



BASIC INFO:

Disinformation Alerts – Russian Media Monitoring is a monthly report of the news containing disinformation and misinformation targeting Kosovo, published by Russian media in English and Serbian Language

SUPPORTED BY:



London, United Kingdom

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KOSOVO DISINFORMATION ALERTS

RUSSIAN MEDIA

APRIL 2020

INTRODUCTION

Kosovo Disinformation Alert: Russian Media Monitoring aims to counter disinformation that targets Kosovo, through monitoring on a monthly basis of the preselected media outlets originating in Russia, in both, English, and Serbian Language. The preselected media in English Language are Russia Today, Sputnik, Meduza, Russia Insider, TASS, The Moscow Times, Newsfront, Unz, The Duran and Pravda Report, whereas in Serbian Language is the Sputnik Serbia. In addition, the Kosovo Disinformation Alert monitors news, documents, and statements related to Kosovo, published by Kremlin and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During April 2020, Russia Today has published two news, Sputnik none, Meduza none, Russian Insider one, TASS five, The Moscow Times one, Newsfront six, Unz two, The Duran one and Pravda Report none, whereas Sputnik Serbia has published 53 news related directly or indirectly to Kosovo. On the other hand, during this monitoring period, Kremlin had none, and Russian Foreign Ministry three postings on their web-sites related to Kosovo.

A careful review of the monitored news shows that Sputnik Serbia had three, The Duran one and Newsfront one news articles containing serious disinformation. On the other hand, none of the posts of the Russian Foreign Ministry had a disinformation content.

The disinformation provided by Sputnik Serbia, Duran and Newsfront aimed to project the energy independence of Kosovo as an illegal act, Kosovo's statehood as illegal and in violation of international law, degrading the international intervention and support in Kosovo, by accusing NATO and EULEX Mission in Kosovo and on the other side claiming falsely that in the times of COVID-19 pandemy, EU considers Kosovo as a part of Serbia . The disinformation detected in this period will be discussed and deconstructed in the following section.

DECONSTRUCTION OF THE DETECTED DISINFORMATION

Disinformation Alert 1

Headline: Косово се од понедељка отцепљује и од „Електромрежа Србије [Kosovo to secede from "Electric Network of Serbia" as of Monday], **Sputnik Serbia, April 15th, 2020¹**

The article, among others says that the Transmission System and Electricity Market Operator of Kosovo (KOSTT) and the Albanian Transmission System Operator announced on December 3, 2019 that they had signed an agreement in Tirana on the establishment of the Kosovo-Albania energy system regulatory block, which is a direct violation of the Brussels Agreement.

According to the article, experts in Serbia said that this grossly violated the EU facilitated Energy Agreement between Kosovo and Serbia of 2013², because it envisages that the “false state of Kosovo” will be a separate energy control area, but with the condition that two Serbian companies be formed in the north of Kosovo. The founders of these companies would be "Elektroprivreda Srbije" and the Association of Serbian Municipalities, which has not been formed until today. The agreement, signed in Tirana, was made with the knowledge of the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity.

Deconstruction of the disinformation: Facts and Figures

This article was preceding the decision of the Regional Group Continental Europe (the body of ENTSO-e) of April 20th, which enables KOSTT and Kosovo to leave the Serbia, Montenegro and Northern Macedonia Energy Regulatory Bloc, and join the Kosovo-Albania Energy Regulatory

¹ Косово се од понедељка отцепљује и од „Електромрежа Србије, Sputnik Serbia, April 15th, 2020, [https://rs.sputniknews.com/politika/202004151122348800-lazna-drzava-otcepljuje-mrezu-kosovo-od-ponedeljka-van-elektromreza-srbije-/](https://rs.sputniknews.com/politika/202004151122348800-lazna-drzava-otcepljuje-mrezu-kosovo-od-ponedeljka-van-elektromreza-srbije/)

² Agreement between KOSTT and EMS, 2013 [Marrëveshja për Energjinë], 2013, http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/Marreveshja_per_energjiine.pdf?fbclid=IwAR16zXJrMFy-W3K7NK0tZm5hvE8SIWHEoTnj-pmgNcLMpRbWAYCDXOTdKNI

Block³. In this way, the Agreement paves the way for KOSTT to integrate into the regional electricity market as well as to participate in the Albanian Power Exchange (APEX), and the decision of the ENTSO-e was based on the “Agreement on Energy” signed between Kosovo and Serbia in 2013 as part of the EU-facilitated dialogue in Brussels.⁴ Furthermore, the German Government investment amounting 75 million Euros in the interconnection of the 400kV power line between Kosovo and Albania, which has been completed few years ago, with this agreement got functionalized.⁵

Disinformation Alert 2

Headline: Kosovo authorities try to defend integrity of their own pseudo-state, Newsfront, April 18th, 2020⁶

The article claims that on 17 February 2008, Kosovo, an autonomous province of Serbia, with direct support from Washington and Berlin, announced its declaration of independence, thus violating international law: UN Security Council resolution 1244 and the Helsinki Accords. According to the article “this set an extremely dangerous precedent, as Moscow has repeatedly warned. Historically, not much time has passed, and now the Kosovo authorities themselves are trying to defend the integrity of their own pseudo-state”, while it does not give a single hint how they are doing it.

