(Final Draft, October 27, 2004)

Serbia During and After Milošević[1]

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Under Milošević (1987-2000) Serbia was too easily classified as a form of authoritarian regime, whereas Serbia during the time of the Djindjić government (2001-2003) was too easily classified as a democracy. The reality, however, was more complex, and this article will provide arguments to demonstrate that neither was Serbia under Milosević completely authoritarian, nor was Serbia during the Djindjić government completely democratic.

Both governments have so far received either unfair or scarce theoretical treatment. Popular opinion on Milošević might be right that there were no fundamental differences between the personalities of Slobodan Milošević and Suddam Hussein. Yet their regimes differed a great deal. On the other hand, the establishment of the Djindjić government was received with great enthusiasm both at home and abroad. Although it seems clear that at the onset of transition a government cannot possibly be entirely democratic, many were, because of this enthusiasm, prepared to endorse the view that the Djindjić government was the first democratic government in Serbia after World War II. Reality was more complex, and this article attempts to illustrate the complexity of both the Milošević and the Djindjić governments.

Classifications

During the 1990s most attempts to classify the Milošević regime as a type of dictatorial, totalitarian, or some sort of authoritarian regime failed to offer elaborations of the problem. This is not surprising, as most books written in English about Milošević were actually books about the war in former Yugoslavia. Because of their focus on war atrocities, these books typically neglected the nature of the Serbian regime. Most of these attempts, accordingly, tended to overlook the simple fact that the Milošević regime tolerated the existence of an opposition, and that it was this opposition that, in the September 2000 elections, beat Milošević and brought the whole regime down. As Juan Linz has argued, any type of authoritarian regime is incompatible with the existence of the opposition.[2] It would be even more difficult to classify the Milošević regime as totalitarian, for a totalitarian regime is not imaginable without a ruling ideology, the population's active involvement in politics, and a party that controls not only the state apparatus but the whole of society.[3]

The existence of the opposition under Milošević induced a number of Serbian authors who studied Serbian politics in the 1990s to search for a more viable definition of the Milošević regime. They settled on the definition of sultanism, a class of regime advanced

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[1] This article is a shortened version of chapter 1 of the book *Institutions and Leaders After October 5th* (cowriten with Slobodan Antonic;Forthcoming, 2005).
[2] Juan Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, London: Lynn Rein Publisher, 2000).
[3] Linz, op. cit., pp. 65-142.

by Linz and Chehabi,[4] in which "[Sultanism] is based on personal rulership, but loyalty to the ruler is motivated not by his embodying or articulating ideology, nor by a unique personal mission, nor by any charismatic qualities, but by a mixture of fear and rewards to his collaborators."[5]

Most of the elements of this definition could be found in Milošević s Serbia. By the mid-1990s, Milošević had lost the charisma and the mission he enjoyed at the end of 1980s. In place of this charisma and mission, a system of fears and rewards was established to be utilized by his family, close friends, and party members. Milošević was often branded a nationalist, and in any type of totalitarian regime, ideology indeed matters a great deal. But Milošević renounced nationalist ideology by 1995 (if he had ever embraced it), when he signed the Dayton Agreement. He almost entirely fitted the picture of a sultanistic ruler described by Linz, in which the ruler "exercises his power without restraint, at his own discretion and above all unencumbered by rules or by any commitment to an ideology or value system."[6]

Sultanism is definitely a more suitable definition to capture the nature of the Milošević regime after the mid-1990s. In short, sultanism is characterized by a blurring of the line between the regime and state, personalism, constitutional hypocrisy, and a narrow social basis of support for the regime.[7] Slobodan Antonić discussed all these elements in the context of Serbian politics, and pointed at their presence in the late phase of the Milošević regime.[8] In previous works, I also embraced the idea that the Milošević regime was sultanistic in nature;[9] however, I argued that the Milošević regime in its late phase was not a full-blown form of sultanism, but rather a nascent one.

