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## A New Political Scarecrow? The Political Program and Activity of the "Serbian Right"

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The organization known as *Srpska desnica* (SD; the Serbian Right Wing) during 2019 become increasingly seen in the Serbian media, as well as receiving augmented visibility on posters throughout the country. With their recent electoral success in the town of Medveđa, as well as their announcement that they are turning into an official party that would enter the 2020 parliamentary elections, coupled with the troublesome past of their leader, Miša Vacić, the situation calls for investigation. In this article, we are putting Miša Vacić's public and political engagement under a magnifying glass, positioning him within the broader nationalist political spectrum of the country, engaging his official political program. We shall furthermore define the concept of the political scarecrow, a political party or figure that serves primarily to frighten, as shall be clear from the case study that this is the role of his organization.

**Keywords:** *Srpska desnica*, Serbian Right Wing, Miša Vacić, opposition, political scarecrow, Serbia

## Introduction

The scholarly community has already tackled various forms and shapes of nationalism that saw its heyday during and after the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia featuring heavily (Budding, 1997; Damjanović, Novaković, & Obradović, 2003; Djokic, 2009; Djokić & Ker-Lindsay, 2010; Gagnon, 1994; Gagnon, 2004; Gow, 1994; Greenberg, 2014; Korac, 1993; Krzan, 1994; Perica, 2002, 2017; Ramet, 1996; Vujačić, 1996; Žerjavić, 1998). Having fallen out of the spotlight with the end of the wars of the 1990s, nonetheless, Serbia's recent history and contemporary development have seen scant scholarly interest. With Serbia's President Vučić – former member of the right-wing Serbian Radical Party and long-time warmonger – the country has taken significant strides backwards as a fledgling democracy. Vučić himself is increasingly referred to as a dictator in the media (Error, 2019) and semi-authoritarian in scholarship (Radeljić, 2019), and the country's freedoms have started to erode manifestly, arguably most notably in the domain of the increasingly restricted freedom of the press (FreedomHouse, 2016, 2017; Jovanović, 2018c; Kmezic, 2018). The protests against his regime have seen *some* scant interest within the academic community (Fridman & Hercigonja, 2017; Jovanović, 2019a), including rare pieces on the development of Serbia's Right Wing through the decades (Jovanović, 2018b). The new instances of right-wing organizing, nonetheless, yet remain to have some scholarly light shed on them.

For this reason, this article will delve into the newest instance of right-wing political engagement in Serbia, putting the spotlight onto the so-called *Srpska desnica* (SD, the Serbian Right), a new political party that by the end of 2019 featured extensively in media coverage and public interest. To be more particular, we will be giving an overview of the political context that the SD stemmed from, including their political engagement, after which we shall tackle their official program, contrasting it with various theories and existing scholarship on nationalism and the right wing. We shall, by the end, posit the concept of the *political scarecrow*, a political figure or party that serves to frighten rather than contribute to the political landscape. The political scarecrow is, in its essence, not as much of a valid political option, but instead sends a message that instead of the current government, somebody 'this negative' could come into power, unless the government is reelected. As shall be divulged throughout the course of the article, the SD presents exactly this type of political scarecrow as a counterbalance to the increasingly authoritarian regime of Aleksandar Vučić and his Serbian Progressive Party, rather similar to already existing scarecrows such as Jobbik to Orban's Fidesz, or the Russian LDP and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy to Putin's Edinnaya Rossiya.

## Political context and recent engagement

Tackling the SD would be challenging without tackling its official leader, Miša Vacić, formerly the official spokesperson of the extreme right-wing movement "SNP 1389", who was convicted of hate speech and illegal weapon possession in 2015 (Čongradin, 2019a). An outlandish person with extreme nationalist views bordering with fascism, Vacić figured in the media several times before forming the SD as an officially independent political entity (not an official party), that in 2019 took part in the elections in Medveđa, southern Serbia, and won over 6%. His direct involvement with the government was clear in 2017, when he boarded the curious "Kosovo is Serbia" train in Belgrade. The train, a publicity stunt by President Vučić, was covered with the inscriptions "Kosovo is Serbia" from head to toe in 21 languages; it was supposed to travel to Kosovska Mitrovica in northern Kosovo, yet was stopped by the President himself, who instigated it (Loxha & Zorić, 2017), in a public transportation-turned-nationalist display. Note that Kosovo had long figured as the crucial point of

