

Headed for Brussels Without a Compass? **Serbia's Position between Rapprochement with the EU and Russian Influence**

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Serbia aspires to join the European Union as soon as possible. The majority of the population favors this, as does the country's political elite. Russia, on the other hand, has no real prospects to offer Serbia. And yet, by stressing the common Slavic identity of the two nations, drawing on shared anti-Western resentment, and making a point of supporting Serbia on the matter of Kosovo, the Kremlin manages to assert its influence in Serbia, despite the crisis in Ukraine. This is partly because Serbia's foreign policy is pro-Russian and governed by short-term interests, but it is mainly because the EU has neglected its enlargement policy. The sputtering progress of EU integration has inspired feelings of disappointment and frustration in the population. Brussels must again offer Serbia concrete and credible membership prospects – not so much to avoid the risk of Serbia falling into the Russian orbit but in order to protect it from becoming a fragile nation in the middle of Europe.

Russia's annexation of Crimea and the war in parts of Ukraine pose a fundamental challenge to European order. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, two models are vying openly for supremacy. This focuses attention on the countries of the Western Balkans. Democratically unconsolidated, economically weak, and with no immediate prospects of being admitted to the EU, the nations in this region are susceptible to external influence.¹ In November 2014, it was with comparative frankness that German chancellor Angela Merkel voiced her concern that Russia might pursue its expansion policy into the Western Balkans: "This isn't just about Ukraine; it's also about Moldova, and about Georgia, and if it continues like this ... we will have to ask about Serbia – we will have to ask about the West Balkan states."²

It is no coincidence that Merkel singled out Serbia in the line-up of states from the Western Balkans. Large parts of the country's population and its political elite

regard Russia as a natural ally and protecting power, and good relations with Moscow are part of the government's foreign policy directive. At the same time, however, Serbia is clearly oriented toward the EU. All the important political parties and the population favor their country becoming a member state. This balancing act between EU rapprochement on the one hand and traditionally close relations with Russia on the other posed no problems as long as Brussels and Moscow enjoyed cooperative relations and Serbia was not required to make any stark choice between the two. In the increasingly antagonistic European order, however, Serbia's pro-Russian position will inevitably lead to tension with the EU. The direction Serbia decides to take is of major significance, not only for the country itself, but also for the stability of Europe.

Bound by Symbols

“Serbia ... sees Russia as its major ally.”³ With these words, spoken at the height of the Ukraine crisis in October 2014, Serbian president Tomislav Nikolić reiterated his country's special bond with its “big brother” in Moscow. The occasion for this declaration of friendship was President Vladimir Putin's visit to Belgrade and his participation in a military parade to commemorate the city's liberation from German occupation seventy years before and the joint victory of the Yugoslav Partisans and the Red Army over the Wehrmacht. The event turned out to be a propaganda coup for the Kremlin. Not only was Putin received with high military honors but the parade was rescheduled specifically in order to allow him to take part. Courting the Russian leader was one of the Serbian government's many efforts to maintain good relations with Russia in spite of the tense situation in Ukraine.

Serbia and Russia had already agreed on a “strategic partnership” in 2013 and stepped up their military cooperation. In the same year, Serbia was granted observer status in the Russian-led military alliance Collective Security Treaty Organization. In November 2014, the two countries held their first joint military exercise in the Serbian village of Nikinci in the province of Vojvodina, and more exercises are planned. Beyond this, however, the bilateral agreements involve little concrete action. This makes it all the clearer that Serbia is playing symbolic politics in an attempt to pursue its twofold strategy of cultivating good relations with the EU and maintaining loyalty to Russia. A good example of this is the fact that Serbia rejected the EU's sanctions against Russia, while at the same time recognizing the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Serbia did not vote at the UN plenary session on Ukraine. “We back all EU decisions except sanctions on Russia,” Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić announced in May 2015.⁴

