

Poor governance, good corruption: an overview of Serbia's government's affair-ridden governance (2012-2018)

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Abstract

Ever since the end of the wars of the nineties, as well as the declaration of independence of Kosovo, Serbia has fallen of the radar, both within the international political community, as well as within the academia. Yet, in the meantime, the societal and political situation within the country has changed drastically, with the former warmonger of the nineties, Aleksandar Vučić, having taken hold of seemingly unlimited power. Serbia has, during his reign, become entrenched in corruption, the multitude of affairs being produced on a regular level serving as proof. Drawing on existing theories of political corruption, we shall tackle Serbia's political corruption via the examination of the most prominent affairs, coming to the conclusion that Alatas' designation of "tidal corruption" fits contemporary Serbia best, as well as classifying most prominent instances of corruption.

Keywords: Serbia, corruption, good governance, Aleksandar Vucic

Biedne zarządzanie, dobra korupcja: przegląd spraw rządu serbskiego (2012-2018)

Streszczenie

Od zakończenia wojen lat dziewięćdziesiątych, a także deklaracji niepodległości Kosowa, Serbia spadła z radaru, zarówno w ramach międzynarodowej wspólnoty politycznej, jak i w środowisku akademickim. Jednak w międzyczasie sytuacja społeczna i polityczna w kraju zmieniła się drastycznie, a były podżegacz wojenny z lat dziewięćdziesiątych Aleksandar Vučić przejął pozornie nieograniczoną władzę. Serbia podczas jego rządów utrwaliła się w korupcji, a mnogość spraw produkowana na regularnym poziomie służyła temu dowodem. Opierając się na istniejących teoriach korupcji politycznej, zajmiemy się korupcją polityczną Serbii poprzez zbadanie najważniejszych spraw, dochodząc do wniosku, że oznaczenie „korupcji pływów” Alatas'a pasuje do współczesnej Serbii najlepiej, jak również klasyfikuje najbardziej znaczące przypadki korupcji.

Słowa kluczowe: Serbia, korupcja, dobre zarządzanie, Aleksandar Vucic

Since the wars of the Yugoslav secession in the nineties and the declaration of independence of Kosovo as their direct consequence, Serbia has lost its space in the spotlight of both the academia and the international political and media community alike. Some have opined that there would be a renewed concern “if blood starts flowing” again (Bjelotomić 2017), as the scholarly interest, not unlike the general political attentiveness, has waned significantly during the last two decades. This has resulted in Serbia being pushed aside, leaving its ruler, the former PM, now president, Aleksandar Vučić, to govern as he sees fit. The outcome, in short, is seen in Freedom House’s report on Serbia, saying that “political rights and civil liberties have eroded in recent years under Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić and his Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), which took power in 2012. The government has drawn repeated criticism for imposing various forms of political pressure on independent media and civil society organizations” (Freedomhouse 2017). The Freedom House report, however, is just the tip of the corrupt iceberg, as the general report on civil liberties, freedom of expression, personal autonomy, and rule of law fails to do justice to the immensely corrupt mode of governance that has in the meantime become all-permeating within the country; in other words, no details or detailed analysis is given. Aleksandar Vučić’s “centre-right Serbian Progressive Party enjoys a complete stranglehold on Serbia’s government, judiciary, and security services, and he has neutered the local media to such an extent that only a handful of outlets have dared to publicize the substantial allegations of corruption, cronyism, and voter intimidation that have plagued his time in office” (Erer 2018).