Serbian nationalism ever since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, only to be revived in the 1990s (Auerswald, 2001; Bieber, 2002; Daskalovski, 2003; Emmert, 1999; Emmert, 1990; Jovanović, 2018a; Mihajčić, 1989; Trgovcevic, 1999), and consequently has continued unabashed after the 2008 declaration of Kosovo's independence. Vacić was recorded on the train, gasconading over his official appointment within Vučić's government as the Advisor to the Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, a formal body within the government of the Republic of Serbia, with calling cards to demonstrate for the cameras (Bogosav, 2017). The Director of the Office, Vučić's right hand, Marko Đurić, vehemently denied that Vacić was a team member, saying that the allegations were "invented and perjury" (Tanjug, 2016). Having in mind that Vučić's regime has tried numerous times to distance itself from their own wrongdoings in the nineties, as well as from any hard-lining outbursts of nationalism, it is of small surprise to find Đurić deny the government's engagement of an extreme right winger.

Be that as it may, Vacić's own braggadocio during the train ride saw an echo in the few media that are not either directly or indirectly controlled by the government (namely the N1 television network and Ringier's Blic), and he got an invitation for an interview with N1's long-standing host, Minja Miletić, wherein he demonstrated poor communication skills and behaved in, for the lack of other words, an eccentric manner. He kept asking for a glass of water, kept fidgeting nervously, and accused his host of being a "totalitarian" and that she was close to "looking for a tree and rope to hang him" (Blic, 2017). After this failed stunt, oddly enough, Vacić was fired from the governmental position that he, according to the government, never occupied (Blic, 2017). Marko Đurić now changed his rhetoric, admitting that Vacić was indeed hired by the government (Beta, 2017). This serves to establish an early connection between Vacić and Vučić's government, to which we will shortly return.

By early 2018, the media reported that "a new nationalist party" was founded by none other than Vacić himself (Tašković, 2018). By fall 2019, the SD entered the local elections in Medveđa. Vacić physically attacked and threatened a member of the opposition's *Savez za Srbiju*, one of the largest opposition groups in the country, with no punitive measures from the state (Ivanović, 2019). But the next day, Vacić published a video of himself taking a list of potential voters from Serbia's Red Cross (Latas, 2019), after which the SD won 6.5% of the votes, but a year and a half from the organization's founding (A. P. M., 2019). He also publicly boasted about driving around Medveđa with his collaborators in "14 jeeps", going from home to home and taking the voters to the ballot boxes himself to vote for him (Čongradin, 2019a). By now, some sources, such as the long-time journalist of the daily *Danas*, Snežana Čongradin, were certain that Vacić "works directly for the government" (Čongradin, 2019a).

A further scandal erupted in November 2019, when Vacić started threatening anew. This time, he promised to "drown" a member of the opposition, Nebojša Zelenović, in "the Serbian river Drina", that he would "arrest him and spit on him", that he would "banish him", further opining that the media who are not influenced or controlled by the government, such as N1, *Danas*, *Vreme*, and *Blic*, were "traitorous media" (N1, 2019). The trope of the "traitors" to the nation saw high saturation during the government of Slobodan Milošević; further notice needs to mention that President Vučić was Milošević's Minister of Information, when he enforced the strictest laws bent on media oppression (Jovanović, 2019). Additionally, he threatened the libertarian political scientist, Vuk Velebit, with murder, saying that he would send him "under the sword" already in 2017, which Velebit had reported to the Prosecutor's office, yet the prosecution chose not to do anything with the case (Radenković, 2019).

