

# **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**



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## A TROUBLED OR A TROUBLING CANDIDATE – SERBIAN ACCESSION TO THE EU

Following wars of Yugoslav succession in the 1990s, Serbia became a pariah state ruled in an authoritarian fashion by Slobodan Milošević. Isolated and engulfed in conflicts in its neighborhood, the Milošević regime managed to survive a decade in which its own rhetoric based on a nationalist agenda gradually lost support among Serbian people. When finally war threatened Serbia itself, during NATO military operations to resolve the Kosovo crisis between March and June 1999, it was high time for Milošević to leave his post. Presidential elections of September 2000 proved crucial in defeating Milošević in the way he utterly disrespected: democratically elected president Koštunica received more votes in the elections and, although Milošević tried to dispute the results, popular protests made the loser leave. International support to Serbian opposition, chiefly provided by the US, managed to unite different opposition factions into one single block that ousted Milošević and opened a new chapter in the Serbian history.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it seemed that the authoritarian era of the 1990s was finally over and Serbia was to have a fresh start. And indeed it was a fresh start for Belgrade both domestically and internationally: on the one hand, democratic opposition was given a chance to form the government and start much needed process of ‘repairing’ the country both materially and value-wise, and, on the other hand, international isolation and sanctions that the country had to withstand during the 1990s were lifted on the road of establishing closer relations with the international community, most importantly the EU and US.

However, considering a number of problems Serbia had to tackle from 2000 on (battling economic crisis and legacy of war, restructuring undeveloped democratic institutions in a dysfunctional state based on weak civic culture, fighting corruption, nepotism, and organized crime, and the issue of Kosovo, just to name the few), the democratic opposition in power and its successors seem to have had a partial success at best. Unfortunately, having in mind that opposition parties and their leaders were often opposed to each other on a number of issues, many of these stemming from various personal disagreements, it is fair to conclude that fragmentation of Serbian opposition started immediately after it took power in parliamentary elections in late 2000. While opposition leaders may have differed in both ideas and practices from each other, they seem to have been rather reluctant in relenting personalized control and extra-institutional networks of influence, both of these being cornerstones of Milošević’s regime.<sup>2</sup> In that re-

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<sup>1</sup> See: V. Bunce, S. Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries*, New York 2011, pp. 85–114.

<sup>2</sup> O. Kesić, *An Airplane with Eighteen Pilots: Serbia after Milošević*, in: *Serbia since 1989: Politics and Society under Milošević and after*, (eds.) S. Ramet, V. Pavlaković, Seattle 2005, pp. 95–125.

spect, it comes as no wonder that Serbian governments after 2000 remained largely unstable and had vacillating popular support since dismantling Milošević's apparatus was never properly done which, in turn, negatively influenced implementation of reforms. Unfortunately, many Serbian citizens appeared to have vested too much hope in their politicians given that popular discontent with both scope and speed of state reforms was increasing leading to a decrease in voter turn-out and a diminished support for government measures.<sup>3</sup> For example, a very eventful 2003 announced, when Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić (Democratic Party, Demokratska stranka) was murdered and state of emergency declared,<sup>4</sup> a departure of the formerly united opposition block from the Serbian political scene at the end of that year. Apparently the opposition parties experienced major problems in functioning in the government and, moreover, it is worthy of noting that all coalitions up to 2012 except two were formed with either Democratic Party (DS) or Democratic Party of Serbia (Demokratska Stranka Srbije, DSS) respectively at their centers.<sup>5</sup> This polarization on the Serbian political scene following Milošević's removal unfortunately pitted DS and DSS in political struggle and influenced, among other issues, rise of previously marginalized parties such as Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), former Milošević's party. SPS' rise to political power, following their participation in 2008 coalition government headed by DS, was crowned in the last elections when this party brokered a major coalition deal with the United Regions of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party (formed by two former leaders of nationalist Serbian Radical Party) and entered the government.<sup>6</sup> In that respect, establishment of the new Serbian government in 2012 indicated a major political shift in the country and caused anxiety in the international community of Serbia taking a nationalist U-turn with possible regression to the disastrous 1990s.<sup>7</sup>

All things being equal, and this is important to note, Serbia has made improvements, as the EU Commission report on Serbia's application for membership of the European Union says, in "obligations under the Interim Agreement and is generally respecting its commitments under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. In 2008 Serbia adopted a National Programme for Integration into the European Union, which is a comprehensive and ambitious plan for the period 2008–2012 providing for approximation of its national legislation to the EU acquis. Since then, significant progress has been made with adopting legislation aligned with the EU acquis, particularly on the internal market, statistics, trade-related provisions, customs and taxation".<sup>8</sup> However, it is

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<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> See: *BBC News Europe*, article available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2843433.stm> (1.09.2012).