Several features of the Milošević system drove it along its path toward sultanism, but there were two important exceptions—the existence of opposition and elections. The role of the opposition and elections will be discussed at length later in the article. Here I want to enlarge on two variables of the Milošević system—namely, ideology and popular mobilization. Milošević came to power on a wave of an extreme version of Serbian nationalism in 1987. Nationalism constituted the indisputable essence of his ideological legitimation by the mid-1990s. As opposed to totalitarianism, however, authoritarian and sultanistic regimes attach a low value to ideology, and when they do, it is mainly in order to manipulate it. Democracy, on the other hand, is also characterized by ideologies, but their utopian and teleological aspects are not dominant. What matters more in the ideological variable in democracy is "extensive intellectual commitment to citizenship and procedural rules of contestation."[10] Thus, with regards to ideology, the Milošević regime would be closer to totalitarianism then to any of the other three alternatives (democracy, authoritarianism, and sultanism). However, if we compare Milošević's ideology in relation to the development of sultanism, it becomes clear that Milošević intended to ditch ideology as his system advanced towards sultanism. The tendency was visible in 1995 after Milošević signed the Dayton Peace Accords (which ended the

[4] Juan J. Linz and H.E. Chehabi, *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press, 1998).
[5] Ibid., p. 7.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid. pp. 10-21.
[8] Slobodan Antonić, *Zarobljena zemlja* (Belgrade: Otkrovenje, 2002). pp. 440-460.
[9] Dušan Pavlović, *Akteri i modeli.* (Belgrade: Samizdat B92, 2001), pp. 71-235.
[10] Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 44.

Bosnian conflict), embraced the ideology of peace, and became critical of nationalism. This was the first manipulation of ideology which is typical for authoritarianism or sultanism. Linz and Stepan write that in sultanism ideology turns into "pseudo ideology which is not believed by staff, subject, or outside world."[11]By the late 1990s, Milošević's staff and outside world knew that ideology was not what the Milošević system was about.

Opposition and elections raise the issue of popular mobilization, which is a concept often present in classification debates. This issue should be tackled carefully because it can be misleading. Milošević came to power with high levels of mass mobilization during 1988-1989. Authoritarian and sultanistic regimes are characterized by low mass mobilization, whereas the system characterized by extensive mobilization is totalitarian.[12] Democracy, however, is also characterized by the population's participation. What made the Milošević regime democratic was not the presence of popular mobilization but the population's participation in elections. It is almost bizarre that a ruler like Milošević — whose personality showed many authoritarian traits and who was prepared to endorse a gradual transformation of the system into a non-democratic regime—was intent on retaining a democratic manner of election. I have argued in *Akteri i modeli* that this feature of his regime was due to the way he strengthened his power in 1988-1989. Milošević came to power through the party apparatus, but he became ultimate ruler after a series of mass demonstrations that thundered across Serbia in 1988-1989. This populist manner locked Milošević into an electoral procedure whereby he needed to continually seek popular support for his presidency every time he wanted to renew his mandate.[13] In 2000, when he could have remained the president of Yugoslavia elected by parliament for at least another year, Milošević instead decided to amend the federal constitution in order to have a direct presidential election, which he ultimately lost.

The Opposition and Competitive Authoritarianism

As may be seen from the above discussion, most problems in classifying regimes such as Serbia's under Milošević derive from the underdeveloped classification of democratic regimes. While there is a rich matrix of non-democracies, the literature lacks a rich discussion and typologization of hybrid regimes which combine democratic and non-democratic elements, but could nevertheless fall under the category of democracy. The further discussion will show that the Milošević regime was a hybrid form of democracy because the opposition and elections mattered a great deal in it. Because of the existence of both an opposition and elections, the argument that the Milošević system was authoritarian cannot stand. However, precisely because of the existence of an opposition and elections, the argument that the Milošević regime, even in its late phase, was entirely sultanistic does not hold true either. The existence of a phony opposition (an opposition that made it possible for the sultan to win elections) is essential for sultanism. Such an opposition did not really exist under Milošević, and, despite Milošević's ability to occasionally manipulate some opposition leaders, he never managed to corrupt the whole of the opposition. Today we can only speculate whether the Milošević regime was in fact headed towards a full-blown sultanism that would have either fully corrupted or eliminated the opposition from the system. Since firm proofs for concluding so are absent, I want to support the claim that the Milošević regime was some form of unconsolidated democracy. To my knowledge, the first Serbian author who came up with

