

## Medvedev in Belgrade: two aspects of the announced visit

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At the beginning of August the news "leaked" in the Serbian media and later on it was confirmed that the President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Antolyievich Medvedev was coming to an official visit to Belgrade at the invitation of the President of Serbia, Boris Tadic. After a brief uncertainty, the date of visit was announced - 20<sup>th</sup> of October, the 65th anniversary of the liberation in the World War II.

The announcement of President Medvedev's visit, undoubtedly an important event for the Serbian politics and diplomacy, has already provoked numerous reactions.

Bearing in mind the importance of the planned visit, foreign policy activities of Serbia and a switch in Russia-Serbia relations in the last two years, the arranged President Medvedev's visit raises a series of important issues related to actual policy, foreign-political orientation of Serbia and current Serbia-Russia relations. In that respect, we can think about two aspects of the upcoming meeting of the Russian and Serbian Presidents in Belgrade. The first aspect is related to the symbolic nature of the date of visit -the day of liberation of Belgrade in the World War II, 20<sup>th</sup> of October. And the second aspect, which draws a lot of public attention, wondering and curiosity - when considering contemporary foreign-political activities of Serbia - is the announcement of further deepening of the strategic partnership between the two countries.

### News, Announced Discussion Topics and First Reactions

A symbolic date was chosen for the visit of President Medvedev - 20th of October, the date of the liberation of Belgrade in the World War II. The use of symbolism in politics and diplomacy is not a rare phenomenon. However, the symbolism in this case is rather emphasized. It is also indicative that the first information about President Tadic being the one who expressed the initiative, when the Russian President phoned him, to "mark together the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade", came from the Russian and not from the Serbian side that had sent an invitation. On that occasion, the Serbian side announced the information one day later than the Russian side, without giving any invitation details, not even a detail on "celebrating jointly the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade" and only generally confirmed the Russian information on sending an invitation.<sup>1</sup> The symbolic importance of the 20th of October and several historical facts about the liberation of Belgrade in 1944 were reported by almost all Russian media, along with President Medvedev's statement that "the glorious event has a dignified place in a series of unforgettable dates of the great Victory". Contrary to that, the Serbian media did not emphasize this Medvedev's statement too much, and at the same time it remained unclear how and in what words President Tadic had invited President Medvedev to come to the visit exactly on the 20th of October.

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the official Kremlin's statement, Состоялся телефонный разговор Дмитрия Медведева с Президентом Сербии Борисом Тадичем, Кремль.ру, 5 августа 2009 года (<http://news.kremlin.ru/news/5115>); and the Russian electronic media, for example „Россия и Сербия вместе отметят 65-ю годовщину освобождения Белграда“, News.ru, August 5, 2009 (<http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=307721>); На юбилее освобождения Белграда главы РФ и Сербии будут работать, БалтИнфо.ру August 5, 2009 (<http://www.baltinfo.ru/news/Na-yubilee-osvobozhdeniya-Belgrada-glavy-RF-i-Serbii-budut-rabotat-98286>); Россия и Сербия вместе отметят 65-ю годовщину освобождения Белграда, Регионс.ру August 5, 2009 (<http://www.regions.ru/news/politics/2231268/>) and many others from the Serbian side, such as "Medvedev is coming to Belgrade.", 6th of August 2009; Source: B92, Tanjug ([http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=08&dd=06&nav\\_category=11&nav\\_id=375064&version=print](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=08&dd=06&nav_category=11&nav_id=375064&version=print)); "Medvedev is coming to Belgrade", IP Novine Borba - Online edition, 06/08/2009. (<http://www.borba.rs/content/view/8076/123/>);

