close and further future. The issue on true European orientation is in the shadow of possible political turn initiated by Nikolić. Foreign policy remains in vacuum between the declaratory commitment to EU and statements on loyalty towards Russia. Openness to all options makes Vučić fragile towards the objection of inconsistency in European policy, and it open the space for criticism from the conservative and national pro-Russian standpoint.

It is in the context mentioned that we should note that the construction of the negative image of Government of Serbia and its Prime Minister is related to the foreign policy orientation. We are talking about the headlines of the *Pečat* weekly. This weekly is anti-Western, pro-Russian, anti-capitalist and hard national orientation affirms the image of the world reproducing political, social, value and historical matrix characteristic for Serbia at the beginning of the nineties, more precisely, Serbia of Slobodan Milošević. Unlike European reform sensitive media, like *Vreme*, *NIN*, *Novi magazin* and *Nedeljnik*, that publish critical headlines on internal policy and economic more or less, *Pečat* questions the European orientation of the government, but with no direct reference to Aleksandar Vučić. Moreover, Vučić is kindly advised to deflect from the pro-Western policy and to turn to Russia and China, and the other members of BRICS.

At the same time, *Pečat* maintains the latent propaganda polemics with all members of the opposition in the public domain of Serbia or individuals that are a part of the system, but are critical to the work of Government and Prime Minister, such as, for example, ombudsman Saša Janković. Similarly this weekly radically writes on moral, political and economic errors that led to the failure of transition.

Pečat stigmatizes "October 5th" political elite always and everywhere as well as the pro-European image of the world. For Vučić, it is useful on the level of harsh polemics among the elite. On the other hand, it demolishes European orientation of the Government of Serbia in detail and systematically, revives stereotypes towards nations and countries in the region, radically distances Serbia from NATO and USA, calling on forming an alliance of Serbia and Russia based on strictly militant, anti-capitalist, orthodox and conservative traditions.

World view that clearly undermines not only Vučić's but general, entire European course in Serbia is demonstrated by the *Pečat* weekly in the text "2015" by author Nikola Vrzić. In this text he flirts with the idea of radical weakening of American and European influence in all aspects, from the political and economic to Geo-strategic, and develops a scenario of necessary deflection from the EU integration, market reform based on the advice from IMF and maintaining rational regional policy: "It has been a while since we have dawned in a new



Pečat, 9th January 2015

year that was, as this 2015, met with so many announcements of the great world turnover. There is so many potential to end the (malignant) American world order, with which we have learned to live in the last quarter of the century as if it was a necessary evil, in all of us, more than ever, since such world order was established.”²⁴

In the dawn of the inevitable, as Spengler would say, decline of the West, we should turn to alliance with Russia and China, observe the debacle of European economy, weakening of the American influence in the global arena and, naturally, reject the liberal and democratic order and market economy. In this context the author uses the following rhetoric figures: “the death of post-war world of Bretton Woods”, “breakdown of New York Stock Exchange”, “Euro’s historic minimum value”... “Avant-garde” and basically subversive anti-Western political view, on the other hand, forms a range of troubles for the pro-European forces, since it flirts with the spirit of frustration with the war in the nineties, economic crisis, fragile national identity, spiritual closeness with Russia and EU crisis.

It is clear that the entire sense of the analysis has an interesting internal political context regarding real or alleged tensions within the most powerful party – Serbian Progressive Party. In this context Vučić is advised to reject the pro-European wing of the party and turn to the national and conservative pro-Russian core, in order to direct the state helm toward the “safe harbor” where the brotherly embrace of Putin’s Russia awaits and the interested and powerful partner from the far East, communist China: “Since the possibility of the double coup in SPP is less than minimum, in case of such development (more severe pressure, resistance to such pressure) we should not dismiss the fact that, since he was psychologically studied in detail, we should have no doubts regarding this, Aleksandar Vučić is to be forced to step down on his own. If we were to bet, I would bet that the architects of his forced voluntary leaving the office would see desirable successor of Vučić in Zorana Mihajlović, Vice President of the Government and member of the Chairmanship of SPP.

On the other hand, however Aleksandar Vučić has the support – let’s not dwell on its reasons – that no Serbian leader had in a long time, and with that, some maneuver space not to accept the western blackmails and pressure that, also, a Serbian leader has not suffered for a long time. And this leads to the denouement of global events that will certainly, and perhaps, mercilessly, influence us.”

The political option insisting on mentioned positions indirectly sets the frame for the construction of negative image of the Prime Minister of Serbia and the Government of Serbia as pro-European and democratically legitimate subject. Pečat’s anti-European agenda is one of the many matrix in public that establishes desirable intellectual and political coordinates for the relative aspect of the European path of Serbia. Moreover by focusing on the anti-EU view, political optics of this paper observes each step towards the European integrations as intellectually disputed, politically wrong and historically outdated, since the apocalypse of the West is certain. Consistent adoption of the political and economic logic of Pečat puts

24. Nikola Vrzić, „2015,” Pečat, no. 351, page 9

the Government of Serbia in a negative context that is developed in detail and precision as well as the critic using the underline of the liberal and democratic discourse. Therefore, even though Vučić is not attacked explicitly, his intentions to reform Serbia and to bring it closer to the family of western people is always problematic. In every aspect, from politics to economics, through security, culture and education.

Media image of the opposition – lacking moral integrity and citizens’ support

Critical questioning of the policy of the Serbian Government is more widely present in the columns, comment sections and interviews published in relevant Serbian printed media, particularly weekly newspapers. As pointed out, critical attitude is dominant in writing about the Government, evident both in the choice of themes, method of elaboration of a particular topic and conclusions reached which are, either directly or indirectly, insinuated by journalists and newspapers’ associates in their editorial columns and articles. However, the opposition, as the participant in politics, also enjoys the public scrutiny. In the interviews given by the opposition leaders in the past three months, the opposition is presented as a political subject ready to tackle a much stronger ruling coalition party, particularly SPP and its leader – Aleksandar Vučić. The discourse of the opposition leaders is largely critical of every move taken by the government while simultaneously questioning their own recent past. Principally, there is an understandable balance between these two aspects. Politicians from the opposition parties rarely speak of their own omissions in concept and wrong political decisions while more often criticising the doings of the current government. As the weekly newspapers in Serbia are significantly leaning towards the government, lacking critical re-evaluation of the current political circumstances and no evident tendency towards analytical and critical review of the recent past - time when the current opposition parties made up the government. The critical view of the government in printed media has become more elaborate and perfected than it is the case with the pro-government media.

However, certain number of comments, primarily in the daily newspaper *Informer*, openly shows inclination to critical evaluation of opposition leaders, government-oriented criticism of elite and media and analysing the post-Fifth October era. Basic premise of a series of columns written by Vučićević could be summarised into several ideas: 1) current opposition, along with intellectual and media elite, due to failure of transition, lacks any credibility to dispute those currently in power, 2) despite citizens’ support, actual Serbian government is not adequately treated by the media but is disputed on moral bases, using political writings and other forms of media content without any reasonable grounds, 3) there is evident and unambiguous discrimination of anyone who does not oppose Vučić’s politics. In other words, the ruling thesis is that if anyone is not openly opposing the Prime Minister or showing positive view of the politics of the Serbian government is automatically marked by the Euroreformistic media - an unworthy person.

This approach assumed by Dragan J. Vučićević is manifestly pronounced in his article *Legalising Racism by the merits of our sister Conchita Wurst*: it is with increasing success with which the concept of media and political racial segregation is being imposed in Serbia whereby the "Other-Serbian race" is allowed all that is strictly forbidden to the rest of us. Under the mask of daily accusations for censorship – incomparable even to the one practised at the time of Milošević – a dangerous atmosphere is being wrought up in the country, inducing public unresponsiveness even when the discourse openly calls for assassination of the Prime Minister. So, utterly venerable and utterly honest NUNS recently cried out when the *Informer* observed that other newspapers wrote about "gay affair" of a provincial Prime Minister, but neither to the members of NUNS nor it did even occur to any other person to write a single protest letter to oppose the insane words of Milovan Brkić who wrote that the assassination of Aleksandar Vučić is the only possible solution?! If I were to use the vocabulary of Zoran Živković and his democratic friends, I'd say that that worst scum and the blackest devils wish to plunge Serbia into new chaos in order for those filthy bastards to continue to thrive on our misfortune. Or I could observe, for example, that Dragan Šutanovac, a great advocate for the rights of the impoverished Serbs, spent a New Year's Eve in the most expensive hotel on Mount Kopaonik, cursing at the government from the comfort of his jacuzzi tub which "shame on it (government), dares to work on the 1st of January..."²⁵

Vučićević's style is easily recognizable as direct, lacking intellectual whiff, interwoven with strong, often provocative and indecent phasing whose aim is to demonstrate the pathos of immediate indignation, opposition and protest against certain political and media figures. His critical edge is always *ad hominem*, heavily personalised, bearing strong moral, or more precisely moralistic connotation aimed at the less educated portion of the population inclined to reading tabloid newspapers. At the same time, the column of the chief and responsible editor of the *Informer* magazine is very important for the present Serbian government as it is heavily invested in questioning negative attitudes of the media and political images created by the anti-government-oriented media.

