

Analysis of narratives created around political actors in the National Assembly of Serbia

July 2021.

Political context

Majority of opposition parties **boycotted** the June 2020 parliamentary elections.

Least pluralistic parliament since 1990 - three lists, composed of ruling parties, above the threshold (3%):

Aleksandar Vučić – For our children

Ivica Dačić – SPS, JS – Dragan Markovic Palma

Aleksandar Šapić – Victory for Serbia (SPAS)

+ Four minority lists also won parliamentary seats:

The Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians

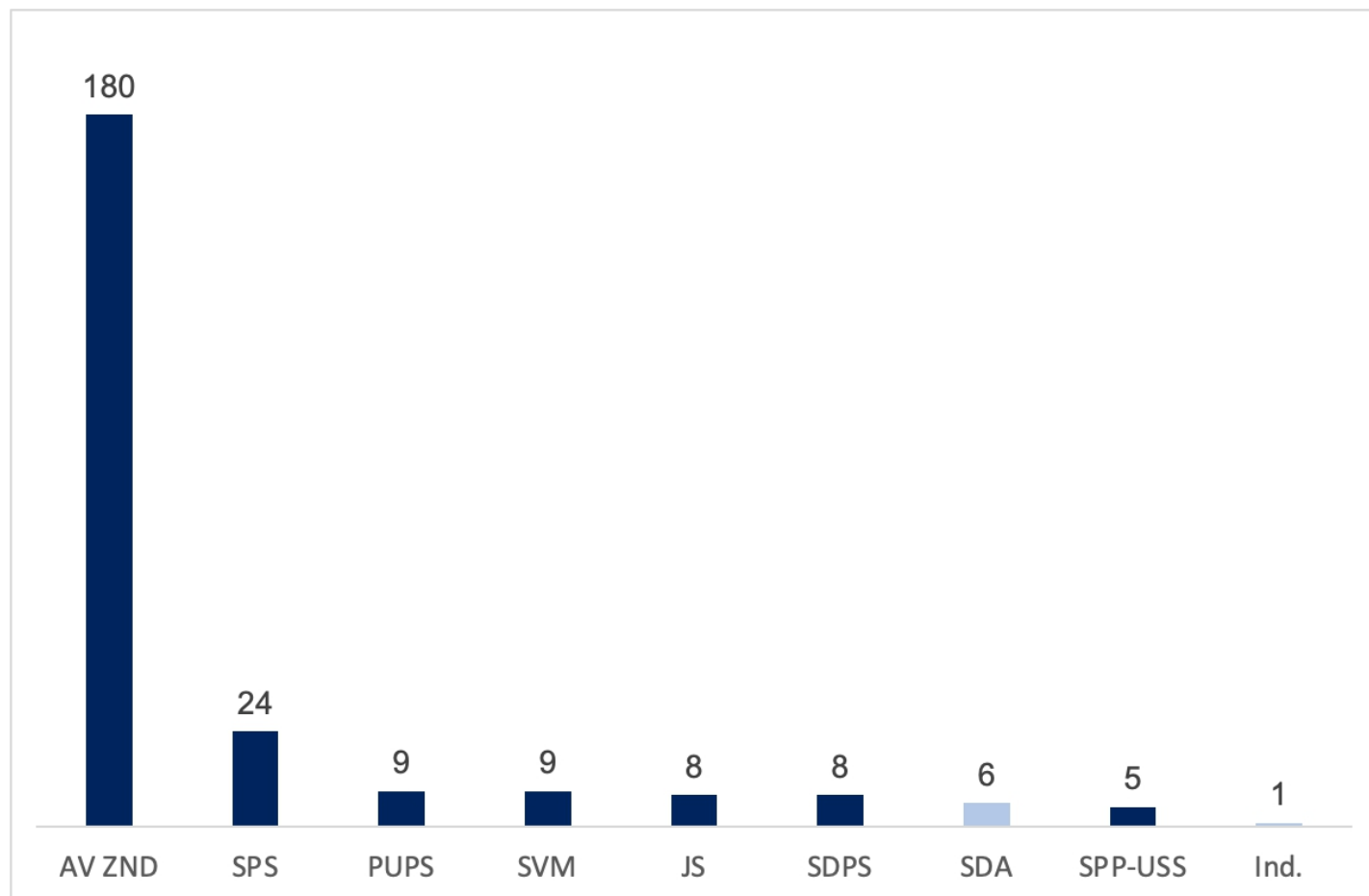
M. Zukorlić – Straight Ahead – SPP, Dem. Party of Macedonians (DPM)