A certain difference, not particularly expressed though, but still visible, in understanding and emphasizing the symbolism of the 20<sup>th</sup> of October between the two sides, Russian and Serbian, could be recognized in the media, but they could also be clearly identified in the views of diplomats referring to this event. Thus, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Vuk Jeremic pointed out that "the friendship between Serbia and Russia has been lasting for centuries. Due to the historical circumstances, this is going to be the first time that the President of Russia is coming to visit Serbia and that very fact gives it a historical importance" and he added that the visit "is going to have a particular significance, since it overlaps with the celebration of the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade, the date that symbolizes the unity of our two peoples in the victorious battle against the fascism"<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, the Russian Ambassador in Belgrade Aleksandar Konuzin, pointing out that the "visit was going to have a deep symbolic significance", emphasized that the President of Russia was going to stay in Belgrade on the day when the forces of USSR and Yugoslavia had liberated the Capital of Serbia from fascism" and added that the "visit would be in the context of the 65th anniversary of the victory of Soviet Union in the Great Homeland War and the 65th anniversary of the victory over fascism in the world"<sup>3</sup>. Hence, the Russian Ambassador has especially emphasized the elements of the "liberation of Serbia from fascism" and the context of the 65th anniversary of the victory of Soviet Union in the Great Homeland War and the 65th anniversary of the victory over fascism in the world". During that time, Minister Jeremic underlined "a long-lasting friendship" and the "date symbolizing the unity of our two people in the victorious battle". Although minor, these differences are completely substantial. Even more so because exactly the symbolism of *Victory in the Great Homeland War* and *Liberation of Europe from Fascism* has had an extremely important place in the foreign-political rhetoric of the official Moscow for the last couple of years.

Anyhow, the celebration of 20<sup>th</sup> of October is only one aspect – certainly not the most important one – of the imminent meeting between Presidents Tadic and Medvedev. In addition to the celebration of Belgrade liberation day, a series of important issues to be discussed by the two Presidents has been announced. The majority of them are related to economic issues – cooperation in the field of energy and Russian financial aid to Serbia. However, they will also discuss a number of important political issues, coordination of foreign political activities, and "all issues of multilateral Russia-Serbia cooperation and determination of benchmark for the purpose of further strengthening of strategic partnership"<sup>4</sup>.

Such announcement, along with the chosen date of the visit, in particular as viewed within the context of intensive foreign-political activities of both Serbia and Russia that have been evident in the last few months, highlights two aspects of the upcoming visit of President Medvedev. One is the political symbolism of the chosen date for visit and the other is the issue of strategic partnership that has been emerging gradually, related to Serbia-Russia relations in the last two years, as a key issue for defining the character of current and future mutual relationships.

### **Symbolism of the date and foreign policy**

The rhetorical emphasizing of the importance of the World War II and Victory of USSR in the war against fascism is particularly evident in the communication of Russian diplomacy and top-level Russian officials with the transatlantic integrations states, i. e. USA and European states, especially those EU members that became independent after the dissolution of USSR, i. e. former East/Communist Block states (1945-1991). However, the symbolic importance of the World War II is noticeably absent, which can be understood to a certain extent, when it comes to Russian

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<sup>2</sup> Compare: We are finding out - Medvedev on 20th of October in Serbia, Press Online 06/08/2009 (<http://www.pressonline.rs/page/stories/sr.html?id=75311&sectionId=37&view=story>); Jeremic: Historical visit of Medvedev, Emportal, 6th of August 2009, Source: Beta (<http://www.emportal.rs/vesti/srbija/95872.html>); Jeremic and Konuzin: Medvedev's visit to Serbia will be a historical one ([www.rtv.rs/sr/vesti/politika/politika/2009.../vest\\_144994.jsp](http://www.rtv.rs/sr/vesti/politika/politika/2009.../vest_144994.jsp)), and others.

