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Critical analysis of the Russian-Bulgarian political relations based on Far-Right Parties 2013-2018

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Abstract:

The main subject of this study is the political relations between Bulgaria and Russia, which are based on the extreme right party. In Europe, which has recently been the cradle of democracy, major political changes have begun to take place, and it has been observed that extreme right-wing parties have risen due to the economic crisis. At the same time, the rise of these far-right parties was evaluated as an opportunity by Russia to destabilize the European Union, and the fact that Russia was were already sanctioned by Europe for its bad relations with Ukraine. Since Bulgaria was a satellite of the Soviet Union, Russia has tried to establish a political relationship with that country through the far-right parties by activating its old relations. As a result, Russia has tended to stop the enlargement process of both NATO and the European Union in this way.

Keywords: Bulgaria, Russia, Economic Sanctions, Political Relations, Far Right Parties, ATAKA

1. Introduction- Problem statement

Europe is facing many crises from the economy to migration to the attempt for independency in some regions and terrorist attacks. Related issue is the rise of the far right or anti system parties in the last decade. With the victory of the Austrian Peoples Party (Independent, 2017) gained the right to form the new government with another far-right party the Freedom Party. Both parties used very strong slogans against immigrants, Muslims, and asylum seekers. When it comes to the ideological roots of the far-right parties, they are much differentiated between each other: from anti-system or antiestablishment to the neo-fascist, from nationalist to populist and ultra-conservative (Henley, Bengtsson and Barr, 2016). Another important issue which Europe is facing is across the continent the strongest leading

parties who were in dominant position in the politics for 60 years are in decline (Henley, Bengtsson and Barr, 2016).

The rise of far-right parties gave to Russia chance to intervene in the internal politics of European Union especially after the annexation of Crimea and the Ukraine crisis and the start of the sanctions toward Russian federation by the European Union. Bulgaria and Russia, once united in the Communist bloc, shared similar political, economic, and cultural values and interests. With the deconstruction of that bloc, Russia was significantly weakened, and the countries that were in the alliance with Russia were turned to the West. However, after the unfulfilled expectations from the NATO integration, Bulgaria allowed the spreading of Russian influence in the country, which coincided with the new Russian strategy under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin. The Russian Federation is trying to gain dominance in the Balkans especially in countries that have had excellent relations with Russia. This study analyzes how Russia influences Bulgaria through supporting pro-Russian parties. Russia has expanded its influence on politics, funding the creation of pro - Russia parties; ATAKA and Bulgarian Socialist Party in Bulgaria, which achieved significant gains in the elections and won important seats in parliament.

2. Objectives and Problem Justification

The aim of the research is to understand the ideological background of the far-right parties, what the impact of Russia is over these parties and why the European society which was protecting and spreading democracy took direction toward the far-right parties. This study analyzes why the far-right parties are rising and how Russia is using this opportunity to influence Bulgaria through supporting pro-Russian parties. Russia has expanded its influence on politics, funding the creation of pro Russia parties. I searched many of the reassures but there is no exact focus on the Russian impact on the far-right parties in Bulgaria except some articles or short journals. So, my contribution will be to explain in deep the Russian- Bulgarian political relation based on the far-right parties in Bulgaria.

I will form my research over the question: Does Russia use the populist parties as a tool to influence and achieve its interest in Bulgaria? The logical explanation is that the rise of the Russian influence in Bulgaria is starting after the creation of the far-right party ATAKA and taking its place in coalition who is governing the country. Since 1990 Bulgarian coalition government were pro- West oriented but with the creation of the ATAKA party it was the first coalition including pro-Russian and anti- West oriented party. Working hypothesis which I propose states that: There is a connection between Russia and far right party ATAKA in

Bulgaria and this connection gives an opportunity for Russia to intervene in the domestic policy of the country and to use it as a tool to achieve its interest there.