SDA Sandžak - Dr. Sulejman Ugljanin

The Albanian Democratic Alternative – United Valley

Despite the clear majority, formation of the Parliament lasted 80 days - on the verge of legal deadlines.

Structure



97% of MPs belong to the ruling majority.

Seven parliamentary groups support the government.

Current parliamentary opposition consists of only 7 out of 250 MPs.

20 parliamentary committees are presided exclusively by the members of the ruling majority.

Efficiency without deliberation

Sittings scheduled on time

Urgent procedure minimized – from 36% to **3%**

Filibustering minimised

The MPs ask questions to the executive every last Thursday in month

Public hearings organized more frequently

Limited improvements in adherence to the Rules of Procedure and more frequent meetings of the Collegium also recorded

Code of Conduct for MPs adopted after a decade long delay

Government is dominant law-maker (98%)

81% of laws adopted without a single amendment

Laws adopted without any discussion, unanimous voting

38% of committee sessions last 10 minutes or less

Lack of engagement with the public and transparent decision-making (such was the appointment of Commissioner for Equality)

Inflammatory language and hate speech

The Speaker of Parliament did not use Rules of Procedures to establish order and sanction MPs who behaved inappropriately.

Methodology

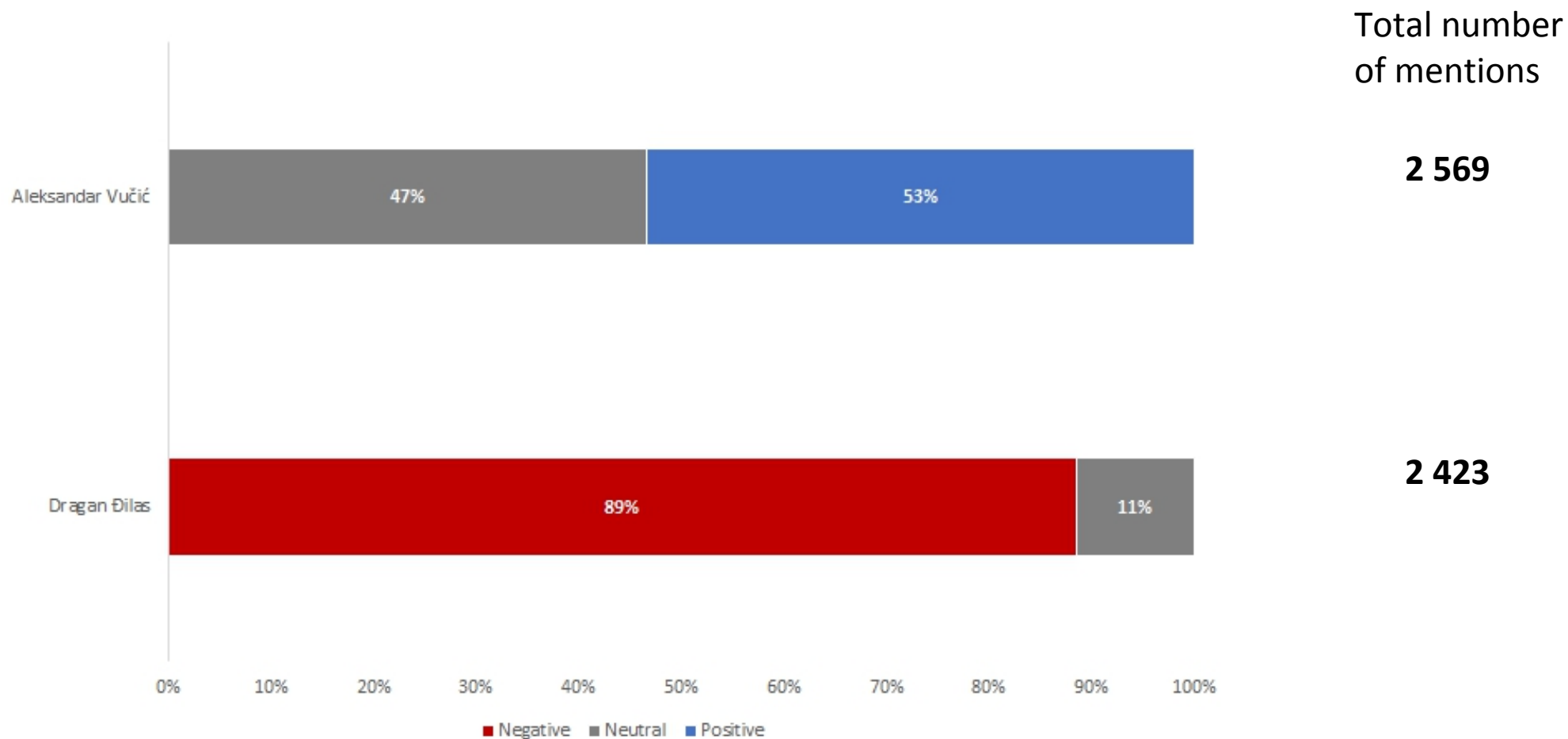
- **Monitoring period:** March 2 2021 – May 27 2021, during which 13 sessions of the National Assembly of Serbia were held
- **Focus of analysis:** MP speeches in the plenary
- **Unit of analysis:** Mentions of individuals (actors) who are representatives of the ruling majority, the opposition, or other social or political areas (the media, civil society, culture, academics, expert community etc)
- **Analyzed sample:** 749 MP speeches during which at least one of the actors was mentioned

