

## **Spread of Russian propaganda on Western Balkans - Case Study Serbia**

### **Abstract**

Russian aggression on Ukraine increased spread of disinformation worldwide. Western Balkans and Serbia as well, are long term subject for Russian active measures. Those active measures have several priorities which are only intensifying in crises period. Russian strategic task for Western Balkan is to prevent full western integrations. So far Russian succeed to blockade Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro very successfully through their proxies on the field.

Like during corona crisis, same patterns are deployed before and after beginning aggression on Ukraine. This work aims to identify, explain and counter main anti-western narratives in context of Russian aggression. No doubts Russia is losing it's international capacity but capacity for cover activities are still untouched on Western Balkans. In this scientific work authors will make brief case study on Serbia, will try to provide better understanding why Russian disinformations is so successful in Serbia. What are main triggers? What can be done to prevent such subversive activities? Also authors will trace and analyses main advisories' narratives from their deployment to their effects.

Russian active measures have potential to trigger inner and international conflicts in Western Balkan region. Already they successfully divide society. Meanwhile Serbia had a parliamentary election which results are in direct connection with war in Ukraine. Right wing parties achieved record success in last 10 years.

Our article will try to find what can be done in way to prevent Russian active measures. What is are role of media, state institutions and civil societies. This challenge unfortunately will be security challenge in futures years, full western integration will not be a "silver bullet" for Russian activities. Russia is global challenger who will exploit every possibility to endanger West. Non-integrated territories will be more vulnerable to became anti-western launch pad in region.

**Keywords:** active measures, security, politics, economy, disinformation, international relations, strategy

### **1. The conceptual framework of hybrid warfare**

In the period of global confrontation, the application of hybrid actions is not lacking. During the Cold War, such activities were called by different names depending on the authors and their ideological positions. Some of the better known concepts are special warfare, active measures, deep operations, reflexive control, cognitive warfare, and finally hybrid warfare. Depending on the terminology, we see that the word war dominates, one of the definitions of war as a legal condition, which equally permits two or more groups to carry on conflict by armed forces (Walzer 2000). If the term war is used as a definition of political conflict, it certainly contains its own political goals. We will prove in this paper how the political goals of the Russian Federation are achieved in the case of Serbia through hybrid actions.

It is of great scientific importance to correctly distinguish terms, concepts and groups of concepts in order to be able to adequately apply protection mechanisms in practice. It is necessary to consider what are the manifestations of the threat, what are the carriers and what are the goals. There is still a lively debate about whether a hybrid attack can trigger collective security mechanisms. If we analyze Russian hybrid actions, we should take into account the society's capacity to defend itself. Hybrid actions are successful because they are not perceived as an immanent threat, as a result of which insufficiently trained staff of security services and political actors are underestimating it, which allows hybrid threats to be fully realized due to lack of understanding of their corrosive and long-lasting effects. When the consequences of hybrid action become noticeable, at that moment there was already a greater or lesser paralysis of state bodies and society as a whole.

It is necessary to distinguish that all countries in the world are fighting for the favor of others. However, it is necessary to distinguish public diplomacy from the use of irregular tactics used to influence the behavior, decisions and attitudes of decision-makers under the influence and public opinion formed by hybrid actions of another stronger state.

What is a hybrid war? The term first appears in Colonel Robert Walker's master's thesis in 1998, where he states that hybrid warfare is that which lies in the interstices between special and conventional warfare (Walker, 1998). If war is waged by warfare laws and conventional forces whose actions are limited by humanitarian law, it can be concluded that hybrid warfare is waged by military rules from irregular forces by armed and unarmed means.

We can define hybrid action as a planned, organized, pre-prepared, coordinated, economic action of state actors against the civilian population, institutions and interests of sovereign states, with the integral use of the principles of military tactics and intelligence, primarily subversive action with the ultimate goal of paralyzing society, on basis to put state system c under duress in order to make certain concessions and the desired state actions of as a whole (Životić, Obradović 2022). The definition tells us that hybrid actions are not spontaneous activities, nor do they represent excesses. The foreign policy objectives are closely linked to the operational objectives of the hybrid operations. All of the above have long been known in the science of security as active measures, and their famous product of disinformation. The ultimate goal of these activities is political influence on the state and its population. During the Cold War, these activities were aimed at public opinion, which would later put pressure on political authorities. In Soviet intelligence doctrine, the concept of “active measures” covers a wide span of practices including disinformation operations, political influence effort, and the activates of Soviet front groups and foreign communist parties. (Kux, 2019).