Having all of the above in mind, we decided to tackle the expanding row of (sometimes peculiar, for lack of other words) affairs within the expanding corrupt system that nowadays defines Serbia as a country, which should shed more light onto its contemporary modes of governance, seen through the lens of existing theories of corruption. Intra-governmental corruption has, during the last six years, led to a slew of money-laundering affairs, including the brobdingnagian urban Belgrade Waterfront project as the perhaps most representative affair, within which one person has lost their life, several have been unlawfully deprived of their freedom, and the promised construction never took place. Minor affairs became plentiful as well, such as the world-record New Year’s tree, bought by the city of Belgrade for an excessive sum of 83,000 euros, immediately afterwards to be first dubbed as a “gift”, making the public wonder why anybody would give Belgrade such a generous present. Eldritch instances, such as the grand opening of an elevator in an elderly retirement home, or the general of Serbia’s

Army saluting a newly built fence around the building, can be said to serve as an icing on a corrupt cake. The rule of one man, Aleksandar Vučić, has enabled his clique to amass large financial resources and strengthen their grip via the diminishing of institutional authority, and the consequent accumulation of extra-institutional personal power. All of these serve as defining moment in the regime of Aleksandar Vučić, who has on 4 March 2018, after a landslide victory at the Belgrade elections, further solidified his tight grip over the country and its crumbling institutions.

Similar cases have been reported around the world, however. Erdogan's post-coup power grab, including the severe diminishing of the freedom of press and expression, serves as but one example (Aytaç and Öniş 2014; D'Amours 2017). The expanding power of Vladimir Putin, with the stifling of the opposition and an expansion of Russia's soft power is yet another (Cimbala 2014; Wagner and Fein 2016; Kotkin 2015). The modes of governance seen in Orban's Hungary (Batory 2016; Lamour and Varga 2017; Antal 2017) – as well as many more – all point to an increase in democratic deficiency on an Europe-wide scale. Should we expand geographically, the election of Donald Trump (Ahmadian, Azarshahi and Paulhus 2017; Inglehart and Norris 2016; Kazin 2016), as well as the recent power surge of Xi Jinping in China, paint a grim picture for good governance and democracy on a worldwide scale. Due to the fact that countries such as Russia, Turkey, the USA, or China, possess significantly more geopolitical relevance and leverage, smaller states – such as Serbia – have effectively been cast out of any particular interest.

What is worse, the international community has, during the 21st century, even praised Aleksandar Vučić – the warmonger from the nineties, who in 1995 famously claimed that a hundred Muslims should be killed for every dead Serb (RTS 1995). Federica Mogherini mentioned “an important step forward on the European path of Serbia” (BETA 2016) under the leadership of Vučić, while Thomas Lubeck claimed that Serbia was among the ten countries with the largest advancement in the conditions for doing business, and can be proud about it” (Žarković 2016), among but a few of such comments, even though “like in the previous 15 years, Serbia is still among the countries with widespread corruption” (BETA 2016). On a more general level, scholars have indeed established that “far from reducing corruption in the short term, political liberalization has made matters worse in most of those countries that embarked on the democratic transition in the 1980s and 1990s” (Sung 2004); Serbia can be, without exaggeration, said to neatly fit into this explanation. Florian Bieber of Graz University

has called this “laissez-faire approach of the EU” as “destructive” (Bieber 2018), due to which Western Balkans countries were “captured states”, and that the lack of interest has started to change. The march 2018 article on Vučić at Foreign Policy called him “Europe’s favourite autocrat” (Eror 2018); drawing upon the renewed interest from a political perspective, we shall here tackle Serbia’s corruption problems, hoping that this renewal of concern might spread to the academia as well.

Having said that, we can state that the aim of this article is to present and categorize corruption in contemporary Serbia, via the use of Lancaster and Montinola’s categorizing methodology (Lancaster and Montinola 1997), in which we shall proceed to present select relevant cases of corruption, seen through the lens of established corruption classification theory (Gupta and Abed 2002; Heywood 1997, Heidenheimer and Johnston 2011). Additionally, a descriptive approach is also taken, as it is of high importance to properly describe and present the array of corruptive affairs that have taken place, in what Thorne *et al* have called “interpretative description” (Thorne, Kirkham and MacDonald-Emes 1997), inspired by Sandelowski’s insistence on the descriptive moment within the social sciences (Sandelowski 2000).