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid, p. 45.
[13] Pavlović, op. cit., pp. 232-235.

such a claim was Vladimir Goati, who classified the Milošević regime as a democracy burdened with acute shortfalls.[14] Goati claimed that the Milošević regime in the mid-1990s was, "just like many other post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe in the inceptive phase of stabilization of parliamentary democracy," and that the establishment of democratic procedures took place relatively easily, whereas these rules had difficulties sinking in.[15]

Of course, Goati's theory on the Milošević regime becomes appealing immediately after it is accepted that the process of democratization is typically divided into two phases: initial democratization and consolidation. Theories of consolidation vary, but the notion of consolidation can be reduced to the following: a system is consolidated when "the rules according to which political and distributional conflicts are carried out are relatively immune from becoming themselves object of such a conflict."[16] This definition suggests that it is possible to have a system with some basic democratic institutions but with a government that persistently fails to stick to the nature of these rules and was willing to break the rules when it saw fit. This was, I suggest, precisely the case with Milošević. In the beginning of the 1990s, Milošević, who was in full control of the system, allowed the formal introduction of democratic institutions and principles such as a multiparty system, multiparty elections, freedom of the media, a division of power, a constitutional court, etc. Yet he deliberately obstructed democratic processes to such an extant that it was impossible to consolidate democracy in Serbia in the years that followed. This made the likelihood that the Serbian political system would evolve into a form of authoritarianism or sultanism quite likely. Democracy in Serbia under Milošević never advanced further than this inceptive phase and never became a consolidated democracy, but, as the historic record shows, neither has it backtracked into a single-party authoritarianism.

The existence of an opposition is critical for understanding the Milošević regime and what came after. Linz writes that a sultanistic regime tolerates oppositional parties but the opposition parties are a phony opposition. The presence of opposition brings into the framework the issue of elections. Namely, if there is an opposition, and if it is not bogus, there must be elections. But what kind of elections?

A phony opposition is the flip side of fake elections. Sultans organize elections but they never lose them because either the opposition is feeble or it makes a deal with the sultan to lose the election, or the sultan manipulates the electoral rules to the extent that no-one but him can win. During the 1990s, Milošević organized altogether eight elections (parliamentary and presidential), and except for the 1990 elections**,** when he and his party came out as the clear winners, all other elections were burdened with various types of electoral fraud.[17]

In their article "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism", Levitsky and Way define competitive authoritarianism as a type of hybrid regime that combines democratic and undemocratic features. The notion of elections is one of the building blocks of such regimes. It is a regime where "formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the principal means for obtaining and exercising political authority. Incumbents violate those

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[14] Vladimir Goati, *Stabilizacija demokratije ili povratak monizmu* (Podgorica: Unireks, 1996).
[15] Ibid., p. 9, p. 209.
[16] Jon Elster, Claus Offe, and Ulrich K. Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 28.
[17] See more on this in Goati (1999), op. cit..

rules so often and to such a great an extent, however, that the regime fails to meet conventional minimum standards for democracy."[18] The point where a competitive authoritarian regime differs from democracy is not in failing to meet standards for democracy (because such standards are occasionally not met by consolidated democracies themselves), it is rather that in competitive authoritarianism such rules are violated in such a systematic way that elections, although initially designed to be free and fair, fail to provide a fair framework for an electoral game that enables the opposition to win the elections. As Levitsky and Way point out,

> Although elections are regularly held and are generally free of massive fraud, incumbents regularly abuse state resources, deny the opposition adequate media coverage, harass opposition candidates and their supporters, and in some cases manipulate electoral results. Members of the opposition may be jailed, exiled, or—less frequently—even assaulted or murdered. Regime characterized by such abuses cannot be called democratic.[19]