If we replace the word Soviet with Russian, we will see that there are no significant changes in the manifestation of active measures. Today, instead of financing communist parties and terrorist organizations, right-wing and nationalist political parties and groups are financed. The matrix has remained the same as from the Cold War period, and is maintained in denigrating opponents. In his essays, Count Vladimir Volkov writes about Soviet propaganda, distinguishing between white, gray and black propaganda. Through the analysis of the content of the term active measure, we realize that two components are crucial. The first is projecting impact, and the second is placing misinformation as a tool. Disinformation is the basic feature of active measures. Through their placement, a misperception is created by the public opinion, in order for the disinformation to be successful, they are cultivated, planned and placed while concealing the source. If it is about gray propaganda, the client is known, and the content is fake or manipulative. And in the case of black propaganda, the masked connections between the ordering party, ie the creator and executor of active measures are hidden. Thus, active measures or hybrid action is a modern form of conflict that takes place in such a way as not to provoke a conventional response. The key question that arises is whether disinformation can be answered with disinformation? Can the damage caused by one misinformation be compensated in the form of revenge on the other side by placing misinformation? Of course, hybrid conflict cannot be

considered conventional. In the field of hybrid conflict, you will either successfully disable or not hybrid performance.

In our case study, we deal predominantly with the placement of misinformation and impact operations as well as the consequences they produce on public opinion in Serbia. These two segments can be divided into information operations and influence operations.

Rand Corporation in its publication<sup>1</sup> defines influence operations as the coordinated, integrated, and synchronized application of national diplomatic, informational, military, economic, and other capabilities in peacetime, crisis, conflict, and post conflict to foster attitudes, behaviors, or decisions by foreign target audiences.

According to NATO and the US Department of Defense, information operations are defined as ‘the integrated employment, during military operations, of information-related capabilities in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision-making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own.’ This definition is quite applicable at the time of the Russian aggression on Ukraine. Especially because the Russian Federation approaches this conflict as a total conventional war against Ukraine, while the rest of the EU and NATO Russia are considered as its enemies to whom it emits daily threats.<sup>2</sup> Non-integrated territories such as the Western Balkans are a testing ground for Russia, where it can fight for affection, but also to form a new front towards the Euro-Atlantic community. The stated foreign policy goals achieve their synergetic effect through the integration of information operations and operations of influence into one whole, which is synchronously manifested in a certain area. This kind of performance is what we call hybrid action, and Russia calls it active measures. In the absence of conventional military coercion, not the possibility of directly projecting the influence on political leadership in action, we have the application of asymmetric action. It manifests itself by influencing public opinion, by creating pressure groups. The ultimate goal of hybrid action carriers is to achieve the desired effect. The diffusion of varying hybrid threats essentially challenges the Western binary thinking on war and peace as well as conventional and unconventional warfare (Weissmann, Nilsson, Palmertz 2021). In fact, hybrid

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND\\_MG654.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG654.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/04/28/russia-must-be-pushed-out-of-the-whole-of-ukraine-says-top-uk-diplomat>

actions in their full capacity are possible only with societies in which there is no censorship or very little censorship. Strictly controlled information societies such as the People's Republic of China, North Korea and the Russian Federation have a lower risk of hybrid threats because they prevent freedom of expression through authoritarian rule. In order to avoid social unrest, the Russian Federation has preventively prescribed a prison sentence for every journalist who does not report in accordance with official policy. Open societies, primarily Western democracies, are more vulnerable to misinformation, ie the creation of polarizations in society. The same concept is applied in Serbia and the Western Balkans. Hybrid warfare below the threshold of war or direct overt violence pays dividends despite being easier, cheaper, and less risky than kinetic operations (Bilal, 2021). This feature is manifested in the use of non-state actors in coordination with the state services of foreign governments.