Aleksandar Vučić (2,569) and Dragan Đilas (2,423) were the two most frequently mentioned actors in MP speeches



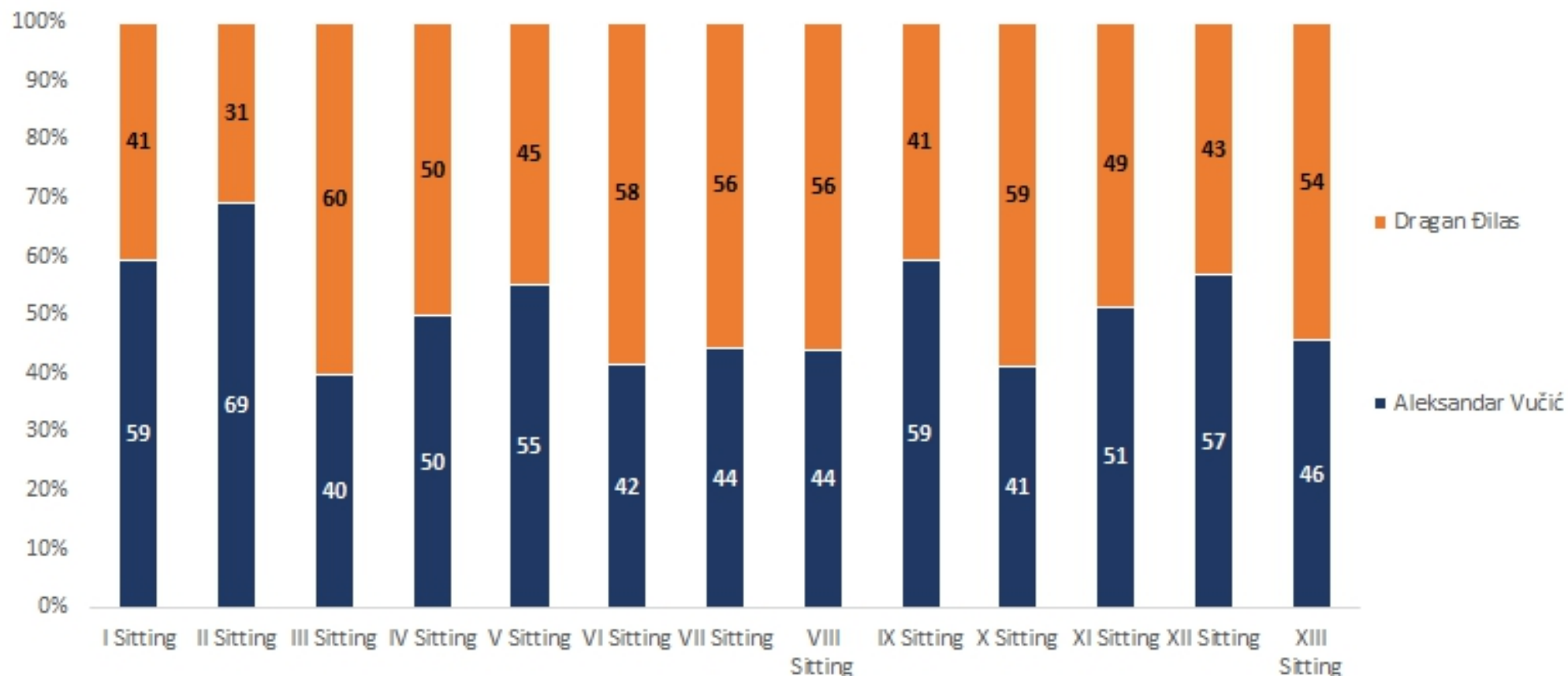
*Number of mentions in percentages

MPs mentioned President Vučić dominantly