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Overview of Serbia:

Current- day Serbia hosts over 7 million citizens with vast backgrounds of culture and history.

With many different ethnic groups including Serbians, Albanians, Hungarians, Bosniaks, Romas, Croats, Slovaks, Bulgarians, and Romanians there is much to be said of the rich culture that lies in Serbia today. According to a study by Maps of the World, conducted in 2011, Serbia has more than 25 national communities.

Serbia has endured many changes between wars beginning from World War 1 to the most recent, the Balkan Wars in the 1990's. However, not only have wars changed the Serbian dynamics, but also the political unrest, seen in present- day Serbia and provinces such as Kosovo.

In recent years, specifically 2006, Serbia became a "stand- alone" sovereign republic and ended the final division of the six republics of the socialist Yugoslavia republic.

Before the departure from Yugoslavia, Serbia had not always found peace in their independent state. Tensions with other cultures and territories led devastating wars and war crimes around the country. Albanian supporters and citizens did not support the new rule of the Serbian government. In 1998 in the province of Kosovo, the Kosovo Liberation Army rebelled against the government, which escalated into tumultuous violence across the province and other cities in Serbia. NATO, which encourages democratic values around the world protested the violence from the Kosovo Liberation Army and Albanians with air strikes in Kosovo and Serbia. According

to “Serbia Country Profile- Overview,” by BBC, said that Kosovo declared independence in 2008. However, the Serbian government declared this illegal.

Through efforts in military and politics, Serbia wished to join the European Union (EU). In 2005 the EU spoke with Serbia and city of Belgrade on the subject of a Stabilization and Association Agreement (Serbia Country Profile- Overview). However this was called off due to Serbian officials’ failure to charge war crime suspects. After Serbia arrested one of the most infamous suspects, the EU referred to this act as a step towards the integration of the EU. A final step into joining the EU, was that Serbia and Kosovo needed to work together to build a relationship. Serbia agreed to so do, however they have not recognized the province as an independent state.

Introduction:

Through rich culture and history, Serbia has grown through stages into a beautiful country. Through these changes the Republic has endured times of violence, extreme rebellions and victims of the fight against free speech. Journalists are threatened and intimidated by rebels on a daily basis. Through the acts against journalists, citizens have spoken out on the fight for freedom of speech and reporting on newsworthy information to the citizens of Serbia.

Despite the government trying to protect reporters’ lives with laws and regulations, there is an abundance of more change that needs to happen in order to facilitate the safety of the journalists’ lives in Serbia.

Through the examination of Serbia's long history of problematic societal issues; geographical research in a country rooted with deep- centered concerns with anti- regime and radicals, the focal point of crime within journalism has become an occurring dispute. Within the past two decades, three unsolved murders of Serbian journalists have occurred. Through wars steaming from World War I to current day, radicals have oppressed the free speech made by journalists of war crimes and political acts.

Cultural Examination:

Serbia's close proximity to other countries, makes this Republic rich in culture. Through geography, demographics, language, education, and national identity depicts a country that has vast differences and makes a historical significance on the world. While having an abundance of culture and pride, this can also be a negative distinction for a republic. With different beliefs and cultural backgrounds political unrest and violence have been a predominate trait in Serbia.

Intercultural Research

Geography

According to *everyculture*, Serbia, a landlocked country, makes up 34,136 square miles with bordering countries that includes: Montenegro, Bulgaria, Hungary, Bosnia- Herzegovina, Romania, Albania and Macedonia. Serbia's mountainous terrain makes it difficult to produce viable agriculture, however, corn and rye are ample, as well as, minerals such as lead, zinc and silver.

Due to the rough terrain and rocky soil, many citizens have to find other means to produce an income for their families. Although livestock is not uncommon to have in the country side, many townspeople have to rely on other means. In addition, due to the country once known to be communist, the government owned most of the farm land. According to *everyculture*, 20 percent of the GDP relies on agriculture and three- quarters of the working class makes up agriculture or industry.

