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SOCIOLOGY

OF SERBIA'S NUCLEAR REVIVAL:

SOCIETY, INSTITUTIONS, GOVERNANCE

Part 1. Comprehensive Analysis of Socio-Behavioral Models and Societal Reactions to the Development of Nuclear Energy in the Republic of Serbia

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Introduction

Late 2024 marked a historical shift in the energy strategy of the Republic of Serbia: the country's National Assembly adopted amendments to the energy law, officially lifting the 35-year moratorium on the construction of nuclear power plants, which was introduced in 1989 amidst the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster.[1] This decision, driven by the imperatives of decarbonization, growing electricity demand, and the need to reduce the 70-percent reliance of national generation on coal, moves nuclear energy from a theoretical realm into practical policy.[2] In accordance with the updated Energy Sector Development Strategy up to 2040 with projections to 2050 and the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (INEKP), Serbia is considering the integration of up to 1200 MW of nuclear capacity, including small modular reactor (SMR) technologies.[1]

However, the transition to the practical implementation of a nuclear program represents not only an unprecedented infrastructure and macroeconomic challenge, but also a highly complex socio-cultural process. Historical experience shows that the success of nuclear megaprojects critically depends on obtaining and maintaining a "social license to operate."[5] Public perception of nuclear technologies is often characterized by a high degree of polarization, irrational fears, and a deficit of institutional trust.[6] This report provides a comprehensive study of the behavioral models of various strata of Serbian society in response to the nuclear initiative. The document analyzes global academic concepts of risk perception in detail, examines social and labor crises at NPP construction sites in countries introducing nuclear energy for the first time (Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Poland, as well as Turkey), and defines the architecture of responsibility and financing mechanisms for effectively managing social reactions.

1. Theoretical and Methodological Modeling of Social Processes and Nuclear Risk Perception

Understanding how society reacts to the emergence of nuclear facilities requires a deep dive into interdisciplinary academic research. The global scientific community has developed robust paradigms and models to predict social resistance and design effective stakeholder engagement strategies. Scientific literature emphasizes that public rejection of nuclear energy is not solely a consequence of a lack of technical information (the knowledge deficit model); rather, it is shaped at the intersection of economic, social, behavioral, and political realities, many of which are exogenous to the nuclear industry itself.[6]

1.1. Psychometric Paradigm and Technology Stigmatization

The dominant approach in risk studies over recent decades remains the psychometric paradigm, originally conceptualized by B. Fischhoff, P. Slovic, and their colleagues.[8] This paradigm explains the fundamental gap between how technical experts assess risks (based on statistical probabilities of accidents and expected mortality) and how laypeople do.[8] For the general public, risk is constructed based on qualitative

and emotional attributes, with the key ones being "dreadfulness" (the potential for catastrophic, uncontrollable consequences) and "newness" (the invisibility of the threat and delayed impact).[8]

Within the psychometric paradigm, nuclear energy occupies a unique, highly negative position, evoking an unparalleled level of subconscious dread compared to any other technology.[6] Later extensions of this paradigm introduced the concept of technological stigmatization.[9] Stigma describes the negative imagery and associations attached to undesirable technologies or locations (e.g., Chernobyl, Fukushima) that persist even in the objective absence of a threat.[12] In the context of Serbia, where the fallout from the Chernobyl accident triggered the 1989 moratorium, the stigmatization of nuclear energy is deeply rooted in collective memory.[2] Studies show that attempts to overcome this stigma simply by providing more facts and statistics (the "educational approach") are doomed to fail because they do not address the affective nature of fear.[6]

1.2. Social Amplification of Risk Framework (SARF)

The Social Amplification of Risk Framework (SARF), developed by R. Kasperson, provides a structural model of how physical incidents or even informational events related to nuclear energy interact with social, psychological, and institutional processes, leading to massive public resonance.[15] According to SARF, risk information is transmitted through society like an acoustic signal, which is picked up, decoded, and passed on through "amplification stations"—mass media, political groups, the scientific community, and informal social networks.[12]