in a positive, followed by the neutral tone, but not even once negatively. Dragan Đilas was mentioned almost exclusively in a negative tone.

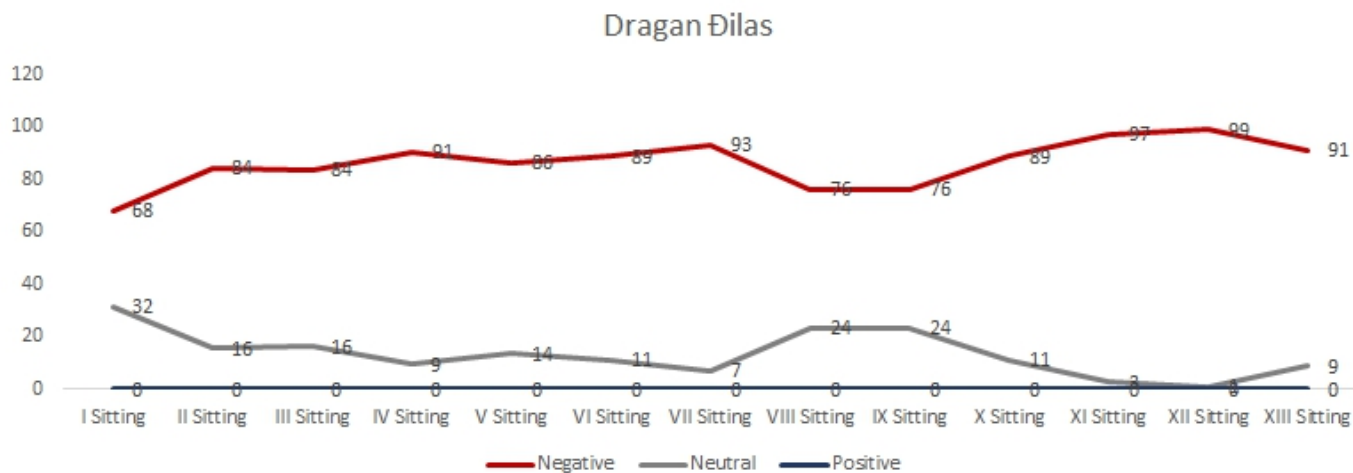
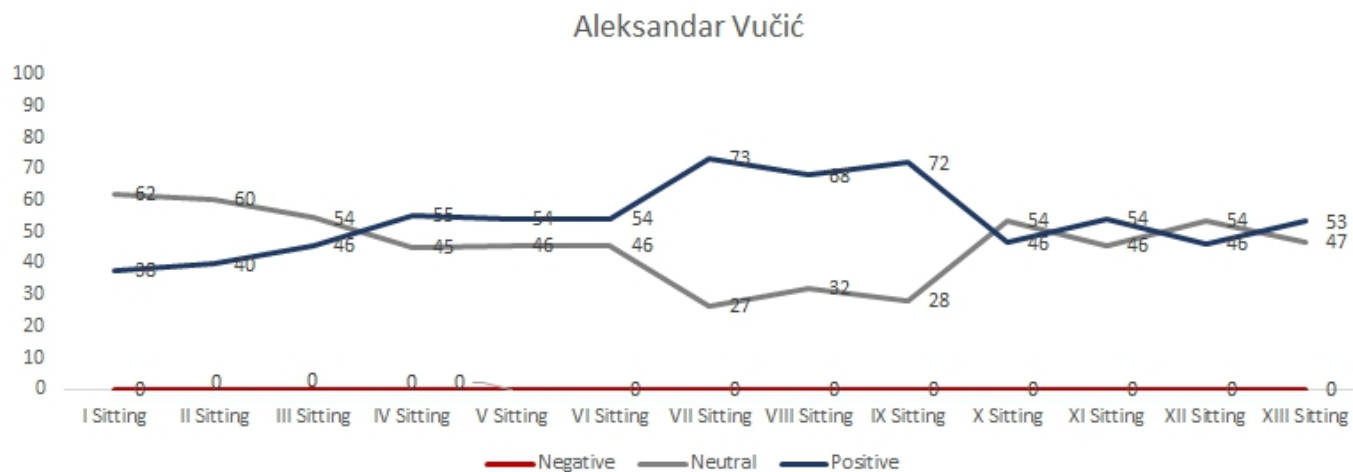