In addition to pathos of indignation and protest, Vučićević's writing is indicative of an interesting tendency to polemise with other media i.e. journalists: the political match between the political parties thus transcends into media struggle involving journalists – columnists through which the media is reduced to day-to-day fighting arena dominated by accusations and counter-accusations. Along the line, the capacity for rational valuation of arguments in decision making process regarding political, economic and social issues is being reduced. This tendency is particularly evident in the text: *Operation Insider* published as a response to a television show broadcasted by TV B92 discussing the suspicious business affairs conducted in Serbian football circles and political connections between current government and football clubs' management. In the said text, Vučićević describes all media in Serbia, except TV Pink, *Informer* and *Večernje Novosti* as anti-government oriented: "Well, special war on social networking sites, just like I prophesized at this very spot almost two years ago, has transferred to "real media". All national newspapers and television stations, literally all,

25. Dragan J. Vučićević „Serbia by the merits of our sister Conchita Wurst," *Informer*, 3.01.2015, page 5

except TV Pink, *Novosti* and *Informer*, with more or less talent, work to the detriment of the state and in favour of chaos. Use all and every opportunity to seize the chance to plant a new lie, as all news, each story can be exaggerated and made into an affair."²⁶

In articles written by Vučićević, the same tendency observed in his approach to critical journalism is also evident in his attitude to daily newspapers that openly write about alleged affairs of high government officials: President Nikolić, Minister Selaković, Governor of the National Bank of Serbia – Jorgovanka Tabaković. Anything written about their alleged indecent or illegal dealings while performing official government duties, Vučićević declares an open attack on the Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić: "There are three newspapers: *Blic*, *Kurir* and *Alo* but there is only one topic at hand. At least one out of three cover pages is a new resounding attack – either on the President Nikolić, Governor Tabaković or one of the ministers. To cover their tracks, the same newspapers, by adhering to an already established system, use every opportunity to praise Prime Minister Vučić, even though they'd rather behead him if they only could and dared... This is all about Vučić, folks. Only and exclusively about Vučić. All those conjunctured affairs have only one purpose: to bring the Serbian public into the state of chaos and narcosis in which nothing is ever incredible. Just like that frog which puddles in lukewarm water only to be boiled alive, those resounding affairs, involving the President, Ministers Vulin, Selaković and Governor Tabaković, are means to prepare us for the greatest and final falsity about Aleksandar Vučić, which is to be launched by the end of the spring at the latest, as the mafia boss. He simply is not and cannot be honest if surrounded by thieves. He is not and cannot be good if his companions are bad. He is not and cannot not be right while everybody around him is wrong."²⁷

General images of the main political figures in the printed media have seen elaboration and confirmation in many events in the past three months. Some of those domestic events confirm the general image of political figures in public while interpretation of events in the regional and foreign affairs domain testify to instability and practical political uncertainty in respect of the pro-European course.

January – Conflict BIRN vs. Serbian Government, Gašić vs. Janković, internal conflicts within SPP lines, victory of Syriza in Greece

The first month of this year is characterised by diverse events in the sphere of politics, economy and society but it also was a witness to different, as a rule of thumb, mutually conflicting interpretation of each event in daily and weekly newspapers. Among myriad events, those typical and representational of the spirit of the divide in the printed media are the following: the conflict between the Serbian Government and BIRN related to tender procedure for the

26. Dragan J. Vučićević, „Operation Insider," *Informer*, 7.03.2015, str. 5

27. Dragan J. Vučićević, „Cooking of a frog," *Informer*, 14.02.2015, str.7

works on pumping water out of the borrowing mine Tamnava, the conflict between the Minister of Defence Bratislav Gašić and the Ombudsman Saša Janković, texts about actual or alleged conflicts within Serbian Progressive Party and the victory of Syriza in Greece. The plurality of attitudes in respect of the foregoing topics is evident in tense atmosphere and, directly or indirectly, flirts with the daily politics, particularly its polemics.

The writings of the media brought back the spirit of old radical confrontation and stirring of political tensions associated with these topics. In case of the issue between BIRN against the Serbian government, and in relation to the public argument between Gašić and Janković, also strongly evident is the pronounced divide on the anti-government and pro-government media and the tension that arose between those who sided differently on the subject of the issue between BIRN and the Government. Actual or alleged conflict within SPP, more precisely, the argument between Minister Zorana Mihajlović and President Nikolić is indicative of the media tendency to fully legitimise inter-government conflicts by stressing any disunity. The strategy to overstress the alleged event is gaining the momentum of a true political first-class conflict. The victory of a left wing coalition – Syriza, opened up the room for political narratives on moral and political debacle of the corrupted political class, the end of the Eurozone, the change in the economic model applied to deal with the actual economic crisis. At the same time, the victory of the left wing party in Greece has awoken nostalgia for the times of socialism, inspired hope in the possibility of toppling down the liberal capitalism and hegemony of international financial institutions, like IMF and World Bank.

BIRN against the Serbian Government

Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, financially supported by EU, published an article about irregularities in the procedure for awarding the contract for pumping water out of the borrowing mine Tamnava that suffered severe damage in the last year's flooding. The subject of issue is the quality of contractors and the tender procedure. BIRN's critical text basically claims that the Power Distribution Company (EPS) and the Government of Serbia acted erroneously by entrusting the works of pumping water out of Tamnava borrowing mine to a Serbian-Romanian consortium instead of a Dutch company „Van Hek“. According to BIRN's claims, the Dutch company not only has better references for the relevant works, but was itself harmed by the tender procedure (the tender procedure was accepted and not direct negotiations model). Also, portion of the public has suspicions that the part of the consortium is directly associated with the people close to Primer Minister Vučić. BIRN also pointed out that Serbia had no mainstream media that had the courage to continuously monitor government policies.“

BIRN's text triggered strong response from the Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić who, after the newspaper clip was published, addressed the public directly with these words: “BIRN (Balkan Investigative Reporting Network) is the one who lied about Air Serbia, it received the money from Mr Davenport and EU to speak against the Serbian Government. You should tell those liars that they have just lied again.” Following this response of the Prime

Minister, various interpretations i.e. political and media issues followed. BIRN remained adamant in there claims and Maja Kocijančić, as the spokesman for EU, said she was surprised by Vučić's claims. “We are very surprised to hear Serbian Prime Minister claim that EU pays certain organisations to run campaigns against the Serbian government. We decisively refute these groundless claims.”

Tamnava case was broadly discussed in the media. Simultaneously with the issue of compliance or non-compliance with the tender procedure, issue of the freedom of the press in Serbia was also raised. In the context of the argument between Vučić and BIRN, the first page of the daily newspaper *Politika* displayed a title *The End of the Honeymoon for EU and Serbian Prime Minister?* (13.01.2015).

The discussion on relation Vučić – Kocijančić, and primarily the one between Vučić and BIRN opened the window for a series of critical remarks regarding authoritarian approach of the Serbian Prime Minister, the most indicative of which was the accusation that it is an “old radical ace” attempting at becoming a pro-European politician. His already mentioned negative image, aggressive and intolerant to critical reviews, is confirmed by a series of reactions which were issued in the aftermath of BIRN's article. Democratic Party (DS) pointed out: “He demonstrated rhetoric typical for the nineties of the last century – the wolf changes his coat but not his nature. We have several times pointed out that Vučić and Nikolić consider the continuation of European integration a requirement to stay in power - a necessary evil. They will be pro-European as much as it takes for them to keep their positions.” The response of the Democratic Party is a paradigm of a reaction from a portion of society to Vučić's manner of addressing BIRN and EU. Similar reactions were seen from other newspaper associations such as NUNS and a group of intellectuals. In the context of such reactions, it is necessary to point out the reaction of the columnist and editor in chief of the daily newspaper *Danas* – Zoran Panović who, in his article titled *Tests for Loyalty* (*Danas*, 17.01.2015) claims that the BIRN crisis made this newspaper agency famous while simultaneously enabled continuous reproduction of negativity in the Serbian media space: If the 24 hour theory were applied, the BIRN crisis would not have existed. Nor would my cousin Pajo have learnt that BIRN are actually journalists. Before this short-circuit between Vučić and Davenport regarding this issue, Pajo would have easily believed that BIRN is an insecticide against Colorado beetle recommended by a Potato Institute from Guča. On the other hand, “BIRN crisis” proved an encouragement for many on the other side. They started hoping that the old radical rhetoric is not an uncontrollable recurrent disease and that it is finally showing its true face.²⁸

Two or three days after the verbal skirmish, Serbian public lived to see old political rivalries brought back to life in the brand new circumstances. A front between citizens' European-oriented opposition and Vučić and SNS was formed. The entire matter gained the spirit of the political polemics of the nineties. However, the course of events took a new turn. The meetings of Vučić and EU Mission chief Mr Michael Davenport showed, both symbolically and realistically, that there is no room for conflict between the official Belgrade and Brus-

28. Zoran Panović, „Tests of loyalty,” *Danas*, appendix *Vikend* 17.01.2015, str.5

sels and that the hope of a part of the public that the government will become anti-EU, and that the pro-European opposition is temporary, is highly misleading. These circumstances were described by already quoted Zoran Panović, saying "To the losers of the transition on both sides, to all 'patriotic' blood suckers and all parasitic snobs of the multiparty Serbia who will – each to their own losers in transition process – explain how the true fight is still ahead. However, the fairy tale was short-lived. Vučić met with Davenport *tete-a-tete*, visited Serbs living in Kosovo (the West probably had no objections to that), Kirby delivered to him Obama's holiday greeting card and, as far as I understand, there is no chance of going back to tucked-in nineties when the roles were clean cut. However, Davenport can hardly be turned into Hallbrook in the long run."²⁹

