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# **The Concept of the Serbian World: A Copy of the Russian World or a Unique Idea for the Multidimensional Cohesion of the Serbian People?**

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of the Free University of Berlin**

**The Concept of the *Serbian World*:  
A Copy of the *Russian World* or a Unique Idea for the  
Multidimensional Cohesion of the Serbian People?**

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*“A true friend is not the one who flatters you, but the one who tells you the truth, the whole truth” – Rodolphe Archibald Reiss (1875-1929)*

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## **List of abbreviations:**

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Definition</b>
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CEDEM	Center for Democracy and Human Rights
CPC	Montenegrin Orthodox Church
CPD	USC Center on Public Diplomacy
DPS	Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro
DS	Democratic Party
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
HRT	Croatian Radio-Television
MOC	Macedonian Orthodox Church – Archdiocese of Ohrid
MSP	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia
MUP	Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PS	Movement of Socialists (in the Republic of Serbia)
ROC	Russian Orthodox Church
Rossotrudnichestvo	Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation
RT	Russia Today
RTS	Radio Television of Serbia
SANU	Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts
SDA	Party of Democratic Action (in BiH)
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SNS	Serbian Progressive Party
SNSD	The Alliance of Independent Social Democrats
SPC	Serbian Orthodox Church
SPS	Socialist Party of Serbia
UNO	United Nations Organization
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

# **1. Introduction:**

The result of the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was the emergence of six sovereign republics on the territory of the once communist state, namely: Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia. Except in the case of Slovenia, the new internationally recognized borders of the once federal republics of Yugoslavia did not forge typical nation states, after the Western European model, but rather ethnically mixed ones. Today, in those ethnically, and often religiously, mixed states, certain ethnic groups still remain outside of their kin state. This is particularly the case with the largest ethnic group in the Balkans, *the Serbs*. Approximately six million Serbs comprise the absolute majority of the population in the Republic of Serbia (83,3%) (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia 2011). However, after the collapse of Yugoslavia, around five million Serbs suddenly lived abroad, outside of the new state borders of the Republic of Serbia, but still identified themselves with their home country. Today, the majority lives in one of the BiH entities – the Republic of Srpska – and the youngest among the former Yugoslav republics, Montenegro. There is also a significant number of Serbs populating the Republic of Croatia (~120,000) and the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo (~100,000), whereas around three million Serbs live outside the territory of former Yugoslavia, residing in countries all over the world, such as Austria, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, and the USA. Due to the fact that the Serbs do not live in a single nation state, after the model of Western European countries like Germany and France, and are spread throughout the Balkan region and the world, the desire for a stronger cultural, spiritual, economic, and even political cohesion between the people of Serbian ethnicity has never faded away. Therefore, the relations between the home country and the Serbs in the region and diaspora are even based on Article XIII of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, pursuant to which Serbia shall protect the rights and interests of its nationals abroad and develop and promote relations of Serbs living abroad with the kin state (The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, art. XIII, sec. 1).

While all leaders of Serbia since the dissolution of SFRY did cherish the relations to the Serbs in the region and diaspora, it was not until the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the political and somewhat economic consolidation of the republic, that the Government of Serbia under the rule of the Democratic Party (DS) started devising a concrete document in order to protect and gradually unite the Serbs in Montenegro, BiH, North Macedonia, Croatia, and Kosovo\*. The Minister of Diaspora in the Serbian government (2008-2011), Srđan Srećković, together with the advisor to the President of the Republic of Serbia, Mlađan



Dorđević, drew up the initial document in 2010, that encompassed a detailed strategy for the Serbs in the region.<sup>1</sup> The document, although not publicly available, foresees the opening of new kindergartens, elementary and high schools for Serbian children in the region, under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) and financed from the budget of the Republic of Serbia. Its ultimate goal is to cherish the national identity and strengthen the ties between the Serbs in the region, mainly through education, culture, and the Orthodox religion. According to the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), Vuk Drašković, it is precisely that moment in contemporary Serbian history in which the Government of Serbia set the pillars for the *Serbian world* concept (Drašković 2022: 385).

Although the initial plan was devised around 2010 and its implementation began merely a year later with the adoption of the “Strategy of Preserving and Strengthening the Relations of Mother Country and the Diaspora and Mother Country and Serbs in the Region” (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2011), the term ‘*Serbian world*’ did not arise and become popular in the political discourse until only recently. This was the case because the document and strategy did not have any particular name pinned to them and were relatively unknown until the term itself was initially propelled under the media spotlight in Serbia and countries of former Yugoslavia, on September 4, 2020. On that day, the term *Serbian world* was used for the first time by a Serbian government official, the then Minister of Defence, Aleksandar Vulin, who in a pre-election meeting of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) in Banja Luka, stated that “I am here to announce that the Serbs will be a united political body and that they will create a *Serbian world*, [...] or we [the Serbs] will cease to exist as a nation” (Uredništvo srpskog sveta 2022). Since that very moment, the term has come to the centre of attention and has been quoted multiple times by domestic as well as regional leaders, but also various other prominent members of the political and academic elites. While it has been used regularly in the past couple of years, the true meaning of the concept still remains quite blurry, especially due to the fact that there is no official and accessible document defining it. Hence, the concept remains a product of the political discourse and mental construct of the social actors using it. In this context, it seems that as of recently, the concept has been given an additional political dimension to its already existing cultural and spiritual one. In the broadest sense, it includes the idea of strengthening the cohesion of the Serbian people, cherishing their national

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<sup>1</sup> Author’s note: The term “Serbs in the region” includes the members of the Serbian people living in the Republic of Slovenia, Republic of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Republic of Albania and Republic of Hungary; *Source*: Law on Diaspora and Serbs in the Region.

identity and sense of national unity, but also potentially a new integration of the areas with the Serbian ethnic majority into a federal state community.

It is not accidental that the question of unity among Serbs has become relevant again, gaining momentum under the rule of the government led by the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and its President, Aleksandar Vučić. In late December 2019, a wave of peaceful protests started against the controversial and newly adopted “Law on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Legal Status of Religious Communities” which effectively transferred ownership of church buildings and estates built before 1918 from the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) in Montenegro to the Montenegrin state. Thousands of people, led by SPC clerics, marched against the law fearing that it would be used to target the church’s assets and the Serbian community in Montenegro (Vasović 2020). The clerical protests, which lasted for several months, and ended with the victory of a pro-Serbian coalition in 2020 parliamentary election in Montenegro, were a part of the much broader ‘Serbian issue’, the ‘half-brother’ of the *Serbian world*, which relates to the status of Serbs in countries of former Yugoslavia. In addition, external events such as the decline in multilateralism, the geopolitical recession, and the overall situation on the global level have caused the attention of key Western powers to be diverted away from the Balkan region, where they have been traditionally present since the breakup of Yugoslavia. It was the internal problem that hit the EU in the Brexit process and the U.S. isolationism during the presidency of Donald Trump that forced the main Western powers to shift their focus from the Balkan Peninsula to their own backyards. In turn, this led to the formation of a (geo)political vacuum and left just enough space for other global powers to get more actively involved in the affairs of the Balkan region. Such developments saw a more dynamic presence of rising and revisionist global powers, such as China and Russia, who on the other hand saw the perfect opportunity to shape the region differently than their Western counterparts and influence the change of constellation of power amongst the countries of the Balkan Peninsula. The mixture of Western disinterest and the clerical protests in Montenegro, the emergence of new actors, the economic strengthening of Serbia, and the unsettled issues from the 1990s, created the perfect ground for the further implementation of the Serbian government’s soft power policy for its ‘Near abroad’. The program that has been ongoing since 2010, was rebranded under the new Serbian government and baptized as the *Serbian world*.

Altogether, as a result of Western disinterest in the region, the Russian emission of soft power has recently been directed at Serbia far more than it had been the case in previous years. Since then, Russian and numerous Russian-friendly NGOs such as the *Rossotrudnichestvo* and *Russkiy Mir Foundation* have started operating in Serbia (Tadić 2016: 120). Interestingly, with

the help of these institutions, the Russian government has been working on the implementation of a similar strategy for its own 'Near abroad' called the *Russian world* (*Ruskiy mir*), a concept likewise based on soft power. Given that there have been quite a few resemblances between the concepts of the *Serbian* and *Russian world*, media outlets from the region of former Yugoslavia and the West have almost immediately started comparing the concept of the *Serbian world* to the *Ruskiy mir*, condemning the former as being modelled after the latter (Brey 2022: 37). While there haven't been any official ties linking the two concepts until now, there are certain hints that might suggest that the Serbian government has developed its own version of the *Ruskiy mir* as its own foreign and regional policy doctrine, particularly in the way how both the Serbian and Russian political subjects perceive the concepts and discuss them in public discourse. Even Russian government officials like Maria Zakharova, the Director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, commented that the *Serbian world* is a humanitarian concept, and is therefore justified and in accordance with international law (Srna 2021). Besides their close relations fostered in the past decade, Russia and Serbia suffered a similar fate in the 1990s, when after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, many of their compatriots were left to live outside of their 'original' state borders, but nevertheless continued to identify with them on different levels. Consequently, it would be logical for Serbia to consider adopting an already existing concept with the aim of uniting an ethno-cultural group spread across several countries into one orbit with Belgrade as their political, cultural, economic and religious centre. Therefore, this article raises the question whether the Serbia modelled its soft-power concept after the principles of the *Russian world* and started implementing it under a different name. In order to compare the concepts, first of all the *Serbian world* needs to be thoroughly examined through the means of political discourse analysis. This research paper sets out to present selected outcomes of the discourse analysis on the concept, which can be found in contemporary Serbian online media, press releases and statements by government officials, the intelligentsia and representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC), as well as personally conducted interviews with the authors of the *Serbian world* idea. Moreover, it analyses the mechanisms through which the concept is being implemented by the government, and which soft power instruments are being used by Serbia to influence its 'compatriots', primarily in the region. Finally, the author presents a synopsis of selected outcomes of this research and possible perspectives for further analysis of the *Serbian world* concept.

**Figure 1:** The *Serbian world* portrayed by the Croatian Radio-Television (Nikolić 2021b):



### 1.1 Research status:

Considering that the contemporary concept of the term *Serbian world* is newly forged and has come into use only recently, it should come as no surprise that there are few published scholarly papers on this topic. While the term itself certainly has preoccupied not only the Serbian, but also the regional general public for over two years now, the *Serbian world* concept and what is understood by it, still remains quite vague. Many researchers still refrain from studying the concept, probably due to the lack of concrete information, the fluid nature of its meaning, and their uncertainty whether the concept is transitory or permanent. In Serbia, besides some online and newspaper articles, the topic has not seen much research. The only published works containing minor, but also critical content on the *Serbian world* project, are the book *Srpstvo i pravoslavlje* (2022), by historian Aleksandar Raković, one of the ideologues of the concept, and the recently published memoirs of Vuk Drašković titled *Ožiljci života* (2022). In the latter, the author shortly explains the content of the government document adopted in 2010 and adds that the notion *Serbian world* was only recently pinned to it, giving therefore only a superficial overview of what the document entails. Nonetheless, his work is crucial as it is the first one connecting the notion to a specific government document, giving it more political weight.

Given the few published papers on this topic, this scholarly writing is going to almost exclusively rely on primary literature sources, including personally conducted interviews with the main ideologues of the concept, Aleksandar Raković, Gojko Raičević and Miljan Glišić. These primary sources are also focussed on Serbian political discourse which can be taken from interviews, press releases, public speeches and various other statements, which are primarily accessible online in the most significant media outlets in Serbia such as *Beta*, *Danas*, *Nova S*, *Novi Standard*, *Novosti*, *NI*, *Politika*, *RTS* and many others. The Serbian political actors who most frequently used the term in the past, include the aforementioned Aleksandar Vulin, as well as the President of the Republic of Srpska, Milorad Dodik. These politicians, together with historian Raković, are considered to be the main advocators of the implementation of the *Serbian world* concept. Given the lack of official documents defining the concept and the fact that the *Serbian world* is a product of the patterns of diverse political discourses, the public statements of these political actors in the domestic media are of immense value for the successful outcome of this research paper.

Since the concept surfaced under the media spotlight, it has been more often discussed and thematized in the region and the West than in Serbia itself, which leads to the logical conclusion that the interest for the meaning of the concept is higher abroad than within the national borders of Serbia. While the articles produced by regional and Western researchers are usually politicized and flawed, they are nevertheless extremely important due to the fact that they shed a completely opposing light on the topic and present their perspective and understanding of the *Serbian world* concept. For instance, the Digital Forensic Center (DFC) from Podgorica has published a paper titled *The Serbian World – An Originally Borrowed Concept* (2021) where a group of authors tries to define the concept and analyse its relation to the *Russian world*, the official foreign policy doctrine of the Russian Federation. Additionally, a German-Bosnian institute *Pangea* published a paper under the name *Die Serbische Welt des Aleksandar Vučić – Tausend Gesichter und die Handschrift des Grossserbischen Traums* in 2021, which mainly compares the current concept to some of the previous ones such as *Greater Serbia* from the 1990s. Lastly, the concept has also caught the attention of the outside world and has been a topic of analyses by the German journalist Thomas Brey who published his writings *Staatsziel Revisionismus: Die Jugoslawienkriege und Russlands Angriff auf die Ukraine* (2022) where he analysis the *Serbian world* concepts in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

When it comes to the academic research in regards to the *Russian world*, there has been quite a number of published papers on the concept and analyses of its evolution (Gasimov 2012; Petro 2015; Pieper 2020). The *Russkiy mir* concept dates back to the 1990s, but it did not

become a planetary phenomenon until 2007 when Vladimir Putin himself inaugurated the Russkiy Mir Foundation. The Russian and Western academia see the *Russkiy mir* concept as Russia's approach to develop and embrace its use of soft power especially in regards to its 'Near abroad'. One of the first papers ever on this topic was written by Konstantin Kosachev, the Head of the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo), titled *The Specifics of Russian Soft Power* (2012). One of the most notable works on this topic is the article written by Marlene Laruelle (2015) titled *The 'Russian World', Russia's Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination*, where the author gives a textbook overview of the roots, trajectory, architects and different meanings of the concept. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace published probably the most detailed study, written by Valery Tishkov (2008), called *Russian World – Changing Meanings and Strategies*. Overall, the paper written by Tishkov is amongst the most crucial studies in terms of the *Russkiy mir* concept as it gives a perfect overview of the different approaches and meanings of the term, which is probably the best example of the fluidness of this concept. The research paper crafted by Mikhail Suslov (2018) has usefully explored the nexus between the Russian post-Soviet geopolitical ideology and the logic of spheres of influence, which is in his opinion the driving force of the *Russian world* concept. However, the literature so far on the *Serbian* and *Russian world* conceptualizations have not been brought together yet in an attempt to substantiate the debate about the similarities and differences between the two *worlds*. On a conceptual level, this paper therefore adds to the literature on the *Serbian world* concept, being the pioneer in the academic circles in defining it, as well as analysing its connection to the *Russian world*.

Lastly, taking into consideration that both concepts are based on the soft power principle, the monumental works of Joseph S. Nye, who coined the term, titled "*Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*" (2004) and "*Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*" (1990), will play a crucial role in outlining the theoretical structure of this analysis.

## **1.2 Methodology and Time Framework:**

The study of a concept starts with identifying its origin and terminological trajectory. There are several approaches; for instance, one may try to attribute it to a specific creator or architect of the concept, be it a politician or intellectual, and follow its evolution, or look at the term as participating in a larger *Zeitgeist* that is distinctive of a particular period in history (Laruelle 2015: 3). One of the most notable works in this regard is the article written by Marlene Laruelle

(2015) titled “*The ‘Russian World’, Russia’s Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination*”, where the author gives a perfect overview of the roots, architects and different meanings of the *Russkiy mir* concept. Hence, her work will serve as one of the pillars for this thesis. This paper primarily puts focus on analysing the historical roots and contemporary origin of the term *Serbian world*, with emphasis on its terminological trajectory, its genesis and development, and moves on to discuss the instruments for its implementation. It further explores the articulation of this term with Serbia’s foreign and regional policy orientations. Additionally, in order to understand and define the contemporary meaning of the term, the author analyses the patterns of use and perception of the said term by political and social actors. Therefore, it is necessary to rely on the help of methodological tools such as primarily the political discourse analysis.

Moreover, the author of the thesis reconstructs the cognitive structure of the *Serbian world* concept in political discourses in contemporary Serbia using the methodology of cognitive semantics. Something similar has been conducted in the paper of Michal Kozdra (2017) named *The Boundaries of Russian Identity: Analysis of the Russkiy Mir Concept in Contemporary Russian Online Media*, where the dataset for the analysis comprised one hundred online media texts contributing to ethnocentric discourse that were published between 2005 and 2013 on several Russian webpages. Although there are several approaches to defining new concepts, the method used by Kozdra applies best for this thesis, due to the simple fact that the *Serbian world* is a product of mental constructs of various social actors, as it has not been defined by its ideologues or written down as an official document by the Serbian government. Generally speaking, discourses “do not speak for themselves, but only ‘come to life’ through social actors,” (Keller et al. 2006: 135) and will therefore be crucial for the reconstruction of the different dimensions of the *Serbian world* concept. Discourse is usually defined as a written and spoken form of social action, a way of assigning meanings to a particular sphere of social life (Fairclough/Wodak 1997: 267). This assignment of meanings is accomplished *via* sequences of language acts that are thematically connected on a macro level (Girnth 1996, 78). In this context, it is important to underline that social actors should be understood as elites of symbolic power that are capable of creating imagined communities, wielding control over the means of communication, and possessing adequate capital. Moreover, they are capable of ruling over others and influencing their minds, mostly by shaping public opinion, as well as processes of categorization and conceptualization of reality (Kozdra 2018: 62). Therefore, the thesis focuses on online political discourse such as press releases or speeches given by primarily Serbian but also some regional actors, where the methodology of cognitive semantics plays a fundamental role in the overall analysis of patterns. The dataset in this scholarly writing

comprises exactly thirty available and accessible online interviews, press releases, statements and articles, whereas the time framework is set for the period between 2020 and 2022. Although the contemporary notion of the *Serbian world* was devised by Miljan Glišić in 2016 (Raković; Glišić 2022), it did not catch the attention of the wider audience until it was proclaimed by both domestic and regional government officials such as Aleksandar Vulin and Milo Đukanović. The period before 2020 is critical for the analysis of the trajectory of the contemporary term *Serbian world* and its meaning among the social actors using it, but in that time framework the term had not yet been part of the media culture. When the term was accepted in 2020 by the then minister Aleksandar Vulin, the concept was promoted to state level and became part of the mainstream in the media outlets of the region of former Yugoslavia. The consequence of his public statement about the *Serbian world* was that the former minister created an avalanche of public appearances by social actors of Serbian ethnicity, but also those from the region and the West. At that moment the term left an indelible mark in the political and ethnocentric discourse in the region of former Yugoslavia and globally. Consequently, the aim of discourse analysis is to reconstruct the specific semantic orders that are characteristic of various specific social spheres, since the reality around us is constructed by social negotiation of meanings. Thus, discourses do not merely provide “*historical frameworks that determine thought processes of discourse subjects and the order of objects but are social realities and collective knowledge structures that influence social practice*” (Kozdra 2018: 62).

On the other hand, in the social sciences the discourse analysis examines the rules and regularities of the given discourses, i.e., the oral or written discussion and examination of a topic (Keller et al. 2006: 135). The objects of discourse analysis (discourse, writing, conversation, etc.) are variously defined in terms of coherent sequences of sentences, propositions, or speeches. Overall, it is important to add that in contrast to other approaches in the social sciences, the discourse analysis does not specifically aim to examine the use of language with regard to its social-structural formulations, but rather focusses on the institutional regulations of the practice of statements and their performative, reality-constructing power. In the case of political discourse, the objects refer to the text and talk of politicians or political institutions, such as presidents and prime ministers and other members of government, parliament or political parties, both at the local, national and international levels. Political discourse analysis is a specific branch of discourse analysis which focuses on discourse in political forums (debates, speeches, hearings, etc.) as the phenomenon of interest. Since the concept remains quite blurry up to this day, the various political discourses will define and reconstruct the term in a way it is understood by the social actors using it. This is a



particularly valuable approach to this topic due to the fact that primarily the *Serbian world* concept is a mental construct, given that there are no publicly available government documents that would define it instead of the social actors in their appearances.

