



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

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KOSOVO DISINFORMATION ALERTS

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INTRODUCTION

Kosovo Disinformation Alerts: Russian Media Monitoring aims to counter disinformation that targets Kosovo, by monitoring on a monthly basis of the preselected media outlets originating in Russia, in both, English, and Serbian languages. 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 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 October 2020, Russia Insider has published 2 news, TASS 1, Newsfront 7, Unz 1, Russia Today 4, Sputnik International 4, Meduza 1, whereas Sputnik Serbia has published 179 news related directly or indirectly to Kosovo. Meanwhile, The Duran, The Moscow Times and Pravda Report have not published any news related to Kosovo. On the other hand, during this monitoring period, Kremlin had one, and the Russian Foreign Ministry had 2 postings related to Kosovo on their web-sites.

Due to large number of articles with disinformation content generated by these media, in this edition are analyzed only the articles with blatant disinformation content. The provided disinformation aims to undermine the statehood of Kosovo by making improper comparisons of this statehood with the situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh, by presenting them as frozen conflicts. Moreover, these media accuse NATO for war crimes against Serbian population, and exaggerate the number of Serbian casualties of the NATO bombing campaign in 1999.

THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE DETECTED DISINFORMATION

Disinformation Alert 1

Headline: Vučić compared the situation in Karabakh with Kosovo, **Newsfront, October 3rd, 2020.**¹

At a meeting with Serbia's National Convention for EU Accession, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić tried to draw parallels between Kosovo and Nagorno-Karabakh. He stated that "In this conflict we have seen the absolute powerlessness of the entire international community, so I am against the frozen conflict in the Balkans. What is happening in Nagorno-Karabakh is a big lesson for us, because frozen conflicts mean clashes in the future in which the international community is powerless. That is why I am in favor of solving issues today and tomorrow, not leaving them to our children."

The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

Russian and Serbian politicians have constantly tried to draw parallels between Kosovo and other cases like Crimea,² Republika Srpska,³ or, as in this case, with Nagorno-Karabakh. First and foremost, Kosovo is a unique "sui generis" case that cannot be compared to Nagorno-Karabakh or any other cases, which are disputable by international law.

There are many reasons that define Kosovo as a precedent case:⁴

¹ Vučić compared the situation in Karabakh with Kosovo, <https://en.news-front.info/2020/10/03/vucic-compared-the-situation-in-karabakh-with-kosovo/>.

² Putin Says Kosovo Precedent Justifies Crimea Secession, <https://balkaninsight.com/2014/03/18/crimea-secession-just-like-kosovo-putin/>.

³ Bosnia: Kosovo, Republika Srpska identical situations, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/bosnia-kosovo-republika-srpska-identical-situations/1920574>.

⁴ For more details see " KOSOVO: THE UNPRECEDENTED STATE, Kipred, July 2007, [http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/KOSOVO, THE UNPRECEDENTED STATE 153256.pdf](http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/KOSOVO,_THE_UNPRECEDENTED_STATE_153256.pdf).

- Ethnic cleansing and attempted genocide that occurred against the civilian population in Kosovo.
- Dissolution of the common state - It is commonly acknowledged that the break-up of Yugoslavia started with the violent abolition of Kosovo's autonomy, in 1989.
- Equal representation at the federal level in the former structure - As a constitutive federal unit, Kosovo's consent was required for all executive, legislative, and judicial decisions at the federal level.
- Illegal downgrade of Kosovo's status.
- A clearly defined territory with distinct boundaries.
- International administration of Kosovo - Kosovo was administered by the UN until 2008.

So, all these facts make Kosovo an unprecedented case, and as such it cannot be compared to any other cases. In this regard it should be noted that the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), concluded that Kosovo's declaration of independence of February 17, 2008, has not violated the UNSC resolution 1244, or any international legal norms.⁵ Moreover, the UNSC resolution 1244 did not prevent or exclude the possibility of Kosovo's independence, it only regulated the interim administration of Kosovo, but not its final or permanent status.⁶

⁵ International Court of Justice. Advisory Opinion on the accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo, July 22nd, 2010, 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.icj-cij.org/public/files/case-related/141/141-20100722-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf>.

⁶ Ibid.