Although competitive authoritarian regimes do not meet some basic standards of democracy, they cannot easily be dismissed as non-democracies. It is, then, possible to say that the Milošević regime was some sort of a hybrid regime combining authoritarian and democratic elements.[20] The point is that incumbents in competitive authoritarianism never succeed in reducing electoral rules to a mere façade. The rules are kept, and incumbents attempt to find roundabout ways to achieve the outcome of a political process that would be the same as if the elections did not exist. The methods which are frequently employed are bribery, cooptation, unreasonably high taxes and fines, harassment, etc. But despite such attempts, in competitive authoritarianism elections are frequently bitterly fought and they actually are related to considerable uncertainty regarding their outcomes. As opposed to democracy where ruling parties lose elections, competitive authoritarianism is a system where more often than not the opposition loses elections.[21] Electoral fraud is common but it is also common that the opposition one day does win elections. This is what happened in Serbia in 2000—the opposition won elections under the rules established by the regime itself. As Levitsky and Way warn, "Although incumbents may manipulate election results, this often costs them dearly and can even bring them down."[22]

To sum up, the Milošević regime was a competitive authoritarian regime rather than a form of sultanism or pure authoritarianism. Competitive authoritarianism is a type of hybrid regime that stands between democracy and authoritarianism. It was a regime that was most likely headed towards full-blown sultanism, but, at the same time, it was a regime that tolerated the opposition and lost elections, which is what democracy, by some standards, is all about.

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[18] Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *The Journal of Democracy* 13 (April 2002), p. 52.
[19] Ibid., p. 53.
[20] Larry Diamond, "Thinking About Hybrid Regimes," *The Journal of Democracy* 13 (April 2002), p. 33.
[21] Andreas Schedler, "The Menu of Manipulation," *The Journal of Democracy* 13, (April 2002), p. 47.
[22] Levitsky and Way, op. cit., p. 55.

Some Remarks

The first three sections of this essay discussed the nature of the Milošević regime because it helped to understand the nature of the regime that was established after Milošević's downfall. Before moving on to a discussion about the first post- Milošević government headed by Zoran Djindjić (2001-2003), two preliminary remarks are in order. As it will be seen below, democratic process was more violated by Milošević than by Djindjić. But this difference—and this is what I will be at pains to show—is not essential. Both governments wanted to interfere with the electoral process in order to preclude a certain electoral outcome. In this sense, Serbia under the Djindjić government was no different than it had been under the Milošević government. But even if we assume that elections under the first post- Milošević government were impeccably conducted, this still does not qualify a regime as a consolidated democracy, for competitive authoritarianism is far from being solely about elections.

In similar fashion, democracy itself is far from being solely about elections. A number of authors claim that electoral design directly relates to the strengthening of democracy. But there is no agreement as to what kind of relationship this is. Adam Przeworski, for example, reduces democracy to institutionalized uncertainty. For Przeworski, "democracy is a system in which parties lose elections. There are parties: divisions of interests, values and opinions. There is a competition, organized by rules. And there are periodic winners and losers."[23] Elections are at the heart of the minimal conception of democracy. Yet that does not mean that minimal conceptions are trouble-free. O'Donnell warns that the minimal definition of elections reduces the concept of citizenship. Holding elections, claims O'Donnell, must not be reduced only to the right to vote because there are many other areas of democratization which remain open or uncovered by this concept. O'Donnell speaks about particularism, delegative rule and weak horizontal accountability which new democracies suffer from. The whole society is given the right to vote, but

> . . . for large sections of the population, basic liberal freedoms are denied or recurrently trampled. […] In many of the new [democracies], individuals are citizens only in relation to the one institution that functions in a manner close to what its formal rules prescribes—elections. As for full citizenship, only the members of privileged minority groups enjoy it.[24]

O'Donnell's views substantiate the claim that elections, no matter how well organized and carried out, do not lay the ground for consolidated democracy. To reach the level of consolidation, institutional design has to be much more developed than merely holding reasonably free and fair elections.