The argument between Vučić and BIRN brought to light another interesting media and political phenomenon. Disputes between the media. These disputes are concerned with professional expertise and politics. In the article "We are not BIRN", editor in chief Ljiljana Smajlović draws the attention to the short-comings of BIRN's research pointing out the attitude supported by the World Bank which insisted on the necessity of direct negotiations over the tender procedure which is the model whole-heartedly supported by BIRN. Having in mind that the World Bank, as the financial source behind the project for pumping water out of the borrowing mine Tamnava, undoubtedly stressed the necessity of the tender procedure, BIRN as the investigative organisation, has a duty towards the public and its profession, to apologise for severe and unverified accusations spilled against the Serbian government and mainstream media. "Not a day passed and it was evident that BIRN report was flaw-ridden. World Bank refuted BIRN's central thesis about the necessity of direct negotiations and it became clear that the "mainstream" media do not have in fact a lot to learn from their colleagues in BIRN. The editors of this internet portal criticised the fact that nobody except Belgrade's weekly magazine *Vreme* has published their article on pumping water from the borrowing mine. Unfortunately for BIRN, it turned out that this portal could learn something even from the most orthodox of all Serbian tabloid media. The works on pumping water out of the borrowing mine was described broadly and negatively, even before BIRN, by *Tabloid* run by Milovan Brkić and *Kurir*, but these tabloids, as opposed to BIRN, did not cover the fact that the World Bank was responsible for imposing the direct negotiations procedure over the tender procedure on EBS. However, BIRN continues to stand by its claim that it had made no mistake."³⁰

Some of the commentators of the political scene in Serbia, noticed that the use of harsh rhetoric by Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić towards EU, in Tamnava case, is a tactic used to divert media attention from important political and economic issues and an attempt to raise his ratings at the time when the effects of austerity measures are beginning to take their toll on the employees in the public sector and retirees: "This represents a classical example of a political communication intended to stage a crisis situation. Anyone not supporting him is the "enemy of the state" says Cvijetin Milivojević, director of Pragma Agency. Further

29. Idem, page 5-6

30. Ljiljana Smajlović, "We are not BIRN," *Politika*, 17.01.2015, page 5

aggravation of the relations with EU is described by Milivojević as the "story to be used for domestic purposes, for flexing muscles with the aim of not hurting the other side too bad while simultaneously receiving acclaim, on an open stage, as a man with a solid integrity who refuses to be anyone's "puppet" or an "errand boy". Milivojević also points out that the measures taken to effect reformation, such as cuts in the pay checks of employees in the public sector and retirees affected the rating of both the Prime Minister and some members of the ruling coalition and this was an attempt to "fix it".³¹

Conflict Gašić vs. Janković

Special attention in the media was caused by an argument between the ombudsman Saša Janković and Minister of Defence Bratislav Gašić. The subject matter of their argument, continuously present in the media during two weeks in January, was the issue of authorisations of the Military Security Agency (VBA) over the spying of the citizens in two cases: celebration in the Crown Plaza Hotel and preparation and organisation of the SRS's meeting in Belgrade in November 2014. Articles published in the media soon turned into an argument. The public took opposite stands, for and against Janković i.e. for and against the Government i.e. Ministry of Defence. The basic premise used by Saša Janković was that handling requests regarding the army and police are part of his duty to monitor the legality of operation of state bodies and that in this way he fulfills his primary obligation – control the government. Contrary to Janković, state representatives i.e. Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Internal Affairs, claimed that bringing these cases, primarily the case of (i)legally providing security detail to the brothers of Aleksandar Vučić and Siniša Mali, during the Pride Parade last September, to the public attention is in fact meddling with the daily politics. For announcing the circumstances related to this case to the public, ombudsman was interpreted as heading the anti-government campaign.

The entire dispute gained a strong momentum in daily politics. Very quickly and easily, this argument was transferred into the zone of fixed images enjoyed the participants of this affair. Alleged resistance of the government to submit full documentation on the Pride case, as publicly requested by Janković, was construed as the manifestation of this authoritarian arrogance and tendency to evade control. The articles published go to show that there are those who see Janković's criticism of the government in the context of the principle of controlling the government, which is so typical for democracy: "The case of ombudsman or VBA, whatever you prefer, showed that both the public and the government itself failed to understand the role of ombudsman as the body in charge of controlling the work of other government bodies and responsible for ensuring the laws are complied with and the citizens' Constitutional rights are preserved."³²

31. Antonela Riha „Tresla se Tamnava“, *NIN*, no. 3342, page 21

32. Jelka Jovanović, „Accusations and questions without answer,“ *Novi Magazin*, no. 196, page 20

On the other hand, media started questioning the professional credibility of ombudsman Saša Janković. Legal analysis of the set of authorisations and competences legally awarded to VBA and VOA, which prevent the submission of confidential security data, was carried out. This is the context in which prof. Milan Škulić's article, published in the weekly magazine *Pečat* should be read: "It is of great importance for the bodies whose primary responsibility is to protect the country and ensure citizens' security to adhere to the laws, but also, on the other hand, that they do not discredit by giving insufficiently grounded comments or participating in anyone's personal promotion, or aiming to accomplish daily political goals."³³

The story about Janković also caused questioning his moral worthiness to be appointed to such an important function. In this context and in pure propaganda style, *Pečat* published an article by Nikola Vrzić *Who protects the ombudsman?* on 30th January, details from professional biography of Saša Janković were brought to light which connect him to two international organisations: OEBS and NATO, which by itself raises suspicion in the majority of the public. Vrzić claims: "... with transfer to OEBS, his interest in the issue of state security is awoken and in 2005, he graduates from the Faculty of Political Science, after completing specialised studies in national and global security. In 2007, as a specialist in this respect, he published a professional paper *The Status of Reforms of the Intelligence Sector in Serbia and Its Challenges* as part of the publication on Reforms of the Security Sector in South-East Europe – from a Necessary Medicine to a Global Concept) whose publishers, *inter alia*, was PfP Consortium of the defence academy and Institute for Security Studies, where PfP stands for NATO's Partnership for Peace and which is founded at NATO Summit in 1998 and operates under the auspices of the western military pact. In his paper, speaking of the lack of civil control over the security services, Janković also writes that reforms of the security services – which have been a key weapon of autocratic governments in the "past decades" helping them to stay in power at all costs – started only after, as he notes with manifest reproach, "Serbian Government realised that it had no idea that its Vice President (Momčilo Perišić – comment by N. V.) was under surveillance until federal, military counter-intelligence service arrested him for espionage!" which did not result in praises of such security service but in a conclusion that it must be supervised by a civilian body. And so, in 2007, this expert for security matters from OEBS, with connections to NATO, under utterly untransparent circumstances (Who nominated him? Why him? Was his nomination under this influence of his position in OEBS, his interest for this sensitive sector of security or his connections to NATO) becomes Serbian ombudsman. And in even less transparent manner, in respect of the motivation, he was reappointed to this duty on 4th August 2012."³⁴

The length and intensity of the campaign pushed to the back the original subject matter of the argument. The public was forced to polarise in the midst of political confusion which was even more evident in the circumstances that, despite being heavily criticised of the government, Janković retained the function of ombudsman.

33. Milan Škulić, „What VBA may, and VBA may not do," *Pečat*, no. 354, page 18.

34. Nikola Vrzić, „Who protects the Ombudsman," *Pečat*, no. 354, page 15

In mid-January, daily newspaper *Blic*, published on 15th January 2015, initiated a story about the relationship between the Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić and Minister of Traffic, Construction and Infrastructure – Mrs Zorana Mihajlović. The cover page of this daily newspaper displayed the title "Zorana has fallen from Vučić's grace", thus signalling the existence of alleged conflict within the Government and SPP. In favour of inspiring political tensions and media speculations on conflicts within the government, a poll was published by *Alo* on its internet portal. The visitors of this site were given opportunity to vote for Zorana Mihajlović as the new president of Serbia, among other ladies present in the Serbian political and public life. Having in mind the timing of the news, comparisons with Croatia and Croatian Democratic Community (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica) nominee Kolinda Grabar Kitarović were imminent.

Internal conflicts within SPP lines

The conflict within SPP, and alleged possibility of Zorana Mihajlović to run for president, inspired other media to deal with the same topic. The entire story about the conflict has a broader context, since it is a public secret that Minister Zorana Mihajlović is in latent media and political dispute with the Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić and members of his cabinet. In one of her numerous interviews, speaking of the existence of separate fractions within SPP favouring Vučić and Nikolić, she introduced the term "energy in carrying out a state function" as a criteria for this division. At the same time, she skilfully evaded answering the question whether she would support Tomislav Nikolić in a new election for president:

- Would you vote for Nikolić in the next presidential election?
- Voting is done by secret ballot.
- Are there any divisions within SPP into those pro-Vučić and those pro-Nikolić as speculated by some of your political opponents and sometimes the media?
- I haven't noticed that, but it may be just the matter of energy. There are people who are energetic and ready to do all it takes and those who are less energetic.
- Do you mean to imply that those more energetic are pro-Vučić and less energetic are those who favour Nikolić?
- Yes.³⁵

Her remoteness and implicitly critical attitude towards Nikolić made her nomination a subject of speculations. However, the epilogue to this media and political skirmish which encouraged internal instability of the government is entirely different.

Even though the news of Zorana Mihajlović's nomination echoed loudly, it was quickly refuted. In the statement given to the state news agency *Tanjug*, published in all media, Zorana Mihajlović explicitly refuted any allegations of her possible nomination as a candidate for Serbian President: "That's nonsense. To be honest, I'm bothered by this and I feel bad."