An explanation often put forward to account for the Serbian-Russian bond is the traditional narrative, firmly anchored in Serbian society, of Russia as the protector of all Slavic nations. No major conflict mars the history of the two countries' good relations. Indeed, the fact that Yugoslavia managed to maintain a healthy distance from the USSR during the Cold War means that Serbia's collective memory of this period is free of negative experiences. Serbians perceive Russia as a long-standing ally, a nation with which Serbia shares the Cyrillic alphabet, the Orthodox faith, and the identity and values they imply. But beside these historical and cultural ties, which have strong emotive power in parts of the Serbian population, it was above all Moscow's behavior during and after the Kosovo conflict that secured Russia lasting sympathies in Serbia – and gave it a strategic trump card in their bilateral relations.

Kosovo: A Token of Friendship

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia was hardly involved in the Balkan wars that wracked the region in the early 1990s. This was to change with the Kosovo conflict of 1998–99. When the fighting in the then Serbian province escalated, Moscow seized the opportunity to revive its “Slavic fraternity” with Serbia – and its own influence in the region as a whole. After initially supporting UN resolutions demanding an end to the conflict, Russia vetoed military action in the UN Security Council in early 1999. When NATO went on to launch bomb attacks against Serbia without a UN mandate, Russian President Boris Yeltsin strongly condemned the measures. Although Russia shied away from open conflict with NATO and did not provide Serbia with military aid, it continues to be held in high regard today in Serbia for the stance it took during the combat operations in Kosovo. To this day, Russia is the main supporter of Serbia's position on Kosovo; Moscow has repeatedly stressed the territorial integrity of Serbia and refuses to recognize Kosovo's independence.

The status of Kosovo is, of course, a key issue in Serbian politics, and one that is emotionally fraught. Thanks to its veto power in the UN Security Council, Russia can, in its bilateral relations to Serbia, implement its support in the matter at once powerfully and without considerable effort. As a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia has thus far prevented Kosovo from joining the UN. Recently, moreover, Moscow also blocked a UN resolution on Srebrenica, which would have condemned as genocide the July 1995 massacre of Muslims by Serbian militia during the Bosnian War. Both Russian and Serbian leaders deny that Moscow's voting behavior demands *quid pro quo*. And yet it would seem likely that the Serbian government at least takes Russia's support in the UN into consideration in its political calculations.

Enmeshed in the Power Grid

The Serbian opposition and many international observers also suspected a political deal behind the December 2008 sale of a majority share in the Serbian oil and gas company NIS (Nafta Industrija Srbije) to a subsidiary of Gazprom. Kosovo declared its independence in 2008. In its determination not to recognize the new state, Serbia was particularly dependent on Russian support. At the same time, 51 percent of the Serbian state company's shares passed into Russian ownership well below value.⁵ What is certain is that the NIS deal was an economic transaction. In return for being able to buy the company at a discount rate, Russia pledged to boost the country's economy by

laying the new South Stream gas pipeline through Serbian territory. In addition to low retail gas prices, Serbia was expecting direct investments, gas transportation revenue, and increased supply security.

This double energy deal was controversial from the outset. Already dependent to a significant degree on Russian oil and gas, the Serbian leadership conceded further control over its domestic power sector to Russia when it sold NIS, which owned the country's two oil refineries.⁶ South Stream did not meet with unmitigated approval either, because instead of diversifying the energy supply, the pipeline continued to favor Russia as the main source of Serbian gas. Nevertheless, Belgrade promoted the construction proposal as an important project for the future.

This only increased the shock when Putin announced the failure of the South Stream project at the end of 2014. Because the agreement on the construction of the new power route at the time of the sale of NIS had only been an informal agreement made "between friends," Serbia was left empty-handed. It was also more dependent than ever on Russian gas and oil. It suffered heavy losses as a result of the investments it had made and in the absence of the anticipated economic recovery. It did not take long to find the culprit. Putin announced that the counter-productive behavior of the European Commission had repeatedly created obstacles to the pipeline's construction and prevented the project's successful implementation.⁷ The Russian ambassador in Belgrade laconically advised Serbia to turn to Brussels for compensation.⁸ This was because Bulgaria had previously stopped work on South Stream after the operator Gazprom had failed to meet the requirements of the European Commission's Third Energy Package regarding the separation of operation and supply. It is likely, however, that economic crisis in Russia meant that it was simply no longer able to afford the largely politically driven project – and that economic concerns had significantly higher priority over friendship.⁹