³ Balkan Green Energy News, KOSTT: ENTSO-E backs Kosovo’s* exit from control block lead by Serbia’s EMS, 21 April, 2020, <https://balkangreenenergynews.com/kostt-entso-e-backs-kosovos-exit-from-control-block-lead-by-serbias-ems/>

⁴ For further explorations see: “Bilateral relations between Kosovo and Serbia regarding energy sector”, Research Institute of Development and European Affairs (RIDEA), October 2019, [http://www.ridea-ks.org/Articles/3/Images/29-01-2019/22628 Bilateral relations between Kosovo and Serbia regarding the Energy Sector.pdf](http://www.ridea-ks.org/Articles/3/Images/29-01-2019/22628%20Bilateral%20relations%20between%20Kosovo%20and%20Serbia%20regarding%20the%20Energy%20Sector.pdf)

⁵ See statement of the German Embassy to Kosovo, posted on its Facebook account on April 20th, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/germany.in.kosovo>

⁶ <https://en.news-front.info/2020/04/18/the-kosovo-authorities-are-trying-to-defend-the-integrity-of-their-own-pseudo-state/>

Deconstruction of the disinformation: Facts and Figures

First and foremost, not a single UN resolution explicitly assigned Kosovo to Serbia as such; the only one in force (1244) recognizes Kosovo as part of the non-existent Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The leftover of the Federation, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, later the Union of Serbia and Montenegro, also split in 2006, when 55.53% of Montenegrin citizens voted for independence, which ultimately diluted and blurred any legal connection between Kosovo and Serbia. Secondly, declaration of the independence was an outcome of the UN mandated negotiation process on the Kosovo status led by the United Nations Secretary General Envoy, President Marti Ahtisaari, while Russia was represented in the President Ahtisaari's team with its high-ranking diplomat Mr. Peter Ivancov. On February 2nd, 2007 President Ahtisaari presented the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement that envisaged a supervised independence for Kosovo⁷, which was supported by the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon⁸ and Kosovo, but was rejected by Serbia⁹.

Ultimately, on July 22, 2010, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivered the advisory opinion confirming that Kosovo's declaration of independence of February 17, 2008 has not violated the International Law¹⁰. Therefore all claims of this article are false. The "precedents" that article is claiming, are Russian military interventions in the Georgian regions of Ossetia and Abkhazia and annexation of Crimea.

⁷ See the full text of the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement https://web.archive.org/web/20091015082628/http://www.unosek.org/docref/Comprehensive_proposal-english.pdf

⁸ UN Report Recommends 'Supervised Independence' For Kosovo, Radio Free Europe, March 26th, 2007 <https://www.rferl.org/a/1075514.html>

⁹ Reuters, Kosovo says Yes to U.N. plan, Serbia says No, February 2nd, 2007, https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL02151096.CH_.2400

¹⁰ International Court of Justice. Advisory Opinion on the accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo, July 22nd, 2010, <https://www.webcitation.org/5rRB9e3bz?url=http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/141/15987.pdf>

Disinformation Alert 3

Headline: Кад је криза, за ЕУ је Косово – српско [When there is a crisis, for the EU, Kosovo is Serbian], Sputnik Serbia, April 1st, 2020¹¹, and EU Demands Serbia to Help Kosovo During Corona Virus But Restricts Assistance of Bosnian Serbs, The Duran, April 3rd, 2020¹²

Both articles that almost identical, among others say that “In times of crisis, the EU proclaims that Kosovo is in fact Serbia’s responsibility. This unprincipled nature of the EU is solely guided by the interests of its major members and aims to palm off the medical responsibility of the illegal breakaway province of Kosovo back to Serbia”. Furthermore it claims that “the EU did nothing to suppress Albanian separatism. In fact, the EU supports the illegality of Kosovo’s independence by deploying over 1,000 police officers under the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo mandate and all member states with the exception of Greece, Cyprus, Romania and Slovakia, recognizing Kosovo’s independence”.

Interestingly, the article of The Duran, regardless the fact that replicates the Sputnik Serbia article does not mention it at all, and gives the authorship to Paul Antonopoulos, Research Fellow at the Center for Syncretic Studies (<https://syncreticstudies.com/paul-antonopoulos/>), whereas the above mentioned qualifications in the article of Sputnik Serbia are quotes taken from the Serbian pro-Russian political analyst Dragomir Andjelkovic.