The other point is this: the subject matter of this article is institution building, not policy making. This has to be underscored, for under both the Milošević and Djindjić regimes there was a tendency to use the content of a particular policy to say something about the nature of regime. Although, up to a point, this relation does hold, it is, in my

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[23] Przeworski 1991, p. 10.

[24] Guillermo O'Donnell, "Illusions About Consolidation," in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 124.

view, wide of the mark to claim that a system was authoritarian only because the policy that the regime was pursuing was illiberal, conservative, or nationalistic (the case with Milošević), just as it was wrong to assert that the regime was democratic only because a government was committed to pursuing liberal economic reforms (as was the case with the Djindjić government).

Here an explanation is in order. In the theory of transition it is usually considered that reforms have two phases. The first phase is about economic stability and involves the trinity originated by the Washington consensus: liberalization, stabilization, and small privatization. The implementation of the Washington consensus policy phase is usually completed within the first six month of a transition. The second phase is about building democratic institutions and a market economy.[25] This is much harder to implement because it entails a substantial relinquishment of the control of the major power resources and the establishment of the rules of the game are not the subject of that very game.

The claim that Serbia under Zoran Djindjić had a democratic government heavily relied on the fact that his government pursued a reformist policy related to the first phase of transition. This is true but, since such a policy can as easily be pursued by an authoritarian ruler (as it was under Milošević in 1994-2000), for those who are concerned with regime classification, this fact is somewhat irrelevant. It matters little what kind of policy is pursued at the onset of the transition if this policy is not accompanied by appropriate institution building so that newly established institutions are created with the goal of remaining relevant. This is something that did not take place under the Djindjić government, and the rest of the article will provide some evidence to this effect.

The Four Arenas

Milosevic was known for flouting institutions and breaking laws. The repercussions of his policy were such that democratic and market institutions could not consolidate. These were also the repercussions of Djindjić's policy. Thus, as far as the classification of regimes is concerned, the two regimes fall under the same category—namely, competitive authoritarianism. Although the nature of this type of regime largely derives from the nature of the electoral process, there are other arenas that constitute building blocks of the system of competitive authoritarianism.

Levitsky and Way established four arenas where democratic rules are most likely to be violated in competitive authoritarianism: electoral, legislative, judiciary arena, and media.[26] To prove this thesis, we can compare one example from the Milošević regime with an equivalent example from the post-Milošević period.

1. The Electoral arena: Whereas in authoritarian regimes elections do not take place and the opposition is absent, "in competitive authoritarian regimes elections are often bitterly fought."[27] At some point it may be that the electoral process generates electoral certainty, but this is only because the ruler has the *ex post* means to annul electoral results. The process is usually characterized by biased media coverage, an obedient electoral

[25] *Transition Report 2002: Agriculture and Rural Transition* (London: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2002), p. 22.
[26] Levitsky and Way, op. cit. 2002, p. 58.
[27] Ibid., p. 55.

committee, a partial judiciary, the absence of control at electoral booths, and various types of harassment of political candidates.

As mentioned before, Milošević's major activity was to flout electoral procedures *ex ante* or to reverse electoral results if he did not like the outcome *ex post*. The Djindjić government did not go as far as to rig electoral results but it did engage in obstructing the electoral process in 2002 during the presidential elections. The 1992 law on electing the president set an extremely high hurdle for elections; namely, in order to elect the president, the turnout had to be over 50%. After the first round of the presidential elections took place on September 2002, it was clear that the turnout requirement would not be met and that the country would remain without the president. The Djindjić government was not bothered by this fact and, before the election was repeated, the DOS majority in the parliament only shifted the turnout requirement from the second into the first round, thus leaving the country without a president for the second time in December 2002. This obstruction was done in order to preclude Koštunica, Djindjić's adversary, from becoming president. The electoral process was deliberately obstructed so that, instead of the regular president, the position could be filled by an acting president, in this case, of course, a Djindjić ally. The turnout requirement was finally scrapped in February 2004, after the change in government. After Milošević stepped down, all electoral institutions were elected by the end of 2000. The first post- Milošević president was elected on June 28, 2004, three and a half years after Milošević was gone.