The methodology used in the analysis of the dataset draws on semantic and cultural analysis with a cognitive and anthropologic angle and elements of critical discourse analysis. Emphasis is placed on the processes of mental embracement of the *Serbian world* by social actors and the systematic investigation of hidden patterns, ideologies and dimensions embedded in discourse. In the aspect of this thesis, there is a textbook example of the process of mental embracement of the world by social actors, where for instance the *Russkiy mir* is viewed by Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Peskov, his Press Secretary, as a (geo)political concept aiming to re-establish unity amongst Russians. However, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, has made reference to the term as more cultural than political. The same case applies for the *Serbian world* concept. Here, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Aleksandar Vulin, regards the term as something rather political than cultural, stating that the primary goal of the *Serbian world* is to unite the Serbian people with the capital in Belgrade. On the other hand, President of the Republic of Srpska, Milorad Dodik, views the term in the same way as Lavrov – as a more cultural than political concept. This is especially why it is beneficial to take the political discourse analysis into consideration and use it as the primary methodological tool in this research paper. The *Serbian world* concept is defined through the speeches that are given by high-level politicians and the way they construct it during their performances. What also makes both the Russian and Serbian concepts so significant and stimulating for research is their ‘fluid’ nature, where it is differently perceived in regards to the social actor(s) using it.

After having defined the concept through the help of the political discourse analysis, the paper shifts to the comparison of the *Serbian world* and its Russian counterpart, the *Russkiy mir*.<sup>2</sup> In addition, due to the fact that the concept of the *Russkiy mir* has already been the topic of analysis of several papers and articles throughout the years, there will be no need to further examine or define it. The results from other authors and academia, listed in the previous chapters and many more, will be presented and used in this research paper in order to compare it to the newly-established *Serbian world*. The outcome of this comparative analysis will be the answer to the research question whether and how the concept of the *Serbian world* resembles the *Russkiy mir* concept of the Russian government.

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<sup>2</sup> Author’s note: The word “russkiy” – ‘Russian’ – indicates historical roots with historical Russia and the word “mir” refers both to the world (planet earth) and to peace. This wordplay is impossible to reproduce in the English language, hence the reason why this concept is referenced in this thesis by the transcribed Russian phrase.

### 1.3 Theoretical structure:

In order to properly conduct the research analysis in the paper, it is necessary to provide the theoretical structure which this work is based upon. Taking into consideration that both the concept of the *Serbian world* and that of the *Russkiy mir* are based on soft power, it means that the various, often conflicting, definitions of soft power must be presented.

Whenever there is an article, research paper, analysis or a book containing the term *soft power*, it is always referred to the globally famous American scholar Joseph S. Nye, who invented it. Soft power as a concept was constituted for the first time in his monumental works "*Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*" (1990) and "*Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*" (2004), when Joseph S. Nye broadly defined it as "*getting others to want the outcomes that you want*" or "*the ability to shape the preferences of others*" (Nye 2005: 10). There are, concretely speaking, two ways to shape the preferences of others; you can either coerce them with threats, and induce them with payments (hard power), or you can attract and co-opt them to want what you want (soft power). The principle of soft power is to co-opt people rather than coerces them and it is thus also considered as the "*second face of power*" that indirectly allows you to obtain the outcomes you want. A country's soft power, according to Nye, rests primarily on three resources: "*its culture (in places where it is attractive to other), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when others see them as legitimate and having moral authority)*" (Nye 2011: 84). This soft power can be wielded by all actors in international politics like NGOs, not just by states.

This almost benign view of the nature of power, which Nye's definitions imply, has often been challenged in theoretical disputes. Among the critics are neorealists, rationalist and neo-rationalists, who completely dismiss soft power out of hand as they assert that actors in international relations respond to only two types of incentives – economic and military force. Other authors even summarize their view of soft power as a means of manipulation and coercion, as the third face of power (Mattern 2008: 697). Overall, as a concept, it can be quite difficult to distinguish soft power from hard power. For example, Janice Bially Mattern (2005: 586) argues that George W. Bush's use of the phrase "*you are either with us or with the terrorists*" was in fact an exercise of hard power. Though military and economic force was not used to pressure other states to join its coalition, a kind of representational force was used. This kind of force threatens the identity of its partners, forcing them to comply or risk being labelled. This being the case, soft power is therefore not so soft. Nonetheless, soft power is one of the most frequently used concepts in contemporary political discourse, and its use has become

established in the scientific and professional public. Although the concept of soft power was defined more than two decades ago, there are still certain doubts about what soft power actually represents and how it works in international relations. In this discourse there are two broad philosophical schools of thought that have formed over the past decades in the discussion about the nature of power in politics and international relations. On one hand, there are mostly Anglo-American scholars who view power as an instrument to be used in order to achieve set goals. Even Joseph S. Nye claims that soft power does not contradict the international relations theory of realism: “*Soft power is not a form of idealism or liberalism. It is simply a form of power, one way of getting desired outcomes*” (Nye 2011: 82). Both the neorealist and the neoliberal approaches share this utilitarian view of power, even if they see the goals of the use of power in different ways. On the other side, there are neo-Marxist structuralists who are inclined to present power as the means to dominate, rather than simply influence. Their theories always evolve around the centres of power that project power over less developed countries or disadvantaged classes within those countries. Thus, neo-Marxists evolved from state-centric views to market and class-centric ones (Djokić 2020: 233). As this paper is about Serbia’s foreign policy, the author will use the neorealist paradigm of power as a means to an end, used by either national or international institutions.

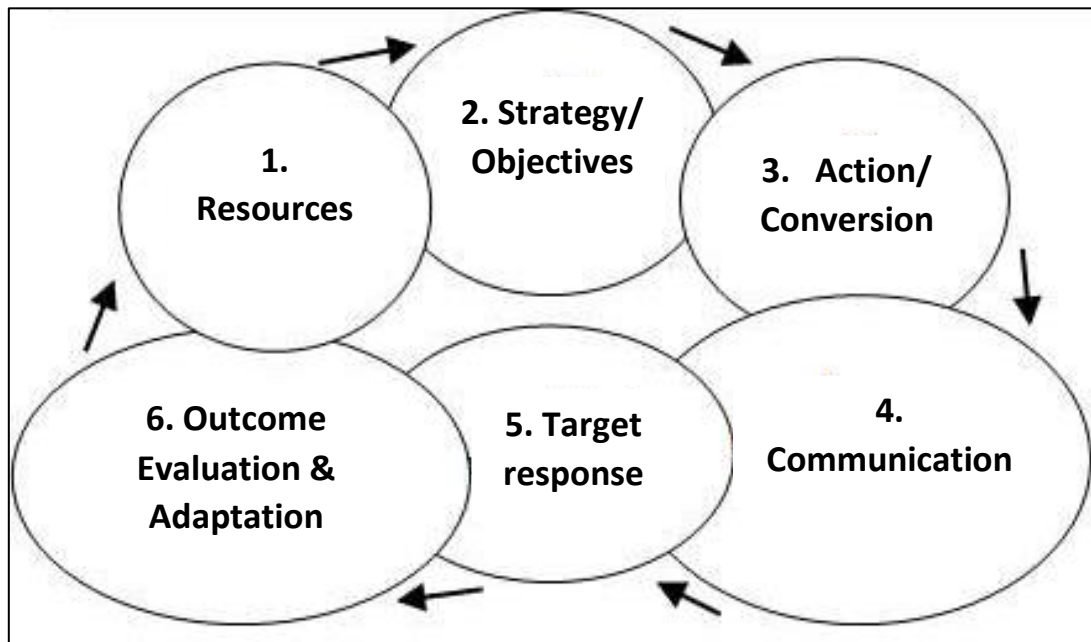
### **1.3.1 Sources of ‘soft power’ and Nye’s conversion model:**

According to the Global report on Soft Power, which is formed by the U.S. Center on Public Diplomacy, soft power can have a large number of sources and they depend on the country. Soft power resources are the basis on which a country's reputation is built, and communication strategies bring these assets to the fore, using them to shape the content they market, advocate a particular political position, and inspire action. However, there are six most common sources of soft power, which are also called sub-indices of soft power. These are: “*the quality of a country’s political institutions, the extent of their cultural appeal, the strength of their diplomatic network, the global reputation of their higher education system, the attractiveness of their economic model, and a country’s digital engagement with the world*” (McClory 2017). Accumulation of soft power is in any case costly, difficult, and time consuming. Solid reputations are only made over years. Therefore, Nye created a model of turning the above presented and many other national resources into soft power. Like a river, says Nye (2005), a country’s image has many sources, thus the first step in the process of converting soft power into a successful outcome is to identify the resources of a country. Nye underlines that only

through the appropriate use of national resources, soft power can be influenced successfully: *“the ability to influence others through resources that can be used to shape national agendas, contribute to the process of persuasion, and foster positive attraction, all in order to achieve a desired outcome”* (Nye 2021: 6). After their recognition, they are transformed into different contents that can be directed to foreign audiences. The resources are then aligned with the set goals and directed where they will be most effective, with the task of achieving the desired outcome, attracting potential consumers and building the best possible image of the country. In order to specify the priorities in a country's action at the regional or international level, it is crucial to formulate a strategy. This strategy specifies ways in which the state, in line with its own goals, will try to contribute to the global community. In most countries, converting soft power into concrete acting requires new policies, initiatives, and program funding, but also effective means of communication. The process of resource development means that these same resources begin to be used by foreign audiences, while international communication turns them into concrete influence. The last two steps in the conversion process are evaluation and adaptation. All carried out actions must be evaluated to show their effectiveness in accordance with the results they have achieved, so that the strategy can be adjusted if the results are unsatisfying or simply confirmed if the achieved results show to be effective and bring the planned development. Therefore, in order for states to use soft power in the right way, they should gradually work on its manifestation (Bubanja 2018: 886).

Studies show that when used properly, soft power can be an effective tool for creating a positive national image both domestically and globally. Hans J. Morgenthau said that the state achieves its interests through the politics of prestige, that is, the power of a nation depends not only on the strength of its diplomacy and the strength of its military force, but also on its attractiveness to other nations, which can be found in its political institutions, politics and philosophy (Morgenthau et al. 2005: 103). That is why the construction of a positive image of a state has paramount importance both for the realization of its political interests (the realization of the goals of its foreign policy, the positioning of the state in the political milieu of the world), and for the realization of its economic interests (the state presents itself as a desirable trading partner or an attractive investment destination). By promoting its own resources, soft power aims to give a country the opportunity to raise public awareness of the country outside its borders, its politics, economy, and culture. With greater knowledge about the country and its products, services offered by its companies or institutions, a positive impression is created, consumers become attached to and expand their knowledge of the country, highlight its positive features, and thus raise the number of potential collaborators (Nye 2011: 100).

**Figure 2: Soft power conversion process, developed by Joseph S. Nye:**



### **1.3.2 Soft Power and Serbia: A nation on the rise?**

An increasing number of countries started realizing that in the modern world hard power can no longer ensure the achievement of political and economic goals. That is why countries, including Serbia, recently started opting for the use of soft, rather than hard power, as it represents a tool that can help all countries regardless of their size or level of development. States choose to use this type of power to create a positive image of themselves with the foreign public by using national resources rather than military force. Positive attitudes and opinions of the public in other countries about a nation state are the first step in positioning that country as a desirable partner and collaborator (McClory 2017). Therefore, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is marked by an increased attention to the appeal and positive image of a country as instruments of influence in the international arena (Kosachev 2012: 6).

There is no universal recipe for success when it comes to using soft power. It is only important that each state detects its soft power resources and directs them where they will be most successful, in accordance with its own priorities, interests and goals. During the time of the SFRY, the state developed public and cultural diplomacy and through them developed its concept of soft power. In this way, it worked on its international image as a country that was culturally and economically rich, with developed school systems that were often visited by foreign students. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, the image of Serbia on the global stage has been somewhat negative. The bad image and reputation are a consequence of the ethnic

conflicts and NATO bombings of Serbia and Montenegro in 1999, in connection with the negative campaigns of the major world media outlets during the nineties of the last century. Serbia had limited influence on that process due to its media blockage, but now there are mechanisms for it to improve its image and reputation, which will pave the way for it to work on itself in other areas and better position itself in the international community (Bubanja 2018: 885). During the nineties, due to the political and economic situation, Serbia did not have the opportunity to influence the construction of its own image in the world, but now things are different. Serbia as an independent country, like its predecessor Yugoslavia, is rich in sources of soft power that can be used and effectively promoted. Despite the upward tendency, Serbia is still ranked low on lists containing various indicators of the use of soft power. This is the result of the decades-long neglect of promotional and communication strategies that were not applied in the fight for a place on the world stage. In this regard, the American Center for Public Diplomacy (CPD) conducts annual surveys on the global use of soft power, highlighting the 30 countries that use this power most successfully (McClory 2017). In that annual report, Serbia ranked 81<sup>st</sup> in 2017 (2016: 77th) out of 100 assessed countries, which is a relatively low position and leaves a lot of room for work on its improvement (Bubanja 2018: 885). An encouraging fact for the further development of its source of soft power is the announced opening of cultural centres in Berlin, Moscow, Trieste and Beijing, which would significantly contribute to the spread of knowledge and information about Serbia, and open the possibility of learning its language, getting to know its literature, art, music and more. The soft power in terms of culture is predominantly spread by numerous Serbian associations formed around the world in the Serbian diaspora, and they actively work to promote its unique cultural identity and religion. The largest number of these associations is connected to the work of the Serbian Orthodox churches in local areas, and annually financed by The Office for Cooperation with the Diaspora and Serbs in the Region of the Republic of Serbia. Another encouraging fact is the announcement of the Director of The Office for Cooperation, Arnaud Gouillon, who stated that alongside the eight newly opened Serbian language schools in Austria, additional 15 will be opened in Spain, Portugal, Russia and Malta (Politika Online 2020). All recent initiatives by Serbia have usually been conducted under the jurisdiction of The Office for Cooperation, which represents one of the leading soft power instruments.

In order to even further improve its use of soft power, Serbia would have to define a strategy and determine its course of action in accordance to its national resources. It seems that Serbia did finally develop a concrete strategy with the adopted government document in 2010 and strategy from 2011, that as of some years ago is known under the notion *Serbian world*. The

*Serbian world* concept is undoubtedly based on soft power and although it mainly focusses on attracting Serbs from the ‘Near abroad’, it also represents a strategy for all people of Serbian ethnicity wherever they might live, but also for countries that can more easily than others be influenced by Serbia such as the former Yugoslav republics. Under the veil of the *Serbian world*, the Serbian Government is trying to promote its unique culture, bridge the distance to its diaspora, but mainly impact the Serbian population in BiH, Croatia, Kosovo\*, North Macedonia, and Montenegro. This is done through cultural centres, various associations, language schools and also the SPC which definitely constitutes the most important soft power instrument utilised to exercise influence regionally and internationally. Serbia aims towards creating stronger cultural ties with its compatriots living abroad in order for the Serbs to develop a sense of national belonging and look towards Belgrade as their political, cultural, economic and spiritual capital, rather than Sarajevo, Podgorica, or Skopje.

That Serbia’s soft power strategy does not merely relate to its compatriots living abroad can be seen at the example of North Macedonia. During the recent Covid-19 pandemic, Serbia donated over 40.000 doses of the Sputnik V vaccines to its southern neighbour (Politika Online 2021). Furthermore, the SPC helped end a 55-year long schism with the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC) and contributed to its reintegration into the Eastern Orthodox community in 2022 (Gajić 2022). This soft power projection, mainly in regards to religion, health care and culture helped improve the image of Serbia. Thus, in a survey conducted by the Prespa Institute in North Macedonia in the ongoing year (2022) the Macedonian people voted in favour of the Republic of Serbia and named it their best friend and partner in international relations (38,6%), in front of the USA (16,8%) and EU (7,8%) (Bošnjaković 2022). Consequently, the use of this concept as soft power has an impact on the marking of new geopolitical, cultural, and social boundaries by political and symbolic power elites. In addition, soft power is spread more easily if strong cultural ties exist between the two countries, which is definitely the case with the neighbours surrounding Serbia, due to their shared history. Serbia has strong cultural and historical ties to its neighbours and the ethnic Serbs inhabiting them. Thus, Serbia became aware that it can promote its culture and use its soft power regionally rather than globally.

## **2. Defining the *Serbian world* concept:**

The original *Serbian world* is a concept with a primarily cultural-geographical meaning and spreads through a vast area, from Saint Andrea and Trieste to Thessaloniki, in which the Serbs left their mark throughout their history. In certain contexts, it can also have a linguistic,

philosophical, spiritual and territorial connotation, among many other meanings. It is therefore analogous to similar expressions in other nations such as the French *Le Monde français*, the Romanian *Lumea Romaneasca* or the Russian *Russkiy Mir*. Throughout its history, the term *Serbian world* has also been synonymous to notions such as *Srpski rod*, i.e., being of Serbian descent, and *Srpske zemlje* (Eng. = Serbian lands), or rather, like historian Aleksandar Raković formulated it, a micro-term within the much broader notion of *Serbhood*, which can be translated as ‘being of Serbian ethnicity and identifying with the Serbian nation and its traditions’ (Serb. = *Srpstvo*). The original term was thus not recently developed, but has a long-standing history dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was a call for the Serbs to create their own orbit, or rather be it *world*, in which they would cherish their own system of values and connect with each other, after decades of foreign rule. In this context, the notion of *world* should be understood by its ancient meaning, that of civilizational space. The ancient sources spoke about the Greek, Roman and Byzantine world as a way to define broad territories under the influence of a singular centre. Not only did these vast areas share the centre’s cultural values, but they also displayed political loyalty to it and were integrated into its economic orbit (Laruelle 2015: 3). In general terms, according to Mikhail Gefter, a Soviet-era dissident historian, *worlds* are trans- and post-national formations staying in tight relations with each other but keeping irreducible differences in culture, politics, economics and morals. Inside the *world*, countries or rather entities would organize themselves into international communities of friendly and culturally fraternal states (Suslov 2018: 343). In many aspects, the *Serbian world* is an updated version of the ancient perception of a shared civilizational space. Belgrade, regarded as the political, economic and cultural centre of Serbs, would take on the role of the Italian region, Piedmont, and serve as the core for Serbian unity, cohesion and integration.

## **2.1 Moving through time and space:**

The term *Serbian world* and what is meant by it, was not coined by its modern-day propagators, nor by its modern-day defamers. It has a strong historical foundation and originates in a period that can be quite indicative and significant for the present and future projection. The traditional Serbian folk expression *Serbian world* has been attested since mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in Serbian periodicals and there are no records of the term being used prior. Back then, it related to the so-called Serbian 19<sup>th</sup> century, i.e., to the history of the Serbian people in the said century, when they won back their homeland, and their national reawakening. It was a time when the Serbian people after centuries of Ottoman (and Austro-Hungarian) hegemony fought to win back their freedom and re-establish their nation state, both through military and diplomatic



means. At that time, the Serbs lived throughout several countries and empires and had the need to connect between each other through means of culture, tradition, religion, literature, etc. In addition, many important institutions such as the *Matica srpska* and the first printed newspaper *Novine Serbske* were established outside of the then Principality of Serbia. Used abundantly, the term *Serbian world* was a part of a much broader national context, and therefore did not represent any kind of government strategy. Thus, it can be found, for instance, in the political newspaper of the Vojvodina Serbs named *Zastava* which was edited and managed by Svetozar Marković, famous Serbian socialist thinker. There, the phrase *Serbian world* was quite common, and it signified the integrity and an integralist view of the Serbian national being, despite having been dispersed throughout several kingdoms and empires. Apart from the political newspaper *Zastava*, there were many papers like *Zemunski glasnik*, *Sion*, *Starmali*, *Prosvetni glasnik*, *Školski list*, *Srpska nezavisnost*, and others who mentioned the term in the same or a similar capacity as Svetozar Marković. Playwright Žarko Lazarević even wrote a poem called the *Serbian world* and the term was also frequently used throughout the books titled “*History of the Serbian People*” and “*Political circumstances in Bosnia and Herzegovina*”, wrote by Serbian historiographer Vladimir Ćorović. The term even comes up in the songs of famous Serbian poet and song writer, Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, in his poem named *Malena sam* (Eng. = ‘Petite I Am’) with the following lyrics:

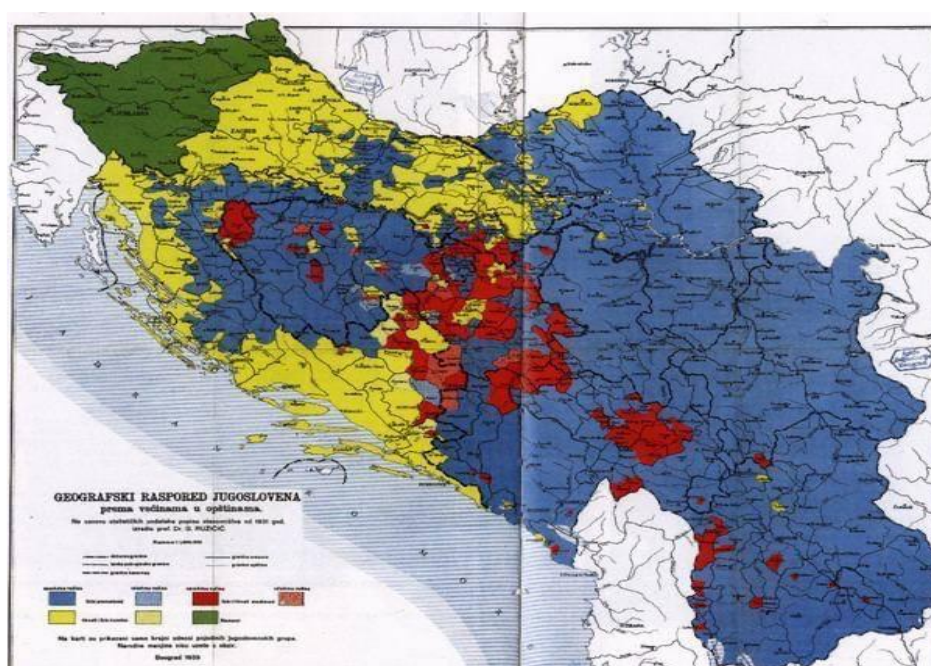
“Аој, крила, кад би моја била!	“I wonder why I cannot fly!
Па да пр'нем по <i>српскоме свету</i> ,	O'er the <i>Serbian world</i> my wings I'd spread
не по роси ни мирисном цвету,	Not o'er the dew or a fragrant flowerbed,
већ по земљам' што се српске звале.“	But the lands that Serbian names once had.”