35. Zorana Mihajlović, „Why am I against Beko," interview with Nenad Čaluković, *Nedeljnik*, 15.01.2015, page 24

have never thought about that and I'm not interested. But, it seems that spinning a story is more important"³⁶ However, the saga on ambitions of Zorana Mihajlović and internal divisions within SPP was further elaborated in the article *Yellow Card* written by Nikola Vrzić and published in weekly magazine *Pečat* on 23rd January 2015.

The cover page of this news weekly gives the inkling of both the purpose and the meaning of the text. In the upper portion of the page, in the left-hand corner, a picture of Zorana Mihajlović was accompanied with reference to *Yellow Card* article inside and with a caption "The Long Hand of the West Inside Top Government?" In this article, the author lays down a thesis that support to Aleksandar Vučić, in his conflict with EU over BIRN, is a test of loyalty to his party, indicating at the same time that both the Ministers Zorana Mihajlović and Jadranka Joksimović failed to provide their full support to Vučić in this harsh polemics: "... while Vučić was supported by many leading members of SPP, both out of reflex, sycophant ideology and out of desire to help, none of which matters now, there is a starking lack of any reaction from the Minister, who otherwise does not miss the opportunity to respond to any questions which might get her media attention, and the response of the Minister competent for EU intergration – Jadranka Joksimović, was not much different – while Vučić was accusing European Union for financing lies about him, his Minister Joksimović thought is was sufficient to say that "transparency of the process is very important for democracy."³⁷ So, the articles about inner conflict placed that conflict not only in the context of inter-party division but inter-government division as well, but also into broad ideological context of division into pro-Europeans and patriots. The way that the event regarding Minister Mihajlović was handled in the media confirms the thesis of the government's inner instability. It was generated by different kinds of political contradictions, personal professional ambitions and conflicts with the domestic public or a portion of international community. Regardless of the generated image of "endemically unstable government", the aftermath of the Mihajlovic case is status quo. All parties involved are still in their positions: the Minister, President Nikolić, Prime Minister Vučić and EU still remains strategic course of the Serbian Government.

Victory of Syriza in Greece

In the context of interpretation of European integrations, it is necessary to discuss the topic of victory of the left wing coalition Syriza in Greece. Even partial view of the Serbian printed media will demonstrate that the victory of Syriza is understood as the protest to the austerity measures imposed on Greece by the "Big Three" (EU, IMF, World Bank). Just as well, the following motives are presented: the beginning of the collapse of Eurozone, the downward spiral of the concept of liberal economy, and not so rarely, the resuscitation of historical and political radical left as a historical and political subject is also mentioned. Strictly speaking, the elections in Greece left a remarkable trace on the Serbian

36. Zorana Mihalović, „I don't want to be The President of Serbia, somebody is setting me up,” <http://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/zorana-mihajlović-necu-da-budem-predsednik-srbije-neko-mi-namesta-clanak-1659653>

37. Nikola Vrzić, „The yellow card,” *Pečat*, no. 353, page 8

public. As many as two weekly newspapers published the news on their cover pages (*Novi Magazin* and *Pečat*).

The responses to victory are accompanied with a significant amount of approval, particularly in the anti-capitalistic portion of the public, and within certain populism-prone political circles within the media. The victory of Tsipras and Varufakis was a symbol of the new political concept, the proof that it is possible to question hegemony of liberal ideology, to open the road leading to a more just society, to terminate the privileges of a political class and to turn attention to the common and the disempowered.

The weekly magazine *Pečat*, which published Alexis Tsipras on its cover page, published an article with a clear message: "Europe is Reborn in Athens". The victory of Syriza is interpreted as a chance for historic overthrow and the author writes: "Europe is shaken by an earthquake of 36.34 Merkali (allusion to the votes won by Syriza – author's comment) with epicentre in Athens. Fortunately, there are no human causalties yet and the material damage is not too great – only New Democracy and Pasok have been demolished so far. From the long term perspective, this earthquake may seriously harm the very foundation of EU and entire current system."³⁸ Its election victory is considered destined not only for Greece but for the entire Europe. In this context, the following metaphor is used: "Greece – Beacon of Hope for Europe".

Unlike *Pečat*, who welcomed Syriza as the herald of new age, or more precisely, as the new European intellectual and political avant-garde which will bring freedom from the tutorship of capitalism, *Novi Magazin* put the victory of Syriza into the context of political and socio-economic fact which describes a bleak political and socio-economic reality of Greece. The gap between the rich and the poor, the high degree of evasion of taxes by the wealthy and resistance to severe austerity measures, together with the tradition of left wing politics in Greece, created a fertile atmosphere for the victory of left wing coalition party.

It is noticeably that the victory of Syriza had a significant echo among the intellectuals in Serbia. Even despite the fact that initial enthusiasm for radical political innovation has started to abate in Greece itself, the printed media still frequently publish opinions according to which Syriza is a political inspiration. Davor Džalto, president of the Institute for Cultural and Christian Studies, in his interview for *Vreme* claims: "I believe that the victory of Syriza is very important, not just because it will bring prosperity to Greece, but more that it will be a stimulation for the people in the region and in Europe to revitalise the forces which will confront the corrupt political elite, the dictatorship of large capital or the so-called corporate fascism."³⁹

Immediately after the victory of Tsipras and Syriza, the political figures had diverse interpretation of the victory of left wing coalition party. Serbian Prime Minister sent a congrat-

38. Katarina Verikios, „Europe is being born again in Athens,” *Pečat*, no. 354, p. 47

39. Davor Džalto, „Left-wing ideas were set in the New Testament,” interview with Jelena Jorgačević, *Vreme*, no. 1260, p. 24

ulations letter to Tsipras but also pointed out that he did not believe in simple and easy solutions, stressing that he himself favoured the austerity policy advocated by Germany and Austria and being less familiar with the left wing political model: "In respect of economy, I feel closer to Austria and Germany than Greece. I believe in hard work, difficult structural reforms, in the possibility to change old habits, our consciousness and in the difficult and strenuous but full recuperation of our economy."⁴⁰

On the other hand, the leader of the opposing Democratic Party in the National Assembly, Borislav Stefanović advocates a new party programme which includes some of the ideas of the victorious Greek coalition: "Syriza programme contains plenty of benefits for the Serbian citizens as well... and my idea is to go completely in the opposite direction from Vučić." This was to be expected as those are the people who have always been in power relying on a wrong model of large capital, exploitation of workers, destruction of the middle class and austerity politics. People who believe in the golden calf, worshiped by the Prime Minister himself, and in the system in which austerity measures apply to citizens but not to the potentate and to none of them, people who do not see the wave of changes rippling through Europe. In the meantime, Serbia is left in the hands of a single decision-maker who delivers promises upon promises while the Government is plunging headlong into indebtedness."⁴¹

The confusion of ideas and politics in the aftermath of the victory of Syriza in Greece revealed an uncommon tendency of politicians to make transformations from initial positions held by their parties. In his statement about the victory of left wing populists, Vučić sounds like a moderate conservative while, contrary to that, Borislav Stefanović, member of a party which nurtured the ideas of modern Serbia founded on the principles of democracy and market economy, adopts the left wing attitudes of Greek Syriza and finds them beneficial. This political constellation in terms of ideology will inspire *Blic*'s columnist, Svetomir Marjanović, to note the paradox in the country's politics: "Bojan Pajtić and his democratic friends are more fond of Syriza and similar parties in the European political league, while Vučić believes Serbia would benefit more from close ties with Angela Merkel and her friends from the EU premier political league. Who is right, Vučić or Pajtić? Vučić who believes in stopping the spending of money we have not yet earned and who talks about working harder or Pajtić and democrats who believe that our crisis can be resolved by introduction of a new form of socialism. Who'd ever say we'd face this dilemma after October 5th?"⁴²

By reviewing the main plots in interpretation of politics by the public, it may be concluded that the public in Serbia is strongly divided on all relevant political issues. The conflict between BIRN and the Government, the conflict between Saša Janković and Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Internal Affairs, is indicative of the undoubted power of the media to

40. Aleksandar Vučić, interview for ORF, source www.tanjug.co.rs

41. Borislav Stefanović, „Dacić has only five-pointed star from the Left,” *Blic*, 8.02.2015

42. Svetomir Marjanović, „Vučić, Pajtić and Syriza,” *Blic*, 3.02.2015

intensively polarise the public opinion. Taken as a whole, the articles published in the weekly newspapers, as well as editorial columns have significantly instigated and generated moral and political confusion and created a significant level of undetermination in the mental and valuation code of the public in respect of politics.

February – migrations of Kosovo Albanians to the EU, rejection of mutual claims for genocide between Serbia and Croatia before the International Court of Justice in The Hague and Presidential elections in Croatia, the failure of negotiations with Esmark, conclusion of the arrangement with the IMF, Serbia between East and West

February was filled with a series of events that significantly shaped the political life in Serbia. For the purpose of discursive analysis, events that can to a large extent indicate the approach of the printed media in the internal political, regional and wider foreign policy plane have been singled out.

By indicating the basic contours of the interpretative model it becomes clear what type of public policies can be legitimized in Serbia, and this also indicates the potential degree of resistance toward the current politics by the general public. In this context, for the purpose of this analysis the following events have been thematized: 1) migrations of Kosovo Albanians to the EU, 2) rejection of mutual claims for genocide between Serbia and Croatia before the International Court of Justice in The Hague and Presidential elections in Croatia, 3) the failure of negotiations with Esmark 4) conclusion of the arrangement with the IMF 5) Serbia between East and West.