Economy

While agriculture is an important boost for Serbia, the economic downfall in the 1990's and constant warfare left the Republic in distress. "The collapse of the Yugoslav Republic in 1991 wreaked havoc on the economy of the region (*everyculture*). Over the past five years, the Republic has steadily increased, economically, but still face hardships.

According to heritage.org, Serbia has reached the "moderately free" category in recent years, for the first time. "Gains have occurred in six of the 10 economic freedoms, with investment freedom, freedom from corruption, and monetary freedom highlighting the upward trend," (heritage.com). Though Serbia has made a step to a positive transition, it is important to keep rules and regulations intact. "Corruption remains widespread, and the judicial system's lack of independence and transparency continues to undermine the rule of law and investor' confidence in the economy," (heritage.com).

Demography

Belgrade, meaning “white fortress,” is the capital of Serbia, with over 1.5 million citizens. The capital is the largest city in the country. Although 90 percent of Serbian Orthodox Christians make up the capital, according to Beograd.rs, Belgrade hosts many different ethnicities, nationalities and religions.

After the Balkan civil war in the 1990’s, most of the citizens in Serbia were Serbs, today demographics include: 62% Serbs, 16% Albanians, 5% Montenegrin, 3% Yugoslav and 3% Hungarian. The remainder of the people living in Serbia are of different minorities. The different demographics have created ongoing and relentless issues in Serbia due to different beliefs and ideologies, including murders and intimidation of journalists. “The union of these different cultures under a repressive regime makes for a volatile situation,” (everyculture). The violent acts led to the civil war in the 1990’s that some researchers have argued that Serbia never recovered from.

Careers

Most Serbs work in industry, including, “fabrication of machines, electronics, and consumer good,” (everyculture). While many Serbs work in the industry business sector, the countryside hosts farmers as well.

According to the book, Careers and Cultures: Individual and Contextual Perspectives by authors Jon Briscoe and Douglas Hall, collectivism in the workforce is very important to the Serbs. “Collectivism in Serbia is also strongly related to an external locus of control. For example, Serbian workers would stay with their companies even if they did not receive any salary for more than a year, and in this case would ask the state to assist their employers instead of

looking for a new job,” (295). This book also relates to Hofstede’s power distance, that Serbians are a high power distance society. Serbs accept that there is unequal distribution in the workforce due to the past communist ways and caste system before the recent changes in their society. The power distance has also contributed to the journalists have faced for the past two decades in Serbia. Journalists have been repressed from contributing to newsworthy information about war crimes and politics. Through the past twenty years, journalists have been beaten, intimidated, threatened, and even murdered. This career has brought unrest and relentless torture for reporting on the country of Serbia. Awareness of this societal issues needs to be brought to light. A movement must start to protect this career. Journalists need to be heard.

The Examination of Journalism as a Societal Issue:

A. The summary of the fight for freedom of speech

For decades, journalists have fought for freedom of speech on newsworthy information. Not only have reporters’ names and reputations been defaced, but their lives have been threatened, they have been beaten, battered and even killed. Today, the fight for what Americans refer to the First Amendment, is a fight for life. Women journalists are especially brought to light in Serbia. Women reporters endure countless name- calling and threats for reporting news to Serbs.

Most threats against journalists are due to reporting on war crimes, politicians, and on powerful Serbs that do not wish to have their information in the public eye. Although Serbia has moved from a communist republic of Yugoslavia to a now, parliamentary republic, there is still deep- rooted power over citizens in Serbia.

Through the examination of journalism, there has been three unsolved journalist murders, radical rebellions, and laws and regulations in an effort to appease the war on freedom of speech.

According to The Guardian, “High ranking officials regularly sue journalists and media outlets for defamation in civil courts.” Accusations against journalists have occurred due to reporters not writing about information that officials would like them to. In a recent case that was studied The Guardian said that, “TV talk- shows in Serbia went off the air due to political pressure. In Serbia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, political interference also includes arbitrary and administrative inspections of media outlets.” In addition to talk- shows being taken off the air, a pro- government newspaper told a women journalist that she had, “shortened her life” by reporting on campaign trails (theguardian).

Although Serbia has made positive changes in order to protect journalists, this issue remains a contributing factor in crime.