Socio-political context: Serbia’s politics since 2012

Since the toppling of Slobodan Milošević and the fateful 5 October 2000, for at least three years, Serbia seemed to have set foot on a path towards democracy and good governance, dubbed by some researchers as “a young and fragile democratic society” (Vukomanović 2008). However, after the 12 March 2003 assassination of the democratic Prime Minister, Zoran Đinđić, the country has fallen back into criminality and political corruption (Gordy 2004). Almost a decade later, the warmongering, ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party gave birth to the Serbian Progressive Party, led by Aleksandar Vučić and Tomislav Nikolić, and emerged victorious in the 2012 presidential elections, after which Vučić aggressively worked on the establishing of unprecedented power. While even a decade before 2012, Serbia’s “institutions are regarded as relatively closed, as corrupt, and as working against the interests of ordinary people” (Gordy 2004), intra-governmental corruption has since reached new levels, so that “reality very often takes the shape of a parody of what is imagined as decent, normal, dignified life; politics in Serbia is seen as a parody of what politics is supposed to be” (Petrović 2015). Since his rise to power, Vučić has worked consistently on diminishing the freedom of the press and expression, every election held whilst he was in power were reported to

have had irregularities, and corruption affairs have become common within the country. As Aleks Eror wrote for Foreign Policy, “over the last six years, Vučić has established what could best be described as a soft autocracy: On the surface, Serbia is still a democratic society with nominally free elections and a political opposition, where dissenting voices are able to criticize the ruling party without fear of mysteriously disappearing in the night. But Vučić’s control over Serbia’s centres of power is so complete and the democratic process is so skewed in his favour that dissent poses no threat to his rule. His political opponents are free to run against him, but they have few means to make their voices heard. The country’s institutions are so totally controlled by Vučić’s allies that there is nothing to stop him from subverting democratic norms” (Eror 2018).

Nowadays, “the Republic of Serbia remains (as of 2014) among the regions that exhibit very low stability in the economic and political as well as social senses” (Bujwid-Kurek 2016), and there are continuous calls for a particular increase in the effort to combat corruption (European Parliament 2013, points 14, 29, 30).

Corruption: a theoretical overview

As Gupta and Abed noticed, “since the early 1990s, there has been a virtual explosion of academic writing on the economics of corruption” (Gupta, Abed 2002). Theoretical and practical considerations of (primarily political) corruption are nowadays aplenty, and we shall briefly go through the main tenets of theories on corruption. Taken very broadly, corruption can be defined as “misusing one’s political office for private gain” (Heidenheimer, Johnston 2011). This is the broadest and most general of definitions of corruption; others have taken a more nuanced approach. Often seen from a legalist perspective; a political act can be considered as corrupt if “it deviates from the formal duties of a public role (elective or appointive) because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) wealth or status gains: or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence” (Nye 1967). As such, corruption goes against the very tenets of good governance, as “today all types of regimes, democratic or otherwise, are based on the principle of rule of law as it has been found to be the only way available to maintain a just society... In countries which have written constitutions, the supreme law is the constitution itself. Governance according to the letter and spirit of the constitution, thus, becomes good governance” (Menon 2017). Additionally, “definitions of political corruption based on notions of the public or common interest significantly broaden the range of behaviour one might investigate” (Heidenheimer and

Johnston 2011). Thus, we have Rogow's and Lasswell's definition of corruption: "a corrupt act violates responsibility towards at least one system of public and civil order and is in fact incompatible with (destructive of) any such system" (Rogow, Lasswell 1963). Heywood draws on Alatas' definitions, and names several types of corruption, as he "distinguishes between 'transactive' and 'extortive' corruption. The former refers to a mutual arrangement between a donor and a recipient, actively pursued by, and to the mutual advantage of, both parties, whereas the latter entails some form of compulsion, usually to avoid some form of harm being inflicted on the donor or those close to him/her. Other types of corruption revolve around, or are the by-products of, transactive and extortive corruption. Defensive corruption is obviously related inversely to the extortive type, whilst investive corruption involves the offer of goods or services without any direct link to a particular favour, but with a view to future situations in which a favour may be required. Nepotistic corruption refers to the unjustified appointment of friends or relatives to public office, or according them favoured treatment. Autogenic corruption involves just one person, who profits, for example, from pre-knowledge of a given policy outcome. Finally, supportive corruption describes actions undertaken to protect and strengthen existing corruption, often through the use of intrigue (as in US machine politics) or else through violence" (Heywood 1997).

