

DIS!NFO

BRIEF



December 2022

DFC ANALYSIS: CHINA'S POSITIONING AFTER THE XX CONGRESS OF THE CCP

DFC ANALYSIS

Over the past two decades, the People's Republic of China has gradually transformed into a global power, and the focus of observing these changes has been its economic rise. China's foreign policy positioning in contemporary international relations is determined, above all, by the geopolitical dimension of its historical experience and long-term strategic goals independent of the programs of individual leaders. As China became more globally present, optimism grew that it would evolve into a partner state of the Euro-Atlantic community, embracing democratic ideals and values in accordance with a rules-based global order. However, under the leadership of Xi Jinping, the goal of assuming global political and economic leadership has clearly come up. Thus, China transformed from an economic and political partner of the West into a systemic rival. In the new [analysis](#) of the Digital Forensic Center, *Positioning of China after the XX Congress of the CCP*, you can read what the results of the XX Congress of the Communist Party of China are and what changes it brings when it comes to Beijing's positioning on the global level. What is the position towards the EU, USA, and Russia and where does the Western Balkans stand in all of this?

INFORMATION WARFARE IN WAR CONDITIONS

DFC INFO

At the conference *Russian aggression against Ukraine: impact and reflection on the Western Balkans*, organized by the Atlantic Council and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, which was held on December 13 in Podgorica, a special [panel](#) was dedicated to disinformation as one of the key tools in hybrid warfare. Analyst of the Digital Forensic Center Milan Jovanović, editor of the Raskrinkavanje.ba portal Emir Zulejhić and project coordinator at CRTA Jovana Prešić spoke on the panel. Milan Jovanović from the DFC pointed out that *the sanctions adopted by the Government of Montenegro, in compliance with the foreign policy of the European Union, joining the measures towards Russia are just a dead letter since due to inadequate implementation today we have unhindered access to Russian media in Montenegro*. Jovanović added that although there are no registered newsrooms of the leading

Russian media in Montenegro, this does not diminish the presence of Russian propaganda. Through certain portals and TV stations, content that abounds in disinformation that is harmonized with the narrative of official Moscow is published. Emir Zulejhić said that the research results show that more or less the same disinformation has been spreading in all countries of the Western Balkans when it comes to the war in Ukraine. Zulejhić pointed out that the most widespread narratives are those that try to justify the invasion, discredit the West and shift the blame to Ukraine. The Serbian media reports biasedly and positively about Russia, while mostly spreading anti-Western narratives, said Jovana Prešić. She concluded that *Sputnik and RT are not needed in Serbia because the domestic media are even more open about disinformation and narratives from Russia*.

ARE ALL PORTALS ACTUALLY MEDIA?

DFC INFO

The recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe define six criteria and a set of indicators based on which it is determined whether a portal can be considered a media or not. The criteria that need to be met are the intention to act as a medium, the purpose and basic goals of the media, editorial control, professional standards, coverage and distribution, and public expectations. Montenegro can use these criteria and recognize online publications that are de facto media, and oblige them to comply with the basic standards that apply to recorded media. This implies the application of the Law on Media, including the right to publish denials, the obligation to highlight the Impressum, and so on. In this way, the emergence of portals that function as media, and which in practice are used for propaganda and the spread of disinformation without any control or the possibility of checking their work, would be partially prevented, [said](#) the executive director of the Media Association of Southeast Europe, Vuk Maraš, in the Policy Brief *Professionalization of the media and improvement of the legal framework as a prerequisite for less disinformation*. Vuk Maraš emphasizes that the fight against disinformation requires a multidimensional approach, and one of the segments of that fight can be ensured through the changes of legal, i.e. regulatory framework, that can result in an increased level of media professionalization. Specifically, how to, by improving self-regulation, better regulation of the media market, the quality of reporting, and new technologies get into a situation where citizens are better informed and less exposed to disinformation.

THE FIRST ROUND OF THE “ISTRAŽI-UKAŽI” INTERNSHIP PROGRAM HAS BEEN COMPLETED

DFC TRAINING

Recognizing the importance of media literacy for realizing a more active role of each individual in the context of the social community to which it belongs, the Digital Forensic Center, in cooperation with the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Montenegro, organized a two-week internship for students. We collaborated with young, promising students, who improved their knowledge in the field of search through open sources, media in the 21st century, media literacy, and social networks, and learned how to deal with the growing problem of disinformation and fake news. Participants of the internship program have a positive experience. *I find the Atlantic Council training extremely applicable, especially in the modern age when we are all victims of disinformation and fake news in the media. I believe that this training really helped me a lot to recognize fake*

*news, as well as to use numerous research methods that will help me to get new knowledge more easily. I consider this training extremely useful and a really valuable and nice experience, said Milica Bojović, a third-year International Relations student. Her colleague Tijana Popović also had a good experience from the two-week training, whose impressions we share below: *In today's world where there is a lot of disinformation and fake news, we are often not familiar with the methods that can help us to debunk this disinformation ourselves. I believe that this training is useful not only to me but to absolutely every person who has access to the Internet and media. The experience I gained during the training is not only useful but also necessary at this time.**

THE CONCEPT OF THE *SERBIAN* WORLD HAS BEEN RELAUNCHED

NARRATIVE

The narrative about the unification of Serbia, the Republic of Srpska, and Montenegro was once again relevant during the New Year and Christmas holidays, but also the political crisis in Montenegro and the celebration of the unconstitutional the Republic of Srpska Day. The narrative has been relaunched by a historian Aleksandar Raković is the most prominent proponent of the unification of Montenegro, Serbia, and the Republic of Srpska into one federal state and the concept of a *Serbian world*. Raković is recognized for his statements full of insults against Montenegro and Montenegrins in which he propagates the unification of all Serbs into one state. Thus, Raković, being a guest on Christmas Day in the studio of Radio and Television of Serbia, pointed out that the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian state need to emphasize the unity of the Serbian people for the major holidays. On that occasion, Raković warned that the attack on Orthodoxy is still ongoing in Montenegro and concluded that Serbian unification is not a utopia and that it is natural for Serbia, the Republic of Srpska, and Montenegro to create a single state. Raković repeated this during the Republic of Srpska Radio-Television program on the occasion of the Republic of Srpska Day, stressing that only the unification as it was in 1918 is a regular environment for Serbs and that they currently live in an irregular environment, stressing that it is neces-

sary to re-establish a regular situation by unifying into a single Serbian state. Raković proposed the abolition of Montenegro, but also, as he said, disintegration in Bosnia and Herzegovina according to the Czechoslovakian model. He pointed out that it is a just solution that no one can dispute and that in 2023 they will get even closer to that goal. Raković's dangerous statements suggesting the redrawing of borders in an already tense period for the Western Balkan region were reported by the pro-Serbian portals in Montenegro [IN4S](#) and [Borba](#). In addition to Aleksandar Raković, the presidents of municipalities in Montenegro from the ranks of the Democratic Front, who spoke on December 13 at the Session of the Committee for the Diaspora and Serbs in the Region in the National Assembly of Serbia, contribute to the promotion of the Serbian idea. On that occasion, the President of the Committee, Milica Đurđević Stamenkovski from Zavetnici, emphasized that the Serbian people in Montenegro have been living in difficult conditions for a long time, while the guests from Montenegro spoke about the position of Serbs in Montenegro, the return of the Serbian tricolor in the offices of municipal presidents and the upcoming census.



This project is funded through a U.S. Embassy grant. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of State.