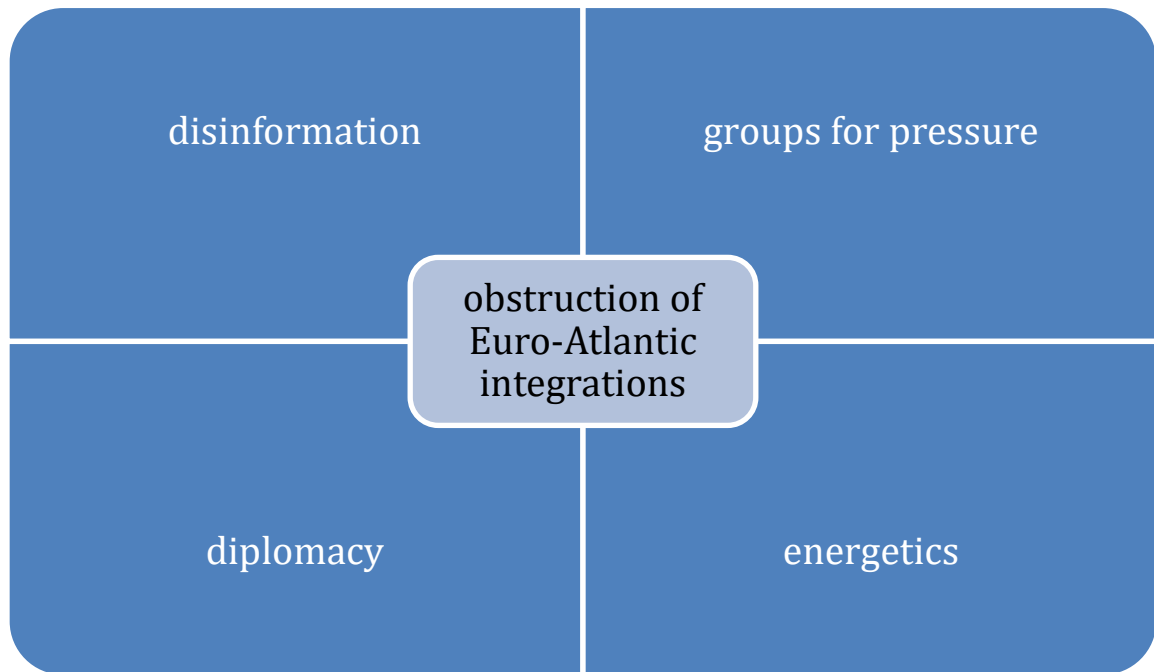
Hybrid warfare can be described as the synchronized use of multiple instruments of power tailored to specific vulnerabilities across the full spectrum of societal functions to achieve synergistic effects (Cullen, Reichborn-Kjennerud 2017).

The term hybrid threat refers to an action conducted by state or non-state actors, whose goal is to undermine or harm a target by influencing its decision-making at the local, regional, state or institutional level. Such actions are coordinated and synchronized and deliberately target democratic states' and institutions' vulnerabilities<sup>3</sup>. European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki gave a descriptive definition of hybrid warfare which can be very suitable for state decision makers and intelligence agencies which confront hybrid activities. Determinant influence on decision-making is a key feature of the hybrid action of the Russian Federation in the Western Balkans and Serbia. In the continuation of the work, we will deal with the case study of how the Russian Federation is conducting operations of influence in Serbia in the light of the Ukrainian crisis. NATO Stratcom COE consider Hybrid threats as levers of influence which can therefore be considered as information or influence activities. These are actions which influence audience perception and decision-making. Such activities are not limited to the 'Information' instrument but involve the combination of different instruments of power, including Diplomatic, Economic and Military

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/hybrid-threats-as-a-phenomenon/>

**2. Schematic representation of the hybrid action of the Russian Federation in the Western Balkans and Serbia**



**3. Active measures on Western Balkans are not the myth**

The Kremlin's goals in the Western Balkans have been clearly proclaimed, and that is to prevent the countries of the Western Balkans from becoming members of NATO and the EU. Anti-NATO narratives are used exclusively as a means to achieve the ultimate goal, which is to prevent the region from becoming a full member of the EU. NATO<sup>4</sup> notes that the annexation of Crimea intensifies the work of platforms for the spread of Russian disinformation in the Western Balkans - The emergence of these narratives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia coincides with the illegal annexation of Crimea in March 2014. The Sputnik news service was launched in the Serbian language, in February 2015, soon followed by Russia Beyond. Dozens of portals with and without impressum (i.e. a legally mandated statement of ownership and authorship) have appeared, generating or distributing similar messages.