3. Methodology

The relationship between Bulgaria and the Russian Federation is explored in the time after joining the Bulgarian into the NATO organization and later in the European Union. The change of relations is reflected in the dynamics of Russian influences in the Balkan countries. Bulgaria is also one of the countries in which Russia is trying to impose its influence as an alternative to European values and the NATO alliance. It is necessary to explore this influence in order to define relations between Bulgaria and Russia. The nature of the research is explanatory, while I tried to explain why Russia is doing an effort to connect with the far-right parties in Bulgaria. The design of the research is qualitative while the work will be based on textual analysis and descriptive without using numbers or statistic.

The time framework of this research topic is from 2013 the moment after the establishment of the far-right party ATAKA. If the time of writing of this paper is taken, then the upper limit of the time framework is 2018, but this issue will in future occupy many research that deal with the growing Russian influence in the Bulgaria and particularly in the Balkans. When it comes to the data collection, textual analysis method was used in this study. Textual analysis is the systematic analyses of the content of given communication it can be as a written work, speech or piece of film or video which includes thematic study to determine the meaning or objective of the communication. It involves interpretation and identification of verbal or non-verbal signs (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009, p. 210). Interpretation of given or selected text is going to be done by the researcher knowing that there are number of possible interpretations and each interpretation is equally valid to the extent that it reflects the meanings attributed to the text from the interpreter (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009, p. 211). The main goal of the textual analyses is interpretation and finding the meaning of the subject. Textual analyses were used for a first time to identify political opinions, ideas and concepts in the mass media and radios, newspapers, and magazines. Textual analyses is used also to determine the psychological, impressions, attitudes, abilities, conditions, values or cultural pattern of persons or groups such as leaders, politicians or social groups. The secondary sources consist of literature of esteemed scholars who had similar opinion about the topics. The books and journals as well as other additional information from newspapers and articles had its contribution to this work.

4. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Petsinis (2014) is focusing on Eurasianism as an ideological trend in Russia. Alexander Dugin, a former Russian journalist, is shown as a prime mover of Putin's contemporary foreign policy. The author uses the ideas by Dugin about Eurasianism and makes the connection with far-right parties in Hungary, Bulgaria, and Greece. The similarity between Russia and these parties are at least based on three factors: 1. Interaction between identity-politics and foreign policy, 2. hard euro-skepticism, 3. Anti-capitalism and anti-liberalism. Sharing the same values as anti-NATO and anti-European Union gives an opportunity for Russia to have a good relationship and connection with these far-right parties while at the same time influence European Union policy. The article contributes knowledge which makes it easy to understand the connection between Russia and far right parties in some countries in Central and Southeast Europe.

Bechev (2016) also points complicated relations between Russia and Bulgaria that are visible in politics, economics, as well as in the religious and cultural spheres of life. These relations divide the Bulgarian people in two: the West (NATO, the European Union) and the East (the Russian Federation), the Russophiles and the Russophobes, democrats and communists. Bechev points out that through the history and today in this ongoing struggle Bulgaria loses national interest and divides the Bulgarian society into two poles. The lack of national interest also places Bulgaria in a bad position in the international political scene. Bulgarian governing structures have no real political authority. Personal interests and corruption are deeply rooted in Bulgarian parties, which cause damage of national sovereignty. However, Russia, through often unreasonable energy and economic projects such as the South Stream (the pipeline project to transport the Russian natural gas through Black Sea and Bulgaria to West Europe), strengthens its sphere of influence in Bulgaria, but this situation causes economic and political damage to the country. The author describes the Russian sphere of influence in Bulgaria, which is left out through the politics, energy and banking, economic and tertiary sector, through the media and press. It includes a series of minor reports of Russian influence in the energy, economic, banking sector and the political system. Clark and Foxall (2014) also claim that the Russian foreign policy became more assertive and influential under leadership of President Putin. The authors claim that the European Union policymakers need to understand these strategic intentions of Russia in the Balkans well. There are many tools which Russia is using for its advancement in the region such as economic, politic, energy, diplomatic, culture. They assume that if there are not any preventive measures toward Russia by European Union it could be too late, and Russia can take same position there as it was before.