<sup>5</sup> A short overview of elections in Serbia up to 2011 can be found at *BalkanInsight*: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/two-decades-of-election-tumult-in-serbia> (2.09.2012).

<sup>6</sup> A short overview of 2012 parliamentary elections in Serbia can be found at *BalkanInsight*: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/new-serbia-ministers-to-be-sworn-in> (2.09.2012).

<sup>7</sup> See: *BBC News Europe*, article available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19012782> (2.09.2012).

<sup>8</sup> European Commission (EC), *Commission Staff Working Paper: Commission Opinion on Serbia's application for membership of the European Union*, Brussels 2011, pp. 132–133, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2011/package/sr\\_analytical\\_rapport\\_2011\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2011/package/sr_analytical_rapport_2011_en.pdf) (2.09.2012).

also crucial to note that Serbian progress towards the EU is seriously threatened by three important issues that successive Serbian governments from 2000 on have obviously tackled wrongly:

1. Political elites have failed to engage in proper fight against systemic corruption and (organized) crime that plague Serbia today. Since lustrations in state structures and wider legislation reforms have not been performed, Belgrade has thus been urged by the EU to make efforts in the fields of “Judiciary and fundamental rights; Justice, freedom and security; and (emphasized word added by author) Financial control”.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the EU Commission report states that Serbia “faces challenges in implementing and enforcing legislation. Particular and continued attention to the fight against corruption will be expected over time”.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, Serbian aspirations to the EU are highly dependent on significant improvements in the areas previously mentioned and, as Jelko Kacin, Vice-Chair of the European Parliament’s Delegation for relations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, pointed out, it is necessary for Serbia to engage in fighting systemic corruption since this is “a cancer on the society”.<sup>11</sup> In that respect, it is a priority for the Serbian governments to tackle this issue thoroughly for entry to the EU is dependent on it.
2. On the other hand, the Serbian government is also expected to address the issue of its relations with Kosovo, considering that the formerly Serbian province has been independent since 2008. German Chancellor Angela Merkel underlined this in August 2011, thus indicating that the EU was not going to allow Serbia to reach membership unless Belgrade resolved its relations with Priština.<sup>12</sup> Having in mind that the EU itself has been riddled with problems for some time now, it seems understandable that importing yet another problem is evidently not a choice of the EU. In that respect, although Serbia does not recognize the independence of Kosovo, the EU has been categorical in pressing Belgrade to normalize its relations with Priština. Last several months have showed significant improvement in relations between the two, especially since 1) dialogue on technical issues has produced results, 2) Kosovo’s participation in regional structures has largely been unblocked by Serbia, and 3) problems in Northern Kosovo, following tensions dating back to mid-2011, have mostly been resolved, although a tendency to further escalation always exists.<sup>13</sup>
3. Lastly, Serbia needs to dedicate significantly more attention to changing political culture and social values since Belgrade’s democratic potential, weak as it was in the beginning of the 1990s, was largely undermined and compromised during the

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 134.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 133.

<sup>11</sup> See: *B92 News*, article available at: [http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2012&mm=08&dd=28&nav\\_id=81960](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2012&mm=08&dd=28&nav_id=81960) (3.09.2012).

<sup>12</sup> See: *BBC News Europe*, article available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14631297> (3.09.2012).

<sup>13</sup> S. Lehne, *Kosovo and Serbia: Toward a Normal Relationship*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012, pp. 2–3, available at: [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Kosovo\\_and\\_Serbia.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Kosovo_and_Serbia.pdf) (3.09.2012).