Serbia's Erratic Foreign Policy

Serbia's dual strategy of maintaining close relations with Russia while pursuing its rapprochement with the EU poses questions about Belgrade's priorities, especially in times of growing antagonism between Brussels and Moscow. In the Serbian government, it is President Nikolić in particular who adopts a pro-Russian stance, regularly seeking the proximity of his Russian counterpart, President Putin. But even if his party colleague Prime Minister Aleksandr Vučić is more often associated with a decidedly pro-European stance, he too fails to pursue a clear line in his foreign policy. The Serbian government considers this

ambiguity to be neutrality. Commenting on Serbia's rejection of EU sanctions against Russia in January 2015, Vučić declared: "Serbia has successfully retained its position and remained neutral."¹⁰

The belief that Serbia can benefit from a policy of non-alignment and pursue good relations both with the West and with Russia is fuelled by a rather rosy view of the Yugoslavian era, when the country enjoyed being courted by both sides. President Josip Broz Tito took deft advantage of his equidistance between the two blocs to increase Yugoslavia's prosperity and standing. This is precisely the kind of position that Belgrade still aspires to: that of an important and respected mediator between East and West. It is in this light, too, that Serbia regards the OSCE chairmanship it currently shares with Switzerland (2014) and Germany (2016). For the OSCE has gained importance as a mediation format in the context of the Ukraine crisis – namely in developing the Minsk protocol. As Foreign Minister Dačić said in June 2015: "Serbia has chosen the path of neutrality, which in a way constitutes the continuation of the policy held by Yugoslavia"¹¹ In fact, however, Serbian foreign policy appears disoriented rather than neutral. By deciding not to participate in the sanctions passed by the EU against Russia, Serbia exposed itself to severe criticism from Brussels. At the same time, Belgrade can hardly draw any palpable benefit from its loyalty to Russia. The Serbian government was completely unprepared for the end of South Stream project and was left the major loser.

Instead of following a strategy with clear priorities, the Serbian government often pursues short-term interests. There are various reasons for this. Parts of the Serbian economic elite are very well-connected in political circles and have little to gain from introducing EU regulations and transparency requirements. A rapprochement with Russia is more appealing. (There are often close links to Russian oligarchs; corruption allegations loom.¹²) Furthermore, EU integration is a complex and drawn-out process. Many political players have adapted themselves to the status quo. Rather than aim at concrete short-term successes in EU membership negotiations, they declare EU membership to be their long-term goal, and this very often looks like lip service. While trotting out a vaguely pro-European mantra, they try to win votes by also playing more emotional cards: emphasizing the Serbo-Russian pan-Slavic ties and Kosovo's historic affiliation with Serbia. In this way, the priorities of Serbian foreign policy elude both the electorate and Serbia's European partners.

A Question of (Controlled) Perception

By stressing its solidarity with Russia, Serbia's leadership is playing into Moscow's hands. Because of its own

economic weakness, Russia cannot offer Serbia a viable alternative to the EU. It is for this reason that Russia also tends to rely on symbols – the common Slavic identity, the shared anti-NATO stance that is firmly anchored in the Serbian consciousness as a result of the humiliating 1999 bombings, and Russia's current "fraternal" support on the Kosovo question. Much of the Serbian media relays this image. Putin in particular, who is highly regarded in Serbia, is promoted as a "strong man," who stands up to the West and defends Serbia's interests. As one journalist noted in a private interview, "Putin sells."¹³ Only a few independent media outlets criticize Kremlin policies. Even after the failure of the South Stream project, most of the mainstream Serbian media only briefly adopted a harsher tone toward Moscow. A few days after the shock, they had returned to their usual modus operandi, putting the main blame for the pipeline's cancellation on the EU and Bulgaria.¹⁴