Todorov (2013) gives important historical information about the evolution of the far-right parties and the populist idea in Bulgaria. He uncovers the reasons why these parties are enthusiastic and willing to connect with Russia because of nationalism, political culture, and orthodox religion as common values. He gives the statistics how the ATAKA party gained some achievements and good results in different elections. This article is a fundamental source because it shows the societal tendency and disposition toward far-right party, leaders of this party and the ideology which they share but additionally towards Russia too.

While Todorov deals with evaluation of far-right parties in Bulgaria, Haines (2016) describes in detail the existing parties in Bulgaria, their relationship with Russia and Turkey. This connection is based primarily on the traditional cultural and religious similarities of the Bulgarian majority with Russia and the Turkish minority in Bulgaria with Turkey. Haines states that the two countries are using these links to exert their influence in Bulgaria. The author used information from (secondary) sources such as statements and speeches of politicians, journals and websites for his research. The article contains important information about Russian influence on the political scene in Bulgaria with focus on the rise of far-right parties in the country and how Russian impact is being implemented through economic investments and energy mega projects sponsored by the Russians. The article contains fundamental and detail information related to far-right parties and their leaders and connections with Russia.

Like Bechev's study, Conley, Mina and Stefanov's (2016) target is to follow and understand the economic and political impact and influence of Russia in central and Eastern Europe with examining five countries as a case study (Bulgaria, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, and Latvia). The authors claim that Russia created a network of patronage in the region which uses to influence and direct decision making. They also note that Russia is trying to influence or to capture the important and critic state institutions, bodies and the economy and could use these influences to shape national policies and decisions in the countries. The authors give good examples how Russia uses the leaders to create pro-Russian parties in each state and to erode democratic institutions, to use corruption as most influential tool, the economic influence with exploiting capitalism's weaknesses. As a conclusion, the authors give a list of possible solutions to stop the growth of Russian interest in Bulgaria, Hungary and etc.

Klapsis (2015) also argues the connection of the Putin's Russia with the European far right parties in strategically and ideological aspect in the recent years. The author claims that both sides are willing to continue this connection. The main hypothesis is that unofficial alliances are established between Russia and different European far right parties. The author states that there are not enough written sources as the event is still evolving taking into

consideration the aspect that he used information drawn from the parties' official programs and the statements made by the far-right party leaders, members of the national and European parliament. The article contains significant information about far-right parties and Russian connection with them, giving examples from Bulgaria and Hungary.

To conclude there are many types of far-right parties which use different strategies to achieve power and gain more followers. When it comes to the connection between Russia and the far-right wing in Europe both sides benefit. What connects the far-right wing and Russia are the national interest, conservatism and to be anti-NATO and anti-EU. Putin is the key leader who is trying to position Russia as in the past the Soviet Union and the far-right wing is very important tool in Europe for the local interest of present Russia to oppose the NATO and European Union. In addition, Bulgaria is one of the countries in Europe where the far right found a strong base to spread.

5. Rise of the Far Right as a Phenomenon in Europe

Throughout history the periods in which the far-right parties emerged, and spread are the crisis periods. However, the populist and extreme ideas put people far away from the far-right parties especially after the two catastrophic world wars. In the European history the nationalism has never ended but after economic depression and frustration of the two world wars, people have shifted their priorities in economic cooperation and peace building process (Guler 2014). Whereas the things started to change especially after current economic slowdown (Polyakova & Shekhovtsov 2016, p.74). With the beginning of the 21st century the far-right parties again start to attract the European societies. The economic crisis in 2008, flow of the illegal immigrants to Europe from different regions of the world, and to have a position of Germany and France to determine the European Union policy led to the emergence of anti-EU radical far right parties in many European states. The Ataka¹ party in Bulgaria is one of the several examples of these radical far right parties. The general frameworks of these parties are anti-Semitic, xenophobic, Eurosceptic, populist, authoritarian, exclusionary, ultranationalist (Ciftci 2017, p.98).