Migrations of Kosovo Albanians to the EU

In the period between February 7 and 10, 2015, the theme of migration of Kosovo Albanians received an important place in the print media, only to, like all other important issues, receive its interpretation in the Serbian weeklies. Among the weeklies, two mutually opposing interpretive models - socio-economic and geopolitical have been crystallized.

The economic and social model of interpretation of Kosovo Albanians' migration to the EU countries places an emphasis on the analysis of socio-economic factors, recognizing in them the key reasons for the migration of the population. In the article "The Mass Escape From Misery," published in the weekly *New Magazine*, Agron Bajrami expressed the view that the main factors of migration are purely socio-economic: "...in Priština, they have been discussing for weeks the reasons of departure of so many people from Kosovo to the West. Most of those who are leaving cite as the main reason poor economic situation, unemploy-

ment, corruption, low wages, political turbulence, lack of perspective, social problems, expensive life, with a high dose of disappointment in politicians who have been unable to provide people with normal dignified life."⁴³

In contrast to this attitude, the weekly *Pečat* formulated a thesis that the process of migration of Albanians from Kosovo to the EU aims to further the demographic expansion of the Albanians in the territory of not the EU, but Serbia. In fact, thanks to the simple procedure for obtaining Serbian citizenship, Kosovo Albanians who have temporarily left Serbia, get the possibility to permanently settle in Serbia in case of deportation from EU countries.

The basis for such an assertion is found in anti-immigration mood in the rich countries of the EU readmission treaty that Serbia signed with the EU. Under the treaty, Serbia is obliged to accept all asylum seekers with Serbian citizenship. The weekly *Pečat* insists on two essentially racist analogies. The first analogy concerns the return of Roma asylum-seekers in recent years, while the other analogy is associated with the "false" exodus of Albanians in the spring of 1999. The assumption of the latter analogy is that the current exodus of Albanians from Kosovo equally farcical as the exodus that the West used as justification for the NATO bombing of Serbia sixteen years ago.

These theses, Zoran Čvorović explains, insisting that during deportation from the EU, the Albanians would remain permanently in Serbia and endanger the demographics in certain regions of Serbia. The change of the demographic structure in the region, will be according to an unwritten, but still valid rule, a fuel for political action that leads to the conquest of Serbian living space: "We had such a case with Roma, but it is certain that it is now turn for the Albanians, who could, on their way back from the EU to Serbia, apply for and be granted temporary and permanent residence in cities where they never lived, as well as documents for the new permanent and temporary residence. It is a selective application of regulations as it does not relate to other citizens of the Republic of Serbia and entails a real danger that Europe would turn back this mass Albanian immigration, which would then, invoking the said treaty, settle in Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Niš, Pančevo."⁴⁴

The project of Albanian expansionism is based on receiving the status of a suffering nation, the expert will point out, asking a question of whether they were right those who claimed "that Serbia due to biological, economic, political and geo-political and military integrity cannot control Kosovo and Metohija with the majority Albanian population. The Republic of Serbia, by the will of an individual, withdrew its effective authority from Kosovo and Metohija, where it has a firm under which the Albanians are going abroad. They are using this firm when it is in their interest, and again they deny it when and how personal interests dictate. We have no ability to control the use of state of Serbia. If it is convenient for the Albanians, they will, as citizens of the Republic of Serbia, be able to settle in Serbian cities and start buying real estate."⁴⁵

43. Agron Bajrami, „The Mass Escape From Misery," *Novi Magazin*, no. 199, p. 14

44. Nataša Jovanović and Predrag Radonjić "Escape into Serbian Future", *Pečat*, no. 356, p. 14

45. Idem

The writing of *Pečat* on the subject of migration of Albanians from Kosovo reproduces the matrix that encourages ethnic distance to the highest level, at the same time affirming the anti-European discourse as legitimate. In the condition of complex situation regarding the implementation of the Brussels Treaty and the continuation of European integration, pro-European public policy can hardly be grounded if it encourages fear of other nations and evokes memories of the tragic events of the recent past. Construction of a conspiracy theory gets its current development and undermines already fragile outlines of public democratic political culture based on the values of tolerance and cooperation.

Rejection of mutual claims for genocide between Serbia and Croatia before the International Court of Justice in The Hague and Presidential elections in Croatia

The fact that revival of ethnic stereotypes and policy of distance has its merits will be shown in another set of events related to the regional relations. It is the ruling of the International Court of Justice and the election of a new President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar Kitarović. Although the ruling of the International Court of Justice dismissed the mutual claims for genocide, individual column writers in some Serbian printed media tried to challenge the rational character of that decision and revive the matrix of the nineties in the public-political field. In this respect, indicative are articles published in the weekly *Pečat* and the editorial column in *Večernje Novosti*. In the article "0:0 for Them", author Filip Rodić strongly insists on claiming that Croatia committed genocide, and that the decision of the International Court is a compromise, which is not in accordance with the principles of fairness. To support his thesis, Rodić cites demographic data from the early 1990's, comparing them with the current situation. The text is concluded with a rhetorical question implicitly suggesting to the reader the only possible answer. His propaganda message is reflected in the following quote: "His propaganda message is reflected in the following quote: "When everything concerning the trial and the ruling of the International Court of Justice is considered, one gets the overwhelming impression that the issued ruling was a compromise, and compromise cannot be justice. This can be least be justice for the people who used to constitute a third of the population of a country, and today is on the level of statistical error. If this is not genocide, then what is?"⁴⁶

After the stigmatization of the ruling of the International Court of Justice, *Pečat* starts contesting two interrelated political process – it questions the policy of good neighborly cooperation in the region and Serbia's membership in the EU. An attempt at articulating the challenging of the aforementioned processes, and with respect to the decision of the International Court of Justice, was made also by the Editor-in-Chief of "Večernje Novosti" and a columnist for *Pečat*, Ratko Dmitrović, in the following article: "The ruling that further opened

46. Filip Rodić, "0:0 for Them," *Pečat*, no. 355, p. 9.

the eyes of Serbia". Dmitrović's basic thesis is that Croatia, despite the ruling of the International Court of Justice, will try to impose on Serbia its own version of the breakup of Yugoslavia. Croatia will be provided by this possibility by the process of European integrations, which Serbia would not give up.

In support of his thesis, Dmitrović implies that the process of accession of new members to the EU rests on the consent of all member states. This procedure opens up space for the Croatian national narrow-mindedness that will be manifested in the request for Serbia to accept the historical responsibility for the breakup of Yugoslavia, as well as the Croatian view of the war conflict: "Croatia is unhappy, almost embittered by the ruling in The Hague, and the same day a plan was presented with which the official Zagreb will force Serbia to recognize the aggression against Croatia and the alleged crime of genocide committed in that aggression. Of course, this is conditioning of Serbia on its path to European integration."

The essence of this plan, according to Dmitrović, was revealed the lawyer Luka Mišetić, the defense attorney of Croatian generals in The Hague who, in a television show dedicated to the process in The Hague, proposed that Croatia clearly presented to Serbia the following: "...if you want Zagreb's approval for the EU membership, you will need to admit before the general public of Europe that you committed aggression against Croatia, thereby committing genocide."⁴⁷

The same author, on the occasion of the ruling of the International Court of Justice, presents in the editorial column the well-known thesis from the 1990's, considering it undisputed and absolute truth: "It is not Yugoslavia that attacked Croatia, but Croatia attacked Yugoslavia. None of this data can be disputed. That is how things stand. This is the truth about the war in Croatia"⁴⁸.

Dmitrović shows his thesis as a paraphrase from the memoirs of Josip Boljkovac, the minister in the Croatian government in the early 1990's. The quoted writings clearly contain the negative judgmental connotations toward the possibility of establishing rational relations between Belgrade and Zagreb.

The spirit of distance and hostility between the two peoples has been further fueled by a series of writings after the victory of Kolinda Grabar Kitarović at the presidential elections in Croatia. Although very harsh words about Serbia were heard during the campaign, Prime Minister Vučić personally attended the inauguration, wanting to send a message about the willingness to cooperate with the legitimately elected representatives of Croatia.

The political decision of the Prime Minister to go to the inauguration in Zagreb was challenged by the media in two ways – directly and indirectly. A direct and open approach to undermining the state policy towards Croatia was adopted by Ratko Dmitrović. Editorial column

47. Ratko Dmitrović „Kolinda roadworker,” *Večernje Novosti*, 17.01.2015

48. Idem

"Kolinda putarka", made a series of allusions to the political profile of the current Croatian president. Indicating the policy of continuity with the first Croatian president Franjo Tuđman, Kolinda Grabar Kitarović takes harsh stance towards Serbia, advocating greater rights for Croats in Serbia, at the same time insisting on the third entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"There is no confusion or error; the woman is an ideological child of Ante Starčević, Josip Frank and Francis Tuđman. They claimed the same, and Kolinda quoted them. I did not forget Pavelić, he recognized the Serbs in the territory of NDH as Serbs, but he solved their issue by slaughtering them. Kolinda is still for assimilation ... Officials in Belgrade are silent about all this. Zagreb claims that Vučić and Nikolić must keep silent because of their past. I don't think so, on the contrary..."⁴⁹

Vučić's visit was rendered meaningless by descriptions of the profile of the new Croatian president Kolinda Grabar Kitarović. At the same time, the disputability of the visit can be read in the fact that the visit did not bring anything fundamentally new in the troubled and difficult relations between Belgrade and Zagreb.

