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Article

Women Executive Leadership and the COVID-19 Pandemic. Explaining Decision Making in Serbia and Germany

Abstract: *This paper tackles the question of how women leaders in executive positions have tackled the debut of the COVID-19 pandemic (March-July 2020). For granularity I will restrict the analysis to two particular cases, Serbia (ex-Prime Minister Ana Brnabic) and Germany (ex-Chancellor Angela Merkel), but the conclusions can be tested in future crisis situations. Drawing on analyses of the measures implemented and the political discourses/interviews of the two leaders related to the pandemic I will describe and evaluate their decision-making strategies. Subsequently I will analyse how the context/specificity of the significantly different socio-political characteristics of the two states interfere with the leader's decision and meaning making process.*

In order to do this, I will also use and analyse data provided by the Varieties of Democracy Institute. The final results show different approaches for Brnabic (failed to successfully fulfil the roles expected of leaders in crisis situations, according to crisis management literature) and Merkel (resembles the leader "prototype" in times of crisis).

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However, among other factors, I take into consideration that the state of the regime in Serbia (tendencies of democratic backsliding) can be held accountable for Brnabic's poor performance as a leader in crisis.

Keywords: *COVID-19, Germany, political discourse, Serbia, women leadership.*

1. Introduction

The way political leaders managed the COVID-19 pandemic raised interest given the uniqueness of the crisis that was faced on a worldwide scale, the unprecedented impact on the lives of each and every citizen (irrespective of nationality/age/gender/etc.), but also the complexity and firmness of the measures adopted by the authorities in response to the crisis (significantly affecting the basic personal freedoms of individuals). In this research I chose to refer to women political leaders in

executive positions and how they acted (focus on measures taken and messages transmitted) during the pandemic.

Why? Because even nowadays we still cannot ignore the so-called “glass rock” or “glass cliff” phenomenon when discussing women leaders. The metaphor refers to the appointment of women to leadership positions when the organization/ state faces a crisis or situation that can be considered risky (Haslam and Ryan, 2008; Gillard and Okonjo-Iweala, 2020). At the same time, women remain numerically underrepresented in executive positions, holding such ranks of power in the hierarchy of fifteen (2020) out of the 193 UN member states (according to the data presented by Women Leaders Worldwide 1960-2023 | Statista 2023). I specifically chose to refer to part of 2020 as timeframe for this research (the situation is not different for the rest of 2020, 2021, 2022 or 2023) because the onset of the pandemic is the most relevant in terms of the strict measures taken by the leaders who found themselves in an unexpected situation with big impact on the everyday lives of the citizens.

In order to contribute to the literature on crisis management by women in executive political positions (the concepts of women political leadership and women political leadership in times of crisis will be applied for the pandemic period), I will observe how Angela Merkel (former Chancellor of Germany) and Ana Brnabic (Serbian Prime Minister) managed especially the onset of the pandemic (2020). Specifically, I will examine (1) the measures adopted in the two states – their timing, firmness and consistency, and (2) the leaders’ speeches – in terms of their frequency and key points communicated in order to establish (3) to what extent the various strategies can represent useful recommendations and strategies for future (health) crises.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. A feminist approach to the concept of political leadership

The idea of political leadership is strongly gendered in the literature. The incongruence between traits considered specifically feminine and the demands traditionally associated with the leadership position are naturally considered a source of discrimination against women and may even complicate their ascent up the hierarchical ladder (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Koenig, Eagly, and Mitchell, 2010; Eagly, Gartzia and Carli, 2014) and create controversies about their „legitimacy“ in leadership positions = the „double gender constraint“, i.e. the fact that it is more difficult for women to enjoy success in leadership positions because they are evaluated more strictly than men (Eagly, Gartzia and Carli, 2013).

Dan Reiter (2015) points out that perhaps the most direct way in which gender could affect the field of international relations is through political leadership. The author starts from the assumption that if women have a different vision than men then this should be reflected in their policymaking. Possible differences between women and male leaders have been the subject of study in specialized literature starting from the theory of social roles which stereotypically associates women with traits considered typically feminine – empathy, sensitivity, sociability, etc. -, respectively men with characteristics considered typically masculine – rationality, ambition, competitiveness, etc. (Eagly, Gartzia and Carli, 2014). Moving away from the constructed images of women vs. men leaders (Ozdenerol, Bingham-Byrne and Seboly, 2023) towards liberal feminism (assesses gender relations as regarded as „partnerships“/anti-hegemonic – Miroiu, 2004) and radical feminism („the most daring exponent“ of feminism, advocates for the „authentic woman“ typology and it is against equality between men and women – Miroiu,