Milošević era, which Gordy described as “destruction of alternatives”.<sup>14</sup> In view of the lack of stress on changing social values by the Serbian political elites so far, it comes as no wonder that some of the most important reforms in the state have not been performed or have been performed improperly. Therefore, changing social values in the country<sup>15</sup> is a must if Serbia wants to become part of the EU. This means that Belgrade should not only satisfy technical criteria of joining the EU, but also ideational and value criteria that the EU has been founded and based on. However, this process will most likely take considerable time since changing values is a long-term process, as example of states which acceded to the EU in both 2004 and 2007 has shown.

### SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION AND (ORGANIZED) CRIME

The first of the problems that Serbia has to confront on its road to the EU is devoting more attention to the fight against systemic corruption and crime, especially organized crime. Having in mind the complete downfall of the country under Milošević’s regime, it becomes apparent how both corruption and organized crime, once a backbone of the regime, relying on informal structures of influence and power, became a custom rather than an exception in Serbia. This problem has been addressed by all Serbian governments from 2000 onwards, although, all things being equal, no government has yet managed to successfully deal with the problem at hand.

The main reasons why Serbian governments failed lie in the fact that, on the one hand, there was very little political will to engage in proper anti-corruption struggle, and, on the other, even when resources were actually committed to this cause, they proved to be insufficient and lacking. Last but not least, all governments in Belgrade failed to understand that fight against corruption and (organized) crime should be a constant, ongoing process rather than a set of actions taken at a specific time and often (mis)used to remove and discredit one’s political opponents or impress voters before next elections. In a 2011 report by the UN Office for Drugs and Crime it is stated that even “Serbian citizens rank corruption as the most important problem facing their country after unemployment and poverty/low standard of living”.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the report says that “corruption is not accepted by Serbian citizens”<sup>17</sup> and that there is obviously a need for a “monitoring system of corruption at national level”.<sup>18</sup> This system should provide for, among other issues, “both repressive and preventive measures”<sup>19</sup> in fighting corruption.

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<sup>14</sup> E. D. Gordy, *Investigating the Destruction of Alternatives*, “Problems of Post-Communism” 1997, No. 4, Vol. 44, pp. 12–21.

<sup>15</sup> See: *Civic and Uncivic Values: Serbia in the post-Milošević Era*, (eds.) O. Listhaug, S. P. Ramet, D. Dulić, Budapest 2011.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Corruption in Serbia: Bribery as Experienced by the Population*, Vienna 2011, p. 3, available at: [http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/corruption/Serbia\\_corruption\\_report\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/corruption/Serbia_corruption_report_web.pdf) (3.09.2012).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 50.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

In that respect, as Business Anti-Corruption Portal<sup>20</sup> highlighted, most corruption cases in Serbia are witnessed in those sectors “with significant financial transactions, such as public procurement, privatisation, and other large budgetary expenditures. Another common type of business-related corruption derives from the large number of regulations that companies have to comply with and the number of licences and permits they need to obtain”.<sup>21</sup> In 2011–2012 Global Competitiveness Report, corruption in Serbia is ranked immediately after bureaucracy in the list of main issues and obviously, as it has been emphasized, Belgrade needs to invest more political will in its anti-corruption efforts.<sup>22</sup> For example, Verica Barać, the former Head of the Anti-Corruption Council of the previous Government of Serbia, highlighted in December 2011 that “the essence of the current problem lies in collusion between political parties, tycoons and criminal elements, which survived the 1990s era, “and even strengthened in the meantime”.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the fight against corruption and organized crime is not only a test of Serbian statehood and implementation of rule of law, but also a proof that Serbia transformed and matured democratically by managing to overcome the legacy of the 1990s. Any government in Belgrade aiming to act responsibly must therefore adopt a top-down approach in order to solve these issues. Unfortunately, up to now, no government has done so, and, in that respect, Barać pointed out that had several important questions been resolved – including “dissolving all secret services, opening all secret files, carrying out lustration and adopting good laws” – corruption would be discussed “as a different phenomenon in Serbia today”.<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly, Serbian governments have not succeeded, due to reasons I have previously mentioned, to properly tackle this issue and the social consequences of such actions are now felt by Serbian citizens since their political elites are, as Bojana Barlovac quoted a board member in the Anti-Corruption Agency of the Republic of Serbia in her article, “champions of corruption”.<sup>25</sup> For example, Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project<sup>26</sup> reported that Serbia, due to grand-scale corruption, lost “€80 million in the first nine months of 2011, according to an investigation by the Serbian police. According to the report, the money was lost from the state budget because of fraud and abuse of power by state officials. Serbia fell eight spots on this year’s Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, ranking 86<sup>th</sup> among 182 countries”.<sup>27</sup> As

