Public perception of Serbia’s foreign policy

Belgrade Centre for Security Policy
www.bezbednost.org
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Content

What do citizens think of major powers and their influence on Serbia?
Milos Popovic, Researcher, Belgrade Centre for Security Policy

What kind of relations should be developed toward major powers, and should Serbia engage outside its borders
Sonja Stojanovic Gajic, Director, Belgrade Centre for Security Policy
The scope of the project

• To examine public attitude about personal and national security, foreign policy and important answers on security challenges, threats and potential alliances

• To provide a template for discussion about new National security strategy of Serbia
About examination of public opinion

• **Questionnaire:** contains 135 questions conceived by BCSP

• **Methodology:** face to face poll on random sample, terrain research done by CESID

• **Timeframe:** from 26 December 2016 to 14 January 2017

• **Representative sample:** 1,403 adult citizens of Serbia (without Kosovo and Metohija)
Sample

- **Sex**: 52% of women and 48% of men.
- **Age**: 18-29 26%, 30-39 17%, 40-49 16%, 50-59 16%, 60-69 14% and over 70 years 11%
- **Educational structure**: elementary school and less 12% examinees, two years/three years high school 8% examinees, four years high school 44% examinees, higher school/faculty 28% examinees, pupil/student 8%
- **Employment status**: self-employed 9%, employed 34%, pupil/student 9%, unemployed 22%, pensioner 21%, housewife 4%, Other 1%
- **Nationality**: Serbian 89%, Hungarian 2%, Bosnian 3%, Romany 2%, Others 3%, do not want to declare 1%
- **Religious preferences**: Orthodox 86%, Islamic 3%, Catholic 4%, Atheists 4%, Others 1%, do not want to declare 2%
- **Regional distribution**: Belgrade 22%, Central Serbia 51%, Vojvodina 27%
- **Residence**: big city 38%, a suburb of big city 8%, small town 27%, village 27%
- **Average income per member of household***: (in households whose examinees were included by research): less than 100 € 22%, 100-200 € 30%, 200-400 € 23%, 400-600 € 5%, 60-1000 € 2%, over 1000 € 1%, can not calculate/do not want to say 17%
Major findings

• The majority is still in favor of EU membership, against NATO membership, and satisfied with the existing level of cooperation with Russia.

• Perception of EU has recently deteriorated; it remains authority only in the domain of democracy and rule of law, and membership is expected to further economic benefits and international standing.

• The majority demands a better definition of the policy of neutrality in Serbia’s foreign and security policy.
Perception of power and influence of major powers

Dr Milos Popovic
Researcher
Belgrade Centre for Security Policy
Perception of major powers

• The majority views Russia as a political and military power, while USA as an economic and technological giant

• EU & Germany are successful in democracy, human rights, and rule of law, and have credible investors

• Citizens believe that China is a successful economic and political power
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PLEASE EVALUATE THE MILITARY POWER OF THE FOLLOWING ACTORS FROM 5 (SUCCESSFUL) TO 1 (UNSUCCESSFUL)
### Evaluate Economic Power of 5 (Successful) to 1 (Unsuccessful)

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### Legend
- **5**: Very powerful
- **4**: Powerful
- **3**: Slightly powerful
- **2**: Not so powerful
- **1**: Not powerful
- **Don't know**
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Please evaluate the credibility of investors for the following actors from 5 (successful) to 1 (unsuccessful).
PLEASE EVALUATE THE TECHNOLOGICAL POWER OF THE FOLLOWING ACTORS FROM 5 (SUCCESSFUL) TO 1 (UNSUCCESSFUL)

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PLEASE EVALUATE THE POLITICAL POWER OF THE FOLLOWING ACTORS FROM 5 (SUCCESSFUL) TO 1 (UNSUCCESSFUL)

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%
PLEASE EVALUATE THE DEMOCRACY, RULE OF LAW & HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE FOLLOWING ACTORS FROM 5 (SUCCESSFUL) TO 1 (UNSUCCESSFUL)

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%
Perception of the major power influence

• Influence of Germany, China and Russia is regarded as positive, while the influence of EU and USA is seen as mostly negative

• Citizens do not expect a change in American foreign policy toward Serbia

• Membership in the EU would attract foreign investment and increase employment, while alliance with Russia would enhance security
ASSESS THE INFLUENCE OF THE FOLLOWING ACTORS ON SERBIAN FOREIGN POLICY

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As Donald Trump assumes U.S. Presidency, the American foreign policy toward Serbia will be:

- Same as before: 60%
- More friendly: 21%
- Don't know: 15%
- Less friendly: 4%
Perception of Relations with Major Powers & participation in peacekeeping operations

Sonja Stojanovic Gajic
Director
Belgrade Centre for Security Policy
Relations with Russia

• The majority satisfied with the current level of cooperation with Russia

• One-third desires Serbia’s integration into a Russia-led Eurasian Union, one-fifth is against, and the majority has no opinion

• The majority has no opinion on the Crimea issue and believes that Serbia should remain neutral regarding the Ukraine conflict
HOW WOULD YOU VOTE IN A REFERENDUM ON SERBIA’S MEMBERSHIP IN RUSSIA-LED EURASIAN UNION?

- Yes 32%
- No 22%
- Don't know/ Won't vote 46%
Should Serbia support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine regarding Crimea?