2004) the perception of women leaders also changes. Each extreme also carries the reverse of the coin. Liberal feminism considers that women can overcome the gender barrier by disrupting gender expectations and displaying masculine behaviours in leadership positions (Ozdenerol, Bingham-Byrne and Seboly, 2023); the reverse of the coin: perpetuating traditional expectations of *think leadership = think male*. At the opposite pole, radical feminism celebrates femininity as an asset in leadership positions (Ozdenerol, Bingham-Byrne and Seboly, 2023); the reverse of the coin: some ‘communal’ personality traits of women can create the impression that they are, by comparison, more insecure or unprepared than their male counterparts in leadership positions (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt and van Engen, 2003). The solution to this puzzle therefore seems to be the deconstruction of gender stereotypes and expectations by women in leadership positions (Ozdenerol, Bingham-Byrne and Seboly, 2023).

2.2. The concept of leadership in crisis

Political leadership is a difficult concept to define and evaluate, and the analysis of the term can be often subject to subjectivity. There are countless definitions of the term “political leadership”, and one of the basic ideas is that „it is the process of interactive influence that occurs when, in a given context, certain people accept someone as their leader, in order to achieve common goals“ (Silva, 2016). The definition mainly implies a process of coordination between the leader and his followers (those who elected him) in order to achieve common goals. In addition, the leader must deliver effective policies – especially in times of crisis or overlapping crises – and win, in addition to the support of followers, that of the other actors on the political scene (‘t Hart, quoted by Rhodes and ‘t Hart, 2014). Ammeter et al. (2002) also bring to attention the concept of leading by example („the leader as a role model“).

Political leadership cannot always be planned and predictable. Leadership in times of crisis means a set of actions taken by a leader to bring about an immediate change in people’s behaviour and beliefs, as well as to achieve the necessary results (Gardner and Laskin 1995, cited by Alkharabesheh, Ahmad and Kharabsheh, 2014). In a crisis situation, a leader must provide „stability, security, confidence and a sense of control“ (Lussier and Achua 2004, 382, cited by Alkharabesheh, Ahmad and Kharabsheh, 2014). All this in a difficult context. A problem for leaders in times of crisis is the lack of time and sometimes of information (Alkharabesheh, Ahmad and Kharabsheh, 2014). Pearson and Clair (1998) suggest that the ambiguity/ uncertainty of response and the urgency/ time pressure are the two basic elements that define a crisis and affect leaders’ ability and effectiveness in their assessments and decision-making (cited by Alkharabesheh, Ahmad and Kharabsheh, 2014).

3. Measures implemented during the pandemic (March-July 2020) in Serbia and Germany

The two states adopted different measures in response to the crisis. Although both are European states, Germany is a „veteran“ state in the EU and a richer state compared to Serbia which is also a candidate for EU membership (still the largest state in terms of population) in the Western Balkans region. According to the classification of Andersen et al. (2022), since the vaccine was not available in the first months of the pandemic, the leaders’ measures revolved around two types of strategies: a) risk exclusion – suppressing the outbreak by minimizing the

risk of transmission from infected to uninfected people, including actions for early case detection, contact tracking, etc.; b) risk minimization – slowing down the outbreak of the disease and reducing the impact on the health system through social distancing, isolation and personal and environmental hygiene.

How does this apply to Serbia and Germany? Serbia relied on an isolation strategy, being considered the state with the toughest pandemic measures in the European region; examples of measures: limitation of public circulation; prohibition of leaving homes at night; closing borders, educational institutions, public areas, parks, and shopping centres (Andersen et al., 2022). Also, the penalties for failure to comply with crisis response measures were set early and were harsh – heavy fines, arrests, etc. (Andersen et al., 2022). The measures introduced by Serbia were highly controversial. Contrary to the law, which states that only the Serbian Parliament can approve the introduction of a state of emergency, President Vucic proclaimed a national emergency on 15 March in the presence of Prime Minister Ana Brnabic (Riha, 2020). At the beginning of March, Serbia set up a coronavirus crisis cell; among leaders, there were Ana Brnabic and the former Serbian Minister of Health (Stojanovic, 2020). By creating the crisis cell, the government controlled the flow of information reaching the public on COVID-19 (Stojanovic, 2020). Local authorities passed the data on to the government and the government forwarded it to public opinion (Stojanovic, 2020). Later on, rather selective measures were introduced – e.g. schools, theatres, restaurants were closed, while gambling and betting halls remained open longer (Riha, 2020). As a conclusion, Hercigonja and Pebic (2023) observe that the decisions taken were largely based on the (un)popularity they could have among the citizens. The authors document several examples in this regard. One is that the authorities declared „victory“ over COVID-19 at key electoral moments (ahead of parliamentary elections planned for June 2020), and most of the lockdown measures were lifted. However, the measures were subsequently reinstated, proof that the authorities also had political reasons for the pandemic measures.