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<sup>20</sup> This portal is financed by the governments of Austria, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK. It is available at: <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/> (3.09.2012).

<sup>21</sup> *Business Anti-Corruption Portal*, <http://www.business-anti-corruption.de/country-profiles/europe-central-asia/serbia/> (3.09.2012).

<sup>22</sup> World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2011–2012*, Geneva 2011, pp. 314–315, available at: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GCR\\_Report\\_2011-12.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GCR_Report_2011-12.pdf) (3.09.2012).

<sup>23</sup> See: *B92 News*, article available at: [http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2011&mm=12&dd=13&nav\\_id=77769](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2011&mm=12&dd=13&nav_id=77769) (3.09.2012).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> *BalkanInsight*, article available at: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/political-elites-are-champion-of-corruption-in-serbia> (3.09.2012).

<sup>26</sup> This is a not-for-profit program of several non-profit centers and independent media extending from Eastern.

<sup>27</sup> *Europe to Central Asia*, article available at: <https://reportingproject.net/occrp/index.php/en/about-us>; *Organized Crime and Corruption Report Project*, available at: <https://reportingproject.net/occrp/index.php/ccwatch/cc-watch-briefs/1261-serbia-lost-80-million-to-corruption-in-nine-months> (3.09.2012).

a consequence, links between various Serbian politicians and shady businesses, be those domestic or international, have become such a problem that “it may undermine the success of its transition” as Vesna Pešić pointed out in her paper back in 2007. She emphasized “large-scale and systemic state capture, which is the root of widespread corruption”<sup>28</sup> as an increasingly present phenomenon in Serbia where politics often goes hand-in-hand with shady businesses.

These shady businesses usually belong to criminal groups and are often established in links with politicians who, after their term expires, usually get discredited for their links with crime figures. For instance, murder of Prime Minister Djindjić in early 2003 followed by police operation Sabre and international police operation Balkan Warrior, among others, showed how powerful and lasting connections between organized crime figures, former or present state security operatives and politicians can really be. Indictments of suspects usually take considerable time and trials are often highly politicized. In addition, when other problems concerning systemic corruption and (organized) crime are added, such as issues in financial sector,<sup>29</sup> hiring and spending in public sector<sup>30</sup> and bribery (“tolerated as a tool for getting things done”<sup>31</sup>), it is only fairly to conclude that only and only if Serbian governments embark on a serious, unrelenting anti-corruption crusade, and they it surely be assisted by both Brussels and the UN<sup>32</sup> in this venture, will the country be ready to join the EU.

## THE KOSOVO ISSUE

Among the three problems that this article identifies as hindering Serbia in the European integration process, the issue of Kosovo is certainly the most contentious one. Once a province of Serbia Kosovo became an international protectorate in 1999 following NATO intervention and it proclaimed independence in early 2008. Road from the international protectorate to independence took Kosovo through a stage when its future was being discussed in the international community while Serbia remained staunchly opposed to Kosovo’s independence. Governments in Belgrade firmly held position of Kosovo remaining part of the Republic of Serbia, often referring to the UN Security

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<sup>28</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>29</sup> Although the new government of Serbia has been boasting about its anti-corruption efforts, it remains to be seen if this government will have enough political will to see these reforms through. On the latest case of corruption in banking sector see *Organized Crime and Corruption Report Project* available at: <http://www.reportingproject.net/occrp/index.php/en/ccwatch/cc-watch-briefs/1616-serbia-new-government-cracks-down-on-corrupt-bank-officials> (3.09.2012).