In Serbia's hybrid information environment, where traditional media coexist with powerful online platforms and social networks, the amplification process is rapid.[17] Any technical delay during the NPP planning stage, discussions about site selection, or waste transportation can be taken out of context and amplified by these stations to the level of an existential national threat.[18] This process generates "ripple effects"—secondary and tertiary socio-economic consequences.[12] As global reactions to the Fukushima accident demonstrated, social amplification can alter the energy policies of entire nations (e.g., Germany's nuclear phase-out) and erode public trust even in safe operators.[12] Consequently, modeling Serbian society's reactions must account not only for direct ecological risks but also for their media interpretation.

1.3. Behavioral Models: From Perception to Action

Academic research identifies structural patterns of how society transitions from perceiving a nuclear issue to concrete actions (protests, signing petitions, or political support).[19] Based on the integrative model (Muller et al.), three main behavioral pathways are distinguished [8]:

1. **High-Involvement Model:** Characterized by sequential cognitive processing of information. The subject analyzes the risk (Belief), forms a conscious attitude (Attitude), and takes action (Behavior). This model is typical for industry experts, eco-activists, and intellectual elites.
2. **Low-Involvement Model:** Decisions are made based on routine, habitual patterns. Attitude shapes behavior, and risk analysis occurs post factum to justify the action already taken.[8]

3. **Hedonic Model:** Behavior is dictated solely by affective reactions and external impulses, bypassing the stage of rational risk assessment.[8] Given the time deficit and abundance of contradictory information (typical of Serbia's media space), a significant portion of the population reacts according to the hedonic scenario, succumbing to mass panic or political populism.

In all three models, **institutional trust** acts as a critical mediator. The level of trust in the government, regulator, and corporations implementing the project directly correlates with the perceived benefit of the project.[19] High trust reduces perceived risk and maximizes support, whereas a trust deficit, common in many transition economies, makes society deaf to any arguments about the benefits of nuclear energy.[7] Empirical data confirms that increasing perceived benefits (e.g., ensuring economic growth) has a statistically stronger impact on the acceptance of nuclear power than attempts to merely reduce risk perception.[9]

Behavioral Factor	Impact on Nuclear Energy Acceptance (according to academic studies)	Impact Mediators
Perceived Risk	Reduces the level of public acceptance. Amplified through stigmatization and historical memory.[9]	Access to transparent information; independence of regulatory bodies.
Perceived Benefit	Significantly increases support. Is the strongest predictor of a positive attitude.[9]	Economic incentives, tariff policy, job creation.
Institutional Trust	Acts as a catalyst: high trust converts knowledge into support and reduces anxiety.[7]	Effective communication by government structures; media openness.
Level of Knowledge	Has no direct linear relationship with support, but indirectly reduces irrational dread.[22]	Educational initiatives STS (Science, Technology, Society).[25]

2. Stratification of Serbian Society's Reactions to the Lifting of the Nuclear Moratorium

The reaction to the nuclear generation initiative in the Republic of Serbia is not homogeneous. Different demographic, geographic, and professional groups demonstrate divergent interests, fears, and expectations. An in-depth analysis of these strata reveals hidden tension points and potential vectors for consensus.

2.1. Expectations of Government Officials and Big Business

For the ruling political elite and representatives of large capital, the revival of nuclear energy seems to be an indispensable macroeconomic imperative.[5] Serbia has committed to investing substantial funds (around 14.4 billion euros by 2035) in the energy sector, realizing that baseload energy, traditionally provided by coal, cannot be exclusively replaced by volatile renewable energy sources under climate constraints.[26] The leadership of the National Power Utility (EPS) positions the enterprise as the future locomotive of this transformation.[28]