Germany, on the other hand, relied on minimizing the risks and imposing tough measures only to the extent that they were strictly necessary, in relation to the infection situation in each individual region. In the early stage of the pandemic a crisis management committee was set under the coordination of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior in order to perfect the coordination of local and central institutions (Our World in Data guest post by Lothar H. Wieler 2021). No state of emergency was imposed in Germany; examples of measures: limiting public gatherings to two people (from outside families); entry into fourteen-day quarantine of citizens arriving from abroad (Our World in Data guest post by Lothar H. Wieler 2021).

4. Analysis of public communication of Brnabic and Merkel

4.1. Theoretical explanations

From the thematic analysis of the leaders' interviews/speeches it can be tested to what extent the leaders acted as sovereigns, facilitators and/or symbols (Ansell, Boin and 't Hart, 2014). The analyses of the studies of Ansell, Boin and 't Hart (2014) and Boin, Kuipers and Overdijk (2013) show that:

The leader as sovereign = „decides“; makes „final“ decisions with authority, based on analysis of all data, and is able to take responsibility. To fulfil this function, we expect political leaders to correctly understand the nature of the crisis, based on all available information.

Based on this understanding, leaders set goals and take proactive and critical actions, for which they take responsibility.

The leader as facilitator = „consults“; „sharing“ power is a must. To fulfil this function, we expect political leaders to be available to rely on competent institutions/individuals.

The leader as symbol = „convinces“; political leaders must be credible and impose a dominant thinking style. They face the delicate task of explaining to citizens and stakeholders what the nature of the crisis is and what they are doing to minimize the risks. Last but not least, it ensures that the response to the crisis should be seen as legitimate.

4.2. Methodological Explanations

Time frame: Germany (January-May 2020; since the start of the pandemic in this country/January 27 until the easing of the restrictions); Serbia (March-July 2020; since the start of the pandemic in this country/March 6 until the easing of restrictions). Methods: thematic analysis of interviews (nine for Merkel, respectively eight for Brnabic – details in the Appendix). I made a selection of the public positions of the two leaders expressed regarding the pandemic in the international media and on the official websites of the governments (details in the Appendix). I searched in English, Serbian and German (using google translate). Limitations: small number of interviews; translation from Serbian and German into English.

4.3. Case study: Brnabic

Brnabic as sovereign. The assumed objective: to save lives (Brnabic, interview, April 16) and ensure the functioning of the medical system (Brnabic, interview, April 28). However, Brnabic has not proven she understands the gravity of the situation or that she is a true sovereign. She assumed an oscillating responsibility – she decreed „success“ against the pandemic several times only to review the affirmation with data on the worsening of the situation. However, it is also relevant that Brnabic has little influence in the country and is less visible than President Vucic (Bilic, 2020). According to an OSCE (2020) analysis of the local media (six dailies with different editorial policies – Blic, Danas, Informer, Kurir, Politika and Vecernje novosti and three local TV stations – RTS, TV Pink and TV N1 during February 26 to 6 May 2020), the best publicly represented political figures during the pandemic were first and foremost the president of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic (286 appearances in the print media – during the analysed period he was present on the front pages almost every day in the context of the fight against the coronavirus; 81 TV appearances) and secondary Ana Brnabic (93 print media mentions; 34 TV appearances).

Brnabic as facilitator. By creating the Pandemic Crisis Management Cell (leader: Ana Brnabic) the government had a monopoly on the data on COVID-19 (Stojanovic, 2020), Brnabic was not meant as a facilitator. The data was often presented in a distorted way to the public (Brzozowski, 2020).

Brnabic as symbol. Brnabic tried to legitimize pandemic measures by delegating/shifting responsibility:

- on the population, accused of not following the rules. For Brnabic the idea of solidarity is closely related to that of discipline;

- on the media, accused of misinforming the population. She also used emotional arguments to avoid providing clear data on some uncomfortable topics – responding to criticism in the press about non-compliance with procedures in the procurement of ventilators, Brnabic

replied that she could not choose between people's lives and compliance with all public procurement regulations.