In this poem, Jovan Jovanović Zmaj emphasizes the belonging to the *Serbhood*, as the highest possible value, dominant even in comparison to other categories such as family. At that time, the *Serbian world* was a micro-term and part of the much broader definition of *Serbhood*, to which it is also somewhat synonymous. Furthermore, in the newspaper “*U Novom Sadu, o Ivanju-dne*”, the general public was called to subscribe to the *Serbian world*, a magazine about political, public, educational and entertainment affairs, including an advertisement with images depicting Vojvodina Serb deputies in the Hungarian Parliament, such as Svetozar Miletić. Another newspaper titled “*Српску свет = Srbsky svet = Serbische Welt*” was issued on a weekly basis in Novi Sad in the years 1913 and 1914, with 37 issues in total. Lastly, even King Nicholas I of Montenegro mentioned the term *Serbian world* in his speech during the

commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Petar II Petrović Njegoš whose works are among the most important in Serbian literature: “*Like a lion from a thicket, from a long-dead, long-lost volcanic basin of Njeguška, my uncle Rade flew out to support the Serbian world in its ideals and duties for the fulfilment of a great national task*” (Trklja 2008). After WWI and the creation of Yugoslavia, the majority of the Serbs were united under the banner of the newly-established country. Mainly in the first Yugoslavia (monarchist 1918-1945; communist 1945-1992), the *Serbian world* became for the first time in history territorialized, given that all territories where Serbs comprise the majority of the population were finally living under the same roof. Due to the fact that the absolute majority of the Serbian people inhabited the territories of Yugoslavia, there was no necessity to stress out the topic of the *Serbian issue* at that time. Hence there aren’t no traces of periodicals, pamphlets, books nor songs where the notion of the *Serbian world* is mentioned. Especially in that period, the Serbs did not have the need to connect through various forms of expression and culture, as well as throughout the borders of several countries, kingdoms, and empires.

As this chapter has shown, the *Serbian world* is not a present-day creation of Serbian social actors, but originates in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, meaning that it has more than a 150-year-long tradition in the country’s historical discourse. Thus, the ever-increasing presence in everyday Serbian political discourse should be observed and analysed through the lens of its historical continuity.

**Figure 3: Geographical distribution of Yugoslavs (1935); the territories majorly inhabited by Serbs are depicted in blue colour (Retrieved from the Archives of Yugoslavia:**



## 2.2 Modern-day meaning and use of the term:

The contemporary notion and the use of the syntagm of the *Serbian world* were crafted by Miljan Glišić, the founder of *Snaga naroda*, the first internet radio in the Balkans. According to him, at the beginning of 2016, Nebojša 'Balša' Ostojić, a guest in one of the shows broadcasted by the radio called *Snaga naroda*, talked about the identity of the Serbian people, their historical sacrifice and the values building a centuries-old national heritage. In that context, he assessed that the *Serbhood* is not “*a statehood, a border or a national issue*”, but rather a “*world of values, with all its peculiarities*” (Jadovno 2021). As the chief editor of the radio, Glišić immediately understood the determining power of this idea. Glišić afterwards explained in an interview for the portal *Jadovno*, that on the basis of the statement given by his guest Nebojša Ostojić, he himself came up with a new phrase *Serbian world*, which in his opinion does not refer to demography or space, but to spiritual and cultural specificities of a nation and their contribution to global civilization. Glišić stressed out that “*the Serbian world, therefore, refers to the world of values of a nation, with its own peculiarities. The phenomenon is universal, and the (geo)political circumstances are transitory*” (Ibid.).

Years passed and in 2020, shortly after the beginning of the clerical protests in Montenegro, Gojko Raičević, a mutual friend of Ostojić and Glišić, came to Belgrade with the intention of starting the work of the national television *IN4S*. He offered Miljan Glišić the position of chief editor of the television *IN4S*, and during the months of the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, Raičević and Glišić, prepared the program and the technical infrastructure of the television together. Nonetheless, there was still the issue of the main show, which would be broadcasted live and in prime time, especially in regards to its name, content and form. This needed to be addressed because the main show was meant to incorporate the message and idea that the whole television wanted to send to its audience. In the end, Glišić insisted that the prime-time show be given the name *Serbian world* (Serb. = *Srpski sv(ij)et*) as a completely new view of the so-called *Serbian issue*, the ‘half-brother’ of the *Serbian world*. Nebojša Ostojić wholeheartedly supported his proposal and Gojko Raičević immediately agreed. The show was officially launched on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020, on a symbolic day called Vidovdan, which is a significant date in Serbian collective memory due to the Kosovo Battle in 1389. The guests of the first show were chosen in the context of the clerical protests in Montenegro and consisted of prominent Serbian intellectuals who were banned from entering the county (in4snet 2020). The show immediately caught the attention of mainly regional actors. The President of Montenegro, Milo Đukanović, recognized the power of the message transmitted by the show, as a serious threat to undermine

the survival of his regime. He harshly accused the Serbs, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the authorities in Belgrade, that the *Serbian world* illustrates a newer version of the hegemonic idea of *Greater Serbia*, which was transposed into the softer euphemism *Serbian world* (Marković 2020b). In this way, Đukanović himself became the first major player to publicly use and promote the term, which everyone uses today for various purposes and agendas.

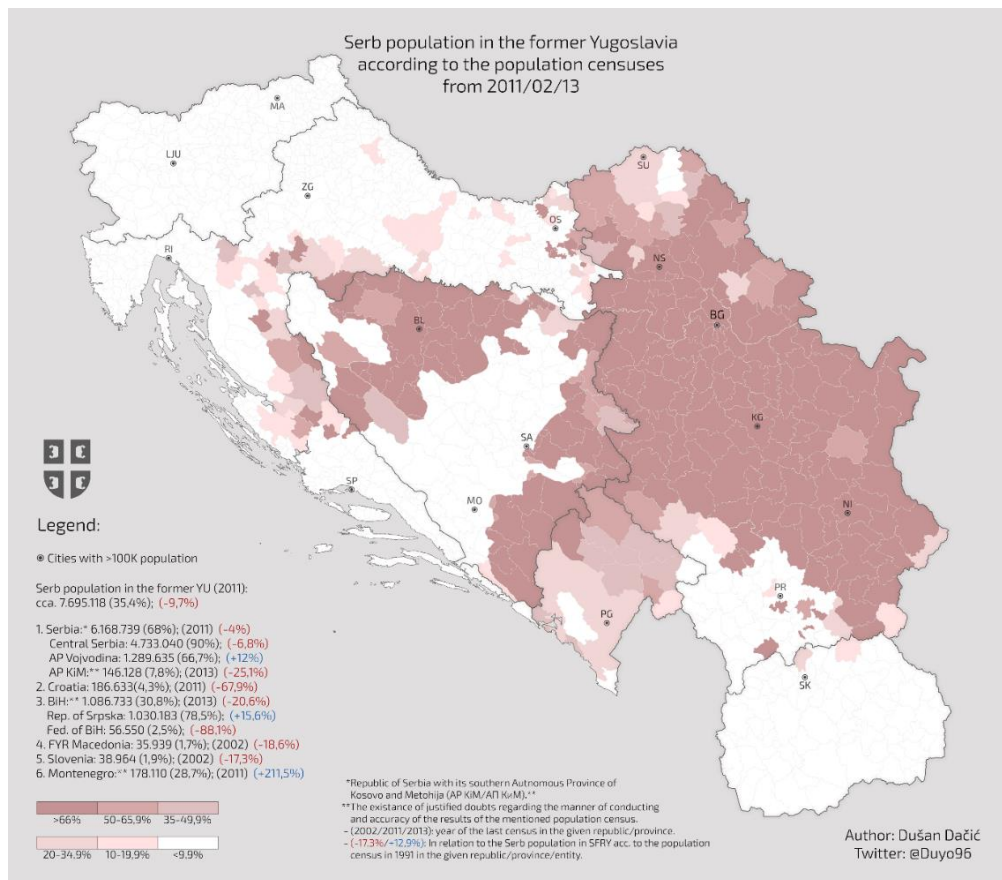
Shortly after, the term was launched domestically with great fanfare in July 2020, when the Belgrade-based newspaper *Politika* published an article by the historian Aleksandar Raković, in which he presents the idea of the *Serbian world* (Karabeg 2021). The historian admitted that he heard about the term from Glišić and Raičević, but explained that for him the concept has a different meaning. In his opinion it has an exclusively political connotation and incorporates the ideas of Serbian unification which includes Serbia (with Kosovo), Montenegro and Republic of Srpska (Novosti Online 2021). After becoming rather famous in academic and regional circles, the term was adopted by the then Minister of Defence, Aleksandar Vulin, who raised it to a state level. It eventually caught the attention of the wider general public on September 4, 2020, when Vulin, as an official member of the Government of Serbia, used the term in a pre-election meeting of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), led by Milorad Dodik. At precisely that moment the term gained political weight.

The concept of the *Serbian world* became relevant again in the context of the much broader Serbian issue. It resurfaced after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, which left some two million Serbs living outside of the borders of the Republic of Serbia in the successor states of the former country, and around three million who decided to emigrate to other parts of the globe forming the Serbian diaspora. At the beginning of the nineties, the ethnic wars in the Balkans caused by the collapse of Yugoslavia contributed to a mass exodus of the Yugoslav people, including those of Serbian ethnicity. In order to avoid suffering, Serbs had but two options: to flee to the Homeland or elsewhere outside the borders of Yugoslavia. Many Serbs found refuge in Australia, USA, Canada, Germany, Austria, and many others (Novosti Online 2016). According to some assessments there are currently more than three million Serbs living in the diaspora<sup>3</sup> which is proportionally to other diasporas a fairly huge number. The Serbs once again had to look across borders to connect with each other, which led to the need for stronger cohesion and the eventual creation of the *Serbian world* concept by several ideologues.

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<sup>3</sup> Author's note: The term "diaspora" includes: citizens of the Republic of Serbia living abroad & members of the Serbian people – emigrants from the territory of the Republic of Serbia and from the region and their descendants. *Source*: Government of the Republic of Serbia (2014): Law on Diaspora and Serbs in the Region.

**Figure 4: Serb population in the territory of the former SFR Yugoslavia according to the population censuses from 2011-2013:<sup>4</sup>**



The developments after the breakup SFRY underlined the necessity of the Government of Serbia to once more work towards the strengthening of the cohesion amongst the Serbian people, wherever they live, in order to devise mechanisms and policies to link and protect each other more easily. Although all Serbian governments cherished good relations with the Serbian diaspora, it was not until Vojislav Koštunica, Prime Minister (2004-2008), that the government had undertaken concrete steps in order to secure long-lasting ties to its people abroad. The relations between the home country and the Serbs in the region and diaspora were therefore included and are based on Article XIII of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, according to which Serbia shall protect the rights and interests of its nationals abroad and develop and promote relations of Serbs living abroad with the kin state (The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, art. XIII, sec. 1). On the basis of the Serbian Constitution and the “Law on Churches and Religious Communities” from 2006, which underlines that Serbia is tasked to take care of

<sup>4</sup> **Author’s note:** The map was created by Dušan Dačić, a law graduate from the University of Belgrade, as part of the project of mapping the wars of the 1990s on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

its religious and cultural heritage wherever it might be located, the Serbian government undertook the first steps towards the maintaining and strengthening ties between the diaspora and the Serbs in the region with their kin state. After its political and somewhat economic consolidation around the year 2010, they started devising a strategy in order to protect and unite the Serbs in Montenegro, BiH, North Macedonia, Croatia and Kosovo\*. The back then Minister of Diaspora (2008-2011), Srđan Srećković and the advisor to the President of Serbia, Mlađan Đorđević, drew up the initial document in 2010, that encompassed a detailed strategy for the Serbs in the region. The document foresees the opening of new kindergartens, elementary and high schools for Serbian children in the region, under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) and financed by the Republic of Serbia.

It has the ultimate goal to strengthen the cohesion between the Serbian people in the region from a very early stage in life, primarily through education, culture and the Orthodox religion. That Mlađan Đorđević is one of the architects became clear in 2010, when the President of Montenegro and leader of the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), Milo Đukanović, labelled him as a man in charge of aiding the pro-Serbian opposition in Montenegro: “Đorđević is running a campaign on behalf of the Serbian opposition in Montenegro and providing it with financial and other support”, accused him of “interfering in the internal political life of the sovereign state of Montenegro through the state leadership of Serbia” (Blic Online 2010).

The initial document devised in 2010, together with the “Strategy of Preserving and Strengthening the Relations of Mother Country and the Diaspora and Mother Country and Serbs in the Region” (2011), have set the legal framework that has the sole purpose to position and define the role of the Republic of Serbia as a home country to all its nationals living abroad, Serbs in the region and members of the Serbian people, emigrants from the territory of the Republic of Serbia and from the region and their descendants (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2011). According to the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Montenegro, Vuk Drašković, in his newly-published memoirs titled *Ožiljci života*, it is precisely that moment in contemporary Serbian history in which the Serbian government set the founding pillars of the *Serbian world* (Drašković 2022: 385). While the implementation of the idea began in 2010 and also merely a year after with the mentioned strategy, the term *Serbian world* had not become relevant in the political discourse until a couple of years ago. It is because the back then ruling Democratic party did not devise a name for their strategy, nor did it bear the name *Serbian world* at the time. The notion *Serbian world* was pinned to the project of strengthening the cohesion between the Serbs in the region and diaspora, under the rule of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS). Therefore, the idea of the *Serbian world* devised by Miljan Glišić and



Nebojša Ostojić was merged with the idea of Serbian unity in the region of former Yugoslavia and diaspora, and as of 2020 gained a state-building level.

### **2.3 Dimensions of the Serbian world:**

Alexander Dugin, a well-known Russian geopolitician, notes that the concept of boundaries determines the future of a state and is the essence of politics: “*The boundary is the quintessence of politics. [...] Boundaries determine success or failure, define starting conditions, and decide an inevitable defeat in the future. The problem of the greatness of a state and the entire abyss of a state’s fall is but part of the question of state boundaries. This is the very metaphysics of boundaries*” (Kozdra 2018: 62). However, boundaries are not only real geographical objects, but also in certain ways mental constructs. This mental construct is often invoked in public discourse by political elites of institutional and symbolic power. For the reality, it is also a space of social awareness and a network of concepts that operates below and above distinct institutions. Boundaries are closely linked to mechanisms of social inclusion and exclusion, dividing lines between different cultures. However, mental representations of boundaries reproduced in the public discourse by elites are not only figments of imagination. They are also a source for creating contemporary identities and taking concrete action. Another important element in terms of boundaries are *concepts*, which are understood to be cognitive structures in the form of mental representations, associations, knowledge, experiences, and emotions (Kozdra 2018: 63). Russian academic Juriy Stepanov underlines that *concepts* in general are “cultural clusters” in human consciousness that are culture specific (Suslov 2018: 341), and are therefore an element of collective knowledge about the world shared by a given speech community. This knowledge, in turn, is a network of connected ideas that derive from national tradition, religion, folklore, systems of value, and also discourses as this thesis will show. Gilles Deleuze, French philosopher, and Felix Guattari, French psychoanalyst, stress the nature of concepts, which need to be invented in real time: “*Concepts are not waiting for us ready-made, like heavenly bodies. There is no heaven for concepts. They must be invented, fabricated, or rather created and would be nothing without their creator’s signature*” (Deleuze/Guattari 1994: 56). Therefore, this paper puts focus on the conceptual analysis which aims to distinguish those ‘created’ terms, analyse the understandings they refer to, and represent them to the readers. Concepts as such create a framework for understanding, making sense or meaning of the world, and they are articulated in an ontology (Cocchiarella 1996: 8).

Since the moment the *Serbian world* became relevant in the contemporary political discourse, it immediately turned into an important motif in the narrative on boundaries and concepts in

their diverse dimensions. This has also been assessed by one of its ideologues, historian Raković, who said that in the state policy of Serbia, there are different models of how the *Serbian world* is understood (Novosti Online 2021). The dimensions have been reconstructed *via* semantic and cultural analysis of the dataset. Through the analysis of the dataset which includes thirty political discourses in the time framework between 2020 and 2022, it can be concluded that the contemporary notion of *Serbian world* is comprised of five dimensions that have been most frequently used by Serbian social actors. These dimensions (models) include: *nationality-oriented*, *cultural*, *spiritual*, *psychological* and *(geo)political*. The following chapter serves to present these dimensions of the *Serbian world* concept as well as the mechanisms for their implementation.

### **2.3.1 Nationality-oriented dimension:**

The concept of the *Serbian world* is undoubtedly nationality-oriented, where the people of Serbian ethnicity compose the main ethnos. The *Serbian world* concept attempts to unite all Serbs and those who identify with them into one shared civilizational and ethno-cultural space. This dimension of the *Serbian world* concept relates to both the Serbs in the Republic of Serbia, the region of former Yugoslavia, but also those who live throughout the world and proportionally compose one of the biggest diasporas worldwide. A famous Serbian lexicographer stated that the Serbian nation actually is the *world* in the notion *Serbian world* and that it is composed of the Serbs who live in America, Austria, Germany, Great Britain, but also in BiH, Montenegro and Serbia (Politika 2022). Gojko Raičević, the founder of *IN4S*, states that the *Serbian world* has no administrative boundaries and includes all Serbs, friends of the Serbian people and every well-intentioned person who identifies with the values, tradition, culture, language and other characteristics of the Serbs. He goes on and says that there would be no *Serbian world* without Pavle Jurišić Sturm, Archibald Reiss, Lady Paget, Major Henry Binell, Yunus Bek Yevkurov, Arnaud Gouillon and numerous others from all the meridians of the planet. Without them, the *Serbian world* is unimaginable and incomplete.