Official rhetoric centers on a roadmap developed in partnership with the French corporation EDF and the engineering company Egis.[26] This plan entails a systemic approach: completing preliminary studies and forging a national consensus by 2027, selecting the technology and signing a construction contract by 2032, and commissioning the first reactor by 2040.[29] Concurrently, intensive consultations are underway with the Director General of the Russian state corporation Rosatom regarding opportunities for "comprehensive cooperation," which may encompass not only traditional high-capacity reactors but also SMR technologies, as well as the creation of Centers for Nuclear Science and Technology for medicine and agriculture.[13]

The reaction of the business community and officials is highly pragmatic. In their paradigm, a nuclear power plant is a catalyst for industrialization, a guarantee of stable electricity prices for industry, and a tool to turn Serbia from a net energy importer into an exporter by 2045.[31] However, experts from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Mining and Energy realize that realizing these plans will require a colossal effort to harmonize legislation, create an independent regulator, and secure investments of at least 3 billion euros for the initial stage alone.[2]

2.2. Rural Population and the Phenomenon of Regional Rejection

Unlike the technocratic optimism in the capital, the reaction of the rural population and potential host communities is driven by the classic NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) syndrome.[34] For agrarian communities, abstract macroeconomic benefits are overshadowed by tangible local risks.

Academic studies of public opinion in Serbia reveal an interesting anomaly: unlike some Western European countries where nationalist and conservative attitudes often correlate with support for traditional heavy energy (including nuclear and coal), Serbian respondents with pronounced nationalist

and pro-Russian views do not demonstrate a commitment to fossil or nuclear fuels. Instead, there is a strong public demand for clean renewable energy sources (solar and wind).[34]

The fears of rural residents center around the threat of agricultural land expropriation, potential disruption of the hydrological balance of local rivers (needed for reactor cooling), and the existential fear of radiation contamination.[35] Given the historically low trust in the ability of national institutions to ensure environmental safety—vividly demonstrated during recent mass protests against lithium mining—any behind-the-scenes decision on NPP site selection will face fierce local resistance.[38] Consequently, the project's success is impossible without transforming local risk perception into a perception of exceptional benefit through socio-economic regional development programs.[40]

2.3. Expats and Foreign Capital: Geopolitics and Workforce

A highly specific factor in the social structure of modern Serbia is the presence of tens of thousands of expats who arrived in the country after 2022. According to official data alone, the number of approved residence permits for Russian citizens has exceeded 67,000.[41] This massive migration, consisting largely of highly qualified engineers, IT specialists, and hard science professionals, represents a colossal reserve of human capital.[43]

For Serbia, where three decades of a moratorium led to the loss of an entire generation of nuclear engineers, physicists, and radiation protection specialists [5], reversing the "brain drain" by integrating Russian intellectual potential into the academic and industrial environment (for instance, at the Vinča Institute of Nuclear Sciences) could be a saving grace.[3] On the other hand, the presence of Western expats—consultants, engineers, and managers from French EDF, American corporations, and consortiums—brings Western standards of corporate governance, occupational health, and safety culture.[46]

However, the influence of expats and foreign stakeholders extends beyond technology and skill transfers. It carries high geopolitical risk.[46] Serbia's energy sector is under unprecedented pressure due to balancing between the European Union and Russia. The precedent with the Petroleum Industry of Serbia (NIS), in which the Russian side holds a controlling stake and which faced the threat of Western sanctions, clearly demonstrates the vulnerability of strategic infrastructure.[48] Choosing between Western (French, American) and Russian nuclear technologies will inevitably polarize society and foreign diasporas, turning a technical issue into an arena of geopolitical confrontation.[46]

2.4. Gender Specifics of Radiation Risk Perception

Global public opinion analysis, corroborated by Bisconti Research and other academic surveys, identifies a persistent gender gap regarding attitudes toward nuclear energy.[52] This trend fully extrapolates to Serbian society. Women consistently exhibit a higher level of concern regarding radiation risks and a lower level of support for nuclear programs compared to men.