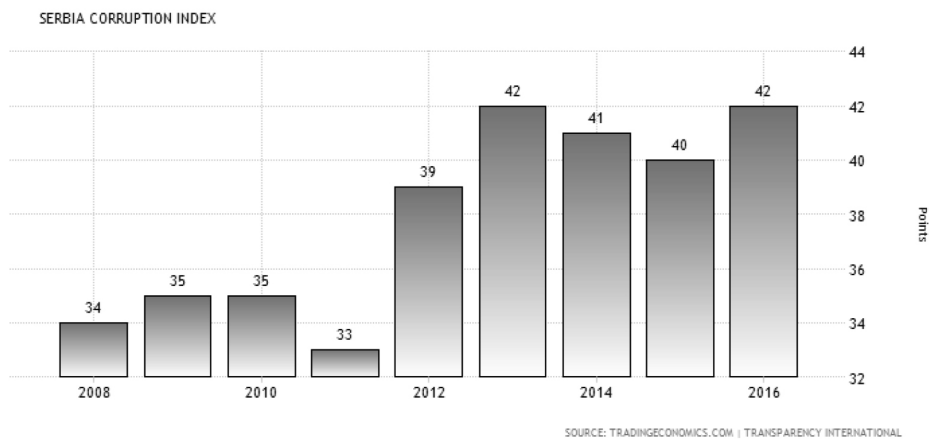
Jain and Rose-Ackerman classified corruption into grand, bureaucratic, and legislative (Jain 2001; Rose-Ackerman 2007). Grand corruption is defined as "the acts of the political elite by which they exploit their power to make economic policies" (Jain 2001). To go further, "legislative corruption is when monetary resources are used to influence the voting behaviour of the legislators, also called political corruption" (Chowdhury, Desai, Audretsch 2018), while bureaucratic corruption represents "engagement in corrupt behaviour by both low-level bureaucrats and their superiors" (Chowdhury, Desai, Audretsch 2018).

Having in mind that – in the case of Serbia – we are tackling severe corruption that permeates all segments of politics (and society), we are in need of introducing Alatas' concept of "tidal corruption", which is seen when the society at large "is dominated by corruption. From top to bottom, government machinery is seriously infected by corruption. We are not talking of pockets of corruption here and there that exist in all societies ... it is this kind of corruption, total corruption that grips a social order" (Alatas 2015). As will be shown, corruption indeed runs rampant in Serbia, in many cases coming down to what Moran has dubbed "money politics" (Moran 2001), though corruption-based affairs within the country have showed that even though the majority of affairs can indeed be

dubbed as based on financial gain, corruption has run an indiscriminative course; in other words, the very *modus operandi* of the government, on all levels, has become defined by it. We shall thus present the most relevant corruption affairs of the Vučić-led government, trying to find a common denominator among the increasing plethora of affairs.

Measuring corruption is a problem in itself, as the “the dominant mode of measurement since the mid-1990s has been perception-based, via cross-national indices drawn from a range of surveys and ‘expert assessments’. Indices such as the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), the Bribe Payers Index (BPI), the Global Corruption Barometer (all produced by Transparency International), the Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Surveys (BEEPS) or other aggregate indicators such as the Control of Corruption element in the World Bank Group’s Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)” (Heywood 2015). However, “it is now widely acknowledged that such measures are inherently prone to bias and serve as imperfect proxies for actual levels of corruption” (Heywood 2015), including the fact that factors that could predict corruption (which often seen through the lens of “perceived” corruption) do not correlate with other measures of experiences of corruption (Treisman 2007). So far, the only useful set of statistics come from Transparency International, where a significant increase in *perceived* corruption was seen exactly from 2012, when the Progressive Party came into power:

Figure 1: Corruption index in Serbia



Source: Trading Economics (2017), <https://trading-economics.com/serbia/corruption-index>

However, due to the nature of Serbia's tidal corruption and its all-permeating nature, statistics on corruption can be said to be fairly irrelevant, as even a cursory glance at the rather prominent instance of corruption paint a clear picture of an all-encompassing venality. Furthermore, being that Serbia has often been "off the radar" for international bodies measuring corruption, coupled with the fact of the severe lack of transparency within the country itself, any particular measurement would fail to serve as entirely satisfactory. This is why we are approaching the subject of corruption in Vučić's Serbia from a qualitative viewpoint, engaging in relevant corruption affairs, and categorizing them into fitting taxonomies.

Prominent cases of corruption since 2012

The most noticeable among the slew of corruptive affairs of the Vučić-led government of the Republic of Serbia is by far the Belgrade Waterfront (BW) project. Summed up by the *Black Book of the SNS Government in Belgrade 2013-2018*, the BW project was "the largest plundering of the construction land in Belgrade's history, in violation of the constitution, laws and all urban, legal, logical, economic, environmental, fire, traffic and other professional procedures and rules. It is a fixed of the idea of Aleksandar Vučić, who personally 'found' and brought 'investors' of Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, and the Arab tycoon, Mohammed Alabar, who, without a call for applications and without any competitive procedure, donated 116 hectares of Belgrade's coastline to build housing and commercial buildings of high altitude and many square meters without the adopted urban plan and without a previous study of the feasibility, impact and cost-effectiveness of such a project for Belgrade and Serbia. The enormous costs of relocating railway traffic, relocating the bus station, expropriating buildings and land, bringing the necessary infrastructure, solving traffic and environmental problems have been transferred to the citizens of Serbia and Belgrade. All of this, under the pretext that investors will invest 3-4 billion euros in the next few years in the project, but it turns out that these finances do not exist, and that they (and their unknown 'silent' partners) will actually resell the buildings and parcel for the next 30 years" (Crna knjiga 2018a).

The government additionally promised that the huge planned tower would have been built by 2016 (Bulatović 2014), yet not even its foundations have been set. Additionally, the two buildings that have seen the beginning of construction have in the meantime (not even completely built) started to sink (Kurir 2017), even catching fire in 2018 in two stories (B92 2018). Falling under Heywood's classification into the realm

of transactive corruption (Heywood 1997), the Belgrade Waterfront has been called into question by a row of professionals, mostly from the points of view of architecture and urbanism as well. The Academy of Architecture of Serbia published a declaration about the BW project, in which it was explained that it hosted numerous legal misgivings and misuse of legal procedures, as well as that “not a single credible expert supported the project” (Akademija arhitekture Srbije 2015). Furthermore, instead of an urban development plan, according to the Declaration, the project was supposed to be created after a picturesque diorama-like model, without almost any design and project-planning. To make the affair worse, non-existing apartments in the equally non-existent BW were sold. According to Lazović, “the beginning of the sale of apartments did not bring anything new, it takes place in the same manner as the whole project – non-transparent and at the expense of citizens. The claim that as much as 75% of offered apartments were sold on the first day is not only false, but hides another, still worse fact about the way of the selling of the apartments – the apartments were not even for sale, but instead, interested parties offered a very suspicious reservation contract, and potential buyers were obliged, without insight into the sales contract, to pay EUR 1,000 as a non-refundable reservation fee” (Lazović 2015).