<sup>3</sup> Compare: Jeremic and Konuzin: Medvedev's visit to Serbia will be a historical one ([www.rtv.rs/sr/vesti/politika/politika/2009.../vest\\_144994.jsp](http://www.rtv.rs/sr/vesti/politika/politika/2009.../vest_144994.jsp)): "Russia attributes a great significance to the upcoming Medvedev's visit to Belgrade" (VIDEO), Emportal, 06. August 2009, (<http://www.emportal.rs/vesti/srbija/95863.html>);

<sup>4</sup> На юбилее освобождения Белграда главы РФ и Сербии будут работать, БалтИнфо.ру, 5 August 2009. (<http://www.baltinfo.ru/news/Na-yubilee-osvobozhdeniya-Belgrada-glavy-RF-i-Serbii-budut-rabotat-98286>)

contacts with the leaders of Asian and African states. It could be clearly identified on one hand in the rhetoric of Prime Minister Putin when he visited Poland on the occasion of celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the World War II and on the other hand, in the President Medvedev's public speeches during his visits to African countries (Egypt, Angola, Nigeria), on the occasion of his visit to Mongolia and on the occasion of reception of the Indian President in Moscow.

On the other hand, both western states and EU members, use in their political rhetoric the symbolism of the World War II – though in a completely opposite manner. Perhaps, the most evident and illustrative example is the OSCE Declaration, issued at the session in Vilnius, Lithuania – which makes completely equal and condemns the two “main totalitarian regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”, Nazism and Stalinism<sup>5</sup>. The Russian public understood it immediately, of course, as passing the blame to USSR for the break out of the World War II<sup>6</sup>.

These two poles are evidently very far away from each other and undoubtedly irreconcilable. That situation occurred as a direct result of the two clearly noticeable processes.

(1) As soon as in 1990-ies, since the defeat of USSR/Russia in the Cold War, among the ideologically oriented experts, politicians and in the public of a series of European states – in the West Europe, and in particular in the former Warsaw Pact members and newly established states after the dissolution of USSR, Baltic states, Ukraine, etc – requests have begun to emerge for identifying the two most important totalitarian regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Nazism and Stalinism (A. Bullock, Viktor Suvorov, *The Black Book of Communism*, etc). They have been a continuation of the tendency of one part of German (and extremely right-wing in general, Denis Irving, etc) historiography, to pass the blame for the breakout of the World War II from Nazi Germany to Stalin and USSR. At the same time, in new ideological and political reality of the Cold War termination, defeat and dissolution of USSR, that change should have minimized the importance of USSR (a new loser) in the victory of allies in the World War II. Therefore, the importance of the World War II as a whole was reduced. It was partly done with the purpose of relativizing the defeat, condemnation and odium towards Germany (one of indisputable winners in the Cold War), but also in order to relativize the importance of the bipolar system of international relations established after the war and embodied in OUN.

That tendency overflowed, almost parallel, from the sphere of expert discussions led by historians, political scientists, sociologists, etc. into the public discourse and political rhetoric. It is particularly emphasized in the Eastern European countries that are flooded by mass production of revisionist papers about the history of the World War II. In that process, to put it as simple as possible, in public discourse the yesterday's “traitors” became overnight “heroes” of the fight for independence, against occupation, against corruption, against “totalitarian Stalinist evil”, while former “heroes” turned into “occupants”, “traitors”, “extended hand of Moscow”, “criminals”, etc. In that process there has been no major difference or consideration about nuances when “heroes” and “traitors” changed places in the historical memory and public discourse. Therefore, in the majority of cases, the newly proclaimed “heroes”, “fighters against occupants”, etc. were the persons who fought for, or who were directly in the service of other totalitarian system which had been condemned until that time – Nazism. That wave of revisionism, mainly in East Europe, leaned partly on one part of results of western historiographies, which, during the Cold War, wrote uncritically about Soviet and Russian history in general, for the needs of ideology.

In the political sphere, that wave of revisionism should have been (and was) used, to a great extent, for creating the basis of self-identification of new state identity of newly established East European countries and those that previously belonged to *soc-lager* (1945-1991). The previously dominant thesis about the “liberation of East Europe from the Red Army and USSR was replaced with the thesis on the “occupation of East Europe”...