<sup>30</sup> Serbian government was sued in 2011 by *Transparency Serbia* for lack of transparency in process of hiring public officials. See: *BalkanInsight*, article available at: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/transparency-serbia-stands-against-hiring-officials-based-on-party-membership> (3.09.2013).

<sup>31</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Corruption in Serbia: Bribery as Experienced by the Population*, Vienna 2011, p. 50, available at: [http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/corruption/Serbia\\_corruption\\_report\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/corruption/Serbia_corruption_report_web.pdf) (3.09.2012).

<sup>32</sup> See: *Tanjug*, article available at: <http://www.tanjug.rs/news/56712/undp-supports-fight-against-corruption-in-serbia.htm> (3.09.2012).



Resolution 1244<sup>33</sup>, and offering Kosovo Albanians a formula of “more than autonomy and less than independence”.<sup>34</sup> However, Albanians, already on the road of establishing their own institutions guided by the EU, were categorically rejecting such offers and aimed at achieving independence at all cost. When in 2008 Kosovo finally became independent, and autumn 2012 marks the end of this internationally-monitored independence,<sup>35</sup> “newborn”<sup>36</sup> (country) was welcomed into the international community divided over the recognition of Kosovo’s new status. So far 92 UN member states have recognized Kosovo, although Serbia has remained chiefly opposed. In that respect, having in mind issues in relations between Serbs and Albanians, not only in the recent years but further into the past, it seems understandable that relations between Serbia and Kosovo are rather challenging and thus it is obvious that, until this matter is settled, as the German Chancellor Merkel stated in 2011, the EU is not going to accept Serbia as a member.

First of all, Serbian governments have acted rather irresponsibly since 1999 mostly because frequently repeated mantra of Kosovo as still part of Serbia was often abused, above anything else, as to gain popularity and influence on the domestic political scene. In that respect, discourse on Kosovo has become so politicized that it actually turned into but a hollow phrase. For that matter, governments in Belgrade usually acted as if Kosovo did not exist as an independent entity at all and largely neglected Serbian minority in the ex-province, thus undermining their own diplomatic potential in dealing with the issue at hand. This is not to say that, on the other hand, Albanian political representatives were entirely fair in their acting domestically or internationally, but just that Belgrade’s doings were entirely inappropriate. For example, successive Serbian governments used their political and financial influence on Serbs in the north of Kosovo and consequently managed to create parallel institutions in this part of the new state.<sup>37</sup> Last year’s skirmishes, inspired, on the one hand, by local crime figures involved in trafficking, and, on the other, by discontented Serbian population, over the issue of customs and border regulations between Kosovo and Serbia resulted in violence and threatened to destabilize the situation in the north. While Belgrade publicly called for cessation of violence and return to normalcy in the north, it secretly supported local Serbs as a way of challenging Priština’s rule, while, on the other hand, Priština stubbornly although unsuccessfully tried to confirm its integrity and resolve the issue by using force.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> This Resolution establishing an international protectorate in Kosovo in 1999 (United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo or UNMIK) is available at: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/172/89/PDF/N9917289.pdf?OpenElement> (4.09.2012).

<sup>34</sup> See: *Danas*, article available at: <http://www.ex-yupress.com/danas/danas134.html> (4.09.2012).

<sup>35</sup> See: *B92 News*, article available at: [http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2012&mm=07&dd=02&nav\\_id=81064](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2012&mm=07&dd=02&nav_id=81064) (4.09.2012).

<sup>36</sup> A typographic sculpture “Newborn” was revealed in Priština on the day, 17 February 2008, when Kosovo proclaimed independence. See: *New Kosova Report* article available at: <http://www.newkosovareport.com/200807041018/Society/newborn-the-symbol-of-kosovo-independence.html> (4.09.2012).

<sup>37</sup> S. Lehne, *Kosovo and Serbia: Toward a Normal Relationship*, op. cit.

<sup>38</sup> See: *Reuters*, article available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/07/28/us-kosovo-nato-idUSTRE76Q69P20110728> (4.09.2012).