B. Targeted Assaults

While some government officials and journalists have fought for freedom of speech and the right to report on war crimes and political entities, journalists receive threats via Facebook, letters, text messages and even face-to- face. With ample evidence and factual information proven by journalists, radicals still threaten the reporters’ news stories because they simply do not want the politically correct information in the public.

Artan Haraqia, an investigative journalist was threatened via Facebook for investigating and reporting on radical Islamic officials. The official threatened to hurt his family, specifically his father, told him the address of where he lived and told him he would see repercussions in three days if he did not take his content down.

Vladimir Mitric investigated drug trafficking in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as he entered his home he was approached by a former police officer who stroke him more than 20 times with a baseball bat. According to the Human Rights Watch, "A Difficult Profession, Media Freedom under Attack in the Western Balkans" said that, "the incident took place just meters away from a coffee shop filled with patrons. Many were off- duty policemen; none responded to Mitric's pleas for help." After Mitric spoke to police about having his car damaged and vandalized the police simply responded, "What can you do, you have a difficult profession," (Human Rights Watch).

The corruption over freedom of media and speech is not only threatened by political officials and radicals, but by police officers and professional protection services that are supposed to safeguard citizens. Political interference of media has not slowed, but has remained the same for decades.

It is often difficult to pinpoint murders of journalists due to the fact that the Serbian government is not very interested in solving the cases. Some government officials in the Yugoslav Republics during the civil wars are now government officials. Theories point that this could be the reason why the government does not look to open journalists' murder cases.

It took one murder case 16 years for someone to stand in the trial. In 1999, while NATO bombs were striking Belgrade, Slavko Curuvija was being murdered. Curuvija was an anti-regime journalist, who was shot 17 times in the back. Index on Censorship published Mitra Nazar's story, "The people investigating Serbia's unsolved journalist murders," which gave in-depth details of journalist murder cases steaming from the Balkan wars. "Fast forward to 1 June 2015: the trial of the four former security officers begins before a special court in Belgrade. It took 16 years for anyone to stand trial over what had become a notorious case of intimidation of journalists in Serbia," (Nazar).

Veran Matic, a veteran journalist and fellow reporters helped get the case of Curuvija brought to trial in Belgrade. Matic is now under 24/7 protection for his life. Matic receives death threats often, however, he has guards in front of his home all day. Matic said, "This is the price we have to pay in order to resolve those crimes. It will contribute to the catharsis of our society," (Nazar). Matic added that, "the truth is worth the compromise," (Nazar).

In addition to Curuvija's case, Dada Vujasinovic is another journalist that reporters believe was also a victim of a political murder. Nazar argues that this case is one of the most difficult investigations due to the fact that it took place in 1994. Although the police ruled this a suicide, forensic evidence suggests otherwise.

The third unsolved manslaughter case of Milan Pantic, a reporter for Vecernje Novosti newspaper, took place in 2001. Pantic had his neck broken and was, "struck on the head with a sharp object," in his apartment in Serbia, (Nazar). Pantic reported on criminal matters and corruption of businesses.

Although some investigators know the murderers, they are not given permission to interview and speak with them. Killers that have not been prosecuted have fled to countries like Germany and Africa to escape trials.

In the Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2015: Serbia*, confirmed that in 2014 between the months of January and August, “the International Journalists Association in Serbia reported five assaults on journalists, three direct threats, and 12 cases of political and other pressure,” (Human Rights Watch).

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), have created a database of: News and Analysis, Data and Research, Services and Resources, and Advocacy and Action. On the website they have deciphered the terminology for the journalist murder cases. The murder cases are broken down into two motives: confirmed and unconfirmed. Confirmed means that the murder case has been ruled as, “work- related,” while unconfirmed means that the “motive is unclear,” it is believe that it is work related but cannot be proved (CJP).

As of today, there are two murder cases that are confirmed and one that is unconfirmed.

C. Support for Reporters

Serbia is moving towards a fight for freedom of media for journalists, as well as more protection for reporters. With organizations like the CJP, and new laws, journalists are getting closer to hope. However, they are still far away from complete freedom. With a low tally of 36 for press freedom score, according to freedomhouse, the government is still polarized against journalists.