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<sup>5</sup> Vilnius Declaration of the Parliamentary Assembly and Resolutions adopted at the Eighteenth Annual Session, Vilnius, 2009, 29 June to 3 July ([http://www.oscepa.org/images/stories/documents/activities/1.Annual%20Session/2009\\_Vilnius/Final\\_Vilnius\\_Declaration\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.oscepa.org/images/stories/documents/activities/1.Annual%20Session/2009_Vilnius/Final_Vilnius_Declaration_ENG.pdf))

<sup>6</sup> Compare for example: ОБСЕ и перезагрузка Истории: СССР обвинили в начале Второй мировой: Сделана очередная решительная попытка приравнять Советский Союз к фашистской Германии, Свободная пресса, 4 июля 2009 года (<http://svpressa.ru/world/article/10974/?go=popul>); and a series of similar reactions.

The pressure of revisionism in the political sphere became particularly emphasized when the majority of former Warsaw Pact members and former Soviet Republics (from the European part of USSR) joined EU. They started a coordinated action to issue a political declaration at the supranational level that would condemn Stalinism declaratively. Individually, the majority of parliaments or governments of these countries had already issued such declarations that accused communist authorities, rehabilitated Nazi collaborators from the World War II, members of anti-communist and Nazi military formations during the war were not only rehabilitated, but they were also granted state pensions.

Thus, the entire set of issues related to the World War II (guilt for breakout of the war, issues of genocide and indirectly holocaust, which was thus additionally complicated to the extent that it required special resolutions – but it is a completely different topic, but also the world establishment agreed by the “Great Three” at the conferences in Teheran and Yalta) – was transformed into a series of simplified political symbols, suitable for political manipulation, media abuse, etc.

(2) Russia, as declarative, essential political, state and legal successor of USSR, at the time of President Boris Jelcin (1991-2000), had rather ambivalent attitude toward the processes of the revision of past in general and political condemnation of Stalinism. Stalinism, as a totalitarian regime (which caused mainly the suffering of the population of Russia) – was severely condemned. Both within the expert circles and in public, a series of crucially important issues, which characterized the totalitarian essence of Stalinism, were brought to light. The basic foundations for self-identification of “new Russia” in the era of Jelcin were looked for (and found) primarily in the monarchic past, before the year 1917. It was reflected, first of all, in new state symbols, system of holidays and changed position of the Russian Orthodox Church in the society. However, a part of USSR’s legacy could not be (and nobody wanted it to be) suppressed: technological achievements (conquering the cosmos), cultural and artistic contribution, and even the victims that USSR suffered and the contribution that USSR gave to the victory over Nazism during the World War II.

Along with the change of government in Russia in 2000 and appointment of Vladimir Putin for President, the entire attitude towards history and political symbolism of past began to change gradually. It became evident that it was not possible to erase 80 years of own history and find a sufficient number of antipodes to the “heroes” from the past times, which would be used for the new self-identification of the Russian society. (In that process, a great role was played by the emphasized social and economic crisis of the liberal model developed during the era of Jelcin, which threatened with further disintegration of the country, as well as extremely passive and in many of its elements contradictory foreign political orientation of Jelcin’s administration).

At the symbolic level, the change was evident through the change of certain state symbols, but much more through the renewed social and political marking of some traditions from the Soviet era. And exactly here the political symbolism of the World War II and USSR’s contribution to the victory over fascism assumed an extremely important place. It became rather obvious on the occasion of grandiose celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the termination of the World War II, which was held in Moscow in 2005 and was attended by almost all world leaders and leading statesmen, headed by the US President George Bush and the French President Jacques Chirac. After that celebration, Russia evidently intensified its rhetoric of historical symbolism related to the World War II in its diplomatic and political presentations. It was particularly noticeable on the basis of increasingly emphasized activities that led towards rejection, negation and condemnation of the Soviet engagement in East Europe (1944/45-1991), whose purpose was the issuance of political declaration on the condemnation of Stalinism, and that were followed by individual activities (by issuing relevant declarations or legal solutions in the parliaments of certain countries, eliminating monuments from the World War II, especially in Baltic countries, etc). In that context, the marking of the World War II tradition assumed a strong symbolic character in political rhetoric and activities of Russia itself, but also a series of former East European states and consequently EU.