The nationality-oriented dimension of the *Serbian world* concept became apparent through a press release published on the website of the Serbian Ministry of Defence. The then Minister of Defence, Aleksandar Vulin stated that “*Belgrade must gather all Serbs in and around it, and the President of Serbia is, should, and must be the President of all Serbs no matter where they live* (Ministry of Defence 2020). In addition, from Vulin’s statements, it can be also concluded that the main idea of the *Serbian world* is not only to create unity among the Serbs, but to protect them as well: “*We were silent about Kozara and Jasenovac, and the storms came*



[Operation Storm in 1995]. *So that there are no more storms and so that the endless images of exiles are not repeated, we must create a Serbian world and make the Serbs a single political nation like every other nation under the sky*” (Marković 2022). Furthermore, the nationality-oriented aspect can be best comprehended through the idea of Milorad Dodik, President of the Republic of Srpska, who proposed the creation of a so-called “national identification card” for citizens of Serbian nationality from the Republic of Srpska and Serbia who live and work in the diaspora. His idea definitely coincides with the concept of the *Serbian world*, as the main ethnos of his proposal are the people of Serbian ethnicity. According to Dodik’s proposal, Serbs from the diaspora would get the rights to education, health care, as well as the right to start a business both in the Republic of Srpska and Serbia, just like the local population. Thus, Dodik aims to strengthen the cohesion and build strong links between the Serbs in the Balkans and the diaspora, also due to the fact that the Serbian diaspora can invest a vast amount of money in the two entities. Dodik’s idea was supported by his closest associate, Željka Cvijanović, the Serb member of the State Presidency of BiH, who comment that *“the creation of national identification cards is a project of national importance. This is an upgrade of a project that started a few years ago, which involved mapping the diaspora”* (Aljović 2022). The idea of the *Serbian world* was therefore accepted by the Serbs living outside of the borders of the Republic of Serbia, which can be seen on the examples of Milorad Dodik, President of the Republic of Srpska, and Željka Cvijanović, Serb Member of the Presidency of BiH. The concept was also accepted by the Serbs from Montenegro, and became apparent through the statement given by Andrija Mandić, one of the leaders of the Democratic Front who in an interview for N1 said that the *“Serbs living outside of the borders [of Serbia] like the idea of the Serbian world,”* concluding that *“we are already working on its realization”* (Vukićević/Gjeraqina 2021).

### **2.3.2 Cultural dimension:**

The cultural dimension is much broader in the sense that it does not have any administrative borders and aims to attract people of different ethnicities by promoting components such as the Orthodox religion, culture and language, but also the shared values and principles of the Serbian people. The cultural dimension of the *Serbian world* includes countries such as North Macedonia, which is particularly exposed to Serbian soft power tools, and is both spiritually and culturally directed towards Serbia. Overall, the Serbian cultural space stretches from Trieste and St. Andrea all the way down to Thessaloniki, a vast territory where Serbs left an indelible mark throughout history. The best definition of the Serbian cultural space was given by the former Serbian minister of culture, Vladan Vukosavljević, who said the following in an

interview given for the weekly magazine *Pečat*: “By the Serbian cultural space, I mean the space in which the Serbian people lived or still live for a long historical period, leaving undoubted traces of their material and immaterial cultural heritage, whether they are located within or outside the borders of their current state creations. In other words, it is not possible to reduce the boundaries of the cultural space to the boundaries of a single political or state space. Therefore, in a transhistorical sense, the Serbian cultural space can be viewed as a meta-space whose outer edges go from the Holy Monastery Hilandar and Thessaloniki through Timisoara, Arad, Saint Andrea, Trieste, Zadar and Dubrovnik, all the way to the Bay of Kotor and Shkoder. Therefore, today it is natural to strive for a mutually agreeable cultural and educational policy, open to equal and fruitful cooperation with the cultures of other nations” (Jovanović 2021). Vukosavljević was particularly inclined towards the successful application of the *Serbian world* project, and during his mandate he has even carried out some concrete and practical steps towards the implementation of said concept such as the adoption of “The Culture Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia from 2020 to 2029” (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2019). The strategy reads that a significantly valuable part of the Serbian cultural heritage, which represents an integral part of the Serbian cultural space, is located outside of the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The document emphasizes the need for systematic aid to the institutions and organizations gathering Serbs outside of their home country and having a potential of the informal Serbian cultural centres such as *Matica Srpska*, *Vukova zadužbina*, and the Educational and Cultural society *Prosvjeta* (DFC 2021). The Government of Serbia allocated 3.4 million euros to build the *Serbian Home* in Podgorica, which encompasses all Serbian organizations in Montenegro. The *Serbian Home* includes the institutions mentioned in the national strategy adopted in 2019: *Matica Srpska*, the Institute for Serbian Culture, the Serbian National Council, the Association of Writers of the Serbian People, the Serbian television, Serbian radio, newspapers, news portals, and the Serbian Cultural Centre.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, in 2020, the Government allocated a one-time assistance amounting to 1.64 million euros to associations of the Serbs in Montenegro for project implementation and work support. Through the cultural centres, language schools and other institutions, Serbia tries to spread the message of the *Serbian world* to other countries of the world. The cultural dimension is therefore fortified by emphasizing the uniqueness of the Serbian nation, which forms the core of the *Serbian world*, and gathers people of different nationalities, ethnicities and countries. The different institutions are responsible for the

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<sup>5</sup> Author’s note: Retrieved from the website of the Serbian Home in Podgorica. URL: <https://srpskakucacg.me/>.

spreading of message of the *Serbian world* and the uniqueness of the Serbian nation, its traditions and history. According to Joseph S. Nye, a country's soft power rests on three resources: "its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when others see them as legitimate and having moral authority)" (Nye 2011: 84). Considering the above-listed accomplishments in the field of culture in the states of its neighbours, the Republic of Serbia bodes particularly well in the first of the three segments of soft power.

Furthermore, the cultural dimension of the concept can be considered as a *world of values and principles* that are especially or rather only applicable to the Serbs, which can be seen through the following statement of Milorad Dodik, who said that "[t]he Serbian world is a story about the values the Serbian people have, which are related to our faith, identity, alphabet, language and patron saint day. They are values of all Serbian communities, wherever they are, and these values can be summed up in the phrase 'Serbian world'. Those who portray it as a territorial story of expansion are absolutely bent on lying and deceiving" (Politika Online 2022). A family's patron saint day is a set of traditions and values that testify to the uniqueness of the Serbian people, because it is only celebrated among them and within North Macedonia. In Serbia, Orthodox Christian families celebrate it in honour of the family's patron saint, who is believed to be their protector and provider of welfare. The celebration is so unique that in 2014 it was even inscribed in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List (UNESCO 2014). The chief editor of the show *Gnev naroda*, Miljan Glišić, referred to the *Serbian world* as a concept that does not refer to demography or space, but to spiritual and cultural specificities of a nation and their meaning or rather value in global civilization, underlining that it "therefore, refers to the world of values of a nation, with its own peculiarities" (Jadovno 2021). His statement highly correlates with the theory of Prof. Dr Milo Lompar, literary historian and university professor, about the Serbian culture being a 'contact culture', which consists of the contact between peoples with different cultures, usually leading to change in both systems. According to Lompar, the fact that Serbia is in fact a 'contact culture' incorporates the idea of Serbian uniqueness as its culture was created in the Balkans, the point of contact between Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Islam, forming a unique civilizational space which contributed to the development of Serbian exceptionalism (Lompar 2019: 362). Thanks to this unique culture it is easier for Serbia to communicate with other *worlds* and spread its message through soft power around the globe. Therefore, the concept is for the majority of the Serbian social actors an exclusively cultural phenomenon and represents the promotion of culture of the Serbs wherever they might live. The long-standing Serbian culture and traditions, dating back to early

medieval times, are the basis for the uniqueness of the Serbian civilizational space. The main ideologues, Glišić and Raičević, consider the concept's main aspect to be the promotion of Serbian national identity in order to get the different *worlds* of this planet closer to each other.

### **2.3.3 Spiritual dimension:**

The spiritual dimension relates to the predominant Orthodox faith among the Serbian people and the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) as a pillar and co-constituent of the *Serbian world*. The Orthodox religion is an integral part of the Serbian nation, its identity, history, culture, traditions, and beliefs, and therefore it represents an important societal role and influence primarily among the Orthodox believers. The existence of the SPC dates back to more than eight centuries ago (established in 1219), and it is considered to be the backbone and supporting pillar of the Serbian nation, particularly during the centuries of Ottoman rule. It is important to understand that the SPC by its definition is not solely the church of the Republic of Serbia, and that the majority of the population in Serbia, Montenegro, Srpska are its followers. Additionally, there are old churches and monasteries in many neighbouring countries of the Republic of Serbia, belonging to the SPC and dating back to the times when these territories were inhabited by Serbs and ruled by the medieval Serbian state. Therefore, the SPC has a strong influence among the ethnic Serbs in the region, but also other Orthodox nations such as the Macedonians who strongly identify with Serbia. Overall, the SPC is the only cross-border institutions and supranational soft-power instruments at Serbia's disposal, and therefore represents an indispensable foreign policy tool. The importance of the SPC was incorporated in Article XI of the Serbian "Law on Churches and Religious Communities" from 2006 which states that "The Serbian Orthodox Church has an exceptional historical, state-building and civilizational role in shaping, preserving and developing the identity of the Serbian people" (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2006).

Nevertheless, the influence of the SPC can be described best through the clerical protests in Montenegro that started in late December 2019, when a wave of peaceful demonstrations was initiated against the controversial "Law on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Legal Status of Religious Communities". After a relatively stable period following the independence in 2006, the political situation in Montenegro entered a very turbulent phase characterized by mass protests due to the adoption of the Law on Religious Freedom, directly affecting the property of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Although the countries separated in 2006, many of Montenegro's citizens still declare themselves as followers of SPC (65%), and the Montenegrin church remains under its jurisdiction. The ruling party (DPS) announced at the 2019 party

congress that one of their future priorities would be to restore the autocephaly of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church (CPC) in order to overcome the situation of division among the Orthodox population in Montenegro by forming a united and organizationally independent Orthodox Church (Đurić/Marković 2021: 10). This was a trigger for the Serbian population and all other pro-Serbian entities to organize processions coordinated by the SPC, expressing dissatisfaction with the Law. Despite disagreements, the law came into force on January 8, 2020. According to the disputed Article LXII, religious communities in Montenegro need to prove property ownership before 1918, otherwise the property will belong to the state of Montenegro. The SPC had to prove ownership of property including medieval monasteries and churches, i.e., everything built before December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918, when Montenegro became a part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The SPC in Montenegro pointed out that the law is “discriminatory and unconstitutional,” and accused the Montenegrin authorities of “inciting divisions and hatred”, while Bishop Amfilohije went as far as to state that this could cause a civil war (Maksimović 2020). In May 2020, when the protests reached their peak, even the Serbian Prime Minister, Ana Brnabić, expressed her opinion that the Republic of Serbia has the constitutional obligation and moral duty to give its support to the Serbian people fighting for their religious freedom and rights in Montenegro. The accumulated dissatisfaction of the Serbian people in Montenegro resulted in a defeat of the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) led by Milo Djukanovic in the parliamentary election held on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and the victory of the pro-Serbian coalition under the lead of Zdravko Krivokapić. Since then, Djukanovic has been one of the main defamers of the Serbian world and has regarded it as Serbia’s tactic to destabilize the 29<sup>th</sup> NATO member. In that context, he said “the ‘Russian world’ in the Balkans is the ‘Serbian world’, and the Serbian Orthodox Church is a disruptive factor” (Beta 2021). Unfortunately, there have not been many members of the SPC that expressed their views on the *Serbian world* and their understanding of the concept. There are also no known synonyms or analogous words to the Serbian world used by the leaders of the SPC, as is the case in the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) where the clerics internally use the term Holy Rus instead of Russkiy mir. The most profound explanation came from Archpriest-Stavrophor Dr Miloš Vesin who said that the Serbian world means the following: “bridging the ocean does not depend on ships or airplanes, but on the spiritual energy, dynamism and beauty of Studenica, Žiča, Pećaršija, Dečan, Ravanica, Krušedol, Krka, Gomir and other Serbian lighthouses scattered throughout the [world]” (Ivošević 2021). The Patriarch, Porfirije Perić, as the Head of the SPC, never used the term *Serbian world* in his public appearances, but has on several occasions sent messages that highly correlate with its mission. He has encouraged the Serbs worldwide to

preserve their national identity, particularly in his speech given in the Cathedral of Saint Sava in Paris, when he pointed out that “Serbs in the diaspora should teach their children to remain faithful to their history and tradition. They must not forget that they are of Serbian origin by preserving their spiritual identity and their Orthodox faith” (Vijesti Online 2022). His most famous quote came while he still served as a bishop of the SPC in Croatia, when he said to the gathered Serbs: “Do not be afraid to be what you are” (Novosti Online 2018), meaning that the Serbs should not forget their origin but cherish it and pass it from kin to kin. Moreover, on one occasion he even spoke about boundaries: “We all know that throughout history the borders of states [...] have changed, and we are not sure that in history, in which everything is relative, they will not change again in the future” (DAN portal 2022). This quote is probably the best example of the concept of boundaries which relates both to the borderless world of values as well as to the physical and administrative state borders, which are incorporated in the *Serbian world* and how different social actors perceive and talk about it in the public sphere.

#### **2.3.4 Psychological dimension:**

“The unity of the Serbs is a necessity without which we will not exist,” (Bacić 2020) were the words of former Minister, Aleksandar Vulin. Within the *Serbian world* concept, the sense of unity is an important component, all the more so due to the fact that many ethnic Serbs live outside of the Republic of Serbia, scattered throughout the region (~2.000.000) and world (~3.000.000). One of the most crucial steps towards the implementation of the *Serbian world* concept and the unity among the Serbian people was the establishment of the symbolical state holiday called “Day of Serb Unity, Freedom and the National Flag” in 2020, which is celebrated annually on September 15<sup>th</sup>, the day of Salonica Front breakthrough in WWI. The idea of a joint holiday in both the Republic of Srpska and Serbia was unveiled by leaders of the two entities. The purpose of establishing this holiday is to promote the unity of the Serbs, but also respect for the Serbian three-coloured flag, which is used in both entities and also represents the historical flag of Montenegro. On this day, all people identifying as Serbian are called to proudly hang the national flag on their homes, and show the world how united they are. Thus, the members of the *Serbian world* are obliged to be loyal to their mother country, show interest in Serbian affairs, and lastly cherish the bonds with Serbia.

Another concrete step was made at the initiative of President Aleksandar Vučić when he together with Arnaud Gouillon, The Director of the Office for Cooperation with the Diaspora and Serbs in the Region of the Republic of Serbia, organized a meeting in the Palace of Serbia with all representatives of Serbs from the region. On that occasion, Arnaud Gouillon (2022)

wrote on his official Instagram account that “This is another significant step in strengthening the mutual ties and improving cooperation between institutions from Serbia and Serbs in the region with the aim of preserving the Serbian language and the Cyrillic alphabet as the foundation of Serbian identity.” On that occasion, in a conversation with Serbs from Slovenia, BiH, Republic of Srpska, North Macedonia, Hungary, Croatia, Romania and Montenegro, Vučić emphasized that the vital interest of Serbia is to take care of its people wherever they are, as well as to preserve the Serbian language and the Cyrillic alphabet, while thanking the attendees for preserving the national and cultural identity of the Serbian people in the region (Predsednik Republike Srbije 2022). In the shaping of identity of a nation and the formation of geographic and mental boundaries, language plays an important role, mostly in the separation of one world from another and of ‘us’ from ‘them’. Given that language plays a critical role in the shaping of identity, The Office for Cooperation with the Diaspora and Serbs in the Region is investing in the opening of Serbian language schools throughout the region, primarily in Croatia and North Macedonia, but also the whole world in order to protect the Serbian identity in the diaspora. In this regard, the Director of the Office, Arnaud Gouillon, announced the opening of fifteen Serbian language schools throughout Europe (Politika Online 2020).

*National identity* should be understood as a sense, enjoyed by an individual, of being distinct from other individuals, shaped by factors as awareness of one’s origin, history, memory, culture, territory, and language. Particularly language is a key factor in the generation of national identity, as identity reveals itself in language behaviour and expression. In this context, the former Minister of Culture and Information, Vladan Vukosavljević, wrote another important document called “The Law on the Use of the Serbian Language in Public Life and the Protection and Preservation of the Cyrillic Alphabet” (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2021), which was subsequently adopted by the Government of Serbia. The Law aims to nurture the Serbian language and the Cyrillic alphabet, as well as cultural and traditional values, promoting its use in public life, given its historical and cultural significance in preserving the national identity of the Serbian people domestically, regionally and in the diaspora. This law was adopted in an identical text in Serbia and the Republic of Srpska (Jovanović 2021).

### **2.3.5 Geopolitical & territorial dimension:**

The analysis of the political discourse as well as the genesis of the *Serbian world* has shown so far that the concept throughout its history has a primarily cultural, spiritual and nationality-oriented connotation that aims to create the feeling of unity among the Serbian people, but also attract people of other nationalities who identify with the Serbian civilizational space. With the

current Serbia government, ruled by the Progressive Party, the notion *Serbian world* has definitely received a new (geo)political dimension that can be seen through several public appearances of official government representatives and other social actors. While the cultural and spiritual dimensions are much broader and look beyond the administrative borders, the (geo)political model of the *Serbian world* concept relates to the territories majorly inhabited by Serbs (Serbia, Srpska, Montenegro), a vast terrain that includes almost half of former Yugoslavia, but was nevertheless downsized after the expulsion of the Serbs from Croatia and Kosovo\* in the 90s. One politician that stands out in this regard and has become the ‘cover face’ of the (geo)political and territorial dimension of the concept is former Minister of Internal Affairs and Defence, Aleksandar Vulin, who has been a part of the government since 2013. In his public appearances the question of (geo)political boundaries as a dimension of the concept initially became apparent on the eve of the annual meeting of the Movement of Socialists (PS), when he as its leader underlined that “the Serbian world should be one political space, one country” (Stanković 2021). Afterwards, during an interview on the *Happy TV* on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Vulin clarified that the current geopolitical circumstances in the region and the world did not favour the unification of all areas majorly inhabited by Serbs, but that he believed that this idea would prevail in ten, twenty or fifty years, and that it would need to be carried out in a peaceful manner. He assessed on another occasion that “if we had the courage to draw the borders and say where we had lived in the two former Yugoslavias [Kingdom: 1918-1941; Communist: 1945-1992], we would not be talking about this today. But we did not have the courage to do so” (Martinović 2021). Therefore, it can be concluded without any doubt that the concept has gained a geopolitical and territorial dimension after it was adopted by Vulin. Aleksandar Raković, prominent Serbian historian, who in a recorded interview (2022) with the author of this research paper, admitted that it was actually he who started devising this idea since 2009 and started writing about it in his books *Srbi i religijski intervencionalizam 1991-2015* (2015), *Crnogorski separatizam* (2019), and *Srpstvo i Pravoslavlje* (2022). He assessed that the Republic of Serbia should gradually work towards its unification with the Republic of Srpska, as those two entities strongly relate to the two Germanies (West & East), so that their fusion is just a matter of time. Eventually Serbia and Srpska would be joined by Montenegro, and also North Macedonia, where the Serbs only amount to 3% of the population, but which is culturally and religiously attached to Serbia and is most prone to its soft power approach. Even prior to the rule of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), there has been cooperation between the Governments of Serbia and Srpska, which can be seen through the joint session in March 2011 during the rule of the Democratic Party. The very close cooperation between the



two governments, which in the eyes of the Bosniaks represents a *de facto* undermining of the executive and legislative power of BiH, continued throughout the entire period of the rule of SNS, especially in the sphere of the implementation of numerous infrastructure and energy projects. Those projects relate to the construction of three hydropower plants on the Drina River, a project that Serbia entered into by signing an agreement directly with the Republic of Srpska, and not with the authorities in Sarajevo. This method of investment in the Republic of Srpska, which was previously seen through the privatization of telecommunication system (Mtel), represented the entry of Serbia through the back door as the owner of public companies in the second Bosnian entity. Lastly, on September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, President Aleksandar Vučić spoke in Belgrade with Milorad Dodik about the construction of a memorial centre in Srpska that will remind “of all the crimes against the Serbian people”, and added that “it should be an all-Serbian shrine [...]. The Serbian people remember and are not ashamed of their victims” (Al Jazeera 2021). Once more, the deal for the construction of the memorial park was made directly between Belgrade and Banja Luka, avoiding the authorities in Sarajevo. The same applies to Montenegro, where the Democratic Front (DF) and other Serbian-friendly political parties coordinate with Belgrade and the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Aleksandar Vulin has praised President Vučić for having successfully united the Serbs into a unified political space (Stojsavljević 2020), although the President himself never publicly advocated the implementation of the (geo)political model of the concept. In contrast to Vulin, there was only one occasion when Vučić has been asked about his opinion on the matter. He answered that he sees nothing controversial, and assessed the negative reactions towards Vulin and the *Serbian world* are a regional campaign against Serbia. When asked to comment on Vulin’s statements about the *Serbian world*, Vučić firmly said that the official state policy is that Serbia’s borders are inviolable (referring to the unilateral proclamation of independence by the Republic of Kosovo\*), and that Belgrade does not meddle with other countries’ borders. In this regard, he told the television *Pink* that “every time they say it is Vučić and Serbia because they have to find the culprit in Serbia for everything. That is why it is important that people know what the official policy of Serbia is, it’s the one that says that Serbia’s borders are inviolable, and we do not care about other people’s borders. We have to protect our own and show in a clear and unambiguous way what our policy is” (Radio Slobodna Evropa 2021). The *Serbian world* concept has a multilayer structure because it is a construct in the form of a conglomerate of mental representations, associations, knowledge, experiences, and emotions that the discourse participants link to it. It comprises five dimensions, which are fairly diffuse

and can overlap at certain times between each other. These dimensions have been reconstructed *via* analysis of the dataset and summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Dimensions of the *Serbian world* concept according to the political discourse analysis of the Serbian media landscape:

Dimension of the <i>Serbian world</i> Concept	Overview of the Content of the Dimensions
Nationality-related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes the Serbs and some other ethnicities of former Yugoslavia</li> <li>• The main ethnos is the Serbian nation</li> </ul>
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Command of the Serbian language and knowledge of Serbian literature and culture are determinants of membership of <i>Srpski svet</i></li> <li>• Laws have been adopted that call for the protection of the cultural heritage</li> <li>• There is a TV show called <i>Srpski sv(ij)et</i></li> </ul>
Spiritual (Religious)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes Orthodox believers</li> <li>• The Serbian Orthodox Church is an important factor and co-constituent</li> <li>• Subscribes to Orthodox values and beliefs</li> <li>• <i>Slava</i>: Celebration of family's saint patron day</li> </ul>
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its members are obliged to be loyal towards their mother country, show interest in Serbian issues and a bond with Serbia</li> <li>• A sense of unity is an important component</li> <li>• Based on exceptionalism &amp; uniqueness</li> </ul>
Geopolitical (Territorial)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extends over a supranational area, including countries like BiH and Montenegro</li> <li>• Unification of territories in the region majorly inhabited by Serbs</li> </ul>

### **3. ‘Serbian world’ – A Borrowed Concept?**

From the very first moment the term *Serbian world* surfaced in the public discourse in the region of former Yugoslavia, many social actors saw the concept as a reproduction of the Russian version, called *Russkiy mir*. There are several reasons to think that the *Serbian world* concept was indeed modelled after the idea of the *Russkiy mir*, especially given the close relations between the two countries and their historical connection. Their historical ties stretch back to the early Middle Ages, when both the Serbian and Russian nations adopted Orthodox Christianity. Cultural exchange between medieval Serbia and Russia was very developed up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when Serbia was conquered by the Ottomans. Up until then, Serbia predominantly influenced Russia, owing its cultural influence to the proximity of the then most advanced country in Europe – the Byzantine Empire. After this period, however, Russia became the dominant political and cultural force amongst the Orthodox Christian world and its influence began to spread to the Balkan Peninsula, including Serbia. This became noticeable at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>, and peaked in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the wake of WWI (Djokić 2020: 235). Furthermore, in Serbian historical literature and political discourse, the definition of Serbs as “little Russians” (Ković 2018: 509) from the Western point of view is predominant. This term appeared first in British diplomacy in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has since found a firm footing in political discourse, implying that the Western countries will always regard Serbia as an actor of influence on behalf of Russia. This sort of deterministic thinking is certainly flawed, but nevertheless emphasized Russia’s leading role in the collective mindset of the Serbs. This bodes well for Russia’s soft power, as it is easier spread than that of the US and EU. Accordingly, there are numerous Russian and Russian-friendly NGOs which are operating in Serbia, such as Rossotrudnichestvo and Russkiy Mir Foundation.

Furthermore, both Serbia and Russia had similar historical developments after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia that left millions of ethnic Russians and Serbs in the ‘Near abroad’. For instance, Russian diaspora is formidable, counting up to 25 million of their ‘compatriots’ living beyond the borders of the Russian Federation (Pieper 2020: 563). Both countries needed to devise strategies for those countries formerly known as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, in order to aid their compatriots, who were led to a struggle between the influence of titular cultures and language and national belonging. Due to these similar developments, it is not unrealistic to think that the concept of the *Serbian world* was adopted and adjusted from the *Russkiy mir* which is definitely a couple of decades older given that it has been a part of the Russian political discourse since 2001. Therefore, the Government of

Serbia could have modelled its concept accordingly and devised a renamed strategy for its own purposes. There are also several Russian government officials who have been known to publicly discuss the *Serbian world* concept, amongst whom Maria Zakharova, the Director of the Information Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, stands out. She recently stated that the *Serbian world* is a humanitarian concept, and is therefore justified and in accordance with international law (Srna 2021). Even the main propagator of the *Serbian world* concept, Aleksandar Vulin, visited Russia on several occasions and during his last visit in August 2022, he met with Sergei Lavrov, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs (Stojanović 2022). Hence, the concepts of the *Serbian* and *Russian world* will be compared in the next chapter in order to figure out if the *Serbian world* is indeed just a mere copy of the *Russkiy mir*, or if it represents a unique approach towards to multidimensional cohesion of the Serbian people. In order to do so, first the *Russkiy mir* concept needs to be examined.

### 3.1 The Concept of the ‘Russian World’:

While the historical term can be traced to the 11th century and originates in the writings of Grand Prince of Kiev Iziaslav Iaroslavich who used it to define the ancient Rus, the contemporary concept, and what is meant by it, was conceived in the 1990s, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, by a group of intellectuals who were pioneers in setting the elaboration of the *Russian world* as a philosophical and metaphysical project, most notably Petr Shchedrovitskiy, Gleb Pavlovskiy, Sergey Chernyshev and Maxim Shevchenko. Some of these intellectuals had ties to Ukraine and seemed more keenly aware of the problems of state collapse as well as the need to help those currently living beyond the borders of the Russian Federation who identified themselves with Russia and Russian culture (Tishkov 2008, 4).

Although the Russian conception of the ‘Near abroad’ as a specific region of interest and a sphere of influence was expressed almost immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country lacked the capacity to exert its policies. Only as of the 2000s was Russia able to tap into new political and financial resources again, and work towards the implementation of the *Russian world* concept. The concept was progressively institutionalized within Russian state agencies, embodying both Russia’s policy in its ‘Near abroad’ and Russia’s public diplomacy towards the rest of the world. The privileged status of the ‘Near abroad’ in Russia’s regional and foreign policy grew under the leadership of foreign affairs and then Prime Minister, Yevgeny Primakov (1996-1999), who affirmed that Russia’s attempt to regain its international status involved recovering its role as a centre of influence over the post-Soviet space (Laruelle 2015: 14). Nevertheless, it was not until on June 28th, 2000 that Russian

President, Vladimir Putin, formulated a new foreign policy and gave priority to the ‘Near abroad’. He initially used the term while addressing the audience of the first World Congress of Compatriots Living Abroad in 2001. The president declared that “the notion of the *Russian World* extends far beyond Russia’s geographical borders and even far from the borders of the Russian ethnicity” (Ibid.: 6). Therefore, it was actually Putin who in his capacity as President of Russia acknowledged the importance and value of the Russian diaspora and brought the concept to the highest political level. Both the idea and the term were adopted by the Russian administration during the Putin era and were eventually institutionalized in 2007, when Putin signed a decree establishing the government-sponsored *Russkiy Mir* Foundation. The Foundation is a joint project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation which aims to form the *Russkiy Mir* as a global project, co-operating with the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in promoting values that challenge the Western cultural tradition. The idea behind the creation of the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation was further elaborated by Putin in his address to the Federal Assembly in April 2007: “The Russian language not only preserves an entire layer of truly global achievements but is also the living space for the many millions of people in the Russian-speaking world, a community that goes far beyond Russia itself. As the common heritage of many peoples, the Russian language will never become the language of hatred or enmity, xenophobia or isolationism.”<sup>6</sup> *Russkiy mir* intends to promote the teaching of the Russian language within Russia and abroad, both to new learners of the language and those who already know Russian. Its goal is also to reconnect the Russian community abroad with their homeland, forging stronger links through cultural and social programmes, exchanges and assistance in relocation. In this sense, the *Russian world* is a “networked structure of large and small communities that think in and speak the Russian language” (Tishkov 2008: 4). “Admitting the existence of a *Russian world* allows us to speak of ‘Russian capital’, an aggregate of cultural, intellectual, human, and organizational potentials, which express themselves in the linguistic thought processes and communicative (humanistic) resources of the Russian language. The energy of will of various ethno-cultural groups that think and speak Russian permits their potential to be realized, turning this into a series of images of the future” (Ibid.: 5). In its essence, the *Russkiy mir* concept is not aggressive, but rather progressive, not trying to expand its territory, but being present in the cultural space, in the consciousness of people scattered across the globe.

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<sup>6</sup> Author’s note: The information was taken from the official website of the Russkiy Mir Foundation. URL: <https://russkiymir.ru/en/fund/>.

More than a decade after Vladimir Putin accepted the *Russkiy mir* idea, the term was used by the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), Patriarch Kirill. This occurred in 2009, when Patriarch Kirill spoke of how the *Russkiy mir*, or *Holy Rus* as he uses it in internal Church circles, should respond to the challenges of globalization. At that occasion, he defined the term as “the common civilizational space founded on three pillars: Eastern Orthodoxy, Russian culture, and especially the language and the common historical memory and connected with its common vision on the further social development” (Rap 2015: 85). In addition, he said that the Church emphasizes the importance of spiritual bonds over the divisions of national borders. It therefore uses the term not as a geographical or ethnic concept, but as a spiritual identity that refers to the cradle civilization of the Eastern Slavs - the Kievan Rus. The core community of the *Holy Rus* resides in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus (sometimes Moldova and Kazakhstan), but can refer to anyone who shares the Orthodox faith, a reliance on Russian language, and a common historical memory. The close relationship between the ROC and state in Russia, provides the Russian foreign policy with a definable moral framework, one that, given its popularity, is likely to continue to shape the country’s policies in the future. Therefore, the ROC and the *Russkiy Mir* have emerged as the missing spiritual and intellectual component of Russia’s soft power (Petro 2015: 5). From the state’s perspective, the ROC can be a useful tool for these purposes, whereas as used by the Church, *Russkiy mir* is a strictly religious concept. It is essential for reversing the secularization of society throughout the former Soviet Union, a task Patriarch Kirill has termed the “second Christianization” of Rus, and sees the Russian government as a tool for achieving this purpose. The establishment of broadly harmonious and mutually supportive relationship between Church and state, for the first time in more than a century, therefore has significant implications for Russian politics.

The meaning of *Russkiy mir* has been differently articulated and instrumentalized for political purposes during the last 20 years. The conservative turn in the official Russian ideology, coupled with the flaring conflict in Ukraine, gave the concept a new twist. In contemporary Russia, (geo)political discourses have become more important than political ideology, so that the concept rose to the position of a wide-ranging ideology, which upholds that Russia is or should be bigger than the Russian Federation (Suslov 2018: 333). Although the concept is in its essence based on soft power, it is well known that even soft power can be articulated along with hard power, precede it, or even justify it. The *Russkiy mir* does not depart from this ambiguity, and has been used to justify the war in Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, as well as the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. With the outbreak of war in Georgia in 2008 in which Russia’s claimed to protect its compatriots abroad have been translated into a

foreign policy objective that justified the use of hard power (Pieper 2020: 757). Afterwards, Putin has advanced many legitimizing points for the annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine, such as geopolitical, historical, and ethnic by reminding that “the Russian nation became one of the biggest, if not the biggest ethnic group in the world to be divided by borders” (Buchholz 2022). Russia’s soft power approach in its ‘Near abroad’ can thus easily turn into hard power as the previous events have shown. Mikhail Suslov (2018) identifies three ideological iterations of the *Russkiy mir* concept. “The first was de-territorialized and de-centred imagery of the ‘Russian archipelago’ in the 1990s. The second represents adjustment of the concept to the idea of the ‘sovereign democracy’ in the 2000s, when the logic of the ‘sphere of influences’ was injected into the ‘Russian world’. Third, in the 2010s, the ‘Russian world’ has been re-territorialized [...], aligned with the logic of representing Russia as an alternative, non-Western model of modernity” (Suslov 2018: 330).

Overall, the *Russkiy mir* is much more than the territory of the Russian Federation and the 143 million people living within its borders.<sup>7</sup> Millions of ethnic Russians, native Russian speakers, their families and descendants scattered across the globe, make up one of the largest diaspora populations in the world. Institutions such as the Russkiy Mir Foundation aim to reconnect the Russian diaspora with its homeland through cultural and social programs, exchanges and assistance in relocation. The *Russkiy mir* also includes the millions of people worldwide who have chosen the Russian language as their subject of study, those who have developed an appreciation for Russia and its rich cultural heritage. Kosachev (2012: 11) argues that the soft power of Russia is first and foremost the *Russkiy mir* in the broadest sense of the word, comprising the Russian compatriots and those who sympathize with and specialize in studying Russia. But, in general, the term actually denotes something quite different for each party, which means that the fluidness is structural to the concept. For the state it is a tool for expanding Russia’s cultural and political influence, while for the Russian Orthodox Church it is a spiritual concept, a reminder that through the baptism of Rus, God consecrated these people with the task of building a *Holy Rus*. Nevertheless, the recent events have shown that Russia’s soft power approach for the post-Soviet area can indeed turn into hard power, which has been seen on the example of Ukraine. Today, the *Russkiy mir* is perceived by the all the neighbouring states with suspicion or even animosity as an instrument of Russia’s political influence and a collection of proxies in a potential Russian invasion (Zevelev 2016: 4).

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<sup>7</sup> Author’s note: The information was taken from the official website of the Russkiy Mir Foundation. URL: <https://russkiymir.ru/en/fund/>.

### 3.2 The Serbian World – A Copy of the Russian World or a Unique Concept?

The first commonality is definitely that both concepts are fluid in their nature and actually mean something quite different in regards to the social actors using it. For example, Putin mentioned the *Russian world* concept during his speech while justifying Russia's annexation of Crimea, which implies that for Putin the concept has a rather geopolitical connotation. However, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov has made reference to the term as more cultural than political. In early 2015, responding to the Lithuanian media, he criticized those who would assume Russia of wanting to annex new territories: "The Russian World is about culture, language, values, and religious orientations. One can draw an analogy with Francophonie, the Ibero-American community, and Confucius, Goethe, or Cervantes institutes. Like any normal country, [we] wish to preserve [our] cultural heritage" (Laruelle 2015: 14). The same goes for the *Serbian world* concept where the analysis of the dataset has shown that former minister Vulin and the historian Aleksandar Raković support the geopolitical dimension and the territorial integration of lands majorly inhabited by Serbs, whereas President Vučić and the other two ideologues of the concept, Miljan Glišić and Gojko Raičević, regard it as a *world of values* without any administrative boundaries (Raičević 2022). On that note, Aleksandar Raković, expressed his views on the different models of the concept and added that "if I were to interpret Vučić's model of the Serbian world, it would be about cultural connection. In contrast to Vulin's, which is clearly defined as territorial connection. Therefore, the Serbian world is not a concept that is unambiguous or strict" (Novosti Online 2021).

Furthermore, both the *Russian* and *Serbian world* concept, from their origin, mediate three different referents. They may be a reference to (a) Russia's/Serbia's policy for their 'Near abroad'; (b) Russia's/Serbia's interaction with Russian/Serbian diasporas throughout the world; and (c) Russia's/Serbia's brand, aiming to attract all who consider themselves friends of Russia/Serbia and speak their language. Therefore, both concepts should be understood as the community of all people identifying with the Russian and Serbian civilizational space, whose fundamental principle is Orthodox faith (Petro 2015: 6). Both concepts are also based on soft power, whereas in contrast to Serbia, Russia officially acknowledged the importance of the use of soft power defining it in its Foreign Policy Concept: "Alongside military might, other important factors allowing States to influence international politics are taking centre stage, including economic, legal, technological and IT capabilities. Using these capabilities to pursue geopolitical interests is detrimental to efforts to find ways to settle disputes and resolve the existing international issues by peaceful means on the basis of the norms of international law.



In addition to traditional methods of diplomacy, ‘soft power’ has become an integral part of efforts to achieve foreign policy objectives” (President of the Russian Federation 2016). Hence, Russia under Putin begins to invest efforts in the promotion of national culture and science through 87 cultural centres worldwide that operate through the Rossotrudnichestvo Fund, established in September 2008. The strategy of Russia clearly accepts the state to be an actor of spreading soft power, alongside with the civil society and corporate actors (Vladimirova 2016). The Government of Serbia understands soft power in a similar way and recognizes the public sector as an instrument for the spread of the country’s influence both regionally and internationally. It therefore invests in the opening of new cultural centres and language schools across the globe, under the jurisdiction of the Office for Cooperation with the Diaspora and Serbs in the Region. Interestingly, the Office is led by French-born Arnaud Gouillon, who accepted the Serbian citizenship and Orthodox faith, and now aims to spread Serbian culture and implement strategies the strengthening of bonds between the Serbian diaspora and their kin state. This is probably the best example of the idea behind the *Serbian world*, as all people who identify with Serbia and are friends of the country are considered to be part of this world. Therefore, both concepts, in their essence, should be understood as the community of all people identifying with the Russian and Serbian civilizational space, whose fundamental principle is Orthodox faith (Petro 2015: 6).

In order to consolidate its influence in its dispersed diaspora, institutions had to be developed with the help of which the compatriots abroad would be well structured, organized and tightly attached to the body of the home country. Hence, the idea of institutionalization of Russian diaspora, which resulted in the establishing of Rossotrudnichestvo, a new Federal Agency in charge of its compatriots, as well as the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation. Around the same time, a series of printed media about the Russian diaspora was initiated, including journals *Russkii vek*, *Shire krug*, *Baltiiskii mir*, as well as numerous online resources (Suslov 2018: 339). In contrast to Russia, the Government of Serbia is yet to institutionalize the *Serbian world* concept, given that there are no institutions bearing that name with the sole purpose of implementing the idea. One institution that resembles to the mission of Rossotrudnichestvo, is the Office for Cooperation with the Diaspora and Serbs in the Region, under the direct auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia (MSP). The Office for Cooperation is indeed in charge of the Serbian people living outside of their kin state and is nowadays used as an instrument of soft power projection, but has been developed much prior to the surfacing of the concept. Furthermore, the Office had once been a Ministry for Diaspora, which was later downgraded by the current government to the status of a mere office under the jurisdiction of

the MSP. In addition, while there certainly are printed media outlets (*Pečat, Novi Standard, Novosti*), and many other online media resources, associated with the *Serbian world* concept, as well as a television with a show called *Srpski sv(ij)et*, it has to be stated that the concept has not yet taken its routes among the Serbs, mainly because it was initiated only two years ago. As this chapter has shown, there are many reasons to suggest that the *Serbian world* concept was modelled after the *Russkiy mir*, and adjusted to its own purposes, primarily given the entwined histories of the countries and the numerous similarities between the concepts. Although there are indeed similarities, there is little to no concrete evidence that would link the concepts and prove that the *Serbian world* was structured after the *Russkiy mir*. The main ideologues of the *Serbian world* concept, Aleksandar Raković, Miljan Glišić, and Gojko Raičević, with whom the author of this thesis has conducted interviews, have also categorically rejected the possibility that the idea behind the *Serbian world* was taken from *Russkiy mir*. Gojko Raičević, the director of the *IN4S* television that broadcasts the *Srpski sv(ij)et* show, said that “the *Russkiy mir* and *Serbian world* are two separate concepts. The *Serbian world* is authentic and was not adopted after the *Russian world* or any other similar concept. *Die deutsche Welt, The English World, Le Monde français, La mondo Italiano, Lumea Romaneasca*, are all *worlds* with authentic names, missions and goals. Ours is the Serbian [world].” Additionally, when asked about the connection between the *Serbian* and *Russian world*, Miljan Glišić, the chief editor of the internet radio – *Snaga naroda* – answered that “Nothing was taken [from the *Russian world*], not the name, nor the idea. My first association was the *Islamic* or *Mohammedan world*, whose values are also somewhat cherished in our nation. Their concept is not a concept of imperialism like the *Russian world*.” Moreover, he stated that “it is important to me that the *Serbian world* is not associated to the *Russian world*. In that context, apart from Orthodoxy, which is deeply embedded in our common identity and significant being perhaps the most important guideline for the sense of meaning and connection among the Slavic people, the Russians have always been an empire. And here, in the *Serbian world*, we are not talking about imperialism, expansionism or statehood, here we are talking about feelings and the meaning of life. Therefore, for me, it was impossible to connect the *Russkiy mir* to the *Serbian world*, in any kind of way. They are simply not the same concept.” Lastly, Aleksandar Raković also underlined that the *Serbian world* did not derive from the Russians, but that it is authentic. In his opinion, “the Russians were quite late with the reintegration of the post-Soviet space into their *world* to the extent that a huge part of the people has developed a completely anti-Russian sentiment, especially in Ukraine. [...] the Russians allowed the dismantling of the centralized Russian Orthodox Church and the Soviet Union.