The arrival to the inauguration in Zagreb in some circles was understood in some circles as Vučić's successful presentation in the eyes of Western diplomats. On the other hand, Nikolić's stay in Belgrade prevented the odium of the general public in Serbia for showing respect to the right-wing Croatian president. It is the theory of different roles within the same political option. Nikolić has the role of a mobilizer of the conservative electorate, while Vučić is the "player" for external use, primarily for the construction of a positive image in the eyes of the region and the West. This thesis is elaborated by the editor of *Nedeljnik* Veljko Lalić, who literally says: "...when you enter Nemanjina and you are welcomed by bureaucrats who explain to you how the country is being attacked from all sides, and when you enter Andrićev Venac, you are greeted by people from your party who convince you that nothing existed before you. And that is why the president did not go to the inauguration of the Croatian president and Vučić did. Experts, experts..."⁵⁰

The failure of negotiations with Esmark

Concluding the arrangement with the IMF and the unsuccessful sale of Smederevo Steelworks (Železara Smederevo) are the main economic events that marked February 2015. On the issue of the failure of the sale of Steelworks, a series of critical articles appeared, which interpreted the failure as a personal defeat of Aleksandar Vučić. On the other hand, in the interpretation of the agreement with the IMF, prevailing was the general opinion, with rare exceptions in the form of articles in *Pečat*, that the arrangement was necessary for the survival of the Serbian economy. At the same time, it was underlined that the fulfillment of IMF conditions is a difficult and almost insurmountable job for the Serbian government.

49. Idem, p. 2

50. Veljko Lalić "Experts, experts..." *Nedeljnik*, 26.02.2015, p. 6



Novi Magazin, 19th February 2015

The failed negotiations about Smederevo Steelworks, as expected, have launched a number of interpretations of the event and possible outcomes of the fate of this company. In the article "Thriller about the iron and money", columnist of the weekly *Vreme*, Dimitrije Boarov, deals with the chronology of the announcements of successful privatization of Steelworks "Smederevo". Presenting a chronicle of the previously announced success in the media, this columnist states that the whole thing was only a media smokescreen, namely the story had a sad end: "triumphant announcement from this fall, when the Prime Minister Vučić said that an agreement had been reached with the US company Esmark about the purchase Smederevo Steelworks, was turned into an exciting story with a sad ending."⁵¹

The failure of the sale of the Steelworks opens also the challenge of its future operation, especially in light of the new arrangement with the IMF, which prohibits subsidizing state enterprises: "...This famous steelworks remains the lead financial burden for Serbia. On this occasion, Serbia will continue the production in the Smederevo Steelworks, and at the same time suspend subsidies to state companies, as promised in its document to the IMF?"⁵²

Economic analysis of sustainability of Smederevo Steelworks was unambiguously presented by professor Miodrag Zec. His position is that the Steelworks has always been a problematic and economically inefficient project: "With respect to this Steelworks, it cannot be profitable with any price of steel, because there is no production volume to cover fixed costs, and it produces the most primitive things in its industry, flat sheets. You do not have iron ore, you do not have coke, you do not have a market, you do not have a metal processing industry, you do not have the capital for change and innovation, for the conversion of the structure, and there are many other things that you do not have. The Steelworks has its history, and throughout its history it has always been on the verge of generating loss and was always subsidized. When all the debts made for the Steelworks would be added up, these are huge amounts, probably exceeding several billion from the time it was founded."⁵³ The impression of defeat of the authorities in the editorial comments on the occasion of the operation of the Steelworks was completed by the editor in chief of the weekly *Vreme* Dragoljub Žarković.

He translated the failure in the sale of the Steelworks into a personal defeat of Prime Minister Vučić. The reason for such a claim Žarković finds in futile fomenting of the hope that the deal would be successfully implemented: "Although the defeat is a strong word for a failure in business negotiations and would not be used if Vučić and his people had not overheated hope of life-saving solution with the US company, which was after the "victory" in the tender and onwards, guided only by their own interests, only strengthening the conditions under which to enter that transaction."⁵⁴

51. Dimitrije Boarov, "Thriller about the iron and money," *Vreme*, no. 1259, p. 4

52. Idem, p. 6.

53. Miodrag Zec, "There is no Plan B for the State," interview with Radmilo Marković, *Vreme*, no. 1260, p. 11

54. Dragoljub Žarković, "Used car salesman – questions opened by the failure in the sale of Smederevo Steelworks," *Vreme*, no. 1260, p. 7

Conclusion of the arrangement with the IMF

On the economic front, the failure of the sale of Smederevo Steelworks has not triggered a failure in the conclusion of the arrangement with the IMF. However, the reached agreement has opened certain dilemmas in the comments that appeared those days in the weeklies. Among them, a columnist Dimitrije Boarov, accepting the justification for the arrangement with the IMF, considers the possibility of its full implementation. The skepticism expressed by this columnist is not unfounded, given the difficulties in the previous stages of the implementation of the agreement with the IMF.

The main problem are the political and social costs of restructuring of public enterprises: "It is early to speak about whether this government is able to implement the promised reforms and whether it is ready for that task or has a plan B. Is the approved arrangement with the IMF good news or "... the point of no return"... it is difficult to answer the question whether the Serbian government will really find the strength and the will to carry out reform of public enterprises and whether it will honestly comply with the "limits" of state guarantees issued to these enterprises".⁵⁵

An exceptionally critical attitude towards the conclusion of the arrangement with the IMF appeared in *Pečat*, entitled "Stand-by Serbia". Author Nikola Vrzić believes that the signed arrangement with the IMF will not bring any prospects for the economic success of the Serbian economy. On the one hand, the consolidation of public finances, which is based on the reduction of public spending and the abolition of state subsidies, will allow only prerequisites for the solvency of the state in returning debts to foreign creditors. These measures will statistically improve the economy, reduce the amount of the debt and reduce the budget deficit. However, reducing the negative balance will release money only for the repayment of the existing debts: "All of these austerity measures, namely, are not designed to enable better life for people, but so that the states forced to implement measures of savings were able to regularly repay their debts (hence reducing the budget deficit) and to further borrow (hence the growth of total debt despite savings). The IMF is not a charity but a creditor..."⁵⁶

At the same time, another positive thing in the arrangement with the IMF, attracting foreign investment, it is difficult to realize, since the investment climate in the Eurozone is extremely bad, and out of caution of the investors positive expectations cannot be rationally justified. Vrzić explains this statement with a quote from the blog of the IMF: "The investments in Eurozone, in particular private investment, have not recovered from the beginning of the financial crisis... The main reasons are: over-indebtedness of companies, financial constraints and uncertainty of investors."⁵⁷ In his propagandist manner, Vrzić claims: "No investors, no hope."⁵⁸

55. Dimitrije Boarov, "Big obligation," *Vreme*, no. 1260

56. Nikola Vrzić, "Standby Serbia," *Pečat*, no. 358, p. 9

57. Idem, p. 9

58. Idem, p. 9

Serbia between East and West

Speaking about the Ukrainian crisis and spreading of Russia's influence to other parts of Europe, US Secretary of State John Kerry said that certain South-European countries were significantly susceptible to Russia's influence: "When it comes to Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro and others – Georgia, Moldova, and Transnistria – they are in the line of fire."⁵⁹ Kerry's remark primarily refers to an increasing and more and more prominent influence of Russia in the media and its ability to impose its viewpoint of the Ukrainian conflict. Statement of the US State Secretary prompts the question of the direction of Serbia's foreign policy. Although official policy is strategically committed to European integrations and maintaining of the best possible relations with Russia, Kerry's statement put the dilemma on first rate foreign policy preference – closer and more comprehensive cooperation with Russia against total integration in the Euro-Atlantic order – under the spotlight again. Process of Euro integrations involves closing of Chapter 31, which means total alignment of Serbia's foreign policy with EU's. This alignment inevitably means solving of the ultimately complex political delicate issues, such as the issue of Kosovo and constitutional re-composition of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, European integrations entail an extremely high level of foreign policy of member countries.

At this particular historical-political time, literal acceptance of European foreign policy would result in Serbia's direct confrontation with Russia and impose the introduction of sanctions due to its active role in the Ukrainian conflict. These circumstances are well-known and widely discussed by the Serbian public. In February 2015, ideas guiding Serbia away from the European path have resurfaced and have been legitimised frequently and on different occasions.

Focusing of the media on this topic started with the publishing of a text by the Russian Minister Sergey Lavrov in the weekly *Nedeljnik*. Sergey Lavrov outlined the matrix of Russia's foreign policy. Polycentric world order as opposed to the Euro-Atlantic world which failed to build "a common zone of peace, stability and peace."⁶⁰ Lavrov bases the reason behind this claim on the position that the US and its allies are insisting on cold-war political paradigm of choosing "You are either with us or against us," as well as on the understanding of geopolitics from a perspective of a "zero-sum" game. Russia weighs against the Euro-Atlantic viewpoint in international relations with a position of respecting "people's freely expressed will" which must be observed.