Serbian authorities failed in delivering coherent messages to the population (Aleksandar Vucic referred to COVID-19 as „the funniest virus“ in an interview on March 11, 2020) and created confusion. The way some Serbian media outlets reported on the COVID-19 pandemic is described by Fruscione (2021) as an „infodemic“, understood in the sense of the World Health Organization, namely „an overabundance of information. – some accurate and some not – making it difficult for people to find reliable sources and reliable guidance when they need it.”

4.4. Case study: Merkel

Merkel as sovereign. Merkel proved that she clearly understands the situation and its seriousness. Markers of Merkel's sovereignty – transmitting clear measures to the population and assuming responsibility (drawing attention to the seriousness of the situation and evaluating/constant recalibration of measures).

Merkel as facilitator. Merkel is recognized in the literature for her collaborative approach (Davidson-Schmich, 2011). During the pandemic, Merkel played the role of facilitator, while not losing control of the situation:

i) relied on scientific evidence and arguments and even sponsored and encouraged research into the field of COVID-19 but at the same time Merkel managed to mediate relations with the scientific community considering her own scientific training;

ii) made decisions together with the representatives of the Länder and explained repeatedly that she was working together with the federal authorities. At the same time, Merkel did not hesitate to draw attention (Merkel, press release, April 23, 2020) to the federal authorities not to relax the pandemic measures too much in order not to lose the progress made against the virus.

Merkel as symbol. The focus in the analysed speeches fell on the idea of solidarity. In addition, Merkel showed empathy and respect for each individual, saying of those infected: „These are not just abstract numbers from statistics, it's about a father or grandfather, a mother or grandmother, a partner — it's about people“ (Merkel, March 16). Merkel did not hesitate to address each social category separately, thanking the medical staff or those who sell items in supermarkets.

On this „wave“ of solidarity and empathy, Merkel legitimized her response to the crisis. She explained that she understood how invasive the pandemic measures were but they are imperative to save lives (Merkel, press release, March 18, 2020) and will be subject to legislative control (Merkel, press release, March 22, 2020).

5. Other variables relevant to the management process: the regime

5.1 Theoretical explanations

The regime is important and it shapes the leader's response in times of crisis. Spinelli (2021), cited by Kneuer and Wurster (2023) believes that the pandemic did not cause problems related to the democratic process, but rather made them visible. In addition to the literature, the Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem) “measures”, among other things, the quality of democ-

racy during the pandemic and how the implemented measures violated democratic norms in 146 states (Lührmann et al., 2020). The risk of a democratic backslide in the pandemic is very high, among others, in Serbia. At the opposite pole, there were no violations of democratic norms in states such as Germany.

5.2. Case study: Serbia

Given the fragility of Serbia's democracy at the onset of the pandemic, the response to the crisis is not unexpected. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the state of democracy has significantly deteriorated in Serbia. In the specialized literature (Tzifakis, 2020) and in expert analyses (Lührmann et al., 2020) Serbia was indicated among the states with the biggest problems in terms of abuse of power.

During the pandemic the further deterioration of the state of democracy in Serbia results from:

a) Bypassing legislative control over the executive. How:

In Serbia, the national emergency state was declared on March 15 based on Article 200 of the Constitution. According to the Article: when the Parliament is unable to meet, the decision to declare a state of emergency is adopted by the President together with the President of the Parliament and the Prime Minister. In the second scenario, the condition is that the decision on the state of emergency is adopted by the Parliament within 48 hours of its adoption or, otherwise, the decision ceases to have its effects at the end of the first session of the Parliament after the proclamation of the state of emergency (Serbian Constitution).