Luckily, with the help of the EU, the matters were resolved, although tensions still persist in the area with sporadic reemergence of hostilities.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, another major issue in relations between Serbia and Kosovo lies in the fact that political elites in Serbia have maintained and recreated one specific understanding of past events in Kosovo, specifically the 1990s and the Kosovo war, by portraying Serbian (security) actions in the ex-province as largely defensive and not anti-Albanian. In that respect, there is very little public dialogue, except initiated by certain politicians,<sup>40</sup> on events, on the one hand, from the 1990s when Milošević's regime completely alienated Albanians from all political, economic and social structures in Kosovo, or, on the other hand, from the Kosovo campaign between 1996–1999 when Serbian security forces did not only engage the Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK in Albanian) but targeted Albanian civilians as well.<sup>41</sup> In that respect, Serbian governments, fearful of losing popularity or being branded as “traitors” by nationalist forces,<sup>42</sup> usually publicly emphasize that Kosovo belongs to Serbia, but almost never engage in discussions on nature of actions undertaken by Serbian security forces in the Kosovo war or, for example, the issue of war crimes. Again, this is not to say that Albanian politicians have been rather fair in their public discourse concerning Serbian minority in the ex-province, for problems Serbs facing in Kosovo have often been downplayed, just that there is still no truly open dialogue concerning events that actually led to the international protectorate established in Kosovo. This consequently has produced a situation in which both sides stand firmly opposed to each other rather than trying to find solution in communicating on a number of issues. It seems that changes in Serbo-Albanian relations, slow as they may be, obviously need time and, above all, willingness of political elites from the both sides.

To conclude, “EU member states obviously have no interest in importing further unresolved territorial disputes and frozen conflicts into the EU”.<sup>43</sup> In this respect, if the government in Belgrade really sees the EU integration as one of its primary goals,<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> See: *Reuters*, article available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/01/us-kosovo-serbs-idUSBRE8500HV20120601> (4.09.2012).

<sup>40</sup> Č. Jovanović, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is one of these politicians. See his interview for the *SETimes*, available at: [http://setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/setimes/articles/2011/10/03/reportage-01](http://setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/articles/2011/10/03/reportage-01) (5.09.2012).

<sup>41</sup> On this issue see: J. Udovicki, J. Ridgeway Udovicki, *Burn this house: the Making and Un-making of Yugoslavia*, Durham 2000; H. Krieger, *The Kosovo Conflict and International Law: An Analytical Documentation 1974–1999*, Cambridge 2001; A. J. Bellamy, *Human Wrongs in Kosovo: 1974–1999*, “International Journal of Human Rights” 2000, Vol. 4, No. 3/4; J. A. Mertus, *Operation Allied Force: handmaiden of independent Kosovo*, “International Affairs” 2009, Vol. 85, No. 3; US Department of State, *Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo: An Accounting*, Washington 1999, available at: [http://www.state.gov/www/global/human\\_rights/kosovoii/homepage.html](http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/kosovoii/homepage.html) (5.09.2012).

<sup>42</sup> Serbian domestic politics is unfortunately still engulfed in the nationalist discourse where labels such as ‘patriot’ and ‘traitor’ are often used to slander one’s political opponents. A very good example of such a discourse, this time with government officials versus ‘unpatriotic’ artists, is discussed in *BalkanInsight* article available at: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbia-s-new-patriots-revive-old-threat-to-art> (5.09.2012).

<sup>43</sup> S. Lehne, *Kosovo and Serbia: Toward a Normal Relationship*, op. cit.

<sup>44</sup> Although the government in Belgrade has publicly stated so, it remains to be seen whether it will be true to its word. Following article in *Economist* gives an interesting perspective on the govern-