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And now the celebration of the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade in the World War II has been included in that long list of jubilees related to the tradition of the World War II and celebration of USSR’s contribution to the victory over Nazism, which Russia has been marking

continuously since 2005 and emphasizing more intensely through media. The celebration, as announced officially in Moscow, but only confirmed by the official Belgrade without further details, was initiated by President Tadic, i. e. the Serbian authorities. That fact, viewed from the tradition-marking aspect, the use of historical symbolism in political rhetoric and the general trend of revising the attitude towards the World War II in expert and public debates, brings actual Serbian leadership in a rather specific and complex position.

Namely, Serbia is one of those East European countries, which after the dissolution of communist regime performed a deep revision of attitude towards the World War II traditions. The discourse of “celebrating” the history was shifted from the communist to the civil resistance movement (Ravna Gora movements/Chetniks), which was defeated in the Civil War conducted within the World War II. It was particularly emphasized after the year 2000 when the traditions in which the communists were included in some way or which were marked by communist symbolism (even regardless of their universal significance), referring to almost 50 years of modern Serbian history, were systematically ignored or suppressed from public and political discourse. (This was done to such extent as to cause some major political errors, such as the one from 2005 when only Serbian representatives did not attend a big celebration in Moscow).

The inversion of “heroes” and “traitors” was done and all actions of communists, communist resistance movement and in that context all actions of the Red Army units that liberated some parts of the country (and that certainly liberated Belgrade on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1944) in the cooperation with the Yugoslav People’s Liberation Movement led by Josip Broz and Yugoslav Communist Party – were transferred into a negative discourse. The yesterday’s “bad guys”, “traitors”, “occupants’ servants”, etc. were somehow rehabilitated over time. An entire series of streets in Belgrade and other places in Serbia named after the Soviet Generals who led the operations – Zhdanov, Tolbukhin and others – were given new/old names, and the Soviet commanders were squeezed out of memory. And October 20<sup>th</sup> itself was not only abolished as Belgrade holiday, but a significant part of public and even a great number of experts proclaimed it to be the day occupation...

The attitude towards October 20<sup>th</sup> was suddenly changed in 2008 when President Tadic visited the Cemetery of the Liberators in Belgrade thus officially marking that date. It remained unclear to the public whether a sudden change occurred upon self-initiative, thinking about historical legacy (which could not be concluded from expert and public debates), or under influence of political and economic convergence with Russia, related to the support concerning Kosovo and later on, the signing of oil-gas arrangement with Gasprom.

And finally, the marking of the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade on October 20<sup>th</sup> – originally celebrated as the liberation day, and then condemned as “the day of occupation” – and the arrival of President Medvedev almost concur with the crescendo of work of the State Commission involved in finding out the remains of General Dragoljub Mihailović, the leader of Chetnik, Ravna Gora tradition of the World War II (in which a series of high-ranking state officials and officials of the ruling Democratic Party of Boris Tadic are included). At the same time, one of the Russian announcements emphasized that Presidents Medvedev and Tadic would mark together the day when “Belgrade had been liberated in a joint military operation conducted by the armed forces of USSR, People’s Liberation Army and partisan squads of Yugoslavia and Army of Bulgaria against German-Fascist and Croatian forces, and also against Serbian Chetniks”<sup>7</sup>. The situation is at least extremely contradictory and complex. Seen from that aspect, it seems that the symbolical conception of the entire event is rather incoherent. Or is it just a simple political calculation?

The same question can be asked when it comes to another aspect of President Medvedev’s planned visit – the one related to “strategic partnership”.