However, the affair did not end there. On the election night of 24/25 April 2016, unknown hooligans, wearing balaclava masks, rased a part of the designated BW area to the ground with excavators and heavy machinery, in the process tying up people whom they found in the area. Citizens have been reported to have called the police numerous times, but the police never reacted. One of the security guards within the zone, Slobodan Tanasković, a witness to the destruction, had a cardiac arrest, and died a few days later in the hospital (Crna knjiga 2018b). According to Aleksandar Vučić, the hooligans have acted as “complete idiots”, as they should have done it in broad daylight (Tanjug 2016). He furthermore stated that “someone was creating a political issue where there was none”. A year later, the estranged wife of the Belgrade Mayor, Siniša Mali, admitted that Mali confided in her, telling her that he was the one who ordered the destruction of public property (Pećo 2017). This was not reported by the majority of the government-controlled media, and the case was buried in public discourse. The reporter, Dragana Pećo, has afterwards had her apartment broken in and entered, without anything taken away (Mirković 2017), understood by many as scare tactics.

Related to the BW affair, the Mayor of Belgrade, Siniša Mali, has played the key role in yet another row of affairs. It has been uncovered that he had plagiarised his doc-

toral thesis, with over a third of the textual production directly taken from other sources, without citing, analysed in detail by Raša Karapandža of the EBS Business School (Karapandža, 2014). Several authors of the works that Mali has used as uncited sources have later voiced their discontent, claiming that their work has “literally been taken” (Mijatović, 2018). Mali has additionally figured in what is probably best described as a row of money-laundering schemes, such as when it was uncovered that he bought 24 apartments on the Bulgarian seaside in secret, the worth of which is estimated to around five million euros, with 3100 square meters total, while officially not earning over 34,000 euros per year; this was heavily denied by the government, Aleksandar Vučić himself, as well as by the government-supporting media (Dojčinović, Pećo and Tchobanov 2015). It furthermore turned out that he kept some of his unlaundered finances in a number of other people’s accounts, including his underage children (Gerila 2018). In summa, another instance of transactive corruption related to “money politics”. Having in mind that Aleksandar Vučić openly stated several times that after the affairs, Mali would no longer serve as Mayor, only to not remove him from office, indicates that this case falls under the category of nepotistic corruption as well, since Vučić did not allow, but instead actively helped, a personal friend and collaborator survive a row of affairs.

Yet another affair was the building of a musical fountain on the Slavija roundabout in the centre of Belgrade, the cost of which capped at two million euros, even though the fountain itself costs from ten to two hundred thousand dollars (Đukić 2017); it is suspected that the rest of the money went into officials’ pockets. The pattern of officially buying or soliciting overpriced services is repetitive and can be seen rather often. The 2017/18 New Year tree in the centre of Belgrade was bought for 83,000 euros (making it the world’s most expensive New Year tree) and installed three days before the contract for it was signed (Pištaljka 2017); Siniša Mali stated that the city would cancel the contract (N1 2017), but that never happened.

An annual instance of corruption is the decorating of Belgrade’s streets for the New Year celebration. In 2014, the City of Belgrade spent 2.98 million dinars on 2000 lamps and 40 glow-covers. The following year, the price increased to 33 096 000 dinars for 2200 light belts, two LED New Year trees, and 200 glow-covers. In 2016, the price was 190 million dinars, up to 230 million in 2017. The city Manager, Goran Vesić, instead told the public that 20 million were spent instead (Crna knjiga 2018c).

Funding the Progressive Party via donations of supports was shown to be “shady” by the Bureau for Social Investigation (*Biro za društvena istraživanja*) as well. As the

Bureau and the N1 Television uncovered, “several donors claim that during the 2017 election, they helped the Serbian Progressive Party hide the origin of the money, as money received from the SNS was paid to the party under their own names. Due to similar findings from 2014, the Agency for the Fight against Corruption, on the warning of the Administration for the Prevention of Money Laundering, reported the Serbian Progressive Party to the Higher Public Prosecutor’s Office” (BIRN 2017).

As it turned out, people have reported that they have been given 40 000 dinars each, that they were instructed to put on the account of the Progressive Party in their own name. Aleksandar Vučić, in the interview with the eminent journalist, Brankica Stanković, claimed that it was normal, and that there is nothing criminal behind it. As Radio Free Europe reported, “namely, it was found out that 6.940 citizens paid 40.000 dinars to the Serbian Progressive Party, while some of them were receiving social help. The explanation... was offered by President Aleksandar Vučić: ‘I suppose this is because it is allowed for people to donate up to that level. Let me explain how. So, you and I are sitting, and a third person comes over, I do not know if it happens like this, but I suspect. And I want to give 800 euros, but I am not allowed. And then I come to somebody else, give them the money, and say “Please give this to our party”’ (Nešić 2017).