Furthermore, as reported by the BETA (2019) news agency, "in Bujanovac, he threatened that all Serbs 'wheeling and dealing' with the Shqiptars (derogatory name for Albanians) would be relocated "because they are ruining other people's lives," adding that the same fate would befall those who "hinder [the actions] of the Serbian Right." He also threatened the mayor of the town of Šabac, Nebojša Zelenović, saying that he "would wind up in the Drina river and that a prison would be built specifically for him in that city". As BETA further reported, "Vacic has been particularly active in the past several months, and the opposition believes that he is a ruling bloc project that is to serve as a 'club' to curb the activities of the Serbian opposition and other government opponents". It was noted that "there were no attempts from the ruling circles to protect Vacic publicly, but the Vranje Basic Public Prosecutor's Office had reacted to his hate speech in Bujanovac, and contacted the local police station with a request for gathering the necessary information on the incident in that town. It is possible, therefore, that the ruling circles estimated that Vacic's ineffective actions were not particularly useful and that, therefore, his 'drives' in the coming months would be less pronounced, but he would still remain a potentially important 'weapon' which could be used against the ruling bloc's opponents" (Beta, 2019). The Bujanovac case was yet another one that the prosecution failed to process (Mihajlović, 2019).

Additionally, in 2019, billboards and posters with the face of Miša Vacić and his *Srpska desnica* increasingly started to be seen throughout Serbia (Espresso, 2019), including the aforementioned Bujanovac (Nacionalist, 2019), for which the portal *Nacionalist* wrote about as Vacić "making Serbia stand up on its feet", while "many pro-Western media were accusing him of nationalism". The posters had inscriptions saying "*Znamo da vas boli, jer Srpska Desnica Srbiju voli*" ("We know it hurts you because the Serbian Right loves Serbia"), and "*Znamo se, rasli smo zajedno. Srbi, mobilizacija!*" ("We know each other, we grew up together. Serbs, mobilization!") (Srpska desnica, 2019).

Due to the above presented increasing presence of Vacić's SD on the political and media scene of contemporary Serbia, we shall now proceed to confront SD's official program, found on their website, *srpskadesnica*.

## The official political program of the Serbian Right

The Serbian Right claims four major instances as being the crux of their political program: 1) traditionalism, 2) patriotism, 3) a healthy society and "togetherness", and 4) Eurasian integration; we shall investigate every of the four instances in detail.

The SD defines traditionalism as the "insistence on tradition as the basic criterion for the organization of society" (All quotes from the program are from: *Srpska desnica*, 2018), wherein they put traditionalism "directly against liberal or leftist approaches to existence and society", which are seen as "imposing the loss of national identity". They stress that this traditionalism should come in the form of a "patriarchal society, Orthodox Christian faith, the respect for and maintaining of institutions that protect the very identity (the symbols of the hero, the father figure, mother, family, military, work, the host, the principle of authority, the principle of societal hierarchy, a monarchical principle)". At the very beginning of the SD's political program, we encounter a slew of old, extremely traditional and patriarchal values. The emphasis on "patriarchal society" follows a long line of patriarchy in Serbia and the Balkans together (Halpern, Kaser, & Wagner, 1996; Kaser, 1992, 2008); the insistence on Orthodoxy has been one of the prime points of the establishment of what the right in Serbia understands as a "Serbian identity"; with the Church playing an important role in daily life (Iveković, 2002; Leustean, 2008; Malešević, 2005; Perica, 2002); some scholars have noticed the relevance of the Serbian Orthodox Church in shaping government policies (Barišić, 2016; Vukomanović, 2008).

The second of the four key topics that the SD stands for, unsurprisingly, patriotism, seen by them as the “only constructive and beneficial relation towards one’s own people”. The concept of the “nation-state”, i.e., in its hard-line form, the overlap of the ethnicity/nation with the state itself, is seen already in the following sentence: “The state is and should be an instrument of the Serbian people, so these two terms overlap a great deal”. This concept indirectly, yet efficiently, removes all “non-Serb” ethnicities or nations from the formula, and, besides being overtly nationalist, can be seen as xenophobic as well (Pajnik & Kuzmanić, 2005). The SD’s concept of patriotism is further described as “active”, meaning that it is a “constant fight and continual promotion in the direction of strengthening national identity of the Serbian people at all levels”. This is to be achieved on a variety of levels, such as the level of “family, traditions, behavior of the individual and the society, societal forms and structures, language, script, industry, symbols, political life, theory, information, and culture”. In other words, the SD intends to control a vast majority of the aspects of daily life, society, politics, and institutions, and can thus be categorized as authoritarian. What was, for a trained eye, missing in the first part of the program, was the insistence on the language and script as the markers of national identity, an important part of the activism of the Serbian nationalist core (Greenberg, 2004; Greenberg, 2008; Jovanović, 2018; Okey, 2004); it did find its place later on.

