

## Montenegro, Serbia, Greece:

### **Podgorica, 11-13/12/17:**

#### Drinks with Brian Whitmore:

- Currently with Radio Free Europe, however leaving to be a Senior Fellow & Director of Russian Studies at CEPA. [personal observation: as he is moving to DC, as an open democrat believes, he has been assured he will have to do minimal fundraising – believe he is a strong candidate for US Cluster. Less of a political target, not clearly linked to military wing in DC.]
- Keen to talk to Institute for Statecraft – contractually obliged in new role to spend significant time in Europe, and has yet to talk in London. So is keen to do so.
- In regard to Integrity Initiative, he will send me list of people to contact about cluster building.
- Believes the next real focus should center on the Latvian elections, and believes we should have a robust cluster formed ahead of that. Has offered to make connections.
- In regard to our discernment program, described the [work of Globe Sec](#), and their work to teach the power of disinformation to the younger generation/

#### Information Warfare and the New World Order, Case Study: Western Balkans.

- Workshop began with an interesting demonstration of tourist centered disinformation – negatively comparing Sotchi & Montenegro.
- **Morning Panel:**  
**Nicolas Brzica:** Strategic Risk Advisor, Dpt. Defence Policy, MSAN, Croatia.  
**Jelena Milic:** Director of Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies, Serbia.  
**Brian Whitmore:** Senior Russian Analyst and Author of RFE/RL
- **BW:** Kleptocracy needs to expand to survive, corruption is the new communism, Russia is a state with a weaponised Mafia. Russia is counting on the ethnic divisions within Western Balkans to cement it's grip on area. It's become unfashionable to believe in the 'story' of the EU & NATO, we need to get better at telling its story. Moscow is no longer going through Belgrade - but around it. Corporate security interests – staffed by ex-Milosevic era figures who're close to Russia. Erosion of social welfare state that plug holes in our system that defend ourselves from interference. We need a 21<sup>st</sup> century analogue of containment. Moscow appears to be going around Belgrade, no longer through Belgrade. Presidential elections, mainstream headlines and then 20 pages of advertising Gazprom.
- **JM:** 'Story telling' difficult if journalists are branded called fake news. Facing the crisis in Western Balkans of homegrown little green men. Ethnic divide in Serbia & Western Balkans causing serious issues as no one has any political ideology – just ethnic allegiances, decline in Social Democrats or anyone else. No political alternative to Vučić. Serbia cannot sit in two chairs at once. 50/60 Serbs have left to fight in Ukraine. The imported western narrative needs to be cautious. [CFR](#): produced a report detailing how Bosnia will split into 3 parts, one with strict Islamist laws. Need to be careful, Serb & Rus media will distort and manipulate any western narrative. Religious obstacle: Serb Orthodox Patriarch describing the judgement on any accused of genocide as being 'a judgement sent from hell'. Problem in Serbia is filling the vacuum left by political parties that want better rule of law. Trials must continue – Serbia is attempting to use relations with Russia as a smokescreen to hide what was done in 90's.
- **NB:** We've moved passed crisis in Bosnia & Macedonia – things improving. We need robust Strat comms & information operations in the area is vital. In Croatia & Slovakia, typical Russian mouth pieces are ignored – however attacks on EU & NATO from far left & right parties are well received. We're seeing a war on governance, notable Cossack(?) presence in election day rallies in Bosnia. Believed approx.500

fighting in Donbass for Russia from Western Balkans. Upon return, this is a force that can change the game. Black cash deposits from corrupt deals funding newspaper and social media and campaigns. Serb & Croat media, key Rus. Mouth piece.

○ Afternoon Panel:

**Greg Rowett:** IfS

**Ruslan Deynichenko:** StopFake

**Milica Penjanoic-Durisc:** Former Minister of Defense, Montenegro

**Andrej Pretrovski:** SHARE CERT

- **MPD:** Society can't keep pace with tech. Serious test to Liberal Democracies. Cyber crime multi disciplinary entity.
- **RD:** How can national governments protect citizens from international companies, education, education, education. Interest surrounding interactive, connected children's presents. Not as well secured as others and esp. Dangerous because given to children. No unique solution to each market.
- **GR:** Spoke well and hit all the IfS points: peacetime mentality during war/Russian vocab all based on warfare/rate of change in society dramatic/need for universal glossary. Algorithms key – we need to start gaming these algorithms and put pressure onto the companies hosting these disinformation campaigns. Deliver message that we're willing and able to push back.
- **BW:** Can Liberalism & Data-ism exist in the same society? It can, but we need to set boundaries for big data. Looking at Estonia, very vulnerable to kinetic threats, totally immune hybrid threats governance. During the 70's there were unilateral bans on the sale of technologies that would give the Soviets an edge. CONTAINMENT.

Lunch:

Conversation: Mark Voyager,

Notes:

- Interested in II and will send me list of appropriate people for II. I feel he could be a potential candidate for our German cluster.
- Discussed his focus: 'Law-fare'. How Russia uses the nuances of things like the Minsk treaty to make point 13 the provision Russia will close it's border – so providing 13 different stipulations to be fulfilled before it is required to close the border.
- He is very willing to speak to the Institute, he has a brief prepared that he has given to the US Senate. We discussed his availability in the New Year to come to the Institute to discuss the topic.