Lavrov uses this principle as an excuse for the annexation of Crimea and for providing legitimacy to political demands of pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine. After the establishing of political-intellectual coordinates for understanding the Ukrainian crisis and re-examining of Euro-Atlantic foreign policy pattern, Lavrov brushes upon the Balkans' politics, as well. In that context, Lavrov views the European efforts towards Western Balkans without ethnic

59. http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2015&mm=02&dd=25&nav_id=961797

60. Sergey Lavrov, "Fake choice: EU or Russia," *Nedeljnik*, 12th Feb 2015, p.22.

conflicts and security issues via integration in EU and NATO as an obligation to recognize Kosovo as a necessary requirement for Serbia's membership in the EU. "Problem of Kosovo still represents a serious challenge since Priština's patrons are advocating recognition of statehood of Kosovo as the "price of Serbia's accession in EU." Belgrade should make independent decisions related to this.⁶¹

In the manner of a seasoned diplomat, Lavrov promotes Serbia's foreign policy which makes a balance between EU and Russia: "Choice made by Serbian leaders is EU membership and maintenance of good relations and cooperation with Russia." After Lavrov, the process of relativization of the European path was further developed in the text by Veljko Lalić *Ministarstvo za Kinu (Ministry for China)*. The thesis of this text supports the idea of relativization of Serbia's European integrations, by prompting the possibility of seeking strategic partnerships outside the USA, EU and Russia. Veljko Lalić writes "let's go through several foreign-policy facts. Russia, today, as well as America, is becoming a Pacific country. There is no more Balkan play. The borders are drawn at Constantinople, at Turkey, which is the most important player on the borders of Europe. This is where the South Stream stops ... only Germany stops when all it has to offer us is savings. And that most important pacific country China, which is the only one that has so many tributaries that one of them could even reach us. This is why I would, if someone asked me such a stupid question as "What would you advise me?" I'd say "Open up a Ministry for cooperation with China," or at least a Bureau where you will lock 300 experts who have to come up with one project with China every day. There's no other chance for us."⁶²

At the same time, with the frequent occurrence of ideas on the redirecting of the centre of the Serbian foreign policy and making a historical-political deflection away from European integrations due to the status of Kosovo, Anti-Americanism is undoubtedly being encouraged in the public, as one of the major foreign-policy choices. The already mentioned newspapers *Pečat* and *Večernje novosti* contribute to this topic.

At the same time as the strong Anti-European tendencies in the perception of Serbia's foreign-policy orientation, from January 2015 to March 2015, interviews with the Ambassadors of EU member countries appeared. The Ambassadors have not at any time questioned the process of Euro-integrations, relaxing the delicate issue of relations with Russia. It should be noted that due to the drop of Euro-enthusiasm in Serbia and the crisis in the European Union, as well as the slow pace of the process of EU enlargement, there are few texts which emphasize the advantages of the country's membership in the EU. Interviews with ambassadors of EU countries, though precisely and professionally lead, still involve an undisputed course of the country towards European Union. Despite the aforementioned, the geopolitical storyline about the turning towards Russia and China leads EU Ambassadors in Belgrade to a higher level of realism. A lack of euphoria among EU representatives referring to Serbia's EU membership is noticeable.

61. Idem, p.26.

62. Veljko Lalić, "Ministry for China," *Nedeljnik*, 12th February 2015, p. 4

An example of a moderate and realistic position when it comes to Euro-integrations and relations with Russia is the interview with the British Ambassador in Belgrade Denis Keefe: "As accession talks develop, we would like to see Serbia align more with the common foreign and security policy of EU. But, there is the question of our common values. EU has different principles. We want to see Serbia share these principles. EU members do not share the same position on some issues. But when they do, then it is because of common principles and values which are shared throughout the EU. Adoption of such values is a natural part of accession to the Union. I believe this will happen as the talks move forward. Last year, there was a debate on the introduction of sanctions to Russia, Serbia explained its position and EU understood. But, now Serbia is presiding over OSCE which we value, and we expect Serbia to demonstrate its Pro-European commitment in foreign affairs. We expect that role to be constructive."⁶³

Writings on foreign policy in February 2015 showed that there is a noticeable plurality of positions which are mutually exclusive in the middle and long run since such policy of balancing and direct non-alignment has its practical limits. In the same way, it is becoming clear that legitimacy of anti-European positions is slowly expanding. Namely, by placing the strategic political commitment towards EU on the same level as other geo-political commitments, original values-obligating dimension of the European reform process aimed at full fledged EU membership is being lost. The remark of the US State Secretary John Kerry on Russia's media expansion has its direct foundation and confirmation. Russia's media-political view of uniting with domestic geopolitical inventiveness is undermining the increasingly fragile EU support in the public opinion, and gradual abating for the prevalence of the European idea in print media is evident. EU is becoming a topic of the politicians, without particular media support which should provide core principles of European integrations with a level of credibility.

63. Denis Keefe, „The year of big challenges is ahead," interview with Jovana Gligorijević, *Vreme*, No. 1259, p. 16

March – helicopter crash, “Belgrade Waterfront”, anniversary of Zoran Đindjić’s assassination

HELICOPTER CRASH

Crash of the Serbian military helicopter, which resulted in military and civil casualties during a rescue operation for a new-born from Novi Pazar, started an avalanche of writings in the media. The case was observed from several different angles: aircraft, military procedure, politics, media, ethical etc. While dailies published reconstructions of the fall, followed the chronology of events, made different hypothesis on the causes of the fall, weeklies took the centre of the discussion to a wider context, specifically they referred to the political and legal implications of the entire case.

Specifically, the topic was primarily the question of accountability for the accident and tragic loss of human life. In light of the event, two mutually controversial interpretations appeared. One, which views responsibility for the fall of the helicopter primarily as a group of unfavourable objective liabilities (adverse weather, difficult communication of the crew and flight control, technical imperfections of the craft,...) and second, which points to responsibility of line ministers of health and defence for starting a risky rescue operation. The latter prevails in columns from weeklies. Its assumption is that the ministers' obsession with popularity, i.e. promoting of a saviour's image was the key reason for the launch of the operation: "If all had been well, if the ministers had taken pictures with a baby of the wrong "religion" that night, and then tomorrow appeared with the usual stunt men in fly suits, of course, before TV cameras in the Government – if luck would have it, let them be as long as they are alive and kicking – all would be fine. However, it did not play out that way, why? Because of the insisting on the landing in the Surčin fog, because TV crews were waiting? Is there anyone left who believes a word of theirs?⁶⁴ ... „doubt, once born, knows no limits“ – though this was not written by Alistair Campbell, but Ivo Andrić. And doubt of one part of the public in this case boils down to the conclusion that someone pressured the pilots in extremely adverse conditions to fly to the Surčin airport, because there was an intention for the two ministers to take a photo as the saviours of a sick child"⁶⁵

Arguing in favour of the thesis of a pre-arranged spectacle with the intent of promoting ministers, one part of the media refer to the subsequently retracted news of the news agency Beta, which reported that the child had reached appropriate health care institutions late that night. At the same time, constant prompting of responsibility of ministers coincides with the readiness of the Prime Minister to protect them. This political-media circumstance is interpreted as the key of the Prime Minister's irrational authoritative governing practice. Inherently, this confirmed the already carefully formed

64. Miloš Vasić, "Tragedy in the fog of politics," *Vreme*, no. 1263

65. Vera Didanović, "They at least deserve the truth," *NIN*, no. 3351



NIN, 19th March 2015

image of Aleksandar Vučić as an authoritative politician prone to avoiding institutions and aggressive media appearances. In this case, principle of awarded roles of actors in the public-political field is at hand:

"When the most powerful man in the country assumes a principle of loyalty then something is not right there. So, Aleksandar Vučić, the alpha and omega of every delta in Serbia, pre-granted amnesty to the Health and Defence Ministers, relieving them of any liability for the tragic outcome of the fall of the military helicopter with four crew members, two health care professionals and the unfortunate five-day baby which was supposed to be saved. There is no committee which would further consider their role in that human drama because the PM said that though truth be told no one asked him, but that he would have sent the helicopter as well if someone had asked him."⁶⁶

The story about ministers' responsibility got its critical reception in the column of the Editor-in-Chief of the *Politika* daily Ljiljana Smajlović. In her comment headlined "Haters" (*Politika*, March 17th, 2015) she emphasized that the promoting of the thesis of publicity as the trigger of the risky operation of child rescue represents an example of genuine political hatred which is exhibited by certain reporters. Smajlović sees irrationality of her colleagues in their constant use of the retracted agency news which served as support of the thesis about ministers' publicity being the trigger of the risky rescue helicopter mission: "the paper *Politika* is one of the newspapers that reported on its site on Friday night the inaccurate *Beta's* news. Both *Beta* and *Politika* extended an apology and an explanation for this oversight to the readers. This did not stop conspiracy theoreticians, editors of obscure sites and haters on social media to find in this news "evidence" of censorship and dictatorship which are shaking Serbia up. There is no point in discussing with people who are capable of claiming that *Politika* intended to trick the nation and cover up the death of the baby and the accompanying persons in order to promote this or that minister. But I cannot hide resentment over the similar statements of colleagues, professional reporters. It would be more honest to fight out in the open on the political stage. Not to declare their political intolerance an ethical standard in journalism. Not to change into fighters for the freedom of the press when they are groundlessly suspicious of all those who do not share their political fears and particular interests."⁶⁷

Interpretive plot around the helicopter case pointed to a deeply-rooted division among the commentators which cancels the possibility of establishing a uniform approach even to a tragic accident. Deep gap in the public is evident, i.e. legible from the spirit and the letter of quoted texts. Political-media discord has been built continuously and regenerated in accordance with the model of role casting. For one part of the public the culprit is always the government, regardless of the intent or adverse weather. The other part of the public, as seen from the quote from Ljiljana Smajlović's text, functions as a defence, unready to realise and accept the pre-arranged scenario of the smearing of political opponents. What is left out in all this, as well as in other specified cases in the public space of Serbia, is the spirit of rational debate and tolerance.