The third instance within the program of the SD is the barely translatable concept of “sabornost”, which we will here translate as “togetherness” or “unity”. The SD sees it as “stemming from Orthodoxy”, and it entails “the unison of all elements of the society and the acting towards the same direction through a combined effort”. This is where nationalism evades individualism and forms the amalgamated concept of the nation that entails almost everything within society and politics into an amorphous mass. The opposition to unity is “liberalism”, and “especially neoliberalism, which is nothing else than the allowing the rampage of the tenets of profit without any protection from this”. This is where the SD, even though being right wing, agrees with much of contemporary leftist thought in Western Europe and the USA, that often also sees an ill-defined idea of “neoliberalism” as the core problem of the contemporary world (Cornwall, Karioris, & Lindisfarne, 2016; Giroux, 2018; Roberts, 2016). However, this rather thought-provoking issue is beyond the scope of this paper and warrants research on its own.

The fourth point is named “Eurasian integrations”. The idea of “Eurasian integrations” has been mentioned by the right side of the political spectrum in Serbia with increasing intensity since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a means of distancing from the European Union and getting closer to Russia (Proroković, 2017; Stojanović & Đorđević, 2017). Russia has increasingly been figuring as a sort of “Mother Hen” for Serbia in the last several decades, seen as a “brotherly nation” with the same religion, in addition to Putin’s Russia being insistent on not recognizing Kosovo as a standalone state (Barišić, 2016; Biserko & Stanojlović, 2016; Blagojevic, 2008; Patalakh, 2018; Stefano, 2018); note that some authors have made mention of the impact of Russia on Serbia a longer time ago as well (Jelavich, 1958). The concept of Eurasian integrations in Serbia, thus, operates with both push and pull factors: push away from the EU, and pull closer to Russia. This is, expectedly, seen in the SD’s ideology as well. The Eurasian integration trope is used to promote a closer “civilizational identity” seen in a “spiritual, cultural, historical, linguistic, and national” view, stressing that it “does not belong to the Atlantic corpus of states, but instead organically belongs to the space of Eurasia, the center of which is occupied by Russia”. For this reason, they stand for the “cessation of EU integrational processes” and the joining an undefined “Eurasian Union”, emphasizing Serbia as “what it organically is – the Western wall of Eurasia”, in an *antemurale eurasianis* rhetoric.

The SD's political program then continues in bullet points that cover the running of the state and society in greater detail, from constitutional organization to sport. We shall tackle the more relevant ones, at least in view of a right-wing *Weltanschauung*. The SD claim that they support a "unitary" model of state governance, emphasizing that allowing any degree of autonomy to provinces is a way towards the "crumbling in of Serbia", in more detail, "this method is used both by domestic separatists with the idea of destroying Serbia, as well as by foreign enemy forces whose idea is the same, and it is being used as a tactical option in this special war, hybrid and network operations against Serbia". This is where the program of the SD reaches conspiracy theory level. The idea of a "hybrid war" being waged against Serbia is a common one, most commonly promulgated by the Serbian government and their supporting tabloids such as the *Informer* (Šoštarić, 2017). Political scientists have already tackled this issue to a certain extent, saying that "this has already become a style of governance – a continual invention of crises and conspiracies, a constant invention of something being done behind the President's back" (Pavićević, in: Karabeg, 2018). Interestingly, Marko Đurić, Vacić's former superordinate, opined that there was a "hybrid war" waged against Serbia by Albania (Telegraf, 2019); the discourses of the government, on this point, here converged. From the nationalists' point of view, enemies are everywhere, and the nationalist organization itself is the aegis that protects and defends.