While new laws have been passed to evidently help reporters, there are regulations that come fourth. “Some laws pose a threat to media freedom. Journalists are subject to prosecution under the Data Secrecy Act, which protects information of interest to national security, public safety, and foreign affairs, among other categories,” (freedomhouse).

In 2011 a new media strategy was proposed and passed. The strategy helped to increase and protect the independence for media freedom. “The strategy is the first step toward the passage of legislative changes to that effect. However, despite ongoing legislative reforms, mostly under European Union guidance, implementation of the media strategy has lagged,” (freedomhouse).

While the government has stakes and control in the newspapers, makes it difficult to obtain total freedom of speech and media. According to freedomhouse, the government vowed to sell their stakes in the newspapers by 2015. In addition, the government and parliamentary have prosecuted violent actors that have beaten journalists.

USAID is program that assists in support for media freedom in Serbia. The Serbia Media Assistance Program, “supports independent and self- sustainable Serbian media through a ‘whole station’ approach that looks across business and editorial functions,” (IREX).

In addition, USAID trains journalists and gives them the support they need to create newsworthy stories for the citizens of Serbia.

DW Akademie’s centers of excellence is much like USAID, where the program trains journalists on reporting and finding new outlets for their work. “Their role is to help media outlets and

journalists create networks, and to offer guidance regarding EU media requirements, “DW Akademie). It is important for reporters to be trained on EU requirements due to Serbia trying to join the European Union for years. The EU will give more protection for Serbia and will be an asset in the world to have them as allies.

This is a step forward to a more democratic journalistic profession for Serbia and the future care for reporters.

D. Conclusion

Journalists have faced newsworthy and dangerous information with bravery and passion. Reporters put their lives on the line every time they publish a new story, post new information, and defy the radical officials. Journalists have been brutally murdered and surrendered their lives to leave the truth to the citizens of Serbia.

Murder cases are left unsolved, due to lack of interest in uncovering the truth. Journalists’ lives matter; Serbia and journalists will continue to the fight for freedom of press. Although Serbia has made progress toward freedom, there is need for a bigger change.

Serbia has endured many transitions in history, and will continue to do so with the help of journalists.

“A free press is not only a right, and not only a privilege, but an organic necessity in a great society,” Walter Lippman, American journalist.

Strategic Plan:

Goal:

To bring to light the profession of journalism and the radical ideological officials that do not allow reporters the privilege of freedom of speech in Serbia.

Objectives:

To increase awareness of the violence journalists endure on a daily basis, by presenting research to my peers.

To facilitate the transition of informing the public of Serbia's rise to a parliamentary republic through the research report and campaign elements.

To use in red, white, and blue colors to tie in intercultural elements of Serbia, along with the symbol of the eagle to represent the republic.

Strategy:

In order to gain awareness of the journalist unrest in Serbia, I will share my research with the Ambassador of Serbia.

In addition, I will share the report, as well as the campaign elements with my peers to bring to light to the issues in Serbia during a presentation.

Tactics:

I will send my information and research to the Ambassador via email, so he can share my report with other Serbian citizens.

During my presentation to my peers, I will facilitate the engagement of information by giving them facts and real- life stories that explain the issues in Serbia.

**The Examination of Serbian Journalism
Fact Sheet
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Purpose

To bring awareness to the public about journalism as a Serbian societal issue. A long, rich history of Serbia and the corrupt government has prohibited freedom of speech and press for journalists. Reporters' lives are threatened on a daily basis when publishing stories on war crimes and radical officials in the republic. In order to maximize freedom for journalists, citizens must become educated and informed to stop the corruption against this profession.

Target Assaults

Over the past two decades, Serbian journalists have been victims to threats, beatings and even murder. Those who report on the corruption of the government and on government officials are often intimidated by police officers, political leaders and radicals. Victims have been subjected to stabbings, gun shots, concussions and minor injuries.