66. Dragoljub Žarković, „Vučić's anniversary of victory – introduction into years of defeats,” *Vreme*, no. 1263

67. Ljiljana Smajlović, "Haters," *Politika*, 18th March 2015, p. 25.

“Belgrade Waterfront”

Project “Belgrade Waterfront” is the most important investment project in recent history of Belgrade and Serbia. Treatment of this project in columns, interviews and analytical texts falls in line with the matrix of radical confrontation of totally opposite viewpoints.

On one side, the government sees it as its chance for development, starting of the economy and further attracting of investments. With all of the above stated, “Belgrade Waterfront” enables development of a dilapidated city area and civilization progress, offering the possibility of allowing Belgrade to thrive as modern European cities built on river banks. “Belgrade Waterfront” completes the picture of Aleksandar Vučić as a reformer and bearer of general social progress, a man determined to commit to solving of specific life issues, growth of economic activities, and improvement of living conditions.

In the media sphere, the story about the “Belgrade Waterfront” is the story which helps build a positive image in the eyes of the citizens. Along with the fight against corruption and liberal economic reform, the “Belgrade Waterfront” has become the constitutive part of Vučić's political and media distinction. On the other hand, critically-oriented public sees the “Belgrade Waterfront” in a completely different light. Precisely because of that, challenging the project in one part of the print media has been done thoroughly and systematically. This includes several interconnected aspects. Similar to *Air Serbia* contract, the Belgrade Waterfront has become the subject of various critical interpretations in the Belgrade-based weeklies.

Sociologist Jovo Bakić, PhD, offered a sample opinion of the critical standpoint in the interview for the weekly *Vreme*. "That project is so megalomaniacal that it is impossible to realize it as a whole. They will erect that unfortunate tower, which will probably be a mockery, they will erect that mall, a few surrounding buildings, and that will be that. At some point, the investor will realize that the project is not profitable, there are no discussions about such an important project on televisions with national frequencies... It is a huge problem that this is part of some sort of deal and the public is completely uninformed about it. There is some investor from the United Arab Emirates, known for some not-yet-started megalomaniacal projects in India and Pakistan, there's Vučić and his Mali (which means little in Serbian) mayor (not to mention the inevitable Dinkić), and no one knows what these men agreed about in terms of how a major part of Belgrade will look, and not any part of Belgrade, but the one with the most potential and its most beautiful part. So, a secret deal is solving an issue of public importance. That very fact would in civilized countries be enough for an overthrow of the government unless the deal was cancelled. But we are far from a civilized society which knows its rights. It is still possible here to present personal interests as state ones to the public, subjecting the public interest to your own will."⁶⁸

68. Jovo Bakić, interview with Zora Drčelić, *Vreme*, No. 1263, p. 16

Promoting a spirit of doubt and suspicion, the non-transparent deal, megalomaniacal and unfeasible ideas, twisted fictions of an authoritative leader and his associates, economical unprofitability of the project, impossibility of its realization, deal made under specific legal aid in direct negotiations... In a word, the image of the "Belgrade Waterfront" painted by Bakić is one of a political-economic improvisation, unnecessary and deprived of any consideration for the common good.

Similar in content, but considerably more precise objections to the project of the Belgrade Waterfront were raised by the architect Bojan Kovačević, member of the Serbian Academy of Architecture. Kovačević's objections refer to the uncertainties accompanying that investment: "The part of the works in Serbia's scope is infrastructural equipping of the land where the Belgrade Waterfront will be built. So, we have to bring water, electricity, heating, sewage, gas...traffic network, parking. All these aspects of our scope of works must be done and planned for the entire "Belgrade Waterfront". We cannot bring one water pipe at a time for each new building which is started, but we must lay pipes which will have water capacities for supplying an entire block. It could happen that the investor says after some time: this does not pay off after all, good writings. There is no way to force him to finish all that had been planned. Has anyone seen a contract of some sort? If yes, what does it say? Those papers often mentioned related to this project are not legally binding for anyone. Memorandum of Understanding means nothing."⁶⁹

The negative perception is completed with an array of accompanying details which involve different forms of legally suspicious decisions or procedures, aesthetic deterioration of an urban environment, etc. Negative image of the "Belgrade Waterfront" in the print media, but also other media, has undoubtedly cast a shadow on the announced project. When it comes to this topic, it is noticeable that there is almost a lack of minimum consent and public and political support. Conflict of positive and negative image which is visible regarding the "Belgrade Waterfront" confirms that the participants in the debate are ideologically sealed off. Manuscripts and positions focusing and elaborating on topics such as the Belgrade Waterfront show that the authors of the texts and interlocutors define the approach to the topic in the context of preconceived perceptions about the subject of discussion. Strong negative discussing tension towards the subject of the "Belgrade Waterfront", minimizing of possible positive aspects, maximizing of real or possible omissions, all this points to an intense propaganda discourse.

The already quoted architect Kovačević accepts such an unbalanced and exclusive approach: "There is one good thing which is at the same time the only good thing – one shabby, completely neglected area is turned into an urban space. That's it."⁷⁰ Such radically negative standpoints could result in the submission of a negative request to the authorities to shutdown the "Belgrade Waterfront" entirely.

69. Bojan Kovačević, „Vučić's forbidden city," interview with Mirko Rudić, *Vreme*, no. 1262, p. 16

70. Idem, p. 18

Anniversary of Zoran Đindić's assassination

Every year for the past 13 years, Serbia has reminisced about its tragically killed Prime Minister Zoran Đindić. In March 2015, all weeklies dedicated space to the first democratic PM in the history of the renewed multiparty system. Unlike other topics, marking of the anniversary of Zoran Đindić's assassination was not followed by an intense debate, as this was the case in the previous years.

Đindić's uniqueness is the key notion which describes this year's evoking of memories of the first democratic PM. In his interviews for *Vreme*, President of the New Party Zoran Živković confirms a positive role of Đindić in the political life of Serbia, insisting on his political uniqueness and excellence. Referring to a comparison with the current PM Aleksandar Vučić, Živković emphasized that these two men and politicians are beyond comparison:

„There is no link between Zoran Đindić and Aleksandar Vučić. Anyone who says there is, speaks either out of malevolence or after half a litre of some bad hard liquor. A rational mind – anyone's – cannot come to the conclusion that the two are similar in any way. They have nothing in common, in terms of their governing methods, or in terms of their goals. He is only trying to imitate Đindić, and each attempt to do so ends as a farcical cartoon."⁷¹

Živković's evaluation about the comparison of Vučić and Đindić represents a reply to the attempt of comparing these two politicians. By excluding the possibility of comparing the mentioned political leaders, Živković questions Vučić's profile of a determined, realistic and bold Euro-reforming politician. The stake in this position is insisting on Đindić's uniqueness in more recent history of the multiparty system in Serbia. Also, Živković entertains a thesis of improbability of any kind of political evolution of Vučić, i.e. development of a credible leader. This is a media strategy of posing a certain media-political image which is awarded to a specific political actor, preventing the possible effect to some other voters.

Without special desire to make comparisons, reporters of *Nedeljnik* evoked memories of Đindić emphasizing its good and bad sides, primarily underlining his unique political, pragmatic, rational and decisive approach. The general conclusion is that Serbia's transition would certainly be more successful had there not been for the assassination.

Another interpretation of Đindić's tragic political and personal fate was offered by the reporter Ratko Dmitrović. In honour of the last anniversary of Đindić's murder, Dmitrović put forward a position about the lack of necessity of researching the political background of the assassination: "political background of the murder does exist, neither as incrimination nor as part of the structure of the act itself. Each politician has its opponents, the one in office has the most, and for such people, in Serbia in particular, every type of verbal fight, showdown is allowed. There are no limits, from criticizing the way they dress to mentioning of their father and mother, curse over the icon of St. George to open rejoicing about someone's

71. Zoran Živković, „Zoran Đindić has no political successor," interview with Filip Švarm, *Vreme* no. 1262, p. 13

death. I will repeat it cannot be sanctioned. Condemned by the public – yes. Punished in the elections – yes. But, it cannot have anything to do with the court.”⁷².

Marking of the twelfth anniversary of Đindić's murder went by mostly in the spirit and letter of the thesis of his originality in modern Serbian politics. Certain propaganda motives, such as Živković's remark about the comparison of Đindić and Vučić or Dmitrović's rendering of the idea of the murder's political background senseless, point to the conclusion that marking of the anniversary of Đindić's death was used in one part of the public for iterating different animosities.

72. Ratko Dmitrović, „Murdering of Đindića,” *Večernje novosti*, 14.03.2015, p. 2

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authors



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Public Policy Institute is a regional think-tank organization that operates in the Western Balkans region through the work of its branch offices in Belgrade, Podgorica and Ljubljana. By promoting public dialogue and constructive solutions, Public Policy Institute contributes to the efforts of the Western Balkan countries to become equal, reliable and progressive partners in the process of European integrations and mutual relationships. After the initial research and analysis of social and media context in the countries of the Western Balkans, the Institute has developed and implemented a series of media related projects, including: Role of the media in the process of securitisation in the Western Balkans, Civil Response to Clientelism in the media - MEDIA CIRCLE, NATO Reach Out - media monitoring and Role of the media in monitoring of R1325 in Montenegro.

EBART Media Archive is privately owned company established in 2000. Its main activity is archiving print media data in e-format. The print media archive consists of up-to-date material dating back to 2003, and more than 3 million print media reports from sources with national coverage. EBART is also specialized for media analysis, basic quantitative and qualitative analyses, comparing media treatment of specific keywords, as well as complex content analyses according to BBC methodology. EBART Media Archive is unmatched in the region with its unique media reports database, and 12 years of media research experience. This media database allows for the overall study of long-term media presence.

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