5. 1. Russia comes – back to the field

After the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics many post- communist states became independent countries, and that reason gave NATO a chance to start the

¹ Attack National Union (ATAKA) is Bulgarian nationalist party which was founded in 2005 by Volen Siderov

enlargement policy including these states. For a short time, NATO geopolitical borders reached the borders of the Russian Federation. This enlargement policy of the NATO pushed Russia to move into sharp policies such as Georgian war, annexation of Crimea and Ukraine invasion. Few years passed after fast expansion of the NATO over the post-communist states but today again we are witnessing the growing political, economic and strategic influence of Russia above the post-communist territories including Bulgaria. The Georgian war, the annexation of Crimea and eastern Ukraine invasion by Russia were turning points in this game. As Zbigniew Brzezinski (1997, p.112-114) mentioned in his book *“The Grand Chess Board”*, if Russia assumes to invite the Ukraine it means that the soil of Soviet Union going to be awake again and a new measure should be taken by United States and the NATO to prevent a further spreading of Russian influence above the old heritage of USSR ancestor.

5.2.ATAKA party: anti- NATO and anti- EU

Bulgaria is one of the countries in Southeast Europe where extreme right and populism politics became very influential part of the political scene in the country. Bulgarian nationalist-populist Ataka party was established in 2005 as a result of merger few nationalists and far right parties and using a TV channel named “SCAT” and newspaper “Nova Zora” Ataka spread its far-right ideology for a short time over all society (Dandolov, 2017, P. 117). This party is generally a party with anti- corruption strict legal and legislative discourse, stand up for withdraw of Bulgaria from NATO membership to win its independence, against all minorities and their political parties, and advocating that the country should separate from European Union in order to gain national and economic independence (Stefanova, 2009, p. 1540). ATAKA is never referred to as a far right, xenophobic party, but alternatively as a European, oppositional, or patriotic party depending on the context of the desired message. The references to ATAKA show resentment against Bulgaria's Euro Atlantic orientation (Human and Social Studies Foundation, 2017, p. 4). However, ATAKA was named in an ECFR² study as the most anti-Western and pro-Kremlin party in Europe (Gressel, 2017). Bulgaria was passing through transition process when extreme wave of populism represented by political party ATAKA. Identity of Ataka in 2005 is based on the radical critique of functioning of the Bulgarian ethnic model with focus Rome and Turk minority in Bulgaria (Novakovic, 2008, p.119). In the 2005, 2009 and 2013 elections the party got seats in Bulgarian Parliament. After re-election in earlier in 2017, Boyko Borisov as Prime Minister made the United Patriots (UP) coalition with three

² European Council on Foreign Relation

far right and pro-Russian parties. One of them is ATAKA with its leader Siderov (Colborne, 2017).

5.3. Russian strategy to oppose the NATO and EU in Bulgaria

In last decade after NATO increase of the military capacity close to Russian borders, pushed Russia to use new strategies to stop NATO enlargement and European Union sanctions against it. Russia revised its foreign policy with EU in four elements: bilateral relations with the EU member states, strengthening Russian influence in the post – soviet space, revising the relations with the EU in political, economic aspect, and promoting asymmetric interdependence with a divided EU (Leonard & Popescu, 2007, p. 13). Historically and geographically European states always were divided over Russia. However, this division of Europe was sharpened by Russian new strategy “divide and rule” which makes Russia more advantage and stronger power and it is natural for Moscow because that is how it sees international politics between great powers (Leonard & Popescu, 2007, p. 13 - 14). In the present time contrast to Europe, Russia has better more developed neighborhood policy even better coordinated and implemented than the EUs, and Russia shares more budget for political, economic and military influence over former members of the Soviet Union states (Leonard & Popescu, 2007, p. 17). When it comes to the strategy of Russia in Bulgaria is different from other neighboring states. Russia uses weaknesses of the Bulgarian government and the state to infiltrate into the state institutions through economic and political projects. Russia often uses corruption-illegal ways of achieving its interests and establishing a network of links in the private and state sectors (Conley and Stefanov, 2016, p.1). Corruption is used in the economic and political transactions. Russia also uses and finances the creation of political power (parties and politicians) and supports the creation of new ones that contain euro-skepticism, anti- NATO stand, populism, nationalism and pro-Rusism as the far-right party ATAKA. This model has more goals; Russia is aiming economic and political benefits that are reflected through the reduction of Western influence in Bulgaria, which would weak the NATO, the European Union and gain Russian domination and to shift Bulgaria from the influence of West to the influence of the East.