In January 2015, the compliant Serbian media was joined in Belgrade by the broadcaster Sputnik, which is closely affiliated with the Kremlin. As well as operating an online news site, it also broadcasts Serbian-language radio programs. In Serbian print media, the Russian view has already been prevalent for some time, notably as a result of a monthly supplement to the big daily *Politika*. The tenor of the Russian media in Serbia is always the same: Russia's actions on the international stage – especially in the Ukraine crisis – are extolled, Western alliance structures are discredited, and Russia is portrayed as Serbia's most loyal ally. Even if the influence of such media on public opinion is debatable, given that media coverage in Serbia is in any case predominantly Russophile, Russia's commitment to using "soft" means to increase its influence in Serbia is indisputable.¹⁵

The extent to which public discussion is influenced by the one-sided media coverage became clear in May and June 2014, when greater Belgrade suffered considerable flood damage. The largest share of aid funds was provided by the EU, and yet it was Russia that was perceived by the population as the "knight in shining armor." The support from Moscow was promoted in the media and accompanied by enthusiastic headlines, while the EU funds went largely unnoticed. Considering this, the results of a survey carried out by the Serbian government in 2014 are hardly surprising: 47 percent of those questioned thought that Russia had been Serbia's main financial backer since 2000; only 28 percent named the EU. In fact, however, between 2010 and 2013, roughly 74 percent of development aid came from the EU and its member states.¹⁶ A year after the floods, perception of foreign aid had changed considerably, particularly with regard to Russia: now, only 22

percent of those questioned saw Russia as Serbia's main financial backer and 24 percent named the EU.¹⁷

Apart from its presence in the media, Russia is also physically present in Belgrade in the form of (largely state-financed) think tanks and foundations. Here, too, the main objective is to influence public debate in the country. The Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS), for example, organizes regular events at the University of Belgrade, with a list of speakers that is, not surprisingly, one-sided. The director of the institute is a former general of the Russian foreign secret service and emphatically criticizes Belgrade's aim of joining the EU.¹⁸ Other active establishments include the Russkiy Mir Foundation (Russian World) and the International Fund for the Unity of Orthodox Nations. In addition, funds flow from Moscow to pro-Russian and Euroskeptic associations and parties situated on the right margins of Serbian society. Thus, with an opaque network of Russian – or Russian-influenced – organizations, the Kremlin attempts to exercise subtle influence.¹⁹ The Russian government views this policy as a direct response to the instruments with which the EU supports civil societies in neighboring states in order to promote democracy and further the process of political transformation.²⁰

The EU is Inadvertently Opening Doors to Russia

As well as aiming to secure economic interests in the power sector and win symbolic support for Russia's own actions, Moscow's activities in Serbia are also focused on weakening the EU. Moscow deploys Serbia as an arena for its power struggle with Brussels, its main concern being to sow doubt as to whether the model of liberal democracy promoted by the EU is the best possible option. Two worldviews and two models of interpretation are vying with one another here.²¹ Experts disagree about the extent to which it is in Russia's interest to undermine the fragile peace in the region by exerting influence on Serbia and particularly on the Serbian minorities in neighboring states. On the one hand, if conflicts in the Western Balkans were to flare up, the EU would be destabilized and attention diverted from the Ukraine crisis.²² On the other hand, Moscow has not yet openly opposed the European path being taken by Serbia, and a pro-Russian state within the EU would not, of course, be an unattractive scenario for the Kremlin either. Whatever the thinking, Russia can use Serbia as an effective instrument with which to administer pinpricks to the EU, and so Moscow remains willing to invest in the Russian-Serbian friendship. If this largely involves preaching to the converted,

that has less to do with the appeal of the Russian model as such than with the EU's weakness.