Disinformation Alert 2

Headline: Trove of Declassified Docs Reveals What Putin Told Clinton About Kursk Sinking, Yugoslavia, Terror, **Sputnik International, October 5th, 2020.**⁷

The article highlights private conversations between President Vladimir Putin and President Bill Clinton. Among other things, this article talks about the situation in Yugoslavia, by falsely claiming that “For 78 days between March and June 1999, over half a year before Putin assumed the Russian presidency, NATO carried out a large scale bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, which left over 5,000 civilians dead.”

The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

Russian media have continuously exaggerated the number of victims of NATO bombing in 1999. Similar to this article, Sputnik International had published in 2019 an article which focused on the former US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, and among other things, it falsely claimed that NATO bombings had left over 5000 victims.⁸ The detailed data gathered based on 31,600 documents, presented in the publication “Kosovo Memory Book” (February 2nd, 2015), which was prepared by the Humanitarian Law Center based in Belgrade, confirm that NATO attacks have killed a total of 754 people: 454 civilians and 300 members of the armed forces. 207 civilians were of Serbian and Montenegrin ethnicity, 219 were Albanian, 14 civilians were Roma, and 14 were of other nationalities. Clearly, the documented data show that the number of deaths during NATO Air Campaign was much lower than 5000 as presented in the article.

⁷ Trove of Declassified Docs Reveals What Putin Told Clinton About Kursk Sinking, Yugoslavia, Terror, <https://sputniknews.com/world/202010051080674054-trove-of-declassified-docs-reveal-what-putin-told-clinton-about-kursk-sinking-yugoslavia-terrorism/>.

⁸ Serbs Mercilessly Mock Madeleine 'Worth It' Albright's New Kosovo Statute, <https://sputniknews.com/europe/201906131075842989-serbs-mercilessly-mock-madeleine-worth-it-albrights-new-kosovo-statute/>.

Disinformation Alert 3

Headline: Serbia-Kosovo ‘normalization of relations’ plan: Will Belgrade give in to Western demands & shift toward ‘mutual recognition’? **RT, October 20th, 2020.**⁹

The article discusses the final solution of the Kosovo issue, by emphasizing that for the West, the only final solution to the Kosovo issue would be the recognition of Kosovo by Serbia as an independent state. Among other things, the article falsely claims that “Kosovo, which has been under the UN administration since the 1999 NATO’s bombing of Yugoslavia, is recognized as an independent state by much of the West, despite UN Security Council Resolution 1244 reaffirming Kosovo as a part of Serbia.”

The Deconstruction of the Disinformation: Facts and Figures

The article falsely claims that Kosovo has been under international administration since the NATO bombing. In fact, Kosovo has been under international administration through UNSC resolution 1244,¹⁰ and Russia has voted in favor of this resolution.¹¹

Furthermore, the article falsely states that Kosovo is recognized as an independent state by much of the West, in despite of the UNSC resolution 1244, reaffirming Kosovo as part of Serbia. In fact, the UNSC resolution 1244 recognizes Kosovo as part of the, now non-existent Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The leftover of the Federation, that is, of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which later became the Union of Serbia and Montenegro, also split in 2006, when 55.53% of the Montenegrin citizens voted for independence, which ultimately diluted and blurred any legal connection between Kosovo and Serbia. On 17 February, Kosovo declared

⁹ Serbia-Kosovo ‘normalization of relations’ plan: Will Belgrade give in to Western demands & shift toward ‘mutual recognition’? <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/503993-serbia-kosovo-us-recognition/>.

¹⁰ United Nations, Security Council, Resolution 1244 (1999), https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/old_dnn/Res1244ENG.pdf.

¹¹ United Nations, Digital Library, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/285560?ln=en>.

independence based on the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement,¹² presented by the UN Envoy, Former Finnish President, Ahtisaari, which was opposed by Russia. In this regard it should be noted that in July 22, 2010, the ICJ delivered the advisory opinion confirming that Kosovo's declaration of independence of February 17, 2008 has not violated the UNSC resolution 1244, or any international legal norms.¹³

¹² Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, https://web.archive.org/web/20091015082628/http://www.unosek.org/docref/Comprehensive_proposal-english.pdf.

¹³ 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.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/141/141-20100722-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf>.