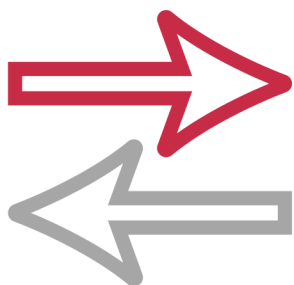# Migration, Extremism, & Dangerous Blame Games
Developments & Dynamics in Serbia

The rapid arrival of hundreds of thousands of migrants into the European Union (EU) from the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa beginning in 2015 coincided with an increase in support for anti-immigrant rhetoric and the far-right in many European countries. A substantial number of these migrants came to the EU through what became known as the "Balkan Route" a major transit land route cutting through the Western Balkans. In 2016, however, the Route officially "closed," leaving many of those people attempting to reach Europe effectively stranded within the Balkans. In 2020, for example, approximately 7,000 migrants and refugees were present within the borders of Serbia at any given time. This presence of migrants within the Balkans did not go unnoticed and, in some cases, even spurred increased activity within and mobilization among far-right actors opposed to their presence in the region. Exploring this phenomenon, this report focuses on dynamics surrounding migration and responses to it from the far-right in Serbia, one of the countries on the Balkan Route.

For more, see: Marina Lažetić, *Migration, Extremism, & Dangerous Blame Games: Developments & Dynamics in Serbia*, RESOLVE Network, 2021.

Migration: A New Frame for an Ongoing Phenomena

Organization among and ideological stances within the Serbian far-right have, historically, been deeply rooted in the idea of a need to protect Serbia's "national identity" from perceived enemies. While the role of "the enemy" has been assigned to different entities over the decades, in recent years a strong anti-immigrant narrative has emerged within the Serbian far-right that others migrants and refugees, portraying them as the entity whose culture and values threaten the Serbian people and their identity.

A Worsening Crisis: The Impact of a Pandemic

The precarious situation of several thousand migrants who had been stuck in the Balkans attempting to reach Western Europe, coupled with the intensification of anti-immigrant campaigns, has been further exacerbated in the wake of COVID-19. While the pandemic has coincided with an increase in anti-immigrant rhetoric globally, with the effect of mainstreaming some far-right ideas and discourse.

Euroscepticism: Strengthening the Agenda of the Serbian Far Right

The "migration crisis," in combination with the pandemic, has exacerbated the sentiment that the Union abandoned the Western Balkans to resolve the migration issue on its own while the EU secured its borders. Such perceptions of the EU are thought to be opening spaces for other external powers to assert their interests and influence and have been strengthened by top political representatives.