Sputnik's content is republished by media outlets in both Serbia and Republika Srpska, while Sputnik republishes news from Serbian media. Raskrinkavanje alleged that most of Sputnik's

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2020/12/21/disinformation-in-the-western-balkans/index.html>

articles are “disinformation”, “clickbait”, “fake news”, “conspiracy theories” and “factual manipulations”<sup>5</sup>.

In the last 10 years, we have several examples of disinformation that preceded street violence and even attempted coups.

The first case is an attempted coup in Montenegro. 2016, then riots in Skopje 2018, religious protests in Montenegro 2020, riots in Belgrade 2020 until the organization of a rally in support of the Russian Federation in Belgrade 2022.

The case of a coup attempt in Montenegro is a combination of hybrid action with the use of irregular armed groups gathered in an agency network. And both Montenegro and North Macedonia, Russia has proven its ability to exploit domestic conflicts. In Montenegro, for instance, it sided with the anti-NATO opposition, which also attacked Prime Minister Milo Djukanović and his governing Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) on grounds of corruption<sup>6</sup>. The coup attempt in Montenegro had its preparation through the broadcasting of strong anti-Western narratives. The operation of obscure media portals that had the role of manipulating public opinion to the complete radicalization and polarization of the population. This incident had its own judicial epilogue, but it is also the first case in the Western Balkans to court tail agents of the Russian GRU in absentia. Montenegro's aspiration to become a member of NATO was taken as an occasion.

The riots in Skopje caused by the Prespan Agreement were strongly accompanied by an insulting tone of Russian officials towards Northern Macedonia, spreading misinformation through obscure portals, but also through orchestrating street riots in both Northern Macedonia and Greece. The hooligan groups that took part in the riots belong to clubs that were owned by Russian oligarchs at that the time.

Russia's second attempt to take over Montenegro took place in 2020. during the social tension caused by the law on freedom of religion.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/31/how-fake-news-spreads-mainstream-media-republish-suspect-sites-stories/>

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[https://stratcomcoe.org/pdfjs/?file=/publications/download/russias\\_strategic\\_interests\\_in\\_balkans\\_11dec.pdf?zoom=page-fit](https://stratcomcoe.org/pdfjs/?file=/publications/download/russias_strategic_interests_in_balkans_11dec.pdf?zoom=page-fit)

Anti-covid protests escalated into mass riots in 2020 in Belgrade. According to experts and politicians<sup>7</sup> the riots were largely orchestrated and directed by a structure associated with the Russian Federation. Until then, the peaceful and cynical Russian diplomacy and media network showed very active and strong activity in terms of denying these claims, the main propaganda engine in preserving the image of the Russian Federation, due to involvement in riots, was the Serbian language portal Sputnik.

Russia is the only great power that maintains an absolutely favorable media narrative in the Serbian language, which extends to the entire region of the Western Balkans and represents a literally integrated desirable media narrative.

#### **4. Russian influence operation in Serbia during aggression on Ukraine**

After the aggression on Ukraine, the application of influence and information operations towards the institutions of the Republic of Serbia and its citizens intensified in Serbia.

The thrust on the civilian population itself can be divided into several key activities :

- Spreading of disinformation and deceptive content
- Organization of demonstrations and rallies of support to Russia
- Diplomatic activity of Russian Federation
- Abuse of energy dependence

##### **4.1 The role of disinformation and deceptive content**

The danger of spreading Russian disinformation is well documented and recognized by EU member states<sup>8</sup>. The vulnerability of the Serbian media itself was recognized in the reports of the European Parliament<sup>9</sup>. Our paper seeks to offer a theoretical framework in terms of disinformation mechanisms, and not to deal with each individual case that is present in the Serbian information space. The application of active measures towards the citizens of Serbia creates a false dilemma between the choice of the West or Russia. Serbia is not a participant in

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/vagner-sormaz-demonstracije/31836979.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/de/press-room/20190307IPR30695/eu-wappnet-sich-fur-den-kampf-gegen-feindselige-propaganda>

<sup>9</sup> <https://europeanwesternbalkans.rs/usvojen-izvestaj-o-srbiji-na-odboru-za-spoljne-poslove-u-evropskom-parlamentu/>



the conflict, but through disinformation, the bearers of Russian hybrid activities are trying to turn Serbia and its citizens into a real or proxy ground for settling conflict with the West.

The basic characteristics of Russian disinformation that are in the Serbian information space can be divided into the following categories according to a certain dominant structure. Disinformation based on conspiracy theories and war propaganda is the most common form.