While men lean more toward "technological optimism," feel better informed (up to 76% in developed

countries), and tend to trust technical arguments, women adopt a more cautious stance.[52] Over 70% of women fall into the category of "fence-sitters," citing a lack of reliable and understandable information.[52] Sociology and ethics explain this phenomenon through the "ethics of care": women, traditionally bearing responsibility for family health and future generations, react more acutely to the risks of long-term contamination and threats to the safety of their habitat.[55]

The situation is exacerbated by the historically masculine culture of the nuclear industry itself (where women make up only about 25% of the workforce) and the fact that international radiation protection standards were long based on the biological model of "Reference Man," ignoring the heightened susceptibility of the female body to ionizing radiation.[56] To bridge this gap, Serbian government bodies will need to abandon paternalistic technical rhetoric and implement inclusive communication strategies focused on child safety, clean air, and ecosystem protection.

2.5. Children and Youth: From Existential Anxiety to Career Opportunities

The impact of nuclear discourses on the psychological state of children and youth is a complex issue. Numerous longitudinal studies conducted over different decades attest to the phenomenon of "nuclear anxiety."[58] The younger generation, receiving fragmented information from mass media, pop culture (e.g., movies about Chernobyl), and social networks, often forms an apocalyptic view of the future. Children commonly feel a sense of powerlessness in the face of global threats, compounded by an understanding of their own biological vulnerability to radiation (accelerated cell division makes children significantly more sensitive to exposure).[59]

On the other hand, the younger generation is the sole source of sustainability for the future nuclear industry, which requires thousands of operators, physicists, and engineers over the next 60–80 years.[46] Global reports (such as the Global Energy Talent Index) sound the alarm over the aging workforce and the insufficient influx of young specialists, for whom nuclear energy is associated with "technologies of the past."[61]

Resolving this dissonance lies in education. Specialized agencies (like NEA OECD and IAEA) urge the integration of the "Science, Technology, Society" (STS) paradigm into school curricula (K-12).[25] Demystifying radiation, explaining its natural origins, and showcasing advanced technologies for the safe handling of nuclear materials can transform existential fear into scientific curiosity and professional motivation.[63] In Serbia, a large-scale program providing grants, international internships, and the introduction of advanced virtual reality simulators in universities will be a critical step toward forming a loyal and competent generation.[66]

Demographic/Social Group	Prevailing Behavioral Model (Involvement)	Key Incentives and Drivers	Main Barriers and Concerns
Government officials and business	High-involvement model (rational cost-benefit analysis)	Decarbonization, baseload stability, geopolitical prestige	Cost of capital, long-term delay risks, sanctions pressure
Rural population and local communities	Hedonic model / Low-involvement model	Direct financial injections, improvement of local infrastructure (hospitals, schools)	NIMBY syndrome, land expropriation, threat to agriculture, distrust of authorities
Foreign expats (engineers, IT)	High-involvement model	Professional realization, highly paid contracts	Geopolitical uncertainty, institutional and cultural friction
Women	Hedonic / Low involvement (cautious skepticism)	Guarantee of ecological cleanliness (zero CO2 emissions) for future generations	Ethics of care (threat to children's health), industry masculinity, waste problem
Children and student youth	Hedonic model (nuclear anxiety) -> transformation into High involvement	Career prospects in a high-tech field, fighting the climate crisis	Existential fear, lack of adaptive STEM education

3. Analysis of Social Problems at NPP Construction Sites: Focus on Newcomer Countries

The transition from paper design to pouring the first concrete inevitably provokes local social upheavals. The experience of states building their first NPPs (newcomer countries according to IAEA classification) demonstrates a spectrum of crisis situations that Serbia should avoid.

