

# From Serbia with Love: Verbal Representation of Russia in Serbian Society\*

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## 1. *Braća Rusi*

The title of this paper is of course a parody of the famous 007 movie title: *From Russia with Love* (1963). The adventure of 007 is no concern of our paper, but due to the title association we will start our discussion with a film, the main character of which is not Mr. James Bond, but the late Josip Broz Tito. The film entitled *Tito po drugi put medju Srbima* (Tito among the Serbs for the Second Time)<sup>1</sup> unfolds as follows. The late Josip Broz, observing the tragic situation of his Yugoslavia, decides to come back from another world to appear in the center of Belgrade and meet people. As a curious crowd gathers, he asks people what happened to *bratstvo i jedinstvo* (brotherhood and unity),<sup>2</sup> and who is guilty of

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1 Želimir Žilnik (Director), *B92 and Vans* (Production and Distribution), 1993, Yugoslavia.

2 “*Bratstvo i jedinstvo*” was the fundamental principle of the postwar multiethnic state of Yugoslavia.

causing all this tragedy: some accuse the West for having condoned the breakup of Yugoslavia, while others denounce Tito for not having nominated Milošević as his successor. Street-corner conversation between the Father of Yugoslavia and his ex-*drugarice i drugovi*<sup>3</sup> continues, then, after a while, there appears a scene with people chanting “Rusija, Rusija!” and a man holding a placard showing a message written in incorrect Serbian: “Hvala baći (should be ‘braći’) Rusima” (Thanks to our Russian brothers). Serbia was under international sanction for the violence in Bosnia when these nonfictive talks were filmed. Since few states, among which was Russia, were against isolating Serbia, the mentioned scene is likely to be assumed as an expression of Serbian gratitude to Russians and Russia. We should notice, however, that the word *braća* has the meaning of referring to those who belong to the same ethnic, social, or religious group<sup>4</sup> as well as its literal meaning of “men from same parents.” The phrase *braća Rusi*, therefore, is a coordination of words that could imply that Russians have a special kinship with Serbs.

*Braća Rusi* (literally “brother Russians”) is indeed one of the phrases, or clichés, favored by Serbs to refer to Russians. Other than *braća Rusi*, we also come across clichéd expressions like the “historical friendly relationship” of Serbia and Russia, which is particularly preferred in diplomatic discourses. For example, a Tanjug news flash on October 27, 2000, reported that in an interview with the Russian media on the occasion of his first visit to Moscow, the newly elected Serbian president Vojislav Koštunica insisted on the importance of the Russian-Serbian relationship as follows: “The relationship with Russia is for us Serbs especially important because of our historical and spiritual proximity, and also because of the fact that Russia has always been with

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3 “Friends” (feminine) and “friends” (masculine). “Drug, Drugarica” was used to address citizens like the Russian “tovarishch.”

4 For the Serbian definition, see Mihailo Stevanović et al., eds., *Rečnik srpskohrvatskog književnog i narodnog jezika*, Knjiga 2 (Beograd: Srpska Akademija Nauka i Umetnosti, 1962), p. 111.

us during the last several years of hardship we went through.”<sup>5</sup> Koštunica took the same opportunity to visit Russia to meet with Patriarch Aleksy II of the Russian Orthodox Church, and is reported to have mentioned that his visit showed “how closely are connected our peoples and churches.”<sup>6</sup> Svetozar Marović, who had to be the last president of Serbia and Montenegro, also emphasized the significance of friendly relations between Russia and Serbia and Montenegro in his interview with the Russian ITAR-TASS and RIA NOVOSTI, stating that “new Russia and new Serbia and Montenegro will foster their traditional friendly and close relationship and enrich it with practical, bilateral, useful contents.”<sup>7</sup>

It is true that there have been centuries-old relations between Russians and Serbs. The Serbian clergy and monasteries received time and again material aid from the Russian Orthodox Church; ever since Ivan Grozny offered books to the Hilandar Monastery, “books from Russia have been continuously brought into Serbian monasteries.”<sup>8</sup> Material aid from *braća Rusi* must have served as invaluable spiritual support as well for orthodox believers living in Ottoman- and Hapsburg-ruled Serbia. It is well known in the history of the Serbian language that Slaveno-Serbski, a “new” Serbian literary language used in the eighteenth century, was forged under the strong influence of Russian Church Slavic language. Growing interest in Russian culture, especially in its literature, can be found from the epoch of Serbian national awakening early in the nineteenth century. *Serbski letopis* (later *Letopis Matice srpske*), the oldest Serbian literary journal, for example, published a brief article on Russian literature in its first issue in 1825, and asserted that the

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5 [http://www.suc.org/news/tanjug/b271000\_s.html] (translation is mine) (accessed October 30, 2006).