The Russians practically handed over 30 million people [today's Ukraine] to other countries with one signature. We [the Serbs] never did that. We fought to save our common state and we managed to save our Serbian Orthodox Church. Even after the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia continued to take care of Serbs who are outside of the borders of the Republic of Serbia. [...] Unlike the Russians who at one point gave up on defending the identity of their people outside of the borders of the Russian Federation, we [the Serbs] have never done that.”

Interestingly, it was actually the foreign actors, who initially suggested that the *Serbian world* was just a copy of the *Ruskiy Mir*, amongst whom the President of Montenegro, Milo Đukanović spoke out and said “The ‘Russian world’ in the Balkans is called the ‘Serbian world’ and it considers Montenegro to be its natural part” (Beta 2021). Researchers from BiH, Montenegro and Germany have also suggested in several articles that the *Serbian world* was actually borrowed from the *Ruskiy mir* concept. Therefore, it was actually the regional and foreign actors who imposed this comparison onto the *Serbian world* concept and labelled it as a mere copy of an already existing concept. For many analysts, the term *Ruskiy mir* epitomizes an expansionist and messianic Russian foreign policy, which is why the foreign actors threatened by the *Serbian world* concept wanted to portray it in the same fashion, in order to accuse Serbia of destabilizing an already unstable region.

#### **4. Conclusion: Does the *Serbian world* have a future?**

The 2022 parliamentary election in Serbia saw the end of Aleksandar Vulin's tenure in office, for the first time since 2013. His departure from the Ministry of Internal Affairs raised the question as to what might be the fate of the *Serbian world* without its main advocate (Nova S 2022). Would the concept be abandoned quickly, or is it a long-term project which will shape Serbia's position in the region and globally, for years to come? The most adequate answer to was given by none other than Vulin himself who said that “the creation of the Serbian world is a process that cannot be stopped”, and added that “the unification of the Serbs will happen. [...] The natural need of the Serbs is to live together” (Beta 2022). As any country with the ability to do so, Serbia will continue to be preoccupied with changes in its neighbourhood, and will continue to design part of its cultural identity in support of its strategic interests in the region, primarily with the focus on the ethnic Serbs living there. On that note, Aleksandar Raković noticed that if a minister of Serbia talks about the concept publicly, and if he is accompanied by other prominent political figures, then the *Serbian world* takes shape of a highly important state idea and policy (Borba 2021). Vulin's departure will therefore not affect

the further implementation of the project and the only question that remains to be seen is which dimension of the concept will prevail in the political discourse in the future. Additionally, the concept has already been accepted by prominent members of the Serbian intellectual and political elite, and its main idea has been spread too far to be extinguished by the departure of one single government official. Raičević (2022) added that although Vulin has made a significant contribution to the popularization of the concept, the idea will continue to live on, as it is bigger than any individual and based on solid foundations built by generations which will be further developed and upgraded in the future. With Vulin's departure, the notion might not be heard as frequently in Serbian political discourse, but its implementation will surely continue as it had prior to his arrival.

But what is the 'true meaning' of the concept? The discourse-based analysis of the dataset leads to the conclusion that the concept presents an element of collective knowledge about the world shared by a given speech community in the Serbian political discourse. It is based on the idea of building community space as a supranational creation and the one of a Serbian civilization with a strong Orthodox component. This community would unite all Serbian people, the Serbian diaspora in the former Yugoslav republics, and even all those who simply learn Serbian and feel the attachment to Serbian culture. The component of unity unquestionably plays the most significant role in the discourse. For now, it can be concluded that the soft power approach of the Government of Serbia aims to attract people of Serbian ethnicity from the region of former Yugoslavia, and develop a sense of unity among them, but also include North Macedonia into its orbit due to the cultural identification with Serbia. Thus, the first component of the *Serbian world* concept is Serbia's policy for its 'Near abroad' (former SFRY). As it has been shown in this research paper, the soft power approach of Serbia does not stop there but also aims to preserve the national identity of its compatriots living abroad. The preservation of the national identity, traditions, and culture in the 'Far abroad' is done through the funding of new initiatives such as opening language schools or cultural associations, usually in cooperation with the Serbian Orthodox Church. Therefore, the second component of the *Serbian world* concept is Serbia's interaction with its diaspora. Both components are the *Leitmotiv* of the "Strategy of Preserving and Strengthening the Relations of Mother Country and the Diaspora and Mother Country and Serbs in the Region" which was published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia in 2011, so there have been some concrete steps towards the realization of set goals. The third component was described by Gojko Raičević, in his interview with the author of this scholarly writing, when he said that "the *Serbian world* has no administrative boundaries. All Serbs, friends of the Serbian people and all well-intended

people, are part of the *Serbian world*. The *Serbian world* without Pavle Jurišić Sturm, Archibald Reiss, Arnaud Guillon and numerous others, does not exist. Without them, the Serbian world is unimaginable and incomplete.” Thus, the concept does not merely include ethnic Serbs, but also those who identify with Serbia, its traditions, history, culture, values, or learn the Serbian language. However, whatever its interpretation, the *Serbian world* is not meant to be a rigid doctrine. Its fuzziness and elasticity are key elements of its functionality, which on the other hand leaves it open to all kinds of re-branding. The analysis of the dataset comprised of thirty political discourses in online Serbian media has shown that there are five dimensions of the *Serbian world* concept so far, and that it could easily develop other maps of meaning in the future, which means that it does not have a universal meaning used by all social actors. The *Serbian world* is thus in essence a floating signifier developed by diverse social actors, one that speaks to different audiences and can take specific forms to be operationalized depending on the context. The blurriness is structural to the *Serbian world* concept, as is the case with the *Russian world* and allows it to be reinterpreted within multiple contexts.

Furthermore, the concept gets even more complex if the perspectives of the regional actors from countries neighbouring Serbia are taken into consideration. Their view of the *Serbian world* is in complete contrast to the perspective of the Serbian political and academic elite. Opposed to the five dimensions of the *Serbian world*, there is only one dimension that can be taken from the statements of regional actors and relates to previously existing concepts such as ‘Greater Serbia’ from the 1990s. Although the ‘Greater Serbia’ was never officially part of Serbian state policy (Popov 2008: 136), the regional leaders however compare these concepts. President of Montenegro, Milo Đukanović, summarized his view in the following statement: “An assessment that the construction of a country encompassing all Serbian territories in one state would be difficult to accomplish in the current circumstances has directed the architects of the Greater Serbia project towards the idea of the creation of the Serbian world, as a phase in the fulfilment of the final goal” (Marković 2020). The regional actors are also the first ones to compare the *Serbian world* concept to its Russian counterpart, and asked the question whether it is an “originally borrowed concept” (DFC 2021: 10), modelled after the *Russkiy mir*. Thus, future research in regards to the *Serbian world* should include the political narrative of the regional actors and present their perspective on this topic. While regional and foreign scholars have tried to label the *Serbian world* as a mere copy of the *Russkiy mir*, the conducted interviews with the main ideologues of the *Serbian world* concept suggest that neither the name nor the idea relate to the *Russian world*. All concepts are authentic in their own way, whereas the Serbian, in contrast to the Russian, is in its core not imperialistic or expansionist, although

several social actors have indeed misused it in the past. The main association to the *Serbian world* is in fact the *Islamic world*, due to the fact that it relates to values that need to be accepted by others, not imposed. The notion of values is crucial for soft power (Kosachev 2012: 2). Historian Raković concluded that the *Serbian world* has much more success than its Russian counterpart, because it has accomplished much more since the dissolution of Yugoslavia than the Russians did in the post-Soviet space. Even regional actors such as the Montenegrin journalist Darko Šuković admitted that the anti-Serbian sentiment in Montenegro suffered an obvious defeat and that the *Serbhood*, i.e., the *Serbian world* is by far the best marketing project in the previous two centuries in the Balkans,” adding that it is “a phenomenal and strategically designed project”, which can now be labelled as the greatest success since 1918 and “for that they [the Serbs] should be congratulated” (Gradska RTV Podgorica 2022). On the other hand, during the 1990s, Russia did not support national sentiments in Crimea, Northern Kazakhstan, or any other places with a substantial ethnic Russian community (Zevelev 2016: 4), whereas Serbia since the dissolution of SFRY always took care of its fellow compatriots.

As witnessed in the past, soft power is developed in order to avoid the use of hard power, but it can also be articulated along with it, precede it, or even be a justification for it. The recent experiences have shown that the *Russkiy mir* concept does not depart from this ambiguity, and that it has been used to justify the war in Georgia, the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of Ukraine. Putin advanced many legitimizing points for the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 such as geopolitical, historical, and ethnic, and has shown that Russia’s soft power in its ‘Near abroad’ can become *hard* as well as that Russia is ready to instrumentalize its compatriots for (geo)political gains. On the other hand, there are no indications that this could happen in the case of Serbia’s soft power approach, given that the main advocate of the territorial model of the concept, Aleksandar Vulin, lost his power after the 2022 parliamentary election. Another aggravating circumstance is that the current constellation of power in the Balkans does not allow Serbia to work more actively towards this idea. So, given Vulin’s departure as one of the few propagators of this dimension, and the fact that the political elite in general is opposed to it supporting mainly the cultural and spiritual model of the *Serbian world* concept, there should be no doubt about the Serbian soft power approach turning hard. Even President Vučić commented that “[...] *it is important that people know what the official policy of Serbia is, it is the one that says that Serbia’s borders are inviolable, and we are not interested in other people’s borders*” (Radio Slobodna Evropa 2021). As a non-political concept, the *Serbian world* represents a legitimate basis for intra-Serbian connection without any territorial pretensions, not only because such activities are

currently unimaginable in the existing power constellation, but because the Serbs seek to be united without looking to harm others. The Serbian government aims to achieve a fatherly relation to the Serbs living outside its borders, but does not intend to use it to expand its territories. The concept evolves around the multidimensional unity of the Serbian people, trying to create a civilizational space and ethno-cultural orbit, to cherish their centuries-long traditions, religion, language, and alphabet. In addition to that, the *Serbian world* would not be complete without people of other ethnicities that identify with the values, tradition and culture cherished by the Serbs. Moreover, it should be noted that such non-political activities are fully in line with European practices (*Francophonie*), where the same people located throughout several countries connect with each other in every possible way (Jovanović 2021), and where it is the responsibility of every nation to take care of their compatriots abroad. Even if Serbs never start living in a nation state, they must have, cultivate and cherish the awareness of common belonging to the Serbian people, culture, and national identity. Most interpreters emphasize the preservation of identity values as the foundation of this concept, and many deny it having any political dimension, such as Milorad Dodik who elaborated that “the *Serbian world* is a story about the values that the Serbian people have, which are related to our faith, identity, alphabet, language and baptismal glory. [...] Those who portray it as a territorial story of expansion are absolutely bent on [...] deceiving (Politika Online 2022). It is relatively unknown that the term originates in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was a call to recognize and use the basic cultural and spiritual values of the Serbs. Today, it should be understood as such. As Miljan Glišić, the concept’s author, formulated: “We created the concept of the *Serbian world* not because people should associate our world with territories and administrative borders, but with the world of values which cannot be imposed to anyone. People need to be attracted to it, and if they are, they will participate in that world. That’s the whole concept” (Glišić 2022).

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# Appendix:

## [Interview #1: Recorded Personal Conversation with Dr Aleksandar Raković:](#)

**Recorded personal conversation / interview with Dr Aleksandar Raković, conducted on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022, in Belgrade, Republic of Serbia. Dr Aleksandar Raković is one of the initial ideologues of the *Serbian world* concept and his input is therefore fundamental for the content of this master thesis. The interview was conducted in the Serbian language and will be presented here in its original version:**

**Question #1:** Концепт 'српског света' постао је популаран у јавном и политичком дискурсу Србије након што га је први пут употребио тадашњи министар одбране, Александар Вулин. Иако се он углавном наводи као архитекта и идеолог тог концепта, поуздано се зна да га он није осмислио. Ко је по Вашем мишљењу осмислио концепт? Како и када је почео да се користи савремени појам 'српски свет'?

**Answer #1:** Дакле, ја сам покренуо ту нову идеју српског уједињења те 2009. године у време када сам био државни службеник у министарству вере Републике Србије и онда сам, пошто сам пуно путовао по српским земљама, те посете црквама и верским манифестацијама, које вас носе на све стране српских земаља, предочио своју идеју Милораду Додику. То вече када сам му предочио да треба да идемо ка новом српском уједињењу, да не морамо да се обазиремо на то шта други причају, он је размислио и сутра ујутру када смо се поново видели, сада у Доњој Градини, он је рекао да треба да идемо ка том циљу. А онда сам полако, све више и више причао људима о томе и ширио сам те своје идеје. На почетку сам значи био сам у томе, а када сам престао да будем државни службеник те 2012. године, онда сам могао и јавно да говорим о томе, јер када сте државни службеник не можете једноставно да причате јавно о томе, обавезује вас и државна политика Србије. 2013. године сам објавио јавно први текст о „Природној Србију“, имате то и у овој књизи у предговору [Српство и Православље]. То је такорећи био одговор на албанску верзију, која се зове „Природна Албанија“, то је њихов концепт, који су тада промовисали и ја сам 2013. године објавио да би „Природна Србија“ требало да обухвата Србију и Републику Српску, јер су оне заправо две Немачке. То је логично да су Србија и Српска заправо две Немачке. Црна Гора треба такође да буде са нама у



јединственој српској држави. Први пут сам објавио ту своју намеру у књизи „Срби и религијски интервенционализам“. То је књига, где је научна историографија ангажована, где сам о томе писао као о потреби. Рекао сам да у тој заједничкој држави треба да буду Србија, Република Српска и Црна Гора и Македонија, с тим што Македонија није српска држава, као што прве три јесу, али да је културолошки исто толико везана за нас и да би било добро да буде са нама. То је више од половине некадашње Југославије и то би могла да буде достојанствена и јака држава, не као што је била Југославија, али достојанствена држава за разлику од наших тренутних државица које се налазе на рубу Европе, него би уједињене поново почеле да играју неку важну улогу, као јединствена асиметрична творевина. То сам тада написао те 2013. године – асиметрична – јер Србија, Српска, тако сам тада мислио треба да буду најчвршће везане па онда чврсто и са Црном Гором, па са Македонијом, али да буде једна држава. Онда сам мало продубљивао у књизи „Историја-Вера-Политика“, која је изашла годину дана касније па онда у књизи „Црногорски сепаратизам“, који је изашао 2019. године. У тој књизи и сада можда чак и највише, највише не можда, сигурно, у књизи „Српство и Православље“, која је изашла из штампе 2022. године.

Е сад, што се тиче конкретног појма „Српски свет“, ја сам га први пут чуо, појам уопште није мој, ја сам га први пут чуо од Миљана Глишића и Гојка Раичевића, који су имали телевизију *Снага народа* и портал *ИН4С*. Ја не знам како су га они осмислили, не знам да ли им је руски свет инспирација, али имате добро на Википедији. Зоран Стефановић, који је власник пројекта *Рас*, он је то потпуно, када смо разговарали, он је питао како то изгледа „Српски свет“, ја сам му објаснио мој део, али да почеци сежу у Миљана Глишића и Гојка Раичевића и емисију „Српски свет“. Пошто сам ја скоро сваки дан говорио о српском уједињењу и изнова и изнова јавно преносио, јер су ми медији били отворени. Прво ови мањи медији и већи у Републици Српској, а мањи медији у Србији. Међутим, касније сам видео да ми све више ови важни државни медији у Србији отвара простор. Да могу да кажем шта год пожелим, па сам схватио да је та идеја заправо нова идеја српског уједињења коју сам обновио и коју сам покренуо. Полако је да идеја почела да из *underground*-а долази до *mainstream*-а, јер чим када почну велики медији да вас зову у Србији, РТС и РТВ и њима слични, то онда значи да је нешто преломљено. И 2020. године, Хрвати су почели да потпуно везују тај појам за мене. Значи они су тај појам приписали мени. А појам су смислили други људи. Зоран Стефановић је реконструисао целу генезу у разговорима са Глишићем, Раичевићем и тако даље. Значи то што је он написао на Википедији, то је потпуно релевантно. Он је урадио целу генезу

појма „Српски свет“ од 19. века па до данас. Ми нисмо ни знали за тај појам из 19. века. То јест ја нисам знао. То је било *Српство* тада, али очигледно да је постојао тада тај неки микро-појам „Српског света“. Хрвати су почели то да везују за мене и онда је кренула цела кампања. И Хрвата, и муслимана, и црногорских сепаратиста, да се мени припише појам „Српски свет“ и та како они кажу великосрпска идеја Велике Србије. Уствари, они нису били ни свесни да су на тај начин потпуно рекламирали и чак на крају је и овај Дарко Шуковић морао да призна на Градској телевизији пре неки дан да је та моја идеја победила. Тако је рекао човек. Да је Раковић победник и да све што је он најавио да ће се догодити, догодило се. Такође је Томас Бреј, немачки новинар, у својим научним радовима, почео да приписује појам „Српски свет“ мени, такође и *Радио Слободна Европа* и тако даље. Значи појам није мој, али су странци потпуно почели да приписују тај појам мени и да фузионишу моју идеју српског уједињења са појмом „Српског света“. На крају се то некако природно накалемеило једно на друго и ја сам то прихватио, јер је то јавност прихватила уствари. Тако да на неки начин могу да им будем захвалан што су то промовисали и спојили тај појам са оним мојим намерама које сам почео да исказујем оне 2009. и 2013. године, као и да о њима пишем од 2015. године. Ово је рецимо на неки начин српска идеологија, ова књига коју сам Вам дао [Српство и Православље].

**Question #2:** У једном интервјуу сте изјавили да постоје различити модели или различите димензије концепта ‘српског света’. Нагласили сте да је Александар Вулин више опредељен политичкој димензији, док Александар Вучић ипак више наглашава културно повезивање Срба. Како коментаришете то и да ли су се можда изкристалисале још неке друге димензије ‘српског света’ у међувремену?

**Answer #2:** Дакле, моја идеја је и намера је да се српске земље уједине, да буду једна држава. Дакле, Србија, Република Српска, Црна Гора, а да Македонија буде у неком асиметричном односу. То је била дакле нека академска прича, прича по научним форумима и тако даље, коју су моје колеге почеле да прихватају у неком тренутку један за другим, јер људи верују у то, али су се плашили да кажу. Раније се стављала стигма на оне људе који би били спремни да кажу нешто тако. Е сад то више није тако. То се потпуно променило и ушло у главни ток. Тиме што је Вулин преузео то у политичком смислу, он је то дигао на државни ниво, јер све што ми интелектуалци причамо по академским круговима небитно је ако државни органи не преуму то, јер они спроводе политику и спроводе планове преко којих би се дошло до неких циљева. Дакле, Вулин

је неспорно говорио о томе да је он за уједињење српских земаља у једну државу. Додик говори да је за уједињење Србије и Републике Српске, и он каже делова Црне Горе. Има то на страни 101 [у књизи Српство и Православље] како он то каже. Ја мислим да то треба да буде читава Црна Гора, а не делови Црне Горе. И Вучић који није својатао тај концепт и појам 'српског света', али све што он ради иде уствари у том правцу да се Срби културолошки дефинишу као јединствена, недељива нација, без икаквих посебних регионалних разлика, посебно се прескачу препреке тих наметнутих државних граница између Републике Србије, Републике Српске, Црне Горе и Македоније. Оне су неприродне. Између Немачке и Португалије нема ниједне границе, а између нас Срба су те границе намерно и вештачки наметнуте. Тако да је добро што је Вулин то преузео. Он је на себе такође навукао пуно проблема због тога што је то преузео, али на крају ово су неки револуционарни кораци у том моделовању српске нације и српског питања. Без неког идејног прихватања од стране неког од државних функционера, то не би имало такав значај. Вулин је то прихватио и као министар унутрашњих послова и као министар одбране, што посебно даје на тежини. Што се Вучића тиче, ја сам сигуран да он такође верује у то да су Срби апсолутно једна и недељива нација у Србији, Црној Гори, Републици Српској, нашем окружењу и наравно нашој дијаспори, и кораци које он сада предузима иду у том правцу.