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<sup>7</sup> „Россия и Сербия вместе отметят 65-ю годовщину освобождения Белграда“, News. ru, August 5, 2009 (<http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=307721>)

## “Strategic Partnership”

The formulation “strategic partnership” entered into political rhetoric of Serbian and Russian authorities some two years ago and it was related to the Russian diplomatic support to Serbia in connection with the Kosovo’s self-proclamation of independence. Later on, it was extended after signing the oil-gas agreement. (It is true that some Russian energy analysts pointed out at that time that it was the “strategic partnership” between Serbia and Gasprom<sup>8</sup>, rather than Serbia and Russia, which is a rather interesting thesis).

The term and particularly its use are in the zone of so-called “useful vagueness”, especially as regards its use in the Serbian diplomatic vocabulary in the last two years. The Serbian side has not made an effort to define more precisely what exactly implies “strategic partnership” at all, both in the relations with Russia and even China<sup>9</sup>. However, the use of this notion in Russian diplomacy and politics implies much smaller space for “useful vagueness”.

The Russian politics and diplomacy use the term “strategic partnership” in two ways. Firstly, they use it to express a declarative resolution of the two sides to undertake certain joint projects, most often when they talk about “strategic partnership” in the area of energy, as it was the case during the negotiations of President Medvedev with the authorities of Angola and Nigeria in June<sup>10</sup>, as well as on the occasion of the announced possibility of “strategic partnership” with Ukraine, with NATO and even with Poland. The second use of the term is much more concrete and involves the signing of various types of documents – agreements, declarations and other documents on strategic partnership (such as the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation between RF and EU from 1994, which entered into force in 1997<sup>11</sup>, Declaration on Relations with China from 1996, which involves the “development of equal and confidential partnership relation”<sup>12</sup>, or more recent Treaty on Strategic Partnership between RF and the Arab Republic of Egypt from June 23, 2009<sup>13</sup> or Declaration on Development of Strategic Partnership between Russia and Mongolia, signed on August 25, 2009.<sup>14</sup>

However, the following question has always remained open and utterly vague during these two years: which one of these two discourses in understanding the notion of “strategic partnership” is accentuated by the Serbian and Russian diplomacies during mutual negotiations? Is the consecutive use of this term in mutual communication going to result in the signing of a particular document, with a number of provisions binding for both parties?

And last but not least is the following question: to which extent is this consecutive referral to “strategic partnership” with Russia compatible with the “first priority of Serbian politics – Serbian EU membership?”<sup>15</sup>. Some less patient analysts formulate this question even as a remark saying that “Serbian foreign policy is schizophrenic”<sup>16</sup>. However, if we consider the use of terms a bit more soberly, it becomes clear that the term “strategic partnership”, almost like the formulation about

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<sup>8</sup> Денис Кириллов, БАЛКАНСКИЙ УЗЕЛ: Сербия становится стратегическим партнером «Газпрома» в Юго-Западной Европе, Журнал «Газпром», 2009 год, № 1-2 (<http://south-stream.info/fileadmin/pixs/publikacii/1-2.2009.pdf>)

<sup>9</sup> Tadic: China – a strategic partner, Emportal, August 18, 2009, Source: Fonet (<http://www.emportal.rs/vesti/srbija/96650.html>)

<sup>10</sup> Брифинг официального представителя МИД России А.А.Нестеренко, 2 июля 2009 года ([http://www.poland.mid.ru/inf\\_09\\_60.html](http://www.poland.mid.ru/inf_09_60.html)); такође и: Артур Блинов, Стратегическое сафари Дмитрия Медведева, Независимая Газета, 24.06.2009 ([http://www.ng.ru/politics/2009-06-24/2\\_safari.html](http://www.ng.ru/politics/2009-06-24/2_safari.html));

<sup>11</sup> Соглашение о партнерстве и сотрудничестве учреждающее партнерство между Российской Федерацией, с одной стороны, и Европейскими сообществами и их государствами-членами, с другой стороны. (подписанное 24 июня 1994 года на острове Корфу (вступило в силу 1 декабря 1997 года)) (Russian version: [http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/ru/p\\_330.htm](http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/ru/p_330.htm); English version: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21997A1128\(01\):EN:HTML](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21997A1128(01):EN:HTML))