The second aim is to increase and realize financial benefits through investment projects. Russia uses different political methods of influence depending on the region in which it has interests. For countries which do not have a privileged treatment in the Russian Federation or countries which are bordering with it, Russia is using the hard power method as in Ukraine, Crimea and Georgia. For some relative distant regions such as the Balkans countries as in Bulgaria, Serbian and etc, Russia is using soft power mainly through energy and economic

investments projects and supporting the pro- Russian politicians and parties. Russia for the spread of influence uses a complex structure of extensive businesses and companies, political networks, and contacts.

The Russian network model of influence is described as *aunivirtuous circle* and its goal is to reduce the credibility of democracy and governments in the countries of the region and through the economy and politics lead the countries to *state capture*³ (Conley and Stefanov, 2016, p. 1). The state capture is followed by economic capture and political capture. Economic capture means the manipulation of the economic sectors that are of vital importance for the country, and political capture refers to the creation groups of nationalists and Russian sympathizers that will create a stabile ground for the policy propagated by Russia. Pundits easily succumb to the temptation to explain Russia's influence and popularity through the bonds of identity, religion, language, culture, and shared historical memories (Bachev, 2017, p. 2). Russian influence on politics relies on long-standing religious and cultural ties with the Balkan countries, especially with Bulgaria. Southeast Europe certainly boasts a long and distinguished Russophile tradition, which inevitably feeds into present-day politics (Bachev, 2017, p. 30). Russia seeks to push pro-Russian politicians to important state positions. Russia has interfered more directly in the domestic politics of a number of countries, playing on anti-Western resentment (Bachev, 2017, p.35). The influence is based on strengthening the right nationalist parties which use Russian political ideology. The most prominent parties are ATAKA and Bulgarian Socialist Party who are against Bulgarian membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and European Union. The ATAKA party has become an important part of the Bulgarian Parliament with the power to control and overthrow the government if Bulgaria allows to the European Union to reduce the influence of Russia over Bulgaria, particular the sanctions imposed by the United States and the EU because of Russia- Ukraine conflict (Haines, 2016, p. 2).

However, Russia's influence is broadening also through media propaganda. "In Bulgaria, there are two major outlets that are recognized as Russian propaganda outlets: RT (formerly Russia Today) and Sputnik News / Sputnik International" (Human and Social Studies Foundation, 2017, p. 2). In the Russian media, Bulgaria tends to be presented as a country that is potentially friendly to Russia but has been hampered and restricted by the EU and US (Human and Social Studies Foundation, 2017, p. 4). The most common topics in Russian media relate

³The actions of small number of firms, groups (military, ethics), kleptocratic politicians to shape rules of the game to their advantage through nontransparent provision of private gains to public officials (Conley &Stefanov, 2016, p. 1).

to: NATO and the Ukraine crisis; the refugee crisis; war in Syria; as well as energy policy which is related to Bulgaria such as the South Stream/Turkish Stream pipeline projects and Belena, the nuclear power plant project. The media also present two opposite political blocks. The opposition to the Euro-Atlanticist Bulgarian political establishment is usually depicted by ATAKA and its leader Volen Siderov. The references to ATAKA serve to show resentment against Bulgaria's Euro Atlantic orientation, with focus of NATO (Human and Social Studies Foundation, 2017, p. 4). In addition to the Russian media present in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian pro-Russian media have a much more effective role of expanding the Russian propaganda or influence. The presidential elections that took place in November 2016 presented an interesting case in the media. The presidential elections in Bulgaria came to an end with the pro-Russian ultimate winner from the Bulgarian Socialist Party, Rumen Radev. Much of the western press coverage picked up on the pro-Russian labeling of Radev. In contrast, Russian outlets were rather silent about the issue. Once the pro-Russian stance of Radev was being discussed in Bulgarian and western media, the official Kremlin and Russian media responded (Human and Social Studies Foundation, 2017, p. 6).