This becomes particularly evident in Serbia's basic lack of alternative to the European path. Even President Nikolić regularly invokes the slogan "EU membership is the first priority for the Serbian government."²³ Despite Serbia's high degree of dependence on Russia in the energy sector and on the cheap loans it receives from Russia, the country's economy is almost entirely geared toward the EU. In 2013, Serbia exported 63 percent of its products to the EU and only 7.2 percent to Russia. In the same year, 62 percent of the country's imported goods came from the EU and only 9.4 percent from Russia.²⁴ Even the EU sanctions did not permanently increase trade with Russia. The weakening of the Russian economy as a result of the sanctions and low oil prices led to a drop in Serbian exports to Russia in the first half of 2015.²⁵

It is not only the economic parameters that point clearly in the direction of the EU. The majority of the population continues to be in favor of becoming a member state. A survey commissioned by the EU delegation in Serbia in May 2015 concluded that 55 percent of the population would vote for their country to join the EU, while unequivocally rejecting NATO membership. Membership in the EU is, above all, associated with economic recovery, prosperity, and better chances on the labor market.²⁶ With approval ratings for EU accession at 49 percent, the Serbian government's survey of June 2015 also concluded that Serbian citizens' positive EU associations are largely connected with material aspects and freedom of movement.²⁷ The EU is associated with hopes of a better standard of living. This does not, however, mean that it is seen positively overall. According to a study carried out by the Ipsos Institute, although a majority of the population favors EU membership, only 32 percent have a positive attitude toward the EU, while 40 percent see the EU in a negative light. On the other hand, only 17 percent of those questioned have a negative view of Russia, while 52 percent see it in a positive light.²⁸

What these figures tell us, first of all, is that the EU continues to be regarded as an attractive model, and secondly, that by neglecting the Western Balkans for so many years, the EU has fueled a sense of disappointment and resignation in Serbia, creating a vacuum for Russian influence and anti-Western resentment.

It is now 15 years since the European Council declared at its summit in Feira that all states of the Western Balkans were potential EU candidates. This was shortly after the overthrow of the Milosevic regime, and it raised hopes in Serbia. At the latest in 2011, when the last of the suspects sought by the UN War Crimes Tribunal was

handed over, it was hoped that big steps would now be made toward EU membership. But there proved to be another major hurdle in the accession process: the conflict over the status of Kosovo. Within the population, the impression began to spread that the EU was constantly imposing new, arbitrary conditions, and consciously keeping Serbia at arm's length.²⁹ In a 2015 opinion poll asking people to name the greatest obstacles to Serbia's EU membership, the EU's "ceaseless" demands were named first by 46 percent of those surveyed. The incompetence of national politicians came in a distant second, with only 17 percent putting this reason at the top of their list.³⁰

After the negative experiences accompanying the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, the EU accession process has become a highly complex and drawn-out obstacle course – a process that is virtually incomprehensible to the general population. Serbia has been an official EU candidate since 2011. Membership negotiations began in January 2014. The first two negotiation chapters – of a total of 35 – were not opened until nearly two years later, in December 2015. Notwithstanding the fact that this is partly owing to the country's lack of reforms, the population is left with a vague sense of disillusionment and frustration. EU Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker's announcement in 2014 that there would be "a five-year break from enlargement" during his watch only seemed to confirm the EU's lack of interest in Serbia.

Putting Enlargement Back on the Agenda

There are several reasons for the EU's neglect of the Western Balkans. In the context of the financial crisis and threats of Great Britain and Greece potentially exiting the Union, internal tensions are sapping its strength and resources. The fact that most member states are "weary" of enlargement makes the active pursuit of a pre-accession policy toward the Western Balkans seem inopportune from a domestic perspective. As long as the region is more or less politically stable and there are no fears of ethnic conflicts erupting anew, pre-accession slips down to the bottom of the European agenda. This attitude is dangerous. Not only is there no guarantee of peace, as the latest unrest in Macedonia has demonstrated. There is also a risk that the currently prevailing pro-European mood in the populations of the EU member states could change, and the EU could lose its own transformative power and momentum. That this power can still have a major impact was shown by the 2013 Brussels agreement that was negotiated after extensive talks between Priština and Belgrade under the EU's aegis. It is considered a milestone in the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo.