- Don't know: 51%
- No, Crimea is Russia: 27%
- Yes, but no sanctions against Russia: 16%
- Yes, unconditionally: 6%

Regarding the Ukraine conflict, Serbia should:

- Stay aside: 51%
- Don't know: 36%
- Support Ukraine: 3%
- Support pro-Russian rebels: 5%
- Support EU stance: 5%
Relations with NATO

• The majority remains opposed to NATO membership and does not expect the membership; there is more negative than positive sentiments regarding a potential membership.

• Every eleventh respondent in favor of NATO membership, one-fifth expects membership to have positive influence on security and FDI influx.

• One-third is in favor of cooperation through the Partnership for Peace, among them are those who prefer more intensive cooperation.
HOW WOULD YOU VOTE IN A REFERENDUM ON NATO MEMBERSHIP?

- Yes: 17, 13, 27, 12, 14, 9
- No: 62, 67, 56, 73, 74, 64
DO YOU BELIEVE THAT SERBIA WILL BECOME NATO MEMBER?

- Yes 13%
- Don't know 29%
- No 58%
WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE REGARDING THE COOPERATION WITH NATO?

- 47% I object to any kind of cooperation with NATO
- 4% I support greater cooperation with NATO, including joint activity under UN mandate
- 25% I support existing cooperation within Partnership for Peace, including neutrality
- 5% I support NATO membership
- 19% Don’t know
Relations with EU

• More citizens in favor than against EU membership, if recognition of Kosovo were a requirement the majority would give up on EU accession

• The length of accession affects the public perception so that the majority believes Serbia will never become EU member

• Although the majority is indifferent regarding a EU disintegration, there are more positive than negative associations and especially regarding peace, democracy, human rights and economic benefits
HOW WOULD YOU VOTE IN A REFERENDUM ON EU MEMBERSHIP?

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SOURCE: SEIO
WHAT WOULD BE YOUR ATTITUDE TO EU ACCESSION IF IT REQUIRED RECOGNITION OF KOSOVO?

Supportive 13%
Don't know 18%
Unsupportive 69%
WHEN WILL SERBIA BECOME EU MEMBER?

- Never: 41%
- In 5–10 years: 22%
- Don't know: 13%
- In more than 10 years: 12%
- In 3–5 years: 11%
- In 1–2 years: 1%
WHAT DOES EU MEAN TO YOU PERSONALLY?

- Good economy: 19
- Freedom of travel: 15
- Peace: 6
- Cultural diversity: 5
- Stronger voice: 4
- Democracy: 3
- More equality: 3
- Social protection: 2
- Adopting euro: 2
- Loss of cultural identity: 8
- Increase in crime: 6
- Waste of money: 5
- Bureaucracy: 4
- Unemployment growth: 3
- Poor border control: 1
- DK: 14
HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF EU CEASED TO EXIST?

- Indifferent: 50%
- I would be sorry: 21%
- I would be glad: 15%
- Don't know: 14%
Relations toward the policy of neutrality

• The majority supports the policy of neutrality

• Among the supporters of neutrality, the most numerous are those who demand better specification of the policy of neutrality

• Among those in favor of “choosing sides”, the majority are the supporters of Dveri, DSS, SRS, DJB and LDP
SHOULD SERBIA CHANGE ITS POLICY OF NEUTRALITY IN THE FOLLOWING PERIOD?

- Don't know 20%
- We should keep it, but specify what we mean under neutrality 38%
- Yes, we must choose sides 21%
- No, we should stay away from any center of power 21%
Relations toward engagement outside of borders of Serbia

• Slightly more of those supporting involvement of Serbia beyond its borders in resolving security issues, and similar in relation to the conflict in Syria

• The costs of engagement are key criteria for selecting destinations of engagement

• Most support for the existing commitment under the UN flag, and in cooperation with Russia and the EU
Should Serbia engage beyond its borders on solving security issues?

- Yes, incl. military and security forces: 5%
- Yes, but only send engineers, doctors et al: 9%
- Yes, but only send humanitarian aid: 14%
- Don't know: 15%
- Yes, if it brings us political and economic benefits, improves our intl. standing: 18%
- No: 39%
If you are in favor of Serbia's engagement beyond its borders, in which part of the world should it take place?

- Don't know: 49%
- Anywhere if we can afford the costs or if others will cover them for us: 35%
- Only in Europe: 10%
- Only in neighboring countries: 6%
Under whose flag should Serbia engage abroad?

- Don't know: 45%
- Only UN: 20%
- Together with Russia: 17%
- UN & EU: 15%
- UN, EU & NATO: 3%
Regarding the Syrian War, Serbia should:

- Stay neutral, but also take an active role in UN diplomatic efforts: 7%
- Support the position of Syria/Russia: 10%
- Support the Syrian opposition and the West: 1%
- Stay neutral, but provide humanitarian aid: 21%
- Don't know: 30%
- Stay aside: 31%
Propositions for the discussion on the Strategy of National Security of Serbia

• Include members of all political parties, civil society, academic community and interested citizens in the public discussion on the potential options for the Strategy: consensus through dialogue = better quality

• Better specify what neutrality means in a changing geopolitical environment

• Align the national security policy with EU policy and determine best options for the policy of neutrality and its compatibility with EU membership requirements

• Make citizens more accustomed to benefits and costs of engagement beyond Serbian borders