**Question #3:** Да ли је и Српска православна црква прихватила тај концепт? Постоје неки званичници СПЦ који су користили тај појам у јавном дискурсу, али водеће личности као што су патријарх Порфирије или блаженопочивши патријарх Иринеј нису у јавности користили тај појам. Да ли постоји и верска димензија или верски модел тог појма, или се зауставља на културолошкој и политичкој димензији?

**Answer #3:** У овој књизи имате текст о патријарху Иринеју, који сам ја и на основу приватних разговора с њим, јер смо се често виђали чак и у четири ока, нешто сам ту написао. Патријарх Иринеј је био за српско уједињење. То је био његов сан. Он је био српски родољуб и залагао се за уједињење Србије, Црне Горе и Републике Српске у једну државу. Ја мислим пошто је Српска православна црква једина наша институција која је надживела разбијање заједничке државе и заједничких институција те 1991 и 1992. године, она је последњи наш остатак нашег уједињења из 1918. године. Мислим да СПЦ не мора да се изјашњава о томе, о самом појму, нити о било којој варијанти концепта, једна државно уједињење, док је друго културно уједињење. Не мора да се изјашњава,

јер све оно што СПЦ чини јесте да је она најважније везивно ткиво између српског народа и то је потпуно у складу са политичким, идентетским српством, а и концептом 'српског света'. Дакле, СПЦ више обједињује српство него дипломатска представништва Републике Србије, јер је народ, чак и оне генерације које уопште више немају наше држављанство, они су везани за СПЦ изван граница Србије, Републике Српске и Црне Горе. Посебно у дијаспори, дакле Западна Европа, Северна Америка, Аустралија, Нови Зеланд и тако даље. Тако да СПЦ је у том смислу просто пример како српско уједињење може да опстане и у најтежим околностима. За разлику од на пример Руса, који су за време Перестројке пристали да им се разбије црква и подели на аутономне цркве, да им се разбије и држава, Совјетски савез, Срби су се борили да сачувају државу и успели су да у потпуности сачувају цркву. Дакле, ми смо били чак у том смислу јаснији око одбране тековина нашег уједињења из 1918. године, много много јаснији него што су то били Руси и успели смо да остваримо велике успехе у том смислу, да нам чак признају да смо од 1918. године остварили највише успеха у тој српској обједињујућој идеји. 1918. година је била врхунац, а сада долази време када се приближавамо поново томе. Највише смо досегли, функционишемо потпуно као јединствена и недељива целина. Када уђете у Републику Српску, не осећате никакав утисак као да сте изван Републике Србије и исто када одете у Црну Гору код Срба, немате никакав утисак да сте изван Србије, а у Македонији се осећамо као код своје куће.

**Question #4:** Вук Драшковић је у својим недавно објављеним мемоарима под називом 'Ожиљци живота' констатовао да су темеље 'српског света' поставили 'Изворни СПО', предвођен тадашњим министром за дијаспору, Срђаном Срећковићем и тадашњим саветник Бориса Тадића, Млађан Ђорђевић. Они су наводно тада саставили документ о заштити Срба у Црној Гори, у БиХ, у Македонији, у Хрватској и на Косову. Планирано је и да се, при српским црквама, парама државе Србије, отварају обданишта за децу, српске основне школе, као и српске гимназије. Да ли тај документ заједно са годину дана касније усвојеном „Стратегијом очувања и јачања односа матичне државе и дијаспоре и матичне државе и Срба у региону“ обележава почетак програма и пројекта који ће касније попримити назив 'српски свет'?

**Answer #4:** Тај документ осликава то време, притом не треба изгубити из вида да је и Коштуница кренуо и пре тога са спровођењем те идеје. Коштуница је купио Телеком у Републици Српској. Кренуло је то технолошко повезивање између Србије и РС, али

заиста тих година, ја сам Вам поменуо 2009. годину, то је увертира у те кораке државе. Ја сам тада био у министарству вера. Министарство вера је заправо највише гурало ту причу о српском уједињавању, јер Закон о црквеним и верским заједницама из 2006. године, који је донела Коштуница Влада, уствари био први корак. Значи закон о црквеним и верским заједницама из 2006. године је обавезивао Републику Србију да мора да се стара о Српској православној цркви где год се она налази и то је у складу са нашим Уставом, донетим у 2006. години, по којем ми имамо обавезу да штитимо интересе Срба где год се они налазили. Значи, 2006. године су донети тај Устав и Закон о верској заједници. То је почетак. То Вук Драшковић не познаје добро. То је почетак те наше политике спорих корака, још увек магловите и недефинисане идеје. Видели су се лични људски напори у томе да се крене ка обједињавању Срба. Па онда иду министарство за дијаспору, министарство културе такође свим пројектима да помаже Србе изван Србије. Дакле, Млађа Ђорђевић се заиста трудио да повезује Србе, али није имао циљ. Значи, било је повезивања Срба, слажем се, али није постојао циљ. Неки циљ мора да постоји, што би по мом мишљењу требало да буде државно уједињење. То би требао да буде циљ. Све то наравно, читава та политика наша из тих година има своју генезу. Посебно треба имати у виду да је идеја српског уједињења била стигматизирана. Неко ко би о томе говорио у јавности би могао да буде озбиљно кажњен или пак макнут са медија. Дакле, то је био сасвим други свет, није као сада. Сви ти напори, и око Закона о црквеним и верским заједницама и Србима у региону и тако даље, изазвали су велике нападе ових који су били против тога. Сада таквих напада практично и нема у Србији. Ви сте видели на примеру рушења Ђукановића да је читава српска јавност била обједињена у томе, за кога код да су били. Значи и про-владина медији и про-опозициони медији, сви су били обједињени у томе, нико то није критиковао. Сви су се ангажовали на томе. Тако да је драгоцено подсетити се тих првих корака, али је идеја добила замах у претходних неколико година и ушла је у главни ток, ушла је у потпуни мејнстрим и то је последица те генезе која траје од 2006. године. И то је значи време када крећемо и када причамо у Бања Луци 2009. године. То је време три године након сецесије Црне Горе и годину дана од једностране сецесије такозваног Косова. Када разговарамо поново о томе да идемо да се уједињујемо и стварамо опет заједничку државу. Показали смо да се нисмо предали и да се нећемо никада предати.

**Question #5:** Домаћи и регионални актери концепт ‘српског света’ углавном пореде са ‘руским миром’ или ‘руским светом’, који се већ неколико деценија користи чак као део

званичне регионалне и спољне политике Руске Федерације и Владимира Путина. Да ли је српски концепт преузет од руског? Ако јесте, које су сличности, а које разлике?

**Answer #5:** Није преузето од руског, то је наш аутентичан концепт. Руси су доста закаснили у реинтеграцији њиховог простора до те мере да је у Украјину практично створен такав идентитет ког огромног дела народа које је у потпуности анти-руско. Значи Руси су мислили да ће, враћам се у доба Перестројке и распада руске цркве, односно разградње централизоване руске цркве и Совјетског савеза. Руси су 30 милиона људи [данашњу Украјину] практично једним потписом предали другим државама. Ми то нисмо никада урадили. Ми смо се борили да сачувамо заједничку државу и успели смо да сачувамо нашу српску цркву. Дакле, и после разбијања Југославије, Србија је наставила да води бригу о Србима који су изван граница Републике Србије. И Милошевићева, и Ђинђићева, и Коштуница, и Тадићева, и Вучићева власт. Дакле, сви предводници Србије после распада Југославије. Они су имали огромне политичке неспоразуме између себе, али су водили бригу о српском народу. Вучић додуше сада највише, дефинитивно, али је тога било и раније. Значи треба поменути, дакле, све ове које сам поменуо, сви они су уствари подржали повезивање Срба изван граница Србије за њихову матичну државу, Републику Србију. Како год да су посматрали то везивање. Руси су били одустали од Украјине. Значи они су мислили да ће економском везом њих привући и тако даље. Идентитетски нису радили ништа да очувају руски идентитет у Украјини. Ми [Срби] смо заиста радили пуно. Улагали смо велика средства за очување српског идентитета посебно на простору бивше Југославије, то је било у складу са нашим Уставом, законима и државним програмима, које је имала Република Србија. Ви сте [Александар Љубомировић у претходно вођеном разговору] поменули један од тих државних програма, било их је више, чак има и Доктрина одбране Републике Србије која подразумева и одбрану Републике Српске. Дакле, било је више тих докумената. Неке ћемо заборавити, неки су јавни, има наравно и неких који су тајни, али за разлику од Руса који су одустали у једном моменту од одбране идентитета свог народа изван граница Русије, ми то никада нисмо учинили. Увек смо се трудили да одбранимо српски идентитет, то се посебно видело на примеру Црне Горе где је почео да се подиже проценат српског становништва, да се враћа на старо и да Србија такође, то је и Вучић најавио, када буде попис у Црној Гори буде укључена у то. Значи морамо да се укључимо и према Уставу Републике Србије и према нашем закону који нас обавезују. То није да

ли ми нешто хоћемо или нећемо – ми морамо. Морамо да поштујемо сопствене законе. Српски свет је некако успешнији од руског света, то је мој утисак.

**Question #6:** Многе медијске куће су поставиле основано питање да ли концепт „Српског света“ има будућност након одласка Александра Вулина са места министра унутрашњих послова. Како Ви гледате на то? Да ли је концепт дугорочно одржив и да ли може да постане званична политика Србије у будућности? У једном интервјуу сте изјавили да је концепт попримио озбиљне назнаке званичне државне политике или барем идеје. Да ли ће то наставити да буде са новом Владом без Вулина?

**Answer #6:** Када је реч о Вулину, он је преузео то у политичком смислу и подигао то на државни ниво, просто то је чињеница. Али сам концепт, изворно, и појам нису његови. Тако да то наставља да живи и овако и онако. Он ће сигурно добити неку позицију, сад видећемо коју.

Знате шта је још велико достигнуће српског света? То је Дан српске заставе, слободе и уједињења, то помињен у предговору књиге, видећете и ту генезу. То је велико достигнуће, то је заправо српски свет. А то су Вучић, Додик и патријарх Порфирије. Видите да има и те како то везе. Дан Републике Српске у Бања Луци, све се моћније и моћније обележава. Ове године је био невероватан. Ја рецимо говорим сваке године од 2018. године на телевизији Републике Српске, пре свечане академије тог дана. Значи то је термин резервисан за мене да говорим о српском уједињењу. Чак када је био и Ковид-19, укључио сам се из Београда. Мени је сада забрањен улазак у Босну и Херцеговину, па ћу се поново укључити из Београда. Дакле, то су Дан Републике Српске у Бања Луци, сваког 9. јануара, вишемесечне литије у Црној Гори, спектакуларно устоличење митрополита Јоаникија на Цетињу. То је исто била снага „Српског света“. Ту су Порфирије и Јоаникије. Прослава Дана српског јединства, слободе и националне заставе у Београду прошле године, то је на грандиозан начин обележено, као и сваке године свесрпско обележавање Дана сећања на страдале и прогнане Србе у хрватској оружаном акцији „Олуја“. То је исто обележавано на веома високом нивоу.

Дакле, нису битне конкретне личности, оне јесу важне, али за идеју и развој „Српског света“, без обзира да ли је реч о концепту државног или културног уједињења, важан је читав српски народ и да та идеја циркулише. Сигуран сам да већина министара и у садашњој Влади верују у то, колико је њих спремно да то каже, то је друго питање, али сматрам да верују у то, јер то је супериорна идеја и ми ћемо до тога доћи. Ту је Додик у

праву, 21. век ће бити век српског уједињења, ми ћемо се ујединити. Ја сам на једном скупу Републике Српске и на састанцима које сам имао овде у Београду са Додиком, па сам рекао да Србија, Црна Гора и Република Српска могу да створе и државу која се зове Савезна Република Србија, јер то је Његошев појам Србије од Дунава до мора, дакле од Апатина до Бара и од Босанске до Тимочке Крајине. Значи то је још један нови моменат, јер сам тада по први пут причао јавно о томе на једном државном скупу, да треба да добијемо име за ту државу, а не да измишљамо више нека имена. Дакле, нема никаквог разлога да свака од тих српских федералних јединица нема идентитет једне заједничке државе која би могла да се зове Савезна Република Србија. Јер ако је Његошу то било сасвим у реду, а он је српски идеолог и митрополит црногорски, не видим у чему би био проблем. Највећи број Срба у Црној Гори говори да навија за Србију, за репрезентацију Србије. Према томе, треба искристалисати то. Знате, људи када добију опције, онда свашта може да им бадне на памет, не треба давати превише опција. Ако дамо опцију хоћемо ли писати ћирилицом или латиницом, многи ће се определити за латиницу. Ако дамо опцију да је српски или такозвани црногорски језик, многи могу да се определе за овај потоњи, и тако даље. Значи, треба сваки човек да тежи да има јасан и чврст идентитет и треба да дефинишемо јасан и чврст идентитет, а не да постављамо неке опције које заправо могу да воде ка разградњи српског народа. Видело смо да смо ми као народ склони тим дуализмима. У Црној Гори је то такозвана црногорска нација. Овде у Србији ћирилица или латиница. Дакле, то је и Бењамин Калај, он је говорио, и рекао је да треба играти на карту српских регионализама, јер то њих раздваја. Треба да превазиђемо српске регионализме и да јачамо стубове нашег идентитета, које чине српска националност, српска ћирилица, српски језик, српска црква и сећања на Косовски завет. Косовски завет игра суштинску улогу



## Interview #2: Recorded Personal Conversation with Gojko Raičević:

**Recorded personal conversation / interview with Gojko Raičević, conducted on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022, in Belgrade, Republic of Serbia. Gojko Raičević is together with Aleksandar Raković and Miljan Glišić, one of the leading advocates of the *Serbian world* and his input is therefore fundamental for the content of this master thesis. The interview was conducted in the Serbian language and will be presented here in its original version:**

**Question #1:** Концепт ‘Српског света’ постао је популаран у јавном и политичком дискурсу Србије након што га је први пут употребио тадашњи министар одбране, Александар Вулин. Иако се он углавном наводи као архитекта и идеолог тог концепта, поуздано се зна да га он није осмислио. Ко је по Вашем мишљењу осмислио концепт? Како и када је почео да се користи савремени појам „Српски свет“?

**Answer #1:** Ријетки су историјски периоди када смо као народ живјели српско јединство, али зато идеја о ослобођењу и уједињењу српског народа живи од косовске трагедије до дана данашњег. Чешћи су, нажалост, периоди у којима је српски народ сањао своје ослобођење. Идеја српског св(иј)ета није ништа друго до јавно демонстрирање идеје о саборности и јединству српског народа која живи кроз један други облик. Гужва око власништва над кованицом је апсурдна. Термин српски свијет користио је краљ Никола, пјесник Змај и бројни други у 19. и почетком 20. вијека. Под тим називом издата је и књига Петра Никетића која је доживјела више издања крајем прошлог вијека... Као директор, главни и одговорни уредник Националне ИН4С телевизије дао сам име Српски св(И)ет емисији која је почињала у 11:00 часова, а завршавала се у 12:44, када су почињале вијести дана. Српски свијет и информативна емисија 12:44 су одавали уређивачки концепт Националне ИН4С телевизије. За то име сам се одлучио дубоко вјерујући у тај принцип, а чуо сам за термин не читајући књигу Никетића или не листајући новине Срба из Угарске, већ из бројних разговора са пријатељем Небојшом Остојићем који је често користио кованицу у нашим разговорима.

Мотив цјелокупног дјеловања медијског тима на чијем сам челу, а и мој лични, јесте заустављање додатног разуђивања српског националног корпуса, као и заустављање процеса расрбљивања, иако свјестан да испуњавање овог задатака није ни на појединцу, нити на малом тиму људи окупљених око ове идеје. Могуће да наша добра намјера, на

самом почетку, и није била препозната. Српски св(И)ет, онај који смо ми пробудили из заборава 2020, имао је за намјеру стварање јединственог духовног простора и то путем медијске, научне, културне и умјетничке свесрпске саборности, по угледу на ентузијазам наших старих и уз, неминовно, прилагођавање данашњици.

**Question #2:** У једном интервјуу је историчар Александар Раковић изјавио да постоје различити модели или различите димензије концепта ‘Српског света’. Нагласио је да је Александар Вулин више одређен за спровођење политичке димензије, док Александар Вучић ипак више наглашава повезивање Срба на једној културолошкој или економској основи. Како коментаришете то и да ли су се можда искристалисале још неке друге димензије ‘Српског света’ у међувремену?

**Answer #2:** Уколико бисте то питање упутили, на примјер, неколицини саговорника, вјероватно бисте добили исто толико различитих одговора, и исто толико различитих углова у сагледавању овог концепта. Нажалост, неки су, за надати се у доброј намјери, обесмислили наш доживљај српског света. Други су га нападали из страха од Велике Србије, док су, пак, трећи видјели опасност да Александар Вучић његовом употребом не постигне оно што Вулин не може на политички начин. Дио политичке јавности Хрвата, Бошњака и Црногораца „српски свет“ су користили за унутрашње политичке борбе, односно за потребе мобилизације сопственог бирачког тијела, стварајући привидну изазвану могућом српском агресијом.

**Question #3:** Које државе спадају под концепт ‘Српског света’? Да ли су то само оне територије које су већински насељене Србима или пак под наведени концепт спадају и државе попут Северне Македоније које су историјски, верски и културолошки везане за Србију? Да ли се под концептом ‘Српског света’ убрајају само Срби у региону или се подразумева и зближавање са српском дијаспором широм света?

**Answer #3:** Наш доживљај српског света нема административне границе.

Сви Срби и све Српкиње, пријатељи српског народа и сваки добронамјерни човјек је дио српског света. Српски свет без Паула Штурма (Павле Јуришић Штурм), Арчибалда Рајса, Лејди Пецет, породице Кадбери, или без мајора Пјер Анри Бинела, Јунуса Бек Јевкурова, генерала Ивашова, Арно Гујона и бројних других са свих меридијана, без њих нема српског света. Без њих је Српски свет незамислив и непотпун.

**Question #4:** Концепт ‘Српског света’ је базиран на мекој моћи. Којим инструментима меке моћи располаже држава Србија, уз помоћ којих може да шири свој утицај међу Србима и другим народима у региону? На који начин се спроводи концепт ‘Српског света’ у дело и да ли је он постао званичан део спољне политике Србије?

**Answer #4:** Волио бих да је српска мека моћ много снажнија. Најчешће је сведена на неколико врхунских спортиста и умјетника, а без значајније, шире, координације. Бојим се да као народ немамо јасан правац дјеловања.

**Question #5:** Домаћи и регионални актери концепт ‘Српског света’ углавном пореде са ‘Руским миром’ или ‘Руским светом’, који се већ неколико деценија користи чак као део званичне регионалне и спољне политике Руске Федерације и Владимира Путина. Да ли је српски концепт преузет од руског? Ако јесте, које су сличности, а које разлике?

**Answer #5:** Руски мир и српски свет су два различита концепта, српски свет је аутентичан и није преузет од руског света или било ког другог сличног концепта. Die deutsche Welt, The English World, Le Monde français, La mondo Italiano, Lumea Romaneasca, сви ти ‘свјетови’ имају аутентичан израз, мисију и циљеве. Наш је српски.

**Question #6:** Многе медијске куће су поставиле основано питање да ли концепт ‘Српског света’ има будућност након одласка Александра Вулина са места министра унутрашњих послова. Како Ви гледате на то? Да ли је концепт дугорочно одржив и да ли може да постане званична политика Србије у будућности? У једном интервјуу је изјављено да је концепт већ попримио озбиљне назнаке званичне државне политике или барем једне националне идеје. Да ли се слажете с тим и да ли ће то бити настављено са новом Владом без Александра Вулина?