¹¹ Кад је криза, за ЕУ је Косово – српско, Sputnik Serbia, April 1st, 2020

¹² EU Demands Serbia to Help Kosovo During Corona Virus But Restricts Assistance of Bosnian Serbs, The Duran, April 3rd, 2020
<https://theduran.com/eu-demands-serbia-to-help-kosovo-during-coronavirus-but-restricts-assistance-of-bosnian-serbs/>

Deconstruction of the disinformation: Facts and Figures

a) EU proclaims that Kosovo is Serbia's responsibility during the COVID-19 crisis

The article presents the call of the Working Group for the Chapter 35 of the Serbian National Convention on the European Union, which gathers civil society organizations in Serbia specialized for the areas covered by the 35 negotiating chapters, addressed to the health care authorities of Serbia and Kosovo requesting their cooperation during the pandemics of COVID 19, as a call of the European Union, by misquoting in a manipulative manner the article of the EU Observer of March 30th, 2020, "Serbian CSOs call for cooperation with Kosovo in combating COVID-19"¹³. Furthermore, neither the call of Serbian CSO's nor a single EU statement has proclaimed that Kosovo is responsibility of Serbia during the COVID-19 crisis.

b) EU supports the illegality of Kosovo's independence through EULEX

The article blames EU for not suppressing "Albanian separatism", by accusing the majority of EU nations for having recognized Kosovo. Furthermore, the EULEX Mission is adopted by all EU members including non-recognizers¹⁴, and in the mission participated all EU countries but Spain and Cyprus, in addition to the United States, Turkey, Norway and Switzerland.

¹³ EU Observer, "Serbian CSOs call for cooperation with Kosovo in combating COVID-19", March 30th, 2020, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2020/03/30/serbian-csos-call-for-cooperation-with-kosovo-in-combating-covid-19/>

¹⁴ See EU Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/856 of 8 June 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/GA/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32018D0856>

Disinformation Alert 4

Headline: Брутална честитка Милачића НАТО-у: Ти си црна рупа цивилизације [Milacic's brutal congratulations to NATO: You are the black hole of civilization] Sputnik Serbia, April 4th, 2020¹⁵

Sputnik in this article transmits “congratulations” of Marko Milacic, the President of the True Montenegro (a pro-Russian political party), to NATO on its 71st Anniversary. The article among others, quotes Malic saying “You have struggled there [Yugoslavia] for a decade, and then on your 50th birthday you found a victim and a reason to exist. As Diana Johnson¹⁶ nicely said, the official version is not true that Kosovo had a problem, and that you offered a solution, on the contrary - you had a problem, a problem of the reasons for your existence, and Kosovo was your solution. That's why you attacked the FRY. That's why you bombed us. There has been no more beautiful gift for your 50th birthday than the bombing of our country”.

Deconstruction of the disinformation: Facts and Figures

The article denies the fact that NATO intervened in Kosovo only after exhausting all diplomatic means in finding a political solution with Belgrade that abolished (un)constitutionally its autonomy 1989¹⁷. Furthermore, in these diplomatic efforts the West was also working together with Russia in the multilateral format known as “Contact Group”, which was created as a response to the bloody war in Bosnia. Serbia refused the Rambouillet Agreement¹⁸ of March 1999

¹⁵ Брутална честитка Милачића НАТО-у: Ти си црна рупа цивилизације, Sputnik Serbia, April 4th, 2020, <https://rs.sputniknews.com/regioni/202004041122261920-brutalna-cestitka-milacica-nato-u-ti-si-crna-rupa-civilizacije-video/>

¹⁶ Diana Johnson is an ultra-leftist author, who asserts that “humanitarian interventions” are a new sort of imperialism. In her book, *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, Nato, and Western Delusions*, Pluto Press, 2002, she claims that “the identification of Muslims as defenseless victims and Serbs as genocidal monsters inflamed fears and hatreds within Yugoslavia, and prepared the way for power to be shifted from the people of the region to such international agencies as NATO”, and that “the “Kosovo war” was in reality the model for future destruction of countries seen as potential threats to the hegemony of an “international community” currently being redefined to exclude or marginalize all but those who conform to the interests of the United State” <https://www.amazon.com/Fools-Crusade-Yugoslavia-Western-Delusions/dp/158367084X>

¹⁷ For further details see: Marc Weller, *The Rambouillet Conference on Kosovo*, *International Affairs*, Vol. 75, No.2, April 1999, pp. 118-221

¹⁸ See the full text of the Rambouillet Accords, https://1997-2001.state.gov/www/regions/eur/ksvo_rambouillet_text.html

and executed the “Operation Horseshoe” against Albanian civilian population with the aim to depopulate Kosovo through terror.¹⁹ Furthermore, Milacic ignores the fact that prior to NATO intervention, Yugoslav forces had killed 2,000, detained over 1,200 and displaced around 300,000 Albanian Kosovars²⁰, thus not only denying political dispute and oppression of Belgrade over Albanian Kosovars, but denying the human catastrophe, which after refusal of Rambouillet Agreement was possible to be addressed solely with an armed intervention by the North Atlantic Alliance, as the single organization in Europe capable to conduct such operations against the rouge Serbian regime of Milosevic.

¹⁹ This plan was leaked to NATO by Bulgaria, <https://balkaninsight.com/2012/01/10/bulgaria-leaked-milosevic-ethnic-cleansing-plan/>

²⁰ Eric Herring, From Rambouillet to the Kosovo accords: NATO'S war against Serbia and its aftermath, The International Journal of Human Rights, Routledge, October 2007