Taking this agreement as a starting point, other contentious issues between the two countries were settled at the end of August 2015 with the mediation of Federica Mogherini, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs. Good neighborly relations are a prerequisite for progress in the EU integration process, both for Kosovo and for Serbia.

Recent signs of a revived commitment on the part of the EU and its member states are a move in the right direction. The Conference of Western Balkan States held in Berlin in 2014 on the initiative of the German federal government and the follow-up conference in Vienna in August 2015 have the potential to give new momentum to the enlargement policy – even if the Vienna meeting was dominated by the current debate on refugees. The German-British initiative for Bosnia and Herzegovina and the German chancellor's trip to the region in summer 2015 have at least drawn attention to the problems on the ground. The mediation in July 2015 of the EU's commissioner for European neighborhood policy and enlargement negotiations, Johannes Hahn, helped to resolve the crisis in Macedonia for the time being. In light of current geopolitical changes in Europe, such involvement should be continued – and stepped up.

In all this, the EU must stand by its principles and conditions. Aberrations and irregularities, such as the breach of democratic rules or values, infringements on media freedom, or deficits in the rule of law, must be explicitly addressed. Accession conditionality is a crucial prerequisite for activating the EU's transformative power.

At the same time, however, the EU must be more present on the ground. It must actively explain its positive role, among other things through clear and open media communication. Above all, together with a political and economic commitment, it must offer Serbia concrete and credible EU prospects in order to ward off the disappointment and frustration the population currently feels. It is

crucial to convey that a future in the EU can be attained through the country's own efforts and through appropriate action on the part of its national politicians. After the substantial progress that was made in Serbia's dialogue with Kosovo, it made good sense to open the first accession chapter with Serbia in December 2015 in order to breathe new life into the EU enlargement process. But opening the first chapter is only the beginning of a course that must be seen through to the end – even if lengthy negotiations are to be expected.

The Serbian government declares EU membership to be its ultimate goal; it should act accordingly and participate in European decisions such as the sanctions against Moscow. This would increase Serbia's credibility within the EU as a reliable partner. Serbia should not be expected to break off its ties to Russia, but the EU does expect its accession candidates to work in the spirit of the EU's common foreign and security policy. As Michael Roth, minister of state for Europe at the German foreign office, put it: "In such matters there can be no 'neutral position' for a state that wants to be part of Europe."³¹ The balancing act between Brussels and Moscow is of no palpable benefit to Serbia. The extent of the asymmetry of Serbian-Russian relations was already clearly demonstrated by the cancellation of South Stream. If it does not adhere to a clear line on foreign policy, Serbia risks emerging from its double game as a loser. The alternative to a Serbia within the EU is not a Serbia within the Russian orbit. Shared symbols and anti-Western prejudices are no substitute for a common future. The alternative is merely to be a very fragile nation in the middle of Europe.