Some of the most popular false narratives about Russian aggression against Ukraine that are present in the Serbian information space, which are weapons of war propaganda, are:

1. The conflict between America and Russia is taking place in Ukraine
  - a) America incited Ukraine against Russia
  - b) America is fighting Russia to the last Ukrainian
  - c) America had an interest in war
2. NATO targeted training of 400,000 Ukrainian soldiers and armed them for a violent fight to attack the Russians
3. Russian language, Russian culture, Russian education and Russian media have been banned since 2014
4. Ukraine is a divided state in which half are Russians, half Ukrainians, with a religious division of 50% -50% Orthodox and Catholics. This division is used as a continuation of many years of active measures by which the Catholic Church presents itself as the ideological creator of the plan for the destruction of Serbia and Orthodoxy.
5. Sanctions against Russia were imposed by a smaller part of the world, 15% of the planet, which presents the EU to the Serbian citizens as irrelevant and unimportant, of course keeping silent about the geographical position of Serbia and the relationship between countries that imposed sanctions on Russia and others which not. Those which not imposed sanctions are the ones which not respect human rights and freedoms , economic prosperity, living standards and which are not key Serbian economic partners

6. NATO is expanding to the East, Russia had nowhere to go to protect its security. This narrative is a consequence of the poor informing of the population in Serbia about all the member states of the NATO that have been bordering the Russian Federation for decades.
7. The coup forced Ukraine to join the EU and NATO. This thesis aims to draw a parallel with the October 5, 2000 changes in Serbia and the democratic changes that the Russian Federation, by implementing active measures, also represents as a consequence of the actions of the American secret services..
8. Russia is facing a security threat from NATO, so it had to react. This narrative directly relies on the abuse of the culture of remembrance of the citizens of Serbia related to the NATO bombing in 1999
9. Russia had to protect its people. A narrative that finds its support among the citizens of Serbia in the almost thirty-year renunciation of the responsibility of the former holders of power for everything that happened in the former Yugoslavia with the protection of the Serbian people, to which great media attention is paid.
10. Biological weapons and bio laboratories are topics that continue through active measures on conspiracy theories that flooded the Serbian media during the Covid 19 pandemic, which served as an excellent preparation.
11. The strength of the Russian army, Russia does not use all its capacities and takes care of civilians. These are the theses that raise the myth of the strength of the Russian army built during the Second World War, which insidiously creates the illusion that the army is so powerful that its help to Serbia in a new war in the Balkans would prevail and secured victory and that is why it is important to be on Russia's side.
12. Ukraine commits war crimes against civilians. They forcibly hold civilians as human shields. This narrative is used to justify the destruction of entire cities, about which news occasionally appear in the Serbian media.

Disinformation on the issue of biological weapons in Ukraine is a misrepresentation of international cooperation, but also misinformation that has found its application in endangering

the public health of Serbian citizens<sup>10</sup>. Additional elaboration of this misinformation depended on the strategic goals for each information space. Several goals have been identified for this hybrid action in Serbia: 1. Undermining international cooperation 2. Spreading irrational fear of imminent life-threatening biological weapons 3. Compromising US and European Union donations 4. Reversing the effects of Western donations, 5. Spreading distrust in Serbian authorities 6. Encouraging conspiratorial worldview and justifying Russian military aggression 7. Endangering public health The most striking example of geopolitically motivated disinformation in Serbian information space is an attack on the Cardiac Surgery Clinic in Nis. The video clip that has been published so far has had 20,000 views, the narrator uses half-truths. Complete disinformation is designed to undo the effects of \$ 1 million in US military equipment donations<sup>11</sup>.

#### **4.2 Organization of demonstrations and support rallies**

In the first days after the aggression on Ukraine, right-wing organizations, in the presence of politicians from parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties, held demonstrations on March 4, 2022, entitled "Gathering of support for the Russian people." The organizers of the gathering called for historical, allied, political and military initiatives and, above all, solidarity. However, the fact that Russia shamelessly attacked Ukraine, and not Ukraine, was ignored. All this did not prevent the masses from carrying the symbols of Russian aggression with the letter "z", and there were more Russian than Serbian flags at the gathering. It is estimated that up to 5,000 people gathered at the rally.