6 Retrieved from [http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/mainnews001027.htm] (accessed October 7, 2006).

7 Retrieved from [http://www.predsednik.gov.yu/press/vest.php?id=958] (accessed May 8, 2005).

8 Miloslav Krleža, et al., eds., *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, vol. 7 (Zagreb: Jugoslaven-ski leksikografski zavod, 1968), p. 463.

journal's aim consists of, among others, introducing Russian and other Slavic literature to Serbian readers. In diplomatic relations throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries up to the latest Kosovo war, Russia has been engaged on many occasions as a protector, a mediator, or sometimes as an interferer for the Serbs and Serbia.

Thus, the existence of Russia, its cultural, diplomatic, and other social influences on the formation of Serbian history is undeniably significant, and for those who know such historical background, it may not be difficult to understand why clichés like the “historical relationship of Russia and Serbia” and the Russofilic expression of *braća Rusi* are favored in Serbian speech. However, to say that “the two are on a friendly terms,” especially in diplomatic language, is one thing; to believe that they are actually so in the real world is another. In the following sections, we will examine how Serbs see Russia and Russians from the angle of verbal behavior, or, to be more precise, from the data of word association.

## 2. Word Association and *Rusi*

### 2.1. Free word association

Words are, as most contemporary linguistic researchers agree, not stored unrelated to each other in our knowledge of language, or, using a cognitive and psycholinguistic term, in our mental lexicon, but placed in structured networks in which words are multiply linked to other words and the concepts behind them.<sup>9</sup> Some words are linked more tightly than others in the word network: by “more tightly,” we mean that, for example, a word is likely to be used particularly frequently in combination with other words in syntactic or phrasal construction, or a conceptual representation of one word has semantic or pragmatic relatedness with

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9 For models of the mental lexicon, see ex. ABE Junichi, MOMOUCHI Yoshio, KANEKO Yasuo, and I Kano, “Ningenno Gengojojoshori: Gengorikaino Nintchikagaku” [Human Language Information Processing], *Cognitive Science & Information Processing* 12 (Saiensusha, 1994), p. 61ff.

another conceptual representation that another word conventionally conveys, and as a result, these two words are felt to be more closely connected than other words in speech activity. Such connections between words are verbalized to form word association: the term “association” in the psychological tradition denotes a “relation between ideas, concepts, or words, which exists in the human mind and manifests in a following way: an appearance of an entity entails the appearance of the other in the mind.”<sup>10</sup> One experimental technique to draw up a word association pattern is the free word association test (FWA test hereafter). Generally, it is an experiment in which subjects are requested to give a word or a phrase that first comes to mind when presented a stimulus word.<sup>11</sup> It would be too simplistic, as Aitchison expresses sceptically,<sup>12</sup> to maintain that FWA should be a reflection of an architecture of a word network in our mind, and that one could obtain what is called a “mental lexicon” simply by testing and analyzing word association patterns. But before noting further what kind of association the FWA test can reveal, let us look at two previous works: Marchall and Cofer,<sup>13</sup> and *Русский ассоциативный словарь*.<sup>14</sup>

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10 Anna Sinopalnikova, “Word Association Thesaurus As a Resource for Building WordNet,” in Petr Sojka, Karel Pala, Pavel Smrž, Christiane Fellbaum and Piek Vossen, eds., *GWC 2004, Proceedings* (Brno: Masaryk University, 2003), pp. 199–205, here, p. 199.

11 For recent works, see Kenneth Ward Church and Patrick Hanks, “Word Association Norms, Mutual Information, and Lexicography,” *Computational Linguistics* 16, no. 1 (March, 1990), pp. 22–29; Iurii Nikolaevich Karaulov, et al., *Russkii assotsiativnyi slovar’*. Tom 1. Ot stimula k reaktivii okolo 7000 stimulov (Moscow, 2002).

12 Jean Aitchison, *Words in the Mind: An Introduction to the Mental Lexicon* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp. 73–74.