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Notes

- 1 The European Union coined the term "Western Balkans" to describe the EU accession candidates in the region: Yugoslavia's successor states (minus Slovenia) plus Albania. This text does not consider Croatia, which joined the EU on July 7, 2013.
- 2 "Merkel: Putin tritt das Recht mit Füßen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 17, 2014 <<http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/angela-merkel-kritisiert-putins-vorgehen-imukraine-konflikt-13270007.html>> (accessed December 17, 2015).
- 3 "Putin Guest of Honour at Serbia Military Parade," *BBC News*, October 16, 2014 <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29641642>> (accessed December 17, 2015).
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- 5 Bojan Ladjevac, "Russland und Serbien: Eine neue Ära der Beziehungen?" Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Internationale Politikanalyse (November 2012), p. 3.
- 6 An English-language version of the Serbian energy agency's 2014 annual report with a breakdown of energy supply data can be consulted online: <<http://www.aers.rs/Files/Izvestaji/Godisnji/Eng/AERS%20Annual%20Report%202014.pdf>> (accessed December 17, 2015).
- 7 See "Putin: Russia Forced to Withdraw from South Stream Project due to EU Stance," *Russia Today*, December 1, 2014 <<http://www.rt.com/business/210483-putin-russia-gas-turkey/>> (accessed December 17, 2015).
- 8 "'Ask EU for Compensation,' Russian Ambassador Advises," *b92.net*, December 3, 2014 <http://www.b92.net/eng/news/business.php?yyyy=2014&mm=12&dd=03&nav_id=92452> (accessed December 17, 2015).
- 9 For details on the end of South Stream, see Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, "The South Stream: Serbia in a Cleft Stick," *Helsinki Bulletin* 110 (December 2014) <<http://www.helsinki.org.rs/doc/HB-No110.pdf>> (accessed December 17, 2015).
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- 11 "Dacic: Serbia Has Chosen Path of Neutrality," *b92.net*, June 8, 2015 <http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2015&mm=06&dd=08&nav_id=94359> (accessed December 17, 2015).
- 12 Based on interview with Serbian think-tank employees in Belgrade on April 23, 2015. All interviews were conducted anonymously.
- 13 Interview with Serbian print journalist in Belgrade on April 23, 2015.
- 14 Interview with a Serbian think-tank employee, April 23, 2015.
- 15 On Russia's media presence in Serbia, see Nemanja Rujević, "Mediale Schlacht um Deutungshoheit in Serbien," *Deutsche Welle*, March 30, 2015 <<http://www.dw.com/de/mediale-schlacht-umdeutungshoheit-in-serbien/a-18310148>> (accessed December 17, 2015).
- 16 Republic of Serbia Government Integration Office, *European Orientation of the Serbian Citizens: Public Opinion Poll*, June 2014 <http://www.seio.gov.rs/upload/documents/nacionalna_dokumenta/istrazivanja_javnog_mnjenja/opinion_poll_14.pdf> (accessed December 17, 2015).
- 17 Republic of Serbia Government Integration Office, *European Orientation of the Serbian Citizens: Public Opinion Poll*, June 2015 <http://www.seio.gov.rs/upload/documents/nacionalna_dokumenta/istrazivanja_javnog_mnjenja/opinion_poll_june15.pdf> (accessed December 17, 2015).
- 18 Florian Hassel, "Vergebliches Trommeln gegen Europa," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 8, 2014 <<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/russlands-werben-um-serbien-vergebliches-trommeln-gegen-europa-1.2255958>> (accessed December 17, 2015).
- 19 Interview with Serbian think-tank employee (see note 12); see also Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, "On the Russian Chessboard," *Helsinki Bulletin* 104 (July 2014) <<http://www.helsinki.org.rs/doc/HBNo104.pdf>> (accessed December 17, 2015).
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- 22 Ivan Krastev, "The Balkans are the Soft Underbelly of Europe," *Financial Times Online*, January 14, 2015 <<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/2287ba66-8489-11e4-bae9-00144feabdc0.html>> (accessed December 17, 2015).
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- 24 European Commission Directorate-General for Trade, "European Union: Trade in Goods with Serbia," April 24, 2015, p. 9 <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2008/august/tradoc_140028.pdf> (accessed December 17, 2015).
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- 28 Smiljana Vukojčić, "Poll: Serbia's Complex Attitude towards the EU," *EurActiv.com*, January 9, 2015 <<http://www.euractiv.com/sections/globaleurope/poll-serbias-complex-attitude-towardseu-311141>> (accessed December 17, 2015).
- 29 Interview with Serbian think-tank employee in Belgrade, April 22, 2015.
- 30 Serbia Government Integration Office, "European Orientation of the Serbian Citizens: Public Opinion Poll," June 2015.
- 31 Michael Roth, "EU-Erweiterungspolitik: Stabilitätsanker oder enttäuschte Hoffnung? Wie wir die Dynamik des Erweiterungsprozesses bewahren," *Integration* 3 (2015), p. 200.