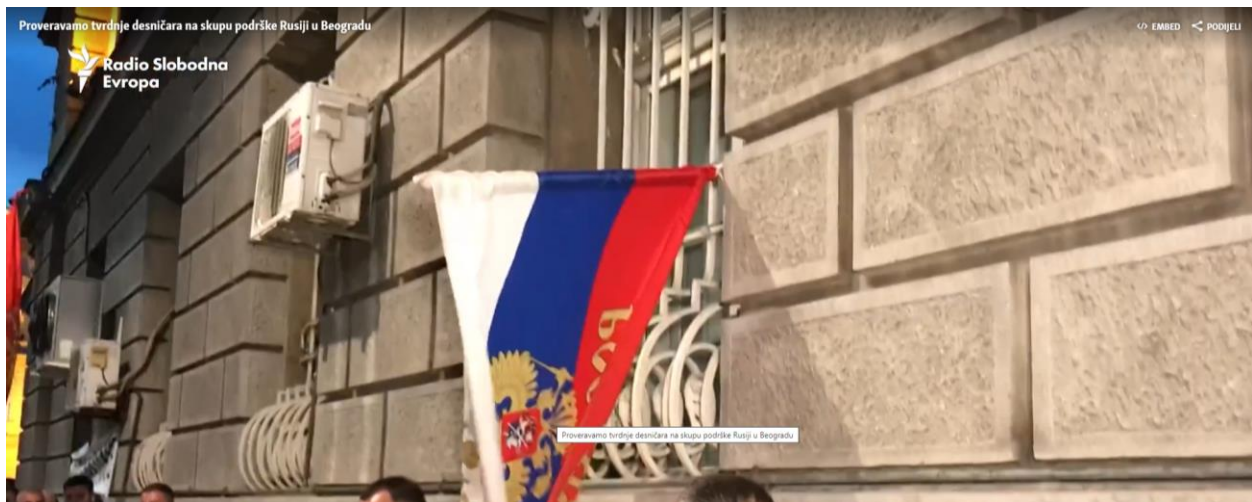
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<sup>11</sup> Report Predivanje globalnih dezinformacija u Srbiju- slučaj biološkog oružja  
<https://www.czsa.org/public/storage/pdf/1647879485.pdf>

At the rally, in the presence of militant right-wingers in various paramilitary uniforms, it was announced that the demonstrations will be even more massive if Serbia imposes sanctions on Russia. The organization of such a gathering represents a direct threat and an operation of influence in order to put pressure on the state not to make decisions in its best interest. It is interesting that the gathering was organized preventively before it was announced yet what kind of sanctions are in question and who will introduce them.

The next mass demonstrations<sup>12</sup> followed on April 15, 2022, and after April 7, when a vote was held in the UN General Assembly, where Serbia joined the condemnation of Russian aggression and joined 141 countries in calling on Russia to withdraw its troops in Ukraine. The specific reason for these demonstrations was Serbia's vote to expel Russia from the UN Human Rights Council. The demonstration demanded that such decisions must be voted on by a two-thirds majority in the Serbian Parliament, and that Serbia violated its neutrality with these actions. Messages of support for Russia were expressed again. Protesters dropped several smoke bombs and hung a Russian flag on the building of the Presidency of the Republic of Serbia.



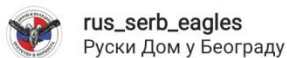
Analyzing the content of messages from gatherings we found that is an emotional manipulation with strong anti-European slogans. It is interesting that the slogan

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/desnicari-srbija-rusija-protest/31804896.html>

from the period of destructive riots from 10 years ago has returned to right-wing rallies, and that is "Serbia is Russia, we don't need (European) Union".

When it comes to organizing the rally, it was noted for the first time that the aggressor state is officially organizing it<sup>13</sup>. On May 9, the Embassy of the Russian Federation organized a rally called "Immortal Regiment Parade" at which the letters "Z" were carried again., Putin from cardboard and other slogans in the presence of right-wing parties and movements. It is important to note that this gathering was mixed with the official state event of laying wreaths and thus occupied the official event. Organizers from the Russian Embassy calculated that a picture of solidarity with Russia would be sent to the world from Belgrade, again abusing historical contexts. It is a completely different question that we must ask why the authorities of the Republic of Serbia did not ban the takeover of the state



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20.05.2022

ХУМАНИТАРНИ КОНЦЕРТ

Мирно небо  
за дечји осмех

Најлепше српске и руске мелодије

Будимо заједно, кад је тешко!  
Велика сала Руског дома у 20:00

Улазница је  
добровољни прилог  
према могућностима.

ceremony for the purpose of promoting Russian war goals in Ukraine. Freedom of assembly is guaranteed, but when it comes to state ceremonies, it is unfortunate that there was no reaction from the authorities who had to react in such a way that the mentioned mass gathered by Russian embassy did not mix with their banners when laying wreaths.