13 George R. Marshall and Charles N. Cofer, “Single Word Free-association Norms for 328 Responses from the Connecticut Cultural Norms for Verbal Items in Categories,” in Leo Postman and Geoffrey Keppel, eds., *Norms of Word Association* (New York: Academic Press, 1970), pp. 321–360, here, p. 330.

14 Karaulov et al., *Russkii assotsiativnyi slovar’*, p. 561.

Table 1 represents the result of responses to the stimulus “Russia”; column A shows the result of American students, tested in 1961, and B reflects the Russian students’ responses, tested in the years from 1988 to 1997.

**Table 1 American and Russian responses to the stimulus *Russia/Россия***

rank	A		B	
	Americans, 1961	total (/98)	Russians, 1988–1997	total (/109)
1	country	28	страна (country)	23
2	communist	7	родина (homeland)	16
3	red	7	мать (mother)	8
4	United States	6	молодая (young)	7
5	Khrushchev	5	матушка (mother)	5
6	communism	4	наша (our)	3
7	Asia	3	флаг (flag)	
8	bad, big, mean, peasant(s), snow, Soviet, U.S.S.R	2	великая (great), государство (state)	2
10			березка, беспредел, больная, большая, будущее, величие, гордость, гостиница, Грузия, Ельцин, лес, Москва, простор, Русь, СНГ, телевизор, терпение, итд.	1
15	adversary, bombs, China, communistic, dark, death, dirt, Europe, evil, freedom, Germany, hammer and sickle, king, large, nation, “net,” old, people, samivar, Siberia, strange, study, war, why	1		

Aitchison points four types of word association a FWA test may reveal.<sup>15</sup> These are: coordination, collocation, superordination, and synonymy. Coordination is a type of association in which words “cluster together at the same level of detail, such as *salt* and *pepper*, *butterfly* and *moth*, or opposites such as *left* and *right*.” Collocation is a linkage of words that are “collocated,” like *salt water*, or *butterfly net*. Superordination is a relation observed between hypernym and hyponym, such as *animal* to *dog*. Let us apply this classification to the results of the tests referred to above.

In spite of the differences of time and place wherein the experiments were performed, the most frequent association with the stimulus “Russia” is “country” in both researches. The word “country” is a class noun for such proper nouns as “Russia,” “America,” and “China”; therefore the association of “country” with “Russia” is what Aitchison names superordination. The other, less frequent, American responses can be mainly divided into two groups: one is associated with the communist state of the USSR and its threat in international relations (*communism*, *communists*, *Khruscev*; *adversary*, *evil*, *bad*, etc.), and other is linked with spatial or cultural images of Russia (*big*, *large*; *snow*, *peasants*, *samivar*). In the responses of contemporary young Russians to *Россия*, on the contrary, adversative responses are scarce (for example, one response was *больная* [sick]), and many of the responses imply a sense of belonging to their own country (*родина*, *наша*). We could classify not all but many of these responses into one of Aitchison’s types. For instance, American responses to “United States, Asia, China, Soviet” belong to the coordination type; Russian responses of “*мать*, *матушка*, *наша*, *великая*” are collocation. “U.S.S.R., Soviet” are the synonymy type of responses. What we should notice here is, however, that many of the responses are culturally specific: American associations of “bad, mean, dark, evil,” apparently connected to Russian-Soviet images that American society of the 1960s held, are not likely to appear among Rus-

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15 Aitchison, *Words in the Mind*, pp. 74–75.

sian subjects in the 1990s; Russian responses of “матушка, наша, великая,” vice versa, would be the last responses to appear among American associations with “Russia.” In this respect, Kalaulov is correct; he pointed out in his study of Russian word association that FWA of Russians discloses, among others, the “most characteristic connections of words that reflect the features of Russian culture.”<sup>16</sup> We should add here that culturally dependent associations are multilayered: some associations are used in a mundane manner in daily social life, and such associations, that is, collocations that people frequently hear, see, or practice in daily conversation and writing, are likely to be easily retrieved in an FWA test. They may be related to a deeper layer of the culture and history of the subjects’ community, but some of them may not be; they can be just temporary reflections of what is topical in the society at the time. To put it the other way round, responses to an FWA test may reveal active aspects of the language performance of the society.

Based on these assumptions, let us proceed to an observation of Serbian word association.