<sup>12</sup> Совместная китайско-российская декларация (1996 г.) (<http://russian.china.org.cn/russian/273010.htm>)

<sup>13</sup> Документы, подписанные в ходе официального визита в Арабскую Республику Египет, ([http://news.kremlin.ru/ref\\_notes/53](http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/53)); Договор о стратегическом партнёрстве между Российской Федерацией и Арабской Республикой Египет (<http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2009/06/218351.shtml>)

<sup>14</sup> Российско-монгольские переговоры (<http://news.kremlin.ru/news/5277>)

<sup>15</sup> Tadic: “EU accession is our main goal”, August 30, 2009 (<http://www.predsednik.yu/mwc/default.asp?c=304000&g=20090830102524&lng=cir&hs1=0>)

<sup>16</sup> Serbian foreign policy is not schizophrenic, Blic Online, August 29, 2009 (<http://www.blic.rs/politika.php?id=108328>)

“accession of Serbia into EU as its first priority” – is still used more or less declaratively in public speeches and political practice.

Clearly, these two tracks of Serbian foreign policy do not have to exclude each other. And generally speaking, the Serbian foreign policy concerning the relations with EU and Russia based on the “either...or...” position would really be detrimental, considering several factors<sup>17</sup>. However, even if we disregard that, if in the foreseeable future some more concrete steps are done towards the determination of strategic partnership and their transformation into a concrete document – *declaration, treaty, agreement, etc.* – its content would inevitably set certain borders and benchmarks for diplomatic activities, particularly if certain clauses are related to the concretization of military-technical cooperation (which is the case with the Treaty concluded with Egypt) or establishment of joint company for the exploitation of uranium (a part of the Protocol with Mongolia).

The matter of “strategic partnership”, not only with Russia, but also with China, with the first foreign-policy priority still being the accession to EU – again opens the second circle of questions related to vision, assumed position of Serbia after EU accession, etc. In that respect, the public can very often hear assurances that Serbia is going to be “a friend of Russia (or China) in EU”, that it is going to represent a political and above all economic “bridge of cooperation between EU and Russia (China)”. Such attitudes, although characterized by an ambition that is being converted into megalomania about some “four pillars” of Serbian foreign policies, can be used only in the internal politics. They do not have any stronghold in realpolitik of either EU or Russia (and China, obviously). Firstly, all EU member states are obliged to comply with the “umbrella policy” of EU itself and it is very difficult, almost impossible that Serbia, as an assumed future member of the Union, could obtain at least a little bit more independent position in foreign policy (especially because both Poland and Baltic states aspire to get that role of a “leader” in determining general directions of EU policy towards Russia, but without any major success). Secondly, as the Russian diplomats have repeatedly and openly emphasized, Russia does not need any intermediary in its contacts with EU and it develops its relations in direct contacts with Brussels and each individual member state. As regards China, bearing in mind its economic potentials and growing importance in the foreseeable future, it is difficult to understand why China would need any special “intermediaries” in its contact with the world.

I am afraid that it is yet another late echo of numerous myths and stereotypes in the Yugoslav (Serbian) diplomacy and its numerous “successes” during the Cold War (in that context we can also understand a sudden shift of Serbian diplomacy towards the Non-Aligned Movement, an organization that has not had either any real content of work or significance for a long time now – an organization that excluded Yugoslavia, one of the three founders of the movement, from its membership at the beginning of 1990-ies). The realpolitik of the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century is far away, even too far away from the Cold War era standards and thinking. It has been developed on different foundations. The task of the Serbian diplomacy should be to recognize these foundations and to fit into them.

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<sup>17</sup> M. Jovanovic, Two Russias: About Two Dominant Russian Discourses in the Serbian Public, ISAC Fund: MONITORING RUSSIA-SERBIA RELATIONS: III Report ([http://www.isac-fund.org/download/Pracenje\\_rusko-srpskih\\_odnosa-3.pdf](http://www.isac-fund.org/download/Pracenje_rusko-srpskih_odnosa-3.pdf))