2. The Legislative arena: Whereas in authoritarian regimes parliaments do not exist or are reduced to reproducing the will of the ruler, in competitive authoritarian regimes, legislatures, albeit relatively weak, tend to be a relevant factor in political life and "occasionally become the focal points of opposition activity."[28]

In section 4 it was pointed out that the Djindjić government did not have an essentially different approach to the electoral process from the Milošević government. It was all a matter of degree. Milošević was much more prepared to bend the electoral rules than Djindjić, but for his part, in the legislative arena, Djindjić was much more willing to violate parliamentary procedure than Milošević had been. In Summer 2002, the Serbian parliament stripped of their mandates about 50 deputies, most of them members of Koštunica's DSS, in an illegal way. The excuse for this action was that the DSS deputies failed to show up at sessions in a regular manner, which was true, but not in disagreement with law. It should be noted that at the time neither the government, nor the parliament, nor the Constitutional Court (which had been kept deliberately incomplete in order not to be able to tackle this type of situation), nor most NGOs that received large funds to promote democracy in Serbia denied that this expulsion took place in an illegal way. The expulsion was justified by the fact that the DSS deputies "presented an obstacle to swifter economic reform." Whether this was done illegally mattered little or, for some, not at all.

In order to provide the legal basis for the expulsion, the parliament itself engaged in amending the electoral law under which the deputies were elected by stating that a deputy could have their mandate revoked if they were previously excluded from the coalition or the party. After this, the expulsion became legal, but the Constitutional Court nevertheless struck down the provision by which a political party is the owner of the deputy's mandate (the amendment that legalized the expulsion). Although the Court's

[28] Ibid., 56.

decision implied that the parliament must restore the composition of the parliament as it was before the 2002 expulsion, the DOS majority in the parliament failed to abide by this decision. When the Court explicitly ordered the government to implement this decision, the government refused, claiming it was preserving the principle of separation of powers, according to which the court has no right whatsoever to interfere with the work of the parliament.

3. Judiciary: In authoritarian regimes the judiciary is strictly controlled by the authoritarian ruler. A competitive authoritarian regime is also bent on subjugating the judiciary but is not always able to do it. The ruler attempts to intimidate and bully the judges, but if some are brave enough, the judicial system can, in fact, pass verdicts which are right, regardless of political pressure.

Under Milošević, a huge number of judges were obedient officials who ruled as the government suggested. A comprehensive judicial reform began in 2001 when the Serbian parliament adopted a package of five laws aimed at establishing judicial independence. Although these laws were a clear improvement in comparison to the Milošević-era, the initial enthusiasm for judicial reform quickly fizzled out. Although the 2001 judicial laws established two independent and expert bodies (the High Council of the Judiciary and the Grand Personnel Council) to appoint and remove judges, the laws were amended in July 2002 and April 2003 with the aim of watering down the independence of judges by again making the parliament and the minister of justice (two political bodies) responsible for deciding on the appointment and removal of judges.

Nor was this all. The government and the ruling coalition in 2001-2003 often pressured courts and judges. During the state of emergency in 2003, a deputy from the majority parliamentary group threatened that the government was not ready to put up with a Supreme Court that failed to hew to the ruling coalition's policy. In March 2003 the head of the court stepped down. The minister of justice in the Djindjić government, who frequently publicly accused local judges of "passing the wrong decisions" or "imposing weak punishments," from time to time came out to announce the names of judges who were to be removed from the judiciary. Granted, most of those judges were judges from the Milošević -era, but the removal more or less took place under the rules of the Milošević era "in which the minister of justice was the supreme authority to decide on the position of judges."[29] In June 2002, prime minister Djindjić and the minister of justice held a meeting with the heads of all the courts in the country. At that meeting, Djindjić presented the heads with a list of priorities, most important of which was to purge the judiciary from improper judges.[30] When some judges refused to act on this, referring to the principle of independence of the judiciary, the prime minister scolded the wayward judges, calling them lazybones of judiciary practice who wanted to receive salary for no work done. "Those who want to preach judicial independence can go to Mars to do it," Djindjić announced after this incident.