## 2.2. Asociativni rečnik srpskog jezika (2005)<sup>17</sup> and its data

### 2.2.1. Description of the dictionary

*Asociativni rečnik srpskog jezika* (Associative Dictionary of the Serbian Language, henceforth ADS) is based on data of FWA tests, carried out in the years of 2003/04 at several faculties and high schools in Belgrade and other cities in Serbia: each subject is given a hundred words, and he/she is requested to give in cir. ten minutes the first word or phrase that comes to mind with each stimulus. Thus, the stimuli used in the tests compose the dictionary entries, and after each entry are listed responses in order of frequency. What is characteristic of ADS is that some topical

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16 Karaulov et al., *Russkii assosiativnyi slovar'*, p. 9.

17 Predrag Piper, Rajna Dragučević and Marija Stefanović, *Asocijativni rečnik srpskoga jezika* (Beograd: Beogradska knjiga, Službeni list SCG, Filološki fakultet u Beogradu, 2005).



terms, such as *NATO*, *HAG* (The Hague), and *Milošević* are included, so that the responses can be used for study of social psychology and political sociology to examine how the young generation is affected by the Yugoslav-Kosovo wars.

Among the entries are ethnonyms in ADS, which are our concern in this paper; they are all in plural form: *Rusi* (Russians), *Amerikanci* (Americans), *Englezi* (the English), *Francuzi* (the French), *Nemci* (Germans), *Hrvati* (Croats), *Bošnjaci* (Bosnians), *Crnogorci* (Montenegrins), *Srbi* (Serbs). These words are, together with other stimuli, tested by eight hundred subjects: cir. 80 percent of them are university students, among which 70 percent attend faculties of human and social sciences. The ratio of males to females among the total subjects is cir. 2:8.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.2.2. Ease and diversity of responses

Let us examine first how easily *Rusi* can be linked to other words, and how diverse its association is. Table 2 represents the response pattern to *Rusi* compared with other ethnonyms: column (A) shows the number of received responses to the stimuli; (B) shows their percentage in a total of eight hundred subjects; (C) and (D) are the total number of response types, and the number of single response with the percentage, respec-

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18 The structure of subjects of this experiment might look disproportionate, and that might make one suspect the validity of the data: if the subjects were older with more practical experience of life, responses would show a more or less different distribution. However, knowledge of language as well as knowledge of the world that school pupils and students possess are built up through their life environment, including education, daily communication with family and community members, and various information provided mainly by the media. Then, we should be allowed to expect that responses of the younger generation more than probably represent the verbal practice and world view of the language community that the subjects belong to. The biased ratio between male and female subjects cannot be as crucial as it might seem for the same reason mentioned above: all subjects have less practice in the real world, are provided with the almost same level of education, and are exposed to same or similar social and cultural information. Difference in responses would manifest itself in such a way that, for example, responses related to sports might be more frequent if there were more male subjects.

tively. The premise here is that if a stimulus is responded to by more subjects, it would mean that it is easier for the given stimulus to be associated with something than those stimuli that received fewer responses, and if the responses are less diverse, then the stimulus-response association is to be understood as more stable.

**Table 2: The response type of *Rusi*, compared with other ethnonyms**

	A	B (%)	C	D
<i>Rusi</i>	663	83	268	199 (30%)
<i>Amerikanci</i>	740	93	359	256 (35%)
<i>Nemci</i>	718	90	253	179 (25%)
<i>Francuzi</i>	654	82	272	192 (29%)
<i>Englezi</i>	746	93	266	202 (27%)
<i>Hrvati</i>	713	89	250	180 (25%)
<i>Bošnjaci</i>	585	73	236	190 (33%)
<i>Crnogorci</i>	756	95	266	196 (26%)
<i>Srbi</i>	738	93	292	232 (31%)

A: total number of responses; B:  $A/800$  (%);

C: number of response types; D: single response and its ratio ( $D/A$ )

### 2.2.3. The most frequent responses

The three most frequent responses to each ethnonym are listed in Table 3. Responses that appear in both singular and plural forms (*glup/i* and *braća/brat*) are counted together.