Yet another affair was the illegal carrying of 205 000 euros into the country by the Minister Aleksandar Vulin, that were not taxed. Vulin tried to evade, saying that he carried the money into the country at the maximum allowed amount, 9000 euros by 9000 euros, that he has received as a “gift” from his “aunt in Canada”, the aunt in question never being found, including the fact that it effectively meant he would have had to travel to Canada and back 23 times (Nešić 2017). Aleksandar Vučić defending Vulin as well.

The recent case of what is categorised as legislative corruption happened during and before the Belgrade elections on 4 March 2018, where numerous sources reported on vote-meddling, with double voter-lists being recorded, with people carrying them running away from cameras (Ozonpress 2018). Aleksandar Vučić called the elections a “festival of democracy” (Garčević 2018). We need to stress at this point that the affairs presented within the article are but the most prominent among a slew of other cases. What then are the common denominators of the aboveseen corruptive affairs?

Taxonomy and conclusion

As seen in the corruption affairs above, they are numerous, continuous, and mostly relating to some type of money laundering, falling into the categories of *grand corrup-*

tion and *money politics*. Having in mind that the affairs are found within numerous segments of society, Alatas' designation of tidal corruption is also a useful one. Aleksandar Vučić blames the opposition for the lowering of the standards of living, claiming that they are "inventing affairs", and that "the only thing they offer are lies, invented affairs, and 'We hate Vučić' paroles" (Vučić 2017), including that combating corruption is one of his primary goals. According to the Centre for Investigative Journalism (CINS, *Centar za istraživačko novinarstvo*), however, "research has shown that the battle against corruption in practice comes down to media announcements and arrests in front of cameras. They are followed by a large number of criminal charges, significantly fewer indictments, and even fewer convictions" (Jahić and Jeremić 2017).

Nevertheless, Aleksandar Vučić, as seen in the cases above, was connected to most of the abovementioned affairs. He defended the Belgrade Waterfront hooligans, he defended the Mayor, Siniša Mali, he defended Aleksandar Vulin with the "aunt from Canada" affair. Having in mind that his political and social power remained unchallenged, the conjecture can be made that he either knows of, or controls, the vast majority of affairs. As seen, in practice, he does not combat corruption, but justifies it and assists it. Since he is helping members of his clique (often called "cronies" in political argot), a strong nepotistic element can also be said to be of relevance for the proper depiction of contemporary Serbian corruption.

In summa, based on the representative samples above, corruption in Serbia under the leadership of Aleksandar Vučić can be classified as:

- *transactive*; relating to money politics, in which arrangements between donors and recipients is created for mutual gain;
- *grand*; relating to the political elite acting towards their own, often financial, gain;
- *legislative*; meaning that corruptive affairs have been used to influence electoral behaviour (such as the forcing of people to fund the Progressive party);
- *nepotistic*; meaning that the members of the ruling clique help each other in order to achieve corruptive goals, and
- *tidal*; meaning that corruption within Serbia has become all-permeating and ubiquitous.

On a more broad, general level, we are talking about the deficit in good governance, sometimes called "bad governance" (Grindle 2017), more often "poor governance" (Gisselquist 2012), that is often connected with, as well as based upon, corruption

(Gupta and Abed 2002; Rose-Ackerman 2005; Tanzi 1999). Tidal corruption *per se* can be said to be the main defining instance of Aleksandar Vučić's now six-year rule, with no signs of diminishing. In this article, we have gone through the most prominent among corruptive affairs; the limits of a standardised research article prohibit us from going deeper, but we would wish to put forth a plea to researchers to tackle this issue in the years to come.

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