4. Media: The media are inevitably censored in an authoritarian regime. In competitive authoritarianism freedom of the media exists, and the media can be very influential, but, just like in the other areas, precisely for that matter the government attempts to harass, threaten, and bulldoze the media into obedience.

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[29] Antonić, "Politički sistem i elite u Srbiji pre i posle 5 oktobra," in Dragana Vujadinović, et. al.,*Izmedju autoritarizma i demokratije* (Belgrade: CEDET, 2002), p. 126.

[30] The document with the above-mentioned priorities was printed in the daily ***Danas*** (Belgrade) on June 28, 2002, p. 3.

During the Milošević era, the government tolerated the existence of free and independent media but made sure that the most influential media outlets were under its control. The Djindjić government continued this policy by setting up a Bureau for Information, headed by infamous Vladimir Popović-Beba, a close friend of prime minister Djindjić, whose major task was to make the electronic media follow the government's line. The bureau did not abstain from direct or indirect pressure, including interfering with editorial policy and threats to journalists. The extent of the policy aiming to control the media could be observed during the state of emergency when the government organized weekly meetings with the editors of Serbia's most influential print and electronic media. These meetings were presided over by Beba and Branislav Lečić, the minister of culture and media. They directly instructed the editors on how they should conduct themselves during the state of emergency. Some editors claimed that the government's guidelines exceeded the state of emergency provisions, while other accused the government of using the state of emergency to impose stricter controls on the media in general. The pressure on the media significantly lessened when Beba stepped down, and practically disappeared after the change in the government in March 2004.

Conclusions

Suppose a Martian read this article and inferred from the fact that I make no essential difference concerning the classification of the political regimes under Milošević and Djindjić, and that, in effect, Serbia under Milošević and Serbia under Djindjić were identical. This would be true to a certain respect because both governments failed to insure the strengthening of institutions. However, whereas in Milošević's case the failure of institution building derived from the nature of the political elite, which was authoritarian, in the post-Milošević phase, the failure of institution building derived mainly from misunderstanding what economic reforms entail. As mentioned above, the major drive of Djindjić's policy was the policy of the Washington consensus. This policy today is considered to have more than a few serious flaws, the most important of which are weak interest in institution building and the absence of political support for reforms.[31] The Djindjić government did not care about institutions (especially those that ensure the rule of law), and political support for reform was frequently assumed away. The Serbian version of the Washington consensus policy seems to have proven a misguided recipe for successful transition since it was not based on the proper institutional foundations of capitalism and democracy.

On the other hand, the conclusion that the Milošević and Djindjić systems were identical could be refuted as soon as the regime under Djindjić is placed within the the proper time context. As noted above, it is not clear what direction the Milošević regime would have headed in if Milošević had pulled off yet another electoral theft in 2000. But the stock of empirical evidence suggests it would most likely have developed into some sort of authoritarianism without an opposition. In contrast, the direction of the Djindjić government was quite the opposite. It was obvious that the changes initiated by the Djindjić government were deep enough to set the country on a democratic path. Something similar was suggested by Freedom House's rankings of Serbia for 2004. With an average grade of 3.84, Serbia is ranked among non-consolidated democracies. If the same method was applied to the last year of Milošević's rule when the average grade was

[31] Gerald Roland, *Transition and Economics* (Boston, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), p. 332.

5, Serbia would have been ranked as a semi-consolidated authoritarian regime.[32] But this mainly indicates direction: Milošević was headed into fully-developed sultanism, whereas Serbia under Djindjić was headed towards consolidated democracy. Yet both governments moved in different directions from the same ground, that of competitive authoritarianism. This suggests that Djindjić's contribution to Serbian democracy, which cannot be disputed, was his resolute ambition to build free markets and a constitutional democracy. As this article has tried to show, however, in doing so, Djindjić too easily believed that anti-authoritarian goals may be accomplished by authoritarian means.

[32] Alexander J. Motyl and Amanda Schnetzer, eds. *Nations in Transit 2004: Democratization in East Central Europe and Eurasia* (Landham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).