**Table 3: The three most frequent responses to the ethnonyms**

Stimuli	rank 1	rank 2	rank 3	1+2+3/total
<i>Rusi</i>	<i>votka</i> (votka) 70	<i>narod</i> (nation) 50	<i>braća/brat</i> 38 (brother/s)	158/663 (24%)
<i>Amerikanci</i>	<i>glup/i</i> (foolish) 28	<i>narod</i> 24	<i>NATO</i> 22	74/740 (10%)
<i>Nemci</i>	<i>narod</i> 51	<i>rat</i> (war) 51	<i>Hitler</i> 41	143/718 (20%)
<i>Francuzi</i>	<i>Pariz</i> 63	<i>narod</i> 54	<i>vino</i> (wine) 31	148/654 (23%)
<i>Englezi</i>	<i>čaj</i> (tea) 81	<i>narod</i> 45	<i>kiša</i> (rain) 29	155/746 (21%)
<i>Hrvati</i>	<i>narod</i> 72	<i>ustaše</i> (ustashas) 39	<i>rat</i> (war) 31	132/713 (19%)
<i>Bošnjaci</i>	<i>narod</i> 68	<i>muslimani</i> 60 (Muslims)	<i>Bosna</i> 48	176/585 (30%)
<i>Crnogorci</i>	<i>lenost</i> (laziness) 94	<i>more</i> (sea) 82	<i>narod</i> 43	219/756 (29%)
<i>Srbi</i>	<i>narod</i> 164	<i>mi</i> (we) 47	<i>ljudi</i> (people) 34	145/738 (20%)

## 2.2.4. Words in the responses

More detailed results of *Rusi*, *Amerikanci*, *Nemci*, and *Hrvati*, namely the ten most frequent responses to which, are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: The ten most frequent responses to *Rusi* and other three ethnonyms**

stim.	<i>Rusi</i>		<i>Amerikanci</i>		<i>Nemci</i>		<i>Hrvati</i>	
rank	res.	num.	responses	num.	responses	num.	responses	num
1	<i>votka</i>	70	<i>glup/i</i> (foolish)	28 (5/23)	<i>narod</i>	51	<i>narod</i>	72
2	<i>narod</i>	50	<i>narod</i>	23	<i>rat</i>	51	<i>ustaše</i>	39
3	<i>braća/brat</i>	38 (36/2)	<i>NATO</i>	22	<i>Hitler</i>	41	<i>Srbi</i>	32
4	<i>Rusija</i>	28	<i>bombardovanje</i> (bombardment)	21	<i>plavi/o</i> (blonde)	26 (19/7)	<i>rat</i>	31
5	<i>Moskva</i>	25	<i>debeli/o</i> (fat)	20	<i>Švabe</i>	23	<i>more</i> (sea)	30
6	<i>zima</i> (winter)	22	<i>Amerika</i>	16	<i>fašisti</i>	22	<i>ljudi</i>	29
7	<i>ljudi</i>	14	<i>glupost</i> (foolishness)	15	<i>Nemačka</i> (Germany)	22	<i>susedi</i> (neighbors)	27
8	<i>Sloveni</i> (Slavs)	13	<i>ljudi</i>	12	<i>ljudi</i>	21	<i>braća</i>	23
9	<i>Sibir</i> (Siberia)	12	<i>zlo</i> (evil)	11	<i>II svetski</i> <i>rat</i> (W. W. II)	18	<i>mržnja</i> (hatred)	23
10	<i>prijatelj/i</i> (friend/s)	11 (9/2)	<i>hamburger</i>	10	<i>nacisti</i> (Nazis)	15	<i>Hrvatska</i> (Croatia)	17
			<i>rat</i>	10				

### 3. Analysis

Data on ease and diversity (Table 2, 3) show that *Rusi* receives a response ratio of 83 percent, which is, together with *Francuzi* (82 percent), lowest among the mentioned ethnonyms, except for *Bošnjaci*, but, again in a similar way as *Francuzi*, is associated with fewer types of responses than *Amerikanci* and even *Srbi*, in that the ratio of a single response to *Rusi* is 30 percent and to *Francuzi*, 29 percent, while 35 percent of responses to *Amerikanci* and 33 percent of those to *Bošnjaci* occur only one time. Compared with *Amerikanci*, thus, we can state that *Rusi* evokes a smaller number of and less diverse types of answers, and *Amerikanci* shows an opposite response pattern. The same tendency can be observed in the proportion of the three most frequent responses to total responses in that the number of the three most frequent responses to *Rusi* accounts for one quarter of its total responses, while the proportion of the three most associated responses to *Amerikanci* is at most 10 percent.<sup>19</sup> To put it differently, for young Serbs, *Rusi* is a word more difficult to associate with something than *Amerikanci*, but once associated, its association pattern is less diverse, or reversely, more stable.