After re-election in earlier in 2017, Boyko Borisov as Prime Minister made coalition with the United Patriots (UP). UP party is a coalition of three far-right nationalist parties. A coalition of Valeri Simeonov's National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (NFSB), Krasimir Karakachanov's Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (VMRO) and Volen Siderov's ATAKA (Colborne, 2017) all of them are anti-EU and anti-NATO oriented. They are also known as pro-Russian politicians and particularly appointment of Karakachanov as defense minister would be significant for the Kremlin because Karakachanov could help drive a wedge between EU leaders over sanctions on Russia (Colborne, 2017). ATAKA's president, Siderov indirectly expressed his pro-Russian stance in two cases, when he supported the construction of South Stream pipeline and when instead of Turkey, he argued for Russia's accession to the EU (Political Capital Institute, 2014). In 2012, Siderov visited Moscow to celebrate Putin's 60th birthday (Tetrault-Faber, 2014). ATAKA party became "the mouthpiece of the Kremlin in Bulgaria" (Nikolov, 2014) and Siderov "insisted that Bulgaria recognize the Crimean referendum results" (Nikolov, 2014). On April 25, 2014, Siderov started ATAKA European elections campaign from Moscow, opposing Bulgaria's membership into NATO and in that time Siderov also received the Russian "Patriotic Star" medal (Nikolov, 2014). Although, ATAKA has never directly recognized its connection with Russia, it is a public secret that Russia finances far right parties in Europe and Bulgaria. Anton Shekhovtsov, a scholar of the subject at the Institute of Human Sciences in Austria includes behind closed doors symposia

that were organized by Kremlin linked Russian oligarchs, such as Vladimir Yakunin and Konstantin Malofeev, and that brought together delegates from far-right parties in Europe such as Bulgaria's far-right Ataka party (Rettman, 2017).

6. Short discussion

After the collapse of the Soviet political system at the end of the 80s and at the beginning of the early 90s, Bulgaria made radical changes to its political and economic system. This has led to the termination of the ideological, political and economic ties with Russia. Russia considers Bulgaria as its sphere of interest, with its historical, economic, political and cultural ties. Russia sees the Bulgarian membership into the NATO as a threat, especially, with Bulgarian approvals for the existence of US military base in its territory. The deep cultural and religious ties between Bulgaria and Russia have not been completely interrupted by the entry of Bulgaria into the NATO's 2004 pact. However, Russia realized that it could not lose the country that was part of the Eastern communist bloc. It is using power and wealth to put Bulgaria into its sphere of influence. Russia through its influence wants to achieve the following goals: The first; The Russian domination and the prevention of the NATO, the European Union and the United States influence in Bulgaria and securing the Russian power and interests. The second; Russia wants more domination and wealth for itself, making multimillion projects on Balkan and Bulgaria. The third; if Russia succeeds in dominating over the Balkan countries, it will damage domination of the NATO and the European Union and will reduce United States power.

The joining Bulgaria's in the NATO reduces the possibility of waning the dominance and influence of Russia in the region. This is particularly evident in the shortages of Russian investment projects as the construction of the South Stream gas pipeline through Bulgaria and the countries of the region. This suspension was based on the EU sanctions against Russia. Russia looks about the NATO and the European Union in Bulgaria as a threat to the development of economic and political relations with Bulgaria. Nevertheless, Russia develops a strategy for achieving significant influence in Bulgaria and the countries of the region.