The whole series of high-profile activities since the beginning of the aggression has been held with only one goal, to intensify propaganda activities in order to present Russia as a victim who is defending itself. So, the Russian House in Belgrade is organizing a manifestation of a humanitarian character entitled "Peaceful skies for children's smiles" and adds

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/politika/ambasada-rusije-povorka-besmrtni-puk-u-beogradu-za-dan-pobede/>

"let's be together when it's hard". The organizer is again applying tactics of emotional manipulation, evoking memories of the bombing of Yugoslavia, calling for an alliance with the abuse of the memory of the citizens of Serbia.

The choreography at the rallies in support of the Russian Federation is very diverse. As unfounded as the story of the denazification of Ukraine is, so many various right-wing organizations of Nazi inclinations gather at manifestations of support for Russia in Serbia. Thus, a group of bikers who gathered in the Temple of St. Sava to express their support and fraternal ties with Russia on their jackets wear insignia with the Nazi symbol of the SS division "Totenkopf". Which shows the very close ideological closeness of the extreme ideas of the people and the soil only this time in the function of Russian foreign policy interests.



## 5. Ideological subversion in Serbian society – key research findings

Ideological subversion is term firstly defined by KGB in 1970<sup>th</sup>. In KGB they invented “Ideological subversion” as a tool of spacial warfare against civilians and administrative employee. “ideological subversion” is a part of doctrinary aproach and propaganda tool. As a spacial warfare tool they intention was to use it dominantly against Yugoslavia in period after 1958. In that time we had fifth colon in secret service, military , universities, among journalists. In that period it was defined as ideological propaganda and subversive activities with goal to overthrow Tito and Yugoslavia regime, and integrate it to SSSR and eastern lager.

Today situation is not so much change, but in this moment Ideological subversion get it full potential. In general, we can define it as. Group of activities, measures and actions, which are led by individuals, groups and organisations in purpose to create high social polarization and to bring to top opinions to large population that there is only one right direction of social development, international cooperation, chose of allies and way of life.

In Republic of Serbia after dismantling of Yugoslavia and SSSR, there is still proxies which acting according to strategy of ideological subversion. In period after Yugoslavia dismantling , also was collapsed security system, which was successfully controlling attacks made by ideological subversion on Yugoslavia. In 1990<sup>th</sup> Russian federation made a huge network according to ideological subversion doctrine.

Main characteristic for ideological subversion activity is that they are not coordinated from one source and they do not have monolit organization structure and coordination.

In Serbia after change of regime in 2000. until today we can identify next proxies:

- 1. Hooligan and team support groups**
- 2. low census political parties**
- 3. minor political movements**
- 4. cultural movements**
- 5. individuals as intellectuals, journalist and artists**
- 6. News portals and other media**

### **Modus operandi**

First of all proxies of ideological subversion must to have support of agents of interest which are in Public Institutions. Support of proxies is on border between official and non-official support .

First role of all proxies is first of all to straighten antagonisms in society of Serbia.

Second to create and spread rumors, fake news and fake facts.

Third is to maintain network for group for pressures in various parts of social structure of Serbian society.

Forth , to be always “alternative” to present government.

### **Conclusion**

In times of global confrontation active measures are widely deployed by Russian Federation. In regions where Russia has, as they declare strategic interests, active measures intensity increased. By content analysis disinformation did not change it's nature. Volume is increased with presence of agent of influence which did not cover any more their positions. One day they are on Russian rallies, another day they are strongly advocating for Russia. Main narrative is that if Serbia impose sanctions to Russia their citizens will have economical damage. Beside that all mainstream media have strong pro-Russian narrative, often supported with already dismantled disinformation. Newspapers also spreading also already dismantled Russian disinformations.

Key problem is a media literacy. Need for education of journalists to understand impact of foreign policy motivated information operations. Source checking is one of key priorities. Another important thing when we analyze media is media independence and literacy towards authoritarian regimes. To build resilience against authoritarian influence is one of key priorities of democracy states. Those activities must be strategic task of security institutions.

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