This result is suggestive in considering how Russians and Russia are existent in Serbian communities as of today. As we have mentioned in the first part of this paper, Russia has been and is involved, from its early history to contemporary political matters, in Serbia, and as the data of ADS prove, memories of this relationship have been compiled and recorded in the store of language of the Serbs. However, various actual as well as virtual aspects of Russian culture are not so accessible or familiar to the Serbian public as historical and diplomatic discourses pretend to show. Ordinary Serbs' knowledge about Russians is mainly indirect, shaped through school textbooks and media information. It is therefore conceivable that, on one hand, for a young Serb who has little concern

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19 We should be note that this is a simple addition of the types that appear. If synonymous words, or at least cognates, are counted together, the ratio of the "three most frequent response groups" will change slightly.

about Russia, it is likely to be difficult to think of any words or phrases that would be connected to Russians without contemplation. On the other hand, associations with *Rusi* range within a restricted number of words that are retrievable, and that appear relatively frequently in historical and/or media discourses. Contrarily, *Amerikanci*, or U.S.A., has a less close relationship with Serbia than Russia does in history, and the data of ADS suggest that the recent Kosovo war is the most influential factor in the formation of associations with *Amerikanci*. Nonetheless, American mass culture such as movies and rock music, as well as fast-food industries represented by MacDonaldis and KFC, must be far closer than the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church to the young Serbian generation. Such fragments of American culture surrounding subjects are likely to make associations with Americans faster, but superficial and therefore diverse at one and the same time.

Let us turn to what is more interesting and significant for our concern here, namely the responses themselves. Especially prominent is that Serbian subjects give many more responses with a favorable meaning than those with a negative or adverse meaning to *Rusi*. This tendency can be recognized more clearly when compared with responses to *Amerikanci*, *Nemci*, and *Hrvati*.

Table 5 below lists the responses given to the said ethnonyms: responses with a favorable meaning are presented in the left-hand column, those with an adverse meaning are in the right-hand column; R, A, N, H, S are for *Rusi*, *Amerikanci*, *Nemci*, *Hrvati*, and *Srbi*, respectively, and the numbers after these uppercase abbreviations represent the frequency of each item.

Responses with favorable implication (*prijatelj/i*, *braća/brat*, *dobri*, *prijateljstvo*, *ljubav*)<sup>20</sup> belong almost exclusively to *Rusi*; *Amerikanci* is reacted to most frequently with contempt (*glup/i*, *glupost*, *idioti*), and the

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20 *Braća* is tentatively treated here as belonging to the group of words with a favorable implication, ignoring the fact that the word *braća* per se can be interpreted as having neutral, favorable, or adverse implication according to the collocation and context it is used in. On interpretation of *braća Rusi*, see the following section 4.

words associated with the Yugoslav/Kosovo wars (*bombardovanje, bombe/a, NATO*) follow. *Nemci* is strongly associated with the memory of World War II (*Hitler, fašisti, nacisti, II svetski rat*), but together with *Hrvati*, is also associated with hostility and hatred (*neprijatelj/i, mržnja, rat*).

It would be an oversimplification to maintain that the frequent associations of *prijatelj/i* and *braća* with *Rusi* mirror the subjects' "brotherly feelings" toward Russia/Russians: the same response *braća* is given to *Hrvati* 23 times, too, but the latter is also associated with *mržnja* (hatred) as frequently as *braća*. A favorable attitude to *Rusi*, however, can be assured by the fact that negative evidence is rarely found: "negative evidence" here means such responses that would deny the favorable attitude of subjects. To *Rusi*, only one occurrence of response *neprijatelj* is found; other responses, such as *mafijaši* (the Mafia), *širomaštvo* (poverty), and *propast* (ruin, disaster), each of which appears two times, would have different negative meanings from *neprijatelj/i* (enemy/ies) or *mržnja*.