In the context of the pandemic: YES: President Vucic decreed the state of emergency in the presence of the President of the Parliament and the Prime Minister (Government of Serbia, 2020), Ana Brnabic being a discreet presence who did not challenge the authority of the President. BUT: Parliament approved it retroactively only on April 28 (not within 48 hours), without clearly explaining the reason for the delay (European Western Balkans/EWB, 2020). The explanation of the President of the Parliament regarding the concern for the safety and health of the parliamentarians is unsatisfactory, without detailed explanations regarding the parameters on the basis of which it was taken (Pešic et al., 2020: 244-245).

b) control of the informational space regarding COVID-19 and the limitation of media freedom:

– detention of journalists amid investigations into unfavourable conditions in a medical facility, under the pretext that „they could cause panic and unrest“ (Tzifakis, 2020; Fruscione, 2021: 51-52; Holtz-Bacha, 2022; Cendic and Gosztonyi, 2020);

– lack of professionalism of the pro-government media that tried to blame the pandemic on alleged attempts by the opposition in Serbia to overthrow the government through „coronavirus propaganda“ (Jovanovic, 2020).

c) discriminatory measures to limit human rights, i.e. if human rights have been disproportionately violated according to race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin, in ways that cannot be justified by concerns for public health (analysis V-Dem). By the Constitution of Serbia, citizens are guaranteed equality before the law, protection of human and minority rights before the courts, and discrimination on any criteria is prohibited (Pešic, Gordic and Stankovic, 2020, p. 321).

V-Dem accuses the discriminatory quarantine measures (24 hours) of housing centres for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, which were also guarded by armed soldiers. Residents

were not allowed to leave the centres except to receive medical care (V-Dem Institute). Based on information from August, there were no cases of Covid-19 in the housing centres. Furthermore, and more seriously, the measures continued even after their repeal in May 2020 (V-Dem Institute). Kovacevic, 2020 (cited by Pešić, Gordic and Stankovic, 2020, p. 330) and Todorovic (2020) believe that citizens over 65 have been deprived of their freedom by the measure of their total and complete isolation. In the first part of the pandemic, the number of cases of violence against women increased in Serbia (Pešić, Gordic and Stankovic, 2020, p. 335).

d) the organization of parliamentary elections. In the days following the end of the state of emergency, the date of the elections was set (June 21), although the epidemiological situation was not stable (Todorovic, 2020). An investigation by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network released the day after the election showed that Serbian authorities underreported deaths and infections with COVID-19 between March and June 2020 (Fruscione, 2021, p 39-40). Two weeks after the vote, President Vucic could no longer hide the seriousness of the situation, as hospitals throughout the country began to fill up with patients infected with Covid-19 (Fruscione, 2021, p 39-40). The motivation for organizing the elections is most likely related to the risk of an epidemiological crisis breaking out as a result of the pandemic measures (Todorovic, 2020).

5.3. Case study: Germany

Merkel relied on a governance based on scientific evidence and left the momentum of the crisis to the executive (Merkel, 2020), a defining factor being her background in science. The emergency measures for COVID-19 were taken by the federal republics and the government acted as a coordinator (V-Dem Institute). The emergency clause provided for in the Constitution has not been activated, the main measures being taken by the republics under the Law against Infections, updated to respond to the situation (V-Dem Institute). No discriminatory measures to limit human rights were identified (V-Dem Institute).

6. Conclusions

In this paper, I analysed how Ana Brnabic and Angela Merkel fulfil their leadership roles in times of crisis (according to the analysis of Ansell, Boin and 't Hart, 2014) and the implications for the state of the regimes. The thematic discourse analysis allowed me to assess how Serbia and Germany handled the COVID-19 crisis at the highest level at its onset.

Merkel seamlessly navigated the roles of sovereign, facilitator and symbol that should accompany the leader in times of crisis, confirming that she can make quick and informed decisions (probably a marker of scientific training) without a pre-set agenda (Davidson-Schmich, 2011). She successfully fulfilled the role of „symbol“ and proved that the personal example is powerful (Merkel self-isolated, like any German citizen would, when she contracted the virus). She handled the role of sovereign very well, proving that soft speech does not translate into soft decision-making. Merkel paid particular attention to upholding democratic standards, proving the association of women with “clean governance” (Davidson-Schmich, 2011). In the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, she proved attention to detail and her leadership style represented a celebration of feminine qualities (Ozdenerol, Bingham-Byrne and Seboly, 2023) – solidarity, empathy, trust in others and collaboration – all put in the service of the sovereign role of the leader (who makes conscious and informed decisions).

Brnabic, on the other hand, undermined the response to the pandemic, confirming a controversial approach and focus on internal/external policy objectives (political motivation), while professionalism came second (Hercigonja and Pebic, 2023). Brnabic failed to credibly adopt the role of crisis leader as sovereign, facilitator and symbol, oscillating, without taking responsibility, between narratives designed to panic the population (with a disciplinary role) or to prove the success of the government/authorities in pandemic management. I also pointed out that Brnabic is contributing to the erosion of democratic standards in Serbia by monopolizing data on the pandemic at the level of the crisis cell she led and by not challenging (even supporting) the Vucic government. Although she uses certain stereotypically feminine elements (promoting solidarity; leading a crisis cell), she is rather a representation of what the manifesto „Feminism for the 99%“ calls a symbol of oppression under a patriarchal system or of gender stereotypes (Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser, 2019). Brnabic is considered a „puppet“ of Vucic (reduced to bureaucratic language) and she is not recognized as a defender of human rights or the LGBT community in Serbian society, although she is a member of this community (Kljajic, 2021).