*Share of negative, neutral and positive tone within the total number of mentions of each actor, in percentages

The frequency of mentions varied, depending on the sitting; Vučić was most frequently mentioned during the second, first, and ninth sitting, while Đilas was most mentioned during the third and tenth sitting



President Vučić was mentioned mostly positively between the fourth and the ninth sitting, while Dragan Đilas was mentioned mostly negatively during the entire Spring session



*Number of mentions, in percentages

MP speeches - training ground for the election campaign

Opposed narratives created around the two most frequently mentioned actors in MP speeches

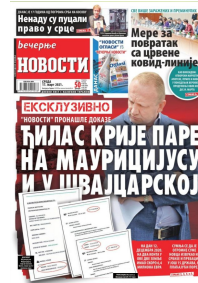
- Vučić was often mentioned along with the phrase “**thanks to Vučić and his wise policies**”
- MPs dominantly portray Vučić in a positive light, creating a discourse where he is presented as a saviour whose work and security are endangered by the malicious opposition that destroyed Serbia before SNS came to power
- Đilas’s name was often followed by the word “**tycoon**” and in the context of the “**619 million euros he stole from citizens**”
- Along with other opposition actors, Đilas was portrayed as a thief, and as a threat to Serbia, as well as to the security of President Vučić and his family

Case study: “Mauritius Affair”

Vučić live on [TV Pink](#) from Abu Dhabi asks Dragan Đilas if he has a bank account in Mauritius

Minister of Finance and a journalist from Vecernje novosti are guests in [TV Pink studio live](#) and discover exclusively the details of Mauritius.

“Đilas hides money on Mauritius and in Switzerland”, Novosti, March, 17th



“Đilas under a scanner of financial police”, Novosti, March, 23rd



“Authorities to inspect bank accounts”, Novosti, March, 31st



Mauritius Affair: mentioned **two** times during 2nd sitting.

Mauritius Affair: mentioned **29** times during the first day of 3rd sitting.

Mauritius Affair: mentioned **78** times during the 2nd and 3rd day of 3rd sitting.

Mauritius Affair: mentioned **47** times during the 4th sitting

Mauritius Affair: mentioned **30** times during 5th sitting