

Sarajevo

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In a cultural sense Russian soft-power, made of cultural-political, economic, humanitarian, propaganda and religious mechanisms of influence, is visible on every corner in the countries with an Orthodox majority, especially in Republic of Srpska (RS) within BiH. Russian soft power in RS is completely aligned with narratives of Dodik's regime and Serbian nationalism, with heritages of the genocidal war and culture of oblivion. It is present here in the form of economic and real-estate investments especially in the energy sector, in the work of Russian cultural centers and official foreign affairs foundations (A.M Gorchakov, Fond for Strategic Culture, etc), as well as in the work of dozens Serb-Russian brotherhood organizations, camps, war-veteran groups and NGOs. Also, pro-Russian online and printed media translated into Serbian are vastly popular in RS. Russian sources are financing religious and cultural exchange with RS and they are building projects such as a Russian ethno-village near Doboj, several Russian and Serb-Russian churches or monuments devoted to the Russian monarchs and national heroes. In the last 10 years such soft power had succeeded to produce very strong pro-Russian sentiment among RS and generally Serb population, a sentiment which became a part of Serbianhood as feeling of greatness or myth of power behind. In that sense Russian sentiment has replaced the sentiments toward Yugoslavia and its mighty army which had slowly faded away after the collapse of Milošević's regime. On the other side it produces strong anti-Western and anti-NATO sentiments.

In security and diplomatic sense the Russian support of Dodik's regime and RS has gone far away from soft-power and entered the spheres of direct support of RS's police, its security and para-intelligence structures, police trainings, exchange of information, diplomatic support and direct involvement in the internal political affairs of BiH. Police cooperation between RS and Russian security services is developing completely autonomously, with active exclusion and bypassing of state level BH authorities. Connections between Dodik's and Putin's regimes gave strong wings to the »RS radicalism and separatism«, destabilizing BiH and the region and giving space for intensive arming, equipping, training and increasing manpower of RS's police and security structures. Only in the last 3 years Dodik's regime tripled the capacities of special police units and spent more than 13 million Euros for new arms, uniforms and special equipment, planning to develop a »reserve police« as some kind of internal army, as well as a »military commemorative guard«. His plans to invest some 3 million Euros for the reconstruction of the former military base in Zalužani into a Center for police and security trainings is already underway and Russian fingerprints are all over it.

In a geopolitical and historical sense, the rise of Russian as well as Turkish nationalisms and regional aspirations had opened again something that history once had recorded as »the Eastern question«. Now in a much more globalized and interconnected world. Since the Russian-propelled aggression on Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea Russian foreign policy has showed much more aggressive approach in Balkan, especially in RS as Russia's most

important strongholds. That's neither because of the economic strength or size of the RS or its population, nor because of its geographical position. It is because RS remained a special case and paradox of international politics and law. The point is that the current legal and political status of RS is the most remarkable achievement and unbreakable weapon of Serbian, Russian, but also of European ultra-right-winged nationalists and forces of reactionary postmodernity, because: 1) in reality RS is an ethnically cleansed Orthodox Christian pro-Russian political community which is rewarded for the genocide it had planned and committed over Muslims, 2) as such RS still persists to exist despite the judicial truth about the creation of RS brought to us by Hague Tribunal – a fact which undermines the structure and values of international law which is often used by the West as a mechanisms to face Russian reactionary aspirations, 3) RS is a political community whose status is fixed not by Russia but by Western players, but nevertheless hides in itself a notion and idea that anti-human-rights, pro-fascist and semi-colonial precedents and strategies are still possible, which now can be used by Russia and all other populists, 4) RS as a political community can continue to exist only by ever-propelling and ever-imposing the hardline Orthodox Christian nationalism and pro-Russian sentiment, Islam-phobia and genocide denial and finally 5) RS is a political community which can exist only by imposing the politics of culturecide, historic revision and frozen conflict which is hidden under unfinished and unjust peace resulted by a badly imagined and even worse implemented peace agreement.

In ideological sense RS is showcase of how Russian influence is grasping not on the base of real power, but on the fact that on its periphery West and EU had lost ideological faith and will to push and defend values of human freedoms and rights (which includes social rights as well), values of international law and idea of a liberal, democratic, secular and socially sensitive society or the idea of an European union of free and equal people (not only free markets and trade). Russian nationalistic aspirations and influence can easily adjust to the free trade and corporative and geopolitical interests (what is best seen in the cases of the very fluid cooperation between American neoconservatives and libertarians or French pro-fascists and Putin's regime and Russian oligarchs), but cannot adjust to the free and equal people or free speech and media. That's why economic sanctions won't bring effects in the case of Putin's nor in the case of Dodik's regime. Russian interests work best if EU and NATO expansions and influences are starved off ideological values of human rights, liberal democracy and secularism and receive the forms of nationalistic or conservative geo-policy, clash of civilizations, or form of corporative agendas and interests of capital.