Another interesting point is point 15 – syndical organization. Yet again, the Serbian Right propagates issues that are more than common with the Left in the West, urging for more syndical organization. The European Union is seen as being "in the hands of big money", working "in the interest of the neoliberal idea of profit ... in a neoliberal exploitative and neocolonial project". The sheer amount of left wing scholarly production that claims the same or similar is staggering (Canetto, 2019; Cole, 2017; Dhamoon, 2015; Grech & Soldatic, 2015; Hankivsky & Jordan-Zachery, 2019; Kurtiş & Adams, 2016; Winch, 2015), however, as we have already mentioned, this is beyond the scope of this work, though it does present relevant avenues for further research.

Point 17 emphasizes the reintroduction of the obligatory military service for all males, a trope that has increasingly been seen during the last decades in nationalist circles in Serbia, having in mind that Serbia changed its military from a conscript-based one to a professional military in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The military should be "necessarily indoctrinarily based on a patriotic spirit ... the officer corps should be exposed to raising and education based on patriotism and celebrated Serbian war traditions". Additionally, the Serbian youth should be "raised in an organized manner, psychophysically and militarily/professionally be enabled for an all-people defense" via introduction of specific subjects in schools, via "the spread of patriotism and national consciousness". The strong bond between nationalism and militarism is not a new one, and has been studied aplenty in scholarship (Orford, 2017).

The SD's ideas about international relations (point 19) is based on the opposition to the EU, stronger ties with Republika Srpska and Russia (via the so-called "Eurasian integrations"), as well as stressing that Kosovo is a part of Serbia, never mind the 2008 declaration of independence. Kosovo gets a bullet point of its own (20), where it being a part of Serbia is stressed several times. It is seen as the "cradle of Serbian culture and spirituality", a trope that has been seen in iteration since its independence (Jovanović, 2019b; Radeljić, 2019), and seen often in primary sources from a nationalist provenance (Antonić, 2017; Nacionalist, 2018; Ristić, 2018; S.J., 2018; Ujedinjenje, 2017). According to the SD's program, "without Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia ceases to exist". This is a tired trope that has seen its iterations in Serbian nationalism aplenty, and, essentially, represents a standard point of departure for any nationalist movement in Serbia. It would be hard, impossible to imagine a nationalist program within the country absent the Kosovo trope and the insistence that it should "remain" a part of Serbia.

The already mentioned “hybrid and networking warfare against Serbia” gets a bullet point of its own as well (21). This is a “new type of warfare led by the West in order to establish complete political, economic, ideological, and cultural control on a global level”. This “special warfare”, according to the SD, is run by numerous organizations, countries, and individuals, from religious groups, via ethnic minorities and the media, to even IT organizations, depicting a large conspiracy picture in the SD’s ideology.

The SD’s “social policy” ventures furthermore into incongruity. Once again, in striking similarity to the contemporary Western left, the SD claims it stands for “social justice” (point 27), yet it clearly approaches homosexuality in a manner patently similar to Russia, that is, proposing the ban on “organizations promoting homosexuality”; homosexuals are referred to as “sodomites”. Yet again, this is nothing innovative for the right wing, as homophobia is often a key point in various right-wing ideologies throughout the globe (Mestvirishvili, Zurabishvili, Iakobidze, & Mestvirishvili, 2017; Moss, 2014; Reygan & Moane, 2014), and fairly common to Serbia *per se* (Mršević, 2013; Stakic, 2011).

## Conclusion: Defining the Political Scarecrow

Altogether, the *Srpska desnica* presents nothing novel on the “Eastern front”. According to Boban Stojanović, Vacić “it is an old, completely irrelevant happening on the political scene that certain actors use in particular moments in order to scare the public” (BBC, 2019). Emphasis on the nation, shared, unified culture within a nation-state, closer ties with Russia, stress on Orthodox Christianity, militarization of public life and discourse, homophobia, emphasis on numerous alleged enemies that surround Serbia – all of these instances have been repeatedly seen in numerous Serbian right-wing organizations, parties, promoters, and policies.