Russia, which is traditional and connoisseur in Europe, supports and sponsors any form of political engagement that goes to the far right or left side, and which in the end causes problems in the European Union. The intricate link between economics and politics in Bulgaria that is reflected in the strengthening of far right, socialist, and Russophiles parties and politicians who are rich businessmen, suspect investments and projects, Bulgaria falls into the trap of Russia from which it is difficult to release. The question is how to get rid of this unusual cycle that

new Russian politics imposes on countries of the former communist bloc, which is labeled as a threat to national security (Conley and Stefan, 2016, p. XI) and independence of Bulgaria. Responsibility primarily belongs to NATO and all EU member states (Conely and Stefanov, 2016, p. XI), which has to create an effective preventing strategy of Russian influence in Bulgaria.

To sum up the hypothesis of this study is relevant and accepted, while after all these evidences easily shows that the Russia is using its connection with the far right parties in Bulgaria as a tool to intervene to the domestic policy of the country and to increase its influence. In this way Russia is targeting two things: the economic interest and to oppose and to challenge the NATO and EU further enlargement policies. The study can be generalized as a comparative case study for other pro- Russian and anti- West oriented far right parties in other countries.

7. Conclusion

The research aimed to analyze Russian- Bulgarian political relations based on far-right parties. After the NATO integration, Russia and Bulgaria had suspended relations, but soon afterwards, Bulgaria has opened the way for the spreading of Russian influence after the creation of the far-right party ATAKA. Bulgaria and Russia have strong historical links from the past that are being renewed at a new level. The Russian Federation with Vladimir Putin is very active in spreading its influence and domination in the Balkans and Europe through new strategic and plans using the far-right parties which are anti- NATO and anti- EU oriented. Bulgaria is a country that is strongly under Russian influence in the economic and political sense, and they are related. The Russian Federation strategy includes modern productive methods of sharing partnerships and old methods of corruption and frightening.

Bulgaria is one of the poorest and most corrupted countries in Europe, which certainly goes in favor of spreading Russian influence in this area. Most businessmen and far right politicians are, in fact, important people for Russia on the political scene in Bulgaria, and they are supported financially by Russian. They have role in strengthening Russian influences and ideas, and to reduce the influence of the NATO and the European Union in Bulgaria. Russia, through expensive investments of projects in the energy and economic sectors, sees itself as an important economic player in region. Russia is rapidly expanding its influence in the region especially in Bulgaria, the NATO and the European Union should have an effective and rapid strategy of preventing the arrival of Russia in these areas. After infiltrating a weak state system through energy, economic, banking projects, media and political far right parties, Russia changes Bulgaria's national affairs and interests in order to achieve economic and political goals

and strengthen its presence in the Balkans. All these negatively affect the sovereignty of the state and the lives of the peoples of Bulgaria, which are on the verge of poverty and desolation. Russia's rule in Bulgaria brought rich oligarchs in political scene, who are working for their own and Russian interests. Often the presence of Russian influence in Bulgaria is marginalized to the point where it is not possible to see its real consequences.

8. Recommendation

To successfully and timely prevent the consequences of the Russian influence on the Balkans countries, the following recommendations are forward. European Union and the NATO should take to stop the Russian influence in Bulgaria, which is specifically concerned mostly with the creation of a financial intelligence service for all the EU and the US Member States, which will monitor the flow of finance through the most sensitive countries of Eastern Europe and the Balkans. It also calls for more effective and concrete involvement of the NATO in this matter. Forming financial intelligence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the EU members and the United States: Developing dedicated units that track illicit Russian transaction; Elevate anticorruption by strengthening intuitions as element of the NATO Action Plan; The United States government assistance in preventing of Russian influence in Eastern Europe countries and Balkans; The assistance of the EU members to help most vulnerable countries build greater resilience to Russian influence; The strengthening of national economic policymaking, regulatory governance, independence, transparency (Conley and Stefanov, 2016, p. 31, 32, 33).

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