Although the differences in the approach to the pandemic by the two leaders are obvious even if I limit the analysis strictly to the evaluation of crisis management models, it should also be taken into account that in Germany more emphasis was placed on joint decision-making, and in Serbia Vucic’s high degree of concentration of power contributes significantly to mitigating Brnabic’s roles as sovereign, enabler or symbol. The political leader is dependent, therefore, on the political system from which he originates, being more than the sum of his characteristics. It is also relevant that the roles of sovereign, facilitator or symbol stand out more in times of crisis, but will remain relevant afterwards, for post-crisis recovery.

Annexes

1. Angela Merkel

Type of speech	Date	Source
Press briefing	11.03.2020	In ‘Coronavirus: Germany’s Angela Merkel urges ‘solidarity and reason’, DW, https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-germanys-angela-merkel-urges-solidarity-and-reason/a-52719086
Press briefing	16.03.2020	https://www.bundeskanzler.de/bk-de/aktuelles/pressekonferenz-von-bundeskanzlerin-merkel-zu-massnahmen-der-bundesregierung-im-zusammenhang-mit-dem-coronavirus-1731022
Press briefing	17.03.2020	In ‘Merkel announces strict measures, tells Germans to stay home in virus fight’, France 24, https://www.france24.com/en/20200317-merkel-announces-strict-measures-and-tells-germans-to-stay-home-in-virus-fight
Address to the nation	18.03.2020	German Federal Government transcript: https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/coronavirus/statement-chancellor-1732296
Address to the nation	22.03.2020	Jacobs University transcript: https://www.jacobs-university.de/addressing-nation-regarding-coronavirus-speech-angela-merkel
Address to the nation	03.04.2020	Merkel sees ‘bit of hope’ amid pandemic, DW, https://www.dw.com/en/angela-merkel-sees-bit-of-hope-but-keeps-coronavirus-lockdown-in-place/a-53010223
Press briefing	09.04.2020	Merkel says no to ‘coronabonds’, Reuters, Merkel says no to ‘coronabonds’ Reuters
Press briefing	15.04.2020	Relying on science and politics, New York Times, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/15/world/europe/coronavirus-germany-merkel.html
Press briefing	20.04.2020	Merkel backs EU bonds to fight coronavirus crisis, Politico, https://www.politico.eu/article/coronavirus-angela-merkel-eu-bonds/

2. Ana Brnabic

Type of speech	Date	Source
Press briefing	16.03.2020	Serbian government: https://www.srbija.gov.rs/vest/en/151470/prime-minister-calls-on-citizens-to-act-more-responsibly.php
Press briefing	26.03.2020	Serbian PM: We defeated the pandemic with responsible measures, N1 Belgrade, https://n1info.rs/english/news/serbian-pm-we-defeated-the-pandemic-with-responsible-measures/
Press briefing	29.03.2020	Exclusive: Support from 'natural ally' China is saving lives, says Serbian PM, CGTN, https://news.seu.cgtn.com/news/2020-03-29/Support-from-natural-ally-China-is-saving-lives-says-Serbian-PM-PeDtjJI7m0/index.html
Press briefing	16.04.2020	https://en.vijesti.me/svijet/balkan/430738/branbic-ako-budemo-disciplinovani-srbija-ce-proglasiti-pobjedu
Press briefing	28.04.2020	Serbian government: https://www.srbija.gov.rs/vest/en/155265/serbia-effective-in-fighting-pandemic.php
Press briefing	22.05.2020	https://www.exitfest.org/en/serbias-pm-asked-exit-festival-not-to-cancel-but-instead-take-place-in-august-2020
Press briefing	30.06.2020	https://balkaninsight.com/2020/06/30/bosnian-serbian-rights-group-send-help-to-covid-19-hard-hit-sandzak-region/
Press briefing	12.07.2020	https://www.srbija.gov.rs/vest/en/158575/gatherings-pose-great-risk-for-spread-of-coronavirus.php

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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