**Table 5: Responses with favorable and adverse meaning**

favorable	adverse
<p><i>prijatelj/i</i> (friend/s) R11  <i>prijateljstvo</i> (friendship) R3  <i>braća/brat</i> (brother/s) R38, H23, S7  <i>bratstvo</i> (brotherhood) R2  <i>naši</i> (ours) R 3; <i>moji</i> (my) R 2</p>	<p><i>neprijatelj/i</i> (enemy/ies) A9, H8, N4  <i>ubice</i> (killers) A4, H6, N3</p>
<p><i>dobri</i> (good) R3  <i>dobri ljudi</i> (good people) R2, S3</p>	<p><i>loše</i> (bad) A3, H4  <i>loši ljudi</i> (bad people) H2  <i>zlo</i> (evil) A11, H5</p>
<p><i>ljubav</i> (love) R2, S5  <i>duša</i> (soul) R4</p>	<p><i>mržnja</i> (hatred) A3, H23, N4  <i>glup/i</i> (foolish) A28; <i>glupači</i> (fools) A3  <i>glupost</i> (foolishness)S3  <i>budale</i> (fools) A6, S2; <i>idiot/i</i> A3</p>

The nonexistence of negative evidence is also confirmed by examining the data in reverse. For example, the stimulus *neprijatelj* is not associated with *Rus/i* or *Rusija* at all, but is with *Nemci* (rank 11 *neprijatelj*, seven occurrences), *Albanci* (Albanians), and *Amerikanci* (both rank 32, two occurrences). To the stimulus *mržnja*, too, no subject responded *Rusi*, but five subjects responded *Šiptari/Albanci* and two subjects, *Hrvati* and *Amerika/Amerikanci*, respectively.

At the same time, however, we must pay attention to the fact that *Rusi* is not given as a response to *prijatelj*. In the case of *Crnogorci*, for instance, it is very frequently responded to with *lenjost* (laziness) (see Table 3 above), and to the stimulus in adjectival form *lenj* (lazy, slow), as many as twenty-two subjects (rank 5) responded *Crnogorci*. Thus, the association of *Crnogorci* and “lazy” can be understood bilaterally, stable in the semantic network of Serbs. In this regard, the association of *Rusi* and *prijatelj* is unilateral and passive: if *Rusi* is given as a stimulus, one may think of *prijatelj*, but the reverse does not hold true.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. *Braća Rusi* again

The ADS data proves that the association of *braća* with *Rusi* is well embedded in contemporary Serbian language. How can this result be interpreted? Should we read any special meaning into this association? One solution may be that it mirrors in any way the affinity and sense of closeness of young Serbs to Russians, regarding the meaning inherent in the word *braća* as was mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Another assumption is likely to be that it merely shows that there is a collocation of *braća Rusi* in Serbian, which bears no special implication, as is the case for the association of *ruska* with *salata*.<sup>22</sup> The latter interpretation seems to be the hardest to support, as the word association itself hardly reveals implicational relation that could exist behind it. However, in

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21 For stimuli that evoke *Rusi*, along with *Rusija*, *ruski*, see APPENDIX.

22 See APPENDIX.



view of the overall favorable responses to *Rusi* of Serbian subjects, we could be incorrect if we refute the possibility that the word *braća* in association with *Rusi* bears an implication of affinity or familiarity.

The phrase *braća Rusi*, however, is used differently in daily discourse. For example, a columnist of *Danas*, a popular Serbian daily newspaper, describing the severe economic conditions in Serbia, says: “According to the official figures and propaganda of the Kremlin (at the time of the USSR), the Soviet outstripped USA and UK, but if you looked at real life, citizens were living at the lowest pitch of poverty... We began to imitate *braća Rusi*. The better go things for the State, the worse for people.”<sup>23</sup> Another journalist, in his remarks on Serbs in Kosovo, expresses his distrust in the policies of the Serbian government and states that “the policies of Belgrade in relation to the Serbs in Kosovo remind me of the position of Russia to their Slavic brothers, Serbs.” According to the writer, “*Braća Rusi* left us Serbs ‘in the strainer’ [in the lurch] whenever the situation became serious.”<sup>24</sup> A reader writes to the Internet version of B92 news on the gas supply affair at the beginning of this year: “*Braća Rusi*, when they should have protected us, when we were bombarded, and when they should supply us with gas this winter to help us, they are never there.”<sup>25</sup>

The sarcastic uses of *braća Rusi* illustrated above are especially notable in political in recent media discourses, where *braća Rusi* is used as a metonymic expression for the political entity of Russia, and is not only the attitude of the media. Serbian society’s disbelief in solidarity with Russia is represented, for illustration, in a poll conducted and published by Serbian sociologists in January 2000. As is presented in Table 6, in spite of this being only several months after the Kosovo war and the

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23 *Danas*, December 6, 2005 [<http://www.danas.co.yu/>].