What needs to be emphasized, though, is the connection of the SD to the increasingly authoritarian regime of President Vučić. Not only was Miša Vacić employed by his government, but his direct superordinate, Marko Đurić, laid claims identical to the SD’s program, namely, that there is a “hybrid warfare” against Serbia. The fact that Vacić and his SD could act in such a manner as to collect potential voter information and post it online whilst bragging that they personally drove voters to the ballot to vote for them – with absolute impunity – including physically and verbally attacking Vučić’s opposition, from a simple *cui bono* perspective, does offer a conclusion (though without utter certainty) that he does, at least in practice (if not formally) work for Vučić’s government. Additionally, the fact that his call for the murder of Vuk Velebit was entirely ignored by the prosecution further stresses the high chance that the SD in practice does work for the government of Aleksandar Vučić. In an interview for the Serbian BBC in 2019, Vacić further revealed his connection to Aleksandar Vučić, when he said that he “knew him from when he was posting ‘Ratko Mladić Boulevard’ posters”, and that he has “not seen him in a long while ... a couple of months” (BBC, 2019). Yet one further instance of cooperation between the SD and the government was the case from the southern city of Vranje, in which the *Jedinstveni za Vranje* (United for Vranje) organization, that already holds power under the aegis of the Serbian Socialist Party (which is a part of the government, in coalition with Aleksandar Vučić’s Serbian Progressive Party), joined the SD, making it a part of the government. Miša Vacić himself stated that “by this act, the Serbian Right Wing officially became the government in Vranje. From today, we have two representatives in the parliament of the city of Vranje. With pleasure do I state that Vranje is the first city in which we are part of the government” (Espresso, 2019). The relationship to the government can thus be said to have been established.

In December 2019, Vacić announced that he would re-register his SD as a political party, aiming to enter the upcoming 2020 elections (Čongradin, 2019b). Čongradin, who has been following and reporting on the SD avidly, calculated the number of around 50,000 euros that would be necessary for that endeavor, while Vacić himself mentioned he would need 10,000. Aleksandar Olenik, leader of the Citizens' Democratic Forum (*Građanski demokratski forum*), opined that "the assumption that such an organization is not in possession of such finances is a based one, so we from the Citizens' Democratic Forum are of the view that this money represents an award for the public threats and the scaring of citizens that has been taking place in the name of the Serbian Progressive Party and Aleksandar Vučić" (Olenik, in: Čongradin, 2019b). He further stressed his view that, in view of the planned opposition boycott of the upcoming elections, this would enable him to enter the parliament in actual fact.

Nebojša Zelenović, the opposition leader from *Zajedno za Srbiju* (Together for Serbia) dubbed him "Vučić's Šešelj". This was a reference to the extreme right winger and Hague Tribunal inductee, Vojislav Šešelj of the Serbian Radical Party, who was often dubbed "Milošević's favorite opposition figure" (Bujošević, 2002; VOICE, 2018; Ž. M., 2015), as well as the "favorite opposition figure of any government" (Tašković, 2018). Essentially, by having an alleged opposition figure such as Šešelj or Vacić – who, instead of acting as the opposition, i.e. *against* the government, acts *for* the government – Vučić's regime (similarly to Milošević's, where Vučić was the Minister of Information) can offer an option "worse" than himself. This could potentially be "translated" into a message for the voters (as well as for the international community) as "If I lose power, *this* comes into power". The SD serves to frighten. With the SD's official joining of the local government in Vranje, however, and with Vacić's boastful proclamation that he is now a part of the government there, the SD can by no means be classified as an opposition party, but as a "scarecrow" instead. We shall thus herein define the *political scarecrow* as the *political option, party, grouping, or personality that acts to intimidate the electorate or international community as posing as a more frightening option than the current government*. The political scarecrow will serve as a "worse" option than the government, and will consequently be used as such *by* the government. The thin definition of the political scarecrow would entail, simply, a figure that is used to frighten the electorate and/or political opponents. The concept of the scarecrow within political science has seen scant to no scholarly interest, though it is found in politics *per se*, including political analysts that operate within the media, such as the New York Times piece from 1966 that dubbed Fidel Castro as a political scarecrow (Giniger, 1966). Vacić's SD has all the hallmarks of the scarecrow: nothing novel from a political perspective, with literal physical (and otherwise) threats ("drowning", "purging", etc.) in the public space, with absolute impunity. The political scarecrow, thus, will exhibit the following:

- 1) It will use hateful discourse that discriminates against part of the population or specific individuals who are commonly members of the political opposition, as well as intimidate the electorate into submission;
- 2) It will, in practice, cooperate with the government, officially or unofficially. Its actions will benefit the government in numerous ways;
- 3) It will represent the "worse" option that the government, making the government party or leader seem like a more viable political option, fortifying itself within the political fringes and extremes ideologically;
- 4) It will often resort to violence or unlawful actions that will either not be prosecuted by the state, or will receive minimal penalty.



Political scarecrows can be said to exist as a hallmark property of Central and Eastern European politics (east from the former Iron Curtain), and they can be found aplenty. In Hungary, Viktor Orbán's Fidesz functions well with its scarecrow, the extreme right-wing Jobbik (Kim, 2016; Wittenberg, 2013), between which a functional relationship has been established in scholarship (Krekó & Mayer, 2015). Kreko and Mayer's description of the Fidesz/Jobbik relationship sounds identical to the Aleksandar Vučić/Miša Vacić practice: "Fidesz instrumentalized the threat Jobbik is posing to the democratic system as well as the negative 'image' of the transition as a justification or pretext for incorporating some ideological and policy elements of Jobbik into their own agenda and also for changing an institutional framework in a way that strongly benefits Fidesz. 'If we don't do this, Jobbik comes to power' was the argument behind most of the actions of Fidesz." (Krekó & Mayer, 2015, p. 185). In other words, Jobbik are Fidesz' political scarecrow party. A similar situation do we find in Putin's Russia, and his relation to Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Putin's scarecrow (Janack, 2005; Verkhovskiy, 2000). Zhirinovskiy is well-known for going to political extremes, simultaneously making Vladimir Putin a viable political option.

According to Stojanović, Vacić is an "extended hand of the government, he says what the government thinks, but dares not say ... the only thing he has are resources, that he is receiving in a questionable manner, as well as space in the media that was given to him by those whom he works for" (BBC, 2019). With the other, already "regular" political scarecrow in Serbia, the Hague inductee, Vojislav Šešelj, an aging figure, young scarecrow blood seems to be the way to go for Vučić and his Progressives. Since his return from the Hague, Šešelj has yet again been playing his scarecrow part, yet it is prudent to assume that Vučić's regime is looking for somebody fresh and new, somebody who will approach the scarecrow role with more vigor and force; a young extremist seems to be the perfect actor for the performance. Ignoring the SD scarecrow could well prove detrimental to democracy, especially if they should succeed in entering the Parliament. Additionally, we hope that this article will open avenues for further research, primarily with the very concept of the political scarecrow, but the "sideline" thread posited in the observed similarity between an Eastern European right wing and a Western left as well.

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## Novo političko strašilo? Politički program i djelovanje Srpske desnice

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Organizacija poznata pod imenom *Srpska desnica* (SD) tijekom 2019. postaje sve prisutnija u srpskim medijima te dobiva istaknutije mjesto na plakatima diljem zemlje. Njihov nedavni izborni uspjeh u Medveđi i najava prerastanja u političku stranku koja će sudjelovati na parlamentarnim izborima 2020., kao i problematična prošlost njihova lidera Miše Vacića, povod su za pomnije istraživanje. U ovom članku stavljamo pod povećalo javno i političko djelovanje Miše Vacića, kao i njegov politički program, kontekstualizirajući ih u okviru šireg nacionalističkog političkog spektra zemlje. Nadalje, objasnit ćemo koncept „političkog strašila“, odnosno političke stranke ili osobe čija je primarna uloga zastrašivanje, što je kao što će jasno pokazati studija slučaja upravo uloga njegove organizacije.

**Ključne riječi:** *Srpska desnica*, srpska desnica, Miša Vacić, oporba, političko strašilo, Srbija