**Answer #6:** Министар Вулин је дао значајан допринос на популаризацији српског света. Од свих српских политичара највише је, управо он, у политичким обраћањима користио тај термин, његов допринос је неупитан. Шта даље са српским светом након што Александар Вулин више не буде министар? Српски свет, Српство, данас живи без Растка Немањића, цара Душана, Његоша, Карађорђа и Милоша... Уз поуке и наслеђе које су оставили Српски свет има чврсте темеље које су градиле генерације, укључујући и ову нашу, а које ће сјутра дограђивати неке будуће смеле и храбре генерације.

### Interview #3: Recorded Personal Conversation with Miljan Glišić:

**Recorded personal conversation / interview with Miljan Glišić, founder of the YouTube canal *Snaga naroda*, conducted on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022, in Belgrade, Republic of Serbia. Miljan Glišić created the term *srpski svet* and his interview is crucial for the analysis of the genesis of the notion. The interview was conducted in the Serbian language and will be presented here in its original version:**

**Question #1:** Шта Ви подразумевате под појмом 'српски свет' и шта он за Вас представља?

**Answer #1:** Постоји неколико основних постулата. Први је апологија непријатељу то је оно што носимо кроз идентитет. То је оно хришћанство које се надовезало. Пошто сам ја присталица оне теорије и идеје да је географија карактер судбина и да је заиста посебна врста цивилизације настајала у овом и медитеранско-панонском, балканском бревијару, о чему су писали разни људи. У том контексту сам ја схватио да је поп-култура та нит која је спајала све људе са овог терена и то се заиста доказало кроз турбо-фолк. У овом оштром последњем рату, турбо-фолк је спојио Загреб и Београд на један директан начин, иако су они то негирали, тражећи да створе нешто што је потпуно анахроно. Концепт 19. века је заправо Велика Хрватска, оно што смо ми имали као концепт Велике Србије, који се изродио још из концепта раније, од Гарашанина и Начертанија. Основна идеја тог концепта је заиста да кроз државаност дођемо до територија на којима живи сав народ заједнички да би се култура динамичније размењивала. То ништа није упалило. Једино што је остало, а да је упалило то је идентитет који нас спаја, односно порекло културе која настаје. Е сад, шта је био проблем са Југославијом, рецимо, као концептом? То што су то биле две различите културе. Имали сте пречанску и терезијанску културу, преко Саве, Дунава и Дрине и та култура није могла да се споји са овом јужном српском културном и зато то није могло да функционише. Да пошаљете српског официра који ће у сред Загреба, средњеевропског града, да командује и да диригује како он хоће у франкопанској теорији културе. То је морало да се распадне и распало се. Међутим, са дигитализацијом и са теоријом хабова коју сада имамо, са културом која се раширила масовно том брзином да се полако враћа идентитет. Имате сад особе као што је Шарић из Хрватске који инсистира на свом идентитету порекла који не мора да буде српски или хрватски, али је

тај јужнословенски, али нагиње српском. На тај начин се треба третирати идеја српског света. То је један велики сабир којем можете да дођете јер припадате култури, али не на силу. Нас не интересује територија и те територије су концепт 19. века или ако хоћете 20. века или ако хоћете нешто што у дигитализацији, пост-модерни и деконструкцији и глобализацији не може да функционише. Али култура функционише савршено и зато је рецимо Загреб 15 пута ближи данас Београду него што је био на почетку 20. века или током 20. века.

Поп-култура која се наслања на словенску антитезу, то је оно што су они нама признали, што нам је Гете признао као културу да би добили државу у 19. веку. Та словенска антитеза је у ствари севдах. Севдах је нешто што је профункционисало кроз поп-културу до дан данас кроз *new wave*, кроз *rock'n'roll*, кроз мело-драму као феномен до турбо-фолка. Тај феномен је постојао да они испод жита доле Цецу, за време агресије њихове на нас и наше на њих и слично. Једна линија је тај идентитет мело-драме односно севдаха односно поп-културе, па долази до масовне културе. У масовној култури, то је та митопејична средина у којој ми разумемо да смо другачији због тог односа према целини и према хришћанству, али још од Винче. Хришћанство је *touch* који надограђује ту културу љубави, ту културу разумевања, ту културу саживота, као и мекост левантско, балканску, медитеранску, коју имамо, али коју смо мало узимали и од Турака. Оно што Ломпар јако паметно каже контактна култура. Та контактна култура на овом тлу је породило заправо то да имате Недовића композитора из 20. века који је ишао по целој бившој Југославији и дан данас они верују да су неке песме аутентично њихове, а он човек заправо из Крагујевца писао и о Вишеграду и о Сплиту и слично. По тој основи, по томе сам ја заправо закључио да је то 'српски свет'. Јер Албанци сматрају да имају 'Природну Албанију' што је једна рудиментарна ствар и никада ништа што је природно не може да буде софистицирано као културолошки феномени, цивилизацијски феномен и да од тога направите државу. Хрвате ради и даље концепт Велике Хрватске. Ми правимо концепт српског света, јер свет није територија, него је један свет вредности који не може да се намеће него можеш само да очекујеш да ако се некоме допадне, учествује у том свету (РУСИ НАМЕЋУ). То је цео концепт.

**Question #2:** Како сте уопште осмислили тај појам? Одакла вуче корене појам 'српски свет'?

**Answer #2:** Асоцијативно, зато што када кажемо свет прво што у некој поруци која је колоквијална, мислимо на 'муслимански свет'. Они нису концепт империјализма као што је 'руски свет' или 'руски мир'. Они нису Комонвелт као што је западна култура направила. Они су заиста свет. Свет живота, свет обичајности, свет комуникације. Они су посебност. У муслиманском свету има и подела, шта је шиитско а шта сунитско и слично, поделе у односу на Африку, на Азију. Све то поделе постоје, али они заиста имају један свет младе религије која има своју поруку. Имају свој систем вредности који се може аутономно затворити и своје аутохтоне вредности. Ја сам стварно закључио да би и Срби могли да имају нешто слично, заиста један свет за разлику од Хрвата и Албанаца и југословенске идеје. Зато ми је било ближе да кажем 'српски свет'.

Зашто муслимански свет? Зато што ми у нашем српском свету градиво мухамеданску културу, ми имамо тај мухамедански елемент који је јако близак нама, који је још ближи него западноевропски који имамо у Хрватској и Далмацији. Далмација је такође ближа јер је Медитеран. Српски свет не може да функционише без Медитерана, јер је и Панонско и Јадранско море део једног бревијара. Ми смо тај елемент где се Балкан са морем са Медитераном и исламским елементом претвара у један посебан свет, у један свет својих вредности. Зато свет а не државност, идеја државе или империје или интеграције. Александар Раковић ми је паметно једном приликом рекао да једина два народа која могу да интегришу остале народе на Балкану су Турци и Срби и то се дешавало већ у прошлости. Али ја сматрам да је ово много дубља врста интеграција, која је преживела све друге политичке и геополитичке процесе.

Важно ми је зашто није 'руски свет' зато што Русију у том контексту осим православља које нам је дубоко усађено у идентитет и што је јако важно, која је можда и најважнија смерница за осећање смисла и повезаности словенског народа, Руси су увек ипак били империја. А овде, у српском свету, се не говори о империјализму и државности, овде се говори о осећању и смислу живота. И онда нисам могао тај руски мир да повежем са српским светом никако. Нису исти концепти.

**Question #3:** То би онда значило да ни назив ни идеја нису преузети од 'руског света'?

**Answer #3:** Није ништа, ни назив, ни идеја. Асоцијација је била на муслимански и на мухамедански свет који такође баштинимо код нас али је то нешто посебно. Посебан је српски свет из ова два постулата у која верујем а то су: Однос према епском, однос према непријатељу, оно што само ми имамо, Нибелунзи имају потпуно другачији приступ, и

код њих је јунаштво, пример чојства и јунаштва. Ми имамо чојство из апологије непријатеља, односно из наше славне културне и наративне баште која се преносила са колена на колена. И то је онда 'Јао, мени до Бога милога, кад ја убих од себе бољега'. Ви то немате у другим народима. И ако имате још словенску антитезу као културни елемент који кроз севдах, јер севдах није само чињеница босанске приче 'Севдалинка најлепша шћери Босне'. Не. Севдах је питање мелодраме, са Балкана и са Леванта, који се кроз све облике масовне културе, а пре свега поп-културе, задржао до дан данас. И када повежете та два елемента добијете свет.

**Question #4:** Са Александром Вулином који је први државник званичник, први министар, који је прихватио појам 'српски свет' и популаризовао га у јавности те 2020. године, је то подигнуто на политички ниво. Да ли је требало да се подигне на државни ниво, имајући у виду да се његово поимање концепта знатно разликује од Вашег?

**Answer #4:** Толико је широка и лако везива та синтагма за било који контекст, друштвени, културни, политички, геополитички, стратешки, и уосталом за идентитет народа, тако да је лако да се од те синтагме створе различита тумачења. То његово тумачење је ипак погрешно, јер не можете како кажу 'старо вино у мијехове нове', не можете стари концепт Велике Србије на коме он то једино разуме, због државничке идеје, у овом актуелном тренутку Александра Вучића који је такође злоупотребио на свој начин. Мислим да они уопште не знају о чему причају. Када би им се овако темељно објаснило можда би донекле разумели. Видео сам у неким интервјуима да Додик инсистира на варијанти да је то културни образац. То је добро, али да ли он разуме који је то културни образац? Да ли разуме ту блискост односа тог народа који разуме 'српски свет', који комуницира, те контактне културе коју баштинимо. Мислим да не. Мислим да они то дневнополитички користе и мислим да Вулин то крајње прагматски користи због којекаквих паролe које ће у одређеном тренутку подићи статус националистима да поверују да је овај режим нешто што разуме за обједињавање Срба на географском терену Балкана, у интересу неке будуће заједнице или чувања културног и вредносног идентитета Срба али у политичком смислу. Не, то нема везе с тим. Појам је толико широк да нас интересује Далмација као контекст сарадње, а не парче Срба у Црној Гори па макар су сви они били Срба, а неки се до данас издавали за Монтенегрине. Ја лично мислим да то није сепаратна ствар, нас не интересују у 'српском свету' и не треба да нас интересују контакти са Србима из Босне. Дубоко нас интересују Далмати, дубоко нас

интересују Муслимани, дубоко нас интересују они Арнаути, не Арбанаси, не Шиптари, него Арнаути који тековима својег идентитета могу да комуницирају са оним центром који је рецимо у овом конкретном историјском тренутку – Београд. Мени се јако давно свидела идеја, био сам у Штокхолму и видео сам да су они промовисали идеју *Stockholm – Capital of Scandinavia*. Београд јесте *capital of the Balkans* и они сви то осећају. И у Македонији и Албанији и свуда наравно са једном горчином то прихватају али то је све због идентитета тог 'српског света' односно тог поп-културног, масовно културног феномена који комуницира на овим крајевима врло крупно.

Зашто српски? Па историјско право је српског народа да буде српски, јер се зна одакле то потиче. Ми задржавамо на тај начин своје српство, међутим у контексту 'српског света' сви они полажу право да буду Срби иако су га се одрекли и ми не можемо сада на силу да им кажемо 'вратите се, бићете Срби'. Не, него ово је право ваше културе ако хоћете изволите. Ово је журка на коју сте добродошли. Не морају, али долазе свакако.

**Question #5:** Пошто је појам 'српском света' прилично нов, шта Ви мислите како ће се развијати у будућности и да ли ће постати део званичне државне стратегије?

**Answer #5:** То је питање теорије меке моћи, то је оно чему Руси у својој историји никада нису били склони. Руси су имерија континуитета, која то разуме само својим инертним ставом силе у одбрани, јер се Руси увек бране, али то раде чврстом стабилном силом, а ту не можеш победити. У тој узрочно-последичкој вези размишљају о државним концептима. Ми би требали са аспекта институција и државе да размишљамо о култури као највишој вредности, која је магнетизам за друге народе. И то је принцип меке моћи, који је нама дубоко усађен од Винче до данас. Ми смо опет, понављам, контактна култура која је научила шта значи саобраћај, комуникација, порука из ситуација у којима смо живели све време. На тај начин, смо и наш културни модел који ради сам за себе и сам од себе, он је неуништив. Могу они да праве државне концепти, али државе ће се мењати, поготово сада са четвртом Индустријском револуцијом. Свет је постао једно место, остале су само културе. Држава је кућа, а то је паметно срочио мислим да је Николај Велимировић, држава постоји да би имало шта да пропадне да не би пропао народ. Генијална идеја. Значи државе ће пропадати, али култура не сме. Улога државе би требало да буде да промовише ту културу, односно идентитетски елемент у државности који може да магнетизује све оне који желе да учествују у таквој лепоти, јер 'српски свет' је идеја топлоте, доброте и врлине, а не наметања. То је један нежан,



паметан концепт у којем свако хоће да учествује. Само што се то у одређеним геополитичким тренуцима то злоупотребљавају. Иначе то не може да буде само државни концепт. Мора кроз државу и институције да се те вредности промовишу. А не сме да буде државна, имеријална или наопака идеја Велике Србије. Није идеја Велике Србије била лоша, али је била у погрешном тренутку. Да је настала у контексту почетка 20. века била би у духу времена и данас бисмо можда имали неке мање проблеме. Проблем је што је то све каснило. Ја имам утисак да је то намерно каснило и да смо ми под окупацијом бар 300 година овде и то врло озбиљно и да су то резултати проблема које доживљавамо. Међутим, култура је сама од себе радила све време, у време највећих ратова и са једне и са друге стране, Цеца се слушала у Загребу, једнако као и у Београду. Зашто? Зато што је то један културни образац. Примитиван, наравно не онако софистициран као што бисмо ми који се бавимо сложенијом културом и уметношћу то желели али питање је онда да ли је то аутентично. У овом контексту аутентично и зато је геније Амадеус смислио синтагму турбо-фолка и то је једна од аспирација због којих сам размишљао о 'српском свету', због турбо-фолка, и наравно због поп-културе која се претвара у масовну културу. Тако да држава свакако то мора да негује, а ако не држава онда појединци који су склони државном питању да афирмишу. Морам да додам и овај детаљ како је настала популаризација синтагме Леванта. Ја сам у 2-3 интервјуа, то пласирао и покушавао то да пласирам кроз радио *Снага народа*, не би ли афирмисао екипу каква се скупља око Бећковића, Кустурице и сличних проминентних интелектуалаца који намећу своје идеје на један пристојан, аутентичан начин. Не, то се није десило. Десио се Мило Ђукановић, велики барбаро-геније, човек који ће спасити елемент српства у Црној Гори. Тај човек је то тако оштро у страху протумачио да је почео на сва уста да се дере 'српски свет', они праве Велику Србију. Е као тај контра-аргумент је Вулин заправо узео да појача и да каже 'Ми јесмо Велика Србија, али нисмо'. То је сада постао еуфемизам за Велику Србију. Нико ништа није разумео. По мени. Испоставиће се, то ће бити доказано кроз културу, ја дубоко верујем и осећам да ће се услед ових тектонских геополитичких потреса који се дешавају, сав тај свет који комуницира са свом том културом, и Далмација и добар део Хрватске, рачунам озбиљно на онај део који није сад окупиран од стране оног Ислама из Индонезије, па чак и из Ирана и тако даље. Мислим да оно што је остало у Босни, да ће такође да гравитира ка тој идеји. Просто је морати када изузмете све ствари које више нису тако битне и важне, остали идентитет. И да ћемо у том контексту са државношћу без државности победити са идејом идентитета кроз српски свет, јер они знају дубоко у себи да су се они одрекли

свега што им дубоко припада и не могу сада по нарави да се томе не враћају. И враћају се. Мислим обрасцима културе које гледамо. Жижек је део српског света. Лајпбах је био део српског света онолико колико је то и Апореја у Македонији. Све је то део тог једног елемента, културног идентитета који има потребу за збирањем. Има један другачији и мекши однос према животу. И ту смо ми веома талентовани за меку моћ и то нам је некако у нарави, то функционише само између свих осталих наметнутих модела политичког Запада и политичког Истока и тако даље. Ми смо та контактна култура. Тако мислим.

**Question #6:** Који најбољи начин промовисања 'српског света' и нашег идентитета? Да ли је то отварање школа српског језика и

**Answer #6:** То наравно један савршен модел али то је такође један од оних старијих модела. То је на пример Стојан Новаковић радио на почетку 20. века. Ми смо имали библиотеке у Црној Гори, у Босни, слали књиге из Београда преко Српске књижевне задруге да се образује читав један свет и да на тај начин добије тај елемент српског идентитета, српске историје, српског права на мисао на слободу на језик што је и најважније. Појмовне ствари су мени најважније. Појам је све. У појму, идеје меке моћи је тај драматуршки обрт и контраст који се мени не свиђа, мека моћ је заправо пропагандна варијанта идеје наметања али мека воља, мека доброта, меко добро, је у ствари порука због које они долазе код нас. И одмах када би појмовно се оријентисали на такав приступ, а то можемо, јер имамо у својој култури задругарства, култури домаћинства, свој својој животној култури имамо тај домаћински и пријатељски образац. Сећам се једне паметне реченице, коју сам чуо више пута, али ми је заборављам. Човек од којег сам први пут чуо, њему је излетео тај концепт 'српски свет', Небојша 'Балша' Остојић. Он је такође мени једном рекао: 'Знаш ли ти драги мој каже то се прича у Црној Гори, каже у Шумадији када устане домаћин прво што уради је отвори капију, да му дођу гости'. И то је тај свет, који ми у ствари поруком ширимо. Ако не узмемо меку моћ као терен него узмемо мекоћу и меко добро као поруку, када имамо комуникацију, када имамо саобраћај, када имамо појмовну и нормалну комуникацију, ствари долазе на своје. Појмовно би институционално требало радити на томе када се жири култура. Тако да када господин Гујон, који је један фактор у историји још од Арчибалда Рајса и свих осталих који су долазили овде да гледају један од посебних светова, зато су се заљубљивали у Србе и у Србију, јер ми имамо посебан свет односе

према добру и злу. Исто као што се ми заљубљујемо у аборицинску културу, то је један посебан свет. Ми смо у диверзитету култура, историјско право културе која мора преживети и преживљава. И у том контексту размишљам о 'српском свету'. А када се на њему треба радити, не треба размишљати у тим тврдим терминима као што су мека моћ, државност итд, него порука. Треба да успоставимо хабове са порукама тоpline и доброте која је у дефициту и ствари ће доћи саме од себе. А већ долазе, јер је то у дефициту и јер не може култура лако да се лажира и да се плагира, јер је култура аутентична ствар, а ми имамо хиљадугодишње, а вероватно и више, о чему се недовољно прича. Историчари су ту на великој важности. Наука уопште. Наравно то је опет геополитички феномен, скривање историје било је јако важно да би могли да праве своју идеју не остваре нашу или било коју другу балканску причу. Тако да ја мислим да је то један добар образац за приступ, али у том образцу не треба наметати варијанту сада ћемо ми да шаљемо 250 уџбеника историје у којима ће сада да се по свако цену инсистира на овај или оној историји, већ слати поруку образаца савремене дигитализације, комуникације, перформанса, са чињеницама, са савременим аудио-визуелним комуникацијама. То је нешто што кажу у савременом елементу бити у духу времена. На тај начин ако приступе, мени би то било феноменално за нешто што је у ствари комуникација. Ми у ствари треба само да појачамо комуникацију, ништа друго.

**Question #7:** За крај, да ли бисте хтели још нешто да додате по питању 'српског света'?

**Answer #7:** То је толико широка тема, један космос идеја да би могло све и свашта да се каже. Јако ми је важна та дистинкција на којој треба стално инсистирати. Природна Албанија, Велика Хрватска и Српски свет. Ту добијамо, јер они не живе у контексту времена. Не разумеју. То бих издвојио као нешто на чему треба радити и шта треба разрадити убудуће, усађивати у интелектуалне средине.

Такође, јако је важна дигитализација, то је оно што нам даје могућност да пренебрегнемо сва та неразумевања која смо имали пре дигитализације. То што се десило са културним образцом Срба и Словена, западног дела и овог источног, није могло да заживи у Југославији само зато што није било протока културе као што данас има. И та дигитализација заправо омогућава да тај 'српски свет' заживи свакако. Ја то лично мислим.