24 *Republika, glasilo građanskog oslobadjanje* no. 300/301 (January 2003), [<http://www.republika.co.yu/>].

25 “Dočekati kraj zime, duge i hladne,” *B92*, February 3, 2006 [[http://www.b92.net/info/vas\\_komentar.php?nav\\_id=187370](http://www.b92.net/info/vas_komentar.php?nav_id=187370)].

**Table 6: The result of a poll in January 2000<sup>26</sup>**

For integration with:	
EU	48%
Russia	8%
USA	4%
China	3%

NATO attack on Serbia, and Serbia still being under the rule of Milošević, nearly 50 percent of those surveyed answered that Serbia should be integrated into the EU, an organization inextricably tied to NATO, while only 8 percent supported a Serbian alliance with Russia.

What have we observed so far? In a simple expression, it is the ambivalent attitude of Serbs to *braća Rusi*. Let us put it as follows. On one hand, Russians are *braća* and *prijatelji* in the word association of Serbian subjects, and this confirms the historical fact that Russians have been considered as brothers and friends on many occasions in the past, for we assume that, imitating the old saying, there is no expression without historical reasons. Another factor that may influence the association responses that show affinity to Russians is in that the association test used as material for the *Association Dictionary of the Serbian Language* was carried out in 2003/4, that is, when the experiences of the Yugoslav/Kosovo wars, especially the NATO bombardments, were still fresh in subjects' memory. It is irrefutable that word association was influenced by all these events in which Russia expressed opposition to the international sanctions against Serbia and opposed the NATO air attack on Serbia. On the other hand, Serbs as of today are rather sceptical about Russia's being *braća* in their real world. There may be, of course, such Serbs who, probably due to their political position, believe that Russia will finally be their "Messiah." Those who gathered at the funeral of Milošević, held in Belgrade, March 18 this year, and chanted "Rusija,

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26 Adapted from *Vreme*, no. 473, January 29, 2000, p. 19.

Rusija” may belong to such people. But those people appear to be the few, while many Serbs think that the state Russia cannot be their eventual partner.

Looking back to history, one is likely to remember that this ambivalent attitude of Serbia to Russia is not new. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Serbs were grateful to receive material support from promoters of Russian Pan-Slavism, namely, from the Slavic Benevolent Committees, and enjoyed the backing of *braća Rusi*. Once it was noticed, however, that the Russian Slavophiles aimed at the political unity of the Slavs under the ruling leadership of Russia, Serbs became wary, even critical, of the movement of Russians.<sup>27</sup> In sum, Russia has been a reliable brother as far as it would offer support and solidarity to Serbia and advocate Serbian legitimacy, but has never been such a brother as to whom unyielding, self-reliant Serbs would entrust their destiny.

## APPENDIX

**Table A: The stimuli associated with *Rusija*, *Rusi*, and *ruski***

Stimuli	Responses	rank	frequency /total res.
<i>Moskva</i>	<i>Rusija</i>	1	228 /778
<i>salata</i> (salad)	<i>ruska</i> (russian, f.sg.)	3	84/780
<i>istok</i> (east)	<i>Rusija</i>	2	64/789
<i>sever</i> (north)	<i>Rusija</i>	23	4/782
<i>crveni</i> (red)	<i>Rusi</i>	24	7/728

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27 Serbian-Russian relations in light of the Pan-Slavic movement in the second half of the nineteenth century are outlined in Krleža et al., *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, p. 478.

Table A shows the stimuli that evoke *Rusija*, *Rusi*, and *ruski* as a response more than multiple times. The response *ruski* to the stimulus *salata* comes from “ruska salata,” a kind of salad of diced vegetables and sometimes meats bound in mayonnaise. According to Wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian\\_salad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_salad)), *ruska salata*, or “salade russe,” was invented by M. Olivier, the chef of the Hermitage Restaurant in Moscow, in the late nineteenth century.

The frequent response of *Rusija* to the stimulus *istok* should be noted; it is the second most frequent association next to *zapad* (west), and other frequent responses to *istok* after *Rusija* are: *sunce* (sun) (37), *Kina* (China) (28), *strana sveta* (direction of the world) (17), and *Japan* (10). For Serbs, Russia seems to be more “east” than China and Japan.