then this government has to engage in properly resolving its relations with Kosovo simply because the EU has set proper regional cooperation and state relations as one of its primary conditions for future members. Unfortunately, this leaves the authorities restricted diplomatically since Serbia is afraid that expanding any relations with Kosovo would inherently mean that Belgrade actually recognizes Kosovo as independent. However, if Serb authorities do not understand that there is no solution here and now, or there and tomorrow, that may satisfy Serbian aspirations of achieving both the membership and retaining Kosovo, then Serbian political elites are seriously deluded. Moreover, if Serbia decides to abandon its EU ambitions, which would certainly be disastrous considering economic support and other close ties between Belgrade and Brussels, Kosovo is most certainly not going back to the Serbian rule. Luckily, previous Serbian government engaged, although under considerable pressure from the international community (specifically the EU), in resolving a number of technical issues in relationship with Kosovo, and concluded agreements on “the return of civil registries and cadastre records, on the freedom of movement of persons and cars, on the mutual recognition of diplomas, on customs stamps as well as – most significantly – on the integrated management of the border crossings and on Kosovo’s regional representation”.<sup>45</sup> This step was very positive because it opened a major opportunity for more liberalized relations between Serbia and Kosovo since, as mentioned previously, the future Union membership of these two depends on it. Belgrade for its part has yet to realize that cooperation with Kosovo opens possibilities to resolve many disputed issues, on the one hand, and, on the other, unlocks door to the Union, while Kosovo has to face the fact that, unless it redefines its policy towards problems in the north of the country, tackles the issue of minority and property rights, and properly addresses concerns of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its position, its own EU aspirations may be halted in the near future.<sup>46</sup> Thus, in the end it seems that Serbia and Kosovo need each other and that, at least in the EU integration process, they are chiefly dependent on each other.

## CHANGING SOCIAL VALUES

Finally, the issue of changing social values is the last great obstacle on Serbia’s road to the EU. Having in mind, above all, years of destructive Milošević’s rule when Serbian democratic capital was entirely depleted, the country’s political and economic distortion and alienation became reflected in uncivic values cultivated in the Serbian society.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, without political elites in Belgrade increasingly advancing values of civic culture, Serbia may not achieve the EU membership status. As values do not only reflect the present but also the past,<sup>48</sup> it becomes apparent that any Serbian advance to-

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ment, its international reception, and its future goals: <http://www.economist.com/node/21559935> (5.09.2012).

<sup>45</sup> S. Lehne, *Kosovo and Serbia: Toward a Normal Relationship*, op. cit.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, pp. 11–15.

<sup>47</sup> *Civic and Uncivic Values: Serbia in the post-Milošević Era*, op. cit.

<sup>48</sup> D. Pantic, *Buducnost tranzicije u Srbiji zavisno od promena vrednosti*, in: *Promene vrednosti i tranzicija u Srbiji: pogled u buducnost*, Grupa Autora, Belgrade 2003, pp. 13–21, available at:

wards the Union means parting ideationally with the Milošević era and advancing towards “value equivalence” that the EU formulated in its founding values and principles. Therefore, Serbia is yet to embrace the EU values and this may take considerable time.

On the one hand, Serbian political elites, if they are at all entitled of being characterized as such, need to lead the country towards acceptance of civic culture and its values rather than recreate nationalist discourse of the past. This new value discourse finally has to put an end to the disastrous 1990s when the regime’s nationalist rhetoric won the day and actually allowed the regime to survive and justify its existence. This means that Serbia needs to relinquish its nationalist legacy by moving on towards a new reality and thus truly becoming a post-conflict society.<sup>49</sup> Until this happens Belgrade is going to be held back by its own past and consequently hindered in democratic advance. Issues from the 1990s, or even deeper into the Serbian history, need to be resolved because, if not done otherwise, they are going to remain influential points of disagreement that are going to keep the Serbian society divided and without proper direction. Orthodox Church and its position in the society, Second World War with its royalist and partisan forces, relations with surrounding nations: specifically Croats, Muslims in BiH, and Albanians, Milošević’s legacy, Kosovo, and new international reality<sup>50</sup> just to name the few, are still durable points of conflict dividing the society and playing crucial roles in both domestic and foreign policy of Serbia. Thus, unless new value discourse is created and rapprochement with these issues achieved, authorities in Serbia will make no real progress value-wise.