Belgrade, 13/12/2017:

Meeting with Jelena:

Discussion:

- Serbia has given it's gas an oil over to Russia. [observation] as you drive into Belgrade there is a massive sign, sponsored by Gazprom, that has the Serb & Russian flag combining.
- It's within this corporate world that Russia is coordinating its operations in Serbia.
- Youth: there is a prominent youth wing of the Russia Freedom Party [perhaps, 'Pledgers'], who are extremely violent, they are Russia's platform in Serbia on Kosovo. Perform acts like heading to Kosovo to 'protect Serb population'.
- How Kosovo is handled is vital to reforming Serbia, rewriting security documents/foreign policy document etc.

- There are voices advocating for Kosovo to be portioned/swap of territories – however this would have a significant knock on effect on Macedonia. The current government is pursuing dialogue with Kos. This approach Jelena agrees with and is supporting the government in this, she privately has little faith in them, but will support them in this, as they are moving in the right direction. She will continue to push for this. Russia is attempting to sideline this process, it's another area we will see an enhanced Russian Presence. Russia have been increasing embassy staff in Kos. Albanian speaking staff.
- Bosnian cluster: people of integrity, fighting Croat influence in the area.
- State of Serbian: there are 2 private industries, app development and private healthcare. However it is the ruling party = Labor market. Ruling party contributes to the political stagnation we see in Serbia, not only does it suffer from any opposition simply being a cadre of single issue campaigns. It is hard to electorally combat a party that provides the bulk of employment.

#### Resolution:

- Will assemble names & contacts of people she trusts to approach with joining II. Important: contact in private Turkish university.
- Will discuss with Stephen chance of him chairing a cluster meeting, of Serbs she is able to assemble, next time he is in Belgrade.
- Jelena is currently undergoing a staff shortage – one area Russians/opposition Serbs have been successful is scaring people away from working with her.
- It would be helpful for us to specify how much time we are expecting from her as CEAS are having strategic planning meetings and need to know how much time to assign for II.
- Needs ruling from Chris & Robert Pizcsel on Balkan cluster structure – Kosovo will be covered by Serb cluster.

Athens, 14/12/2017

#### Meeting with Sissy & Elias:

#### Notes:

- Personal observation: They looked scared. Certain topics caused voices to drop, and eyes watched the people who walked passed table. Members of cluster have been assaulted. Sissy, Elias & Nicos were named and pictured in right wing paper and labeled as traitors.
- A workshop is not possible, if attempted – there will be violence. They are certain of it.
- Their website was hacked, causing them 2770 Euros to repair.
- Ivan Savidis, the focus of their media manipulation work.
- Ties between Russian & Greek Orthodox Church, it's the prominent vehicle used to highlight Russia/Greek bond.
- Fantastical conspiracy theories are believed: Russia will invade Turkey and return Constantinople to Greece.
- The youth is very pro Russian. Strength of his leadership is respected.
- [According to Greek paratrooper I spoke to]: 95% of the armed forces he encounter hate the America/West, and think Putin is who Greece should turn to, despite performing in NATO exercises.

#### Resolution:

- Require money. Working for free – very difficult to do so. I assume, this means paying for each report we receive.
- Translate work that is produced, they have a Russia expert in their circle who has produced work in Greek.
- Sissy will send me all the work they have completed so far – so I can keep it safe. Majority in Greek – will highlight pieces we may consider translating.

- Would like to receive information on Western Balkans/media manipulation: I will assemble a bi-weekly list of pieces to send to them.
- Would like information on Turkey, as they have no idea what is taking place there – I have contacted Jelana re: her contact at the Turkish university, and will facilitate dialogue.
- Suspect majority of my communication will go through [Elias Maglinis](#): not on cluster list I received. Sissy's associate, and journalist with Kathmenis. Writes on Russian Orthodox links, and has written a piece commenting on Putins' Patriarch launching an investigation into the death of the Romanovs.
- They have agreed to keep me updated on the topics they are writing on and investigating.

#### Meeting with Nikos Maranzidis:

##### Notes:

- Focuses on opinion polls, specifically how Russian elements are received and how that fluctuates within age groups. He wants to understand why Russians are welcome & Putin has a very positive image, in U40's.
- He wants to understand how Russian propaganda is presented through the Greek media. Wants to focus research into Ethnos & Epsilon [recently purchased by Savidis]
- Epsilon recently purchased and there has been no great shift in content. But expected within the year.
- Savidis: base in N. Greece, recently purchased POAK 120,000,000 Euros – plays division between N & S Greece. Makes no money from Greek investments – Nikos believes he was *sent* by Putin. Savidis's role is to prep the ground for the expansion of the Orthodox church in turn the expansion of Russian control over Greece. Persuading them they belong to the Eastern world, not the western.
- The Russian Orthodox Church: has monasteries [near Thessaloniki](#) provide financial base of operations for both Savidis & Russian interest in the area. Has traditional policy of expansion. Difference between Patriarch of Constantinople & Moscow, Const = traditional seat of power, but has no money, no political weight because exists in Muslim country. Moscow = all the money, all the power. Its important for bond forming between Russians & Greece as it is not a Slavic state
- Macedonia: Minister for Foreign affairs says resolution close – however Nikos believes that is a line he uses for Western powers, and they don't want a resolution. But knows the internal strength of Komeni [?] second party in gov. Refuses any compromise on the issue. In N. Greece, public opinion is not yet ready for compromise on name.

##### Resolution:

- Has asked for 25k a year for a propaganda observatory to monitor things discussed in notes.
- Will send me people he believe