Supports for reporters

Programs like USAID and the Committee to Protect Journalists help protect journalists in Serbia. These programs give reporters training, assistance and protection to allow journalists to report newsworthy information. Serbians can look to these programs for help and guidance in their profession and work towards freedom of press.

How to bring awareness

By informing the public and educating them on the harassments that journalists endure, citizens can protect journalists and bring justice to those who have been murdered. By bringing this social issue to light, citizens can work towards freedom for professions.

Contact us

To learn more about journalism in Serbia, email aluther1@gulls.salisbury.edu to learn what you can to do help reporters today.

Backgrounder

Background

Although Serbia has tried to move past corruption in recent years, journalism as a profession, is governed by radical political officials. As a result, reporters are often intimidated out of news stories about war crimes and political officials. Freedom of press is repressed and does not allow reporters to publish articles without being threatened, beaten or murdered.

Target Assaults

Journalists have become subjected to unrelenting intimidation due to government officials only allowing certain stories to be published.

- Between the months on January and August 2014, according to Human Rights Watch, there were five assaults reported, three direct threats, and 12 cases of political pressure.
- There have been three unsolved murder cases from 1994 to 2014. The government found little interest to open and solve the cases involving the murders of reporters.
- Journalists have now received death threats via social media if they do not take their content down

Support

As Serbia is taking steps to move forward to more freedom for journalists, programs have been made to protect reporters in Serbia and surrounding countries.

- The Committee to Protect Journalists gives assistance and protection to those that seek help. Journalists may receive medical care, shelter, protection and training for reporting on newsworthy content.
- USAID also trains journalists to report on news content with the regulations of the European Union.
- Government officials have been more apt to open murder cases of journalists in recent years. Officials have also allowed the investigation of victims, and to be able to interview reporters that have endured intimidations.

Awareness

Bringing awareness is important due to it bringing more freedom to journalists. By becoming more informed and educated, citizens can help the fight for freedom of speech.

- Awareness can be brought to the public through reports, presentations and face- to- face conversation.
- To get the word out for freedom of press will allow journalists to report on pertinent information and therefore, inform their citizens.

Contact

To learn more about the victims of journalistic reporting email aluther1@gulls.salisbury.edu for more information.

PSA

The Fight for Freedom of Speech

Take a stance on the freedom of speech for Serbian Journalists. Let their voice be heard. Let the truth come out.

Journalists are threatened every day for reporting on the news for you. Do not allow corruption to take over your country again, start a movement, begin to tell the truth, stand up for your local journalists.

Make Serbia completely free by telling the truth today.

For more information, contact Alexis Luther at aluther1@gulls.salisbury.edu.

The Fight for Freedom of Speech

Several journalists each year in Serbia have their lives threatened due to their line of work

From the years 1994 for 2014, there have been three unsolved murders of journalists.

Investigative journalists such as, Veran Matic have dedicated their lives to solve the murder cases of reporters, while receiving daily death threats daily.

After 15 years, the case of Slavko Curuvija, an anti- regime journalist, was brought to trial, thanks to Matic. Matic is now under protection at all times of the day due to threatening messages of his life at stake.

The Human Rights Watch published, “World Report 2015: Serbia” which reported that in the months of January to August in 2014 there were, “five assaults on journalists, three direct threats, and 12 cases of political and other pressure.” In addition, the article said that journalists will continue to face threats of their lives, “particularly those reporting on radical Muslim groups,” (Human Rights Watch).

While reporters are enduring threats, beatings, and even victims of murders, it is important to remember that these reporters are fighting for freedom of speech. Megan Baker, a PR Specialist and former journalism major, said that, countries that censor information and reporting are crafting the citizens’ behavior. She said that is important to take a stance for journalists because reporting is the way people get their information. To sum up journalism in one word would be: facts, Baker said, “It’s important because it’s how people decipher the truth.”

“This is the battle of journalism,” unlike Serbia, Baker said, “freedom of speech is important to us because we have it. We began with freedom of speech and we’ve had people fight for our freedom of speech.”

It is time to take a stance for Serbia, to fight for their freedom of speech and stop the murders of reporters.

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