In addition, the fact that Serbia came to patronize uncivic values in the 1990s considerably disfigured the domestic political scene. Bearing in mind that political culture remains poorly developed, naturally resulting from ill-developed civic values, Serbian domestic political arena has become a very fruitful ground for populism and all sorts of political affairs. Often and usually pointless political debates on issues that are frequently presented as being of national interest still form bulk of political discourse, and language used by many political figures is chiefly offensive. As in other states in transition, contested issues easily become easily politicized and social divisions are immediately created. Thus, current political scene stands as an indicator of state of mind of the Serbian society and problems that befell it. Moreover, when unresolved issues that continue to plague the Serbian society are taken into account, it becomes obvious how various social divisions are actually reflected, recreated and reaffirmed in the current political discourse. Hence, there is a clear and a vital need for Serbia to embrace liberal political culture, but only committed political elite, and in the case of Serbia the political elites have been rather disoriented and reluctant to lead, is able to steer the society towards liberalization. This liberalization should institute a shift away from the dominant set of anti-modern values and principles and towards a modern democratic value

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<http://www.fes.rs/pubs/2003/pdf/22.Promene%20vrednosti%20i%20%20tranzicija%20u%20Srbiji.pdf> (5.09.2012).

<sup>49</sup> S. Bianchini, *The EU in the Values and Expectations of Serbia: Challenges, Opportunities, and Confrontations*, in: *Civic and Uncivic Values: Serbia in the post-Milošević Era*, op. cit., pp. 77–113.

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem.

set that holds respect of rights of individual at its very foundation.<sup>51</sup> Unless this specific liberal growth of Serbia does not ensue, there is certainly no EU future for Serbia. Moreover, unless Belgrade understands that its membership in the EU does not only depend on fulfilling technical details but accepting and contributing to specific value patterns as well, Serbia will never truly belong to the EU. Democratic transitions, always costly and time-consuming, have rather mixed record of success, and hopefully Serbian political elites will find enough common sense to steer the country into the right direction of the Union membership.

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This article on the Serbian accession bid to the EU presented an analysis of the most pressing issues Belgrade is facing. Identified as systemic corruption and (organized) crime, issue of Kosovo, and, lastly, change of social values, these problems remain principal in blocking Serbian accession to the Union. Unless, as stated in the article, these matters are properly resolved, and this will certainly take time, Serbian accession to the EU is going to be postponed.

For that matter, in the time of writing of this article, Belgrade is still left without a clear answer on date of entry negotiations, however, it is very likely that no such date will be offered by Brussels by the end of 2012. For its part, the new government of Serbia is yet to prove that its EU-oriented rhetoric will be followed by action. Unfortunately, judging by route political situation in Serbia is developing currently, it seems that a return to the nationalist discourse of the 1990s is beginning to be visible. If this government, often accused of being nationalist, really does take the country into that direction and misses the opportunity to move closer to the EU, then Serbian EU integrations may not only take considerable time but Serbian society may face increasing radicalization. Coupled with effects of ‘enlargement fatigue’ and economic crisis in the EU Belgrade may find itself captive of both its own government’s blunders, on the one hand, and Brussels’ domestic issues, on the other. Let us just hope, for the sake of Serbia, that the worst-case scenario like this will not be played out!

#### ABSTRACT

This article analyzes Serbian accession bid to the EU. Although a candidate country as of March 2012, Serbia will have to manage some painstaking reforms before being admitted into the Union. Even if negotiations over Serbian entry start next year, and date of entry negotiations is still unknown, it seems realistic that Serbia will not join the EU by the end of this decade. In that respect, main argument of this article is that Serbian entry to the EU is dependent on the following issues: battling systemic corruption and (organized) crime; relations with Kosovo; and change of political culture.

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

**KANDYDAT Z KŁOPOTAMI CZY KŁOPOTLIWY KANDYDAT – SERBSKA  
AKCESJA DO UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ****STRESZCZENIE**

Artykuł stanowi analizę serbskich dążeń do członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej. Uwzględniając status Serbii jako państwa kandydującego do Unii Europejskiej od marca 2012 r., władze serbskie są zmuszone przeprowadzić niekiedy bolesne reformy. Nadal nieznana jest data wejścia Serbii do Unii Europejskiej, choć jasne pozostaje, że państwo to nie stanie się członkiem UE przed końcem tej dekady. Uwzględniając powyższe, w artykule wskazano, że wejście Serbii do UE uzależnione jest od: skutecznej walki z korupcją i (zorganizowaną) przestępczością; relacji z Kosowem; oraz zmiany kultury politycznej.