3.1. Bangladesh: Rooppur NPP Project

The construction of two VVER-1200 units in Rooppur by the Russian state corporation Rosatom became the largest infrastructure project in Bangladesh's history, initiated under a complex offset agreement.[68] **Socio-economic impact:** The project served as a massive economic anchor for the depressed agrarian Ishwardi region. The influx of investments and creation of thousands of jobs significantly reduced youth outmigration to Dhaka.[70] The emergence of a satellite town with modern amenity standards paradoxically improved overall health metrics of the local population compared to neighboring districts.[71] **Crises and tension:** The flip side of the coin was forced land expropriation. Despite compensations, 92% of displaced citizens found this process traumatic due to the severing of emotional ties to their homeland.[72] The influx of a huge number of foreign specialists provoked cultural diffusion and a sharp spike in inflation in the local housing market.[68] A serious blow to the project's reputation was dealt by corruption scandals: facts emerged regarding the use of substandard materials in infrastructure construction (broken elevators, non-functional fire suppression systems in workers' housing complexes) and tender manipulations, leading to the arrest of high-ranking officials in 2019.[73]

3.2. United Arab Emirates: Barakah NPP Project

The Emirati program, implemented jointly with a South Korean consortium (KEPCO), is recognized as a benchmark in global practice.[74] The launch of four APR-1400 reactors allowed covering 25% of the country's electricity needs.[76] **Social and labor management:** Unlike other countries, the UAE opted for a model of strict centralized control. Integration success was driven by large-scale training programs: over 2,000 local specialists were trained, which diversified competencies and reduced social tension.[77] The approach to labor resources was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when management completely isolated the construction camp (banning entry and exit). This prevented infection on-site and maintained the work schedule, demonstrating unprecedented operational rigor and efficiency.[78] **Community integration:** For the Al Dhafra region, the NPP construction catalyzed social infrastructure development. In partnership with the Authority of Social Contribution (Ma'an) and the Abu Dhabi Sports Council, community centers (Abu Dhabi Community Center) were created, offering inclusive programs for youth, women, and people with disabilities, thereby ensuring high local community loyalty.[79]

3.3. Poland: Choczewo Municipality Project

Poland, planning the launch of its first AP1000 reactors (Westinghouse-Bechtel consortium) in the 2030s,

demonstrates an exceptional level of public support (over 90%).[80] **Drivers and strategies:** Such consensus is based on an acute desire to abandon coal generation and ensure geopolitical energy independence.[83] Deserving special attention is the approach to interacting with the local population. Investors are implementing the "Choczewo — Wind-Powered Commune" program (originally created for offshore wind energy), under which direct grants are allocated to local initiatives: volunteer fire departments, sports clubs, and rural women's associations.[84] This model demonstrates how preliminary investments in the cultural and social fabric of the municipality forge a solid foundation of trust in an industrial facility.

3.4. Saudi Arabia: Protection Motivation Theory

The Kingdom, planning the introduction of nuclear energy to diversify its energy mix (under Vision 2030), actively utilizes academic models to plan social reactions. A study based on the "Protection Motivation Theory," surveying over 1,400 respondents, revealed that perceived benefits of an NPP decisively influence public acceptance of the project, outweighing the fear of risks.[23] A crucial finding was that geographic location is a critical factor: the public is ready to support the nuclear program provided there is sound spatial planning and distance from densely populated centers.

3.5. Turkey: Akkuyu NPP Project (Experience of Social Friction)

The construction of the Akkuyu NPP by the Russian state corporation Rosatom under the BOO (Build-Own-Operate) model highlighted critical risks in labor relations and ecology.[85] **Crises and tension:** Construction is regularly paralyzed by mass strikes due to systematic non-payment of wages by subcontracting organizations (TSM Enerji, Titan-2).[87] Workers' protests are harshly suppressed by gendarmerie forces using water cannons.[88] Local trade unions report discrimination against Turkish workers compared to Russian expats regarding the quality of food, accommodation, and sanitation, leading to instances of mass poisoning.[89] Furthermore, pressure from political deadlines (accelerating work at the behest of the country's leadership) leads to the neglect of occupational safety and health (OSH) norms, resulting in high rates of fatal injuries on site.[90] Local businesses also express dissatisfaction with the opacity of tenders and a sense of exclusion from decision-making processes.[86] The Akkuyu experience serves as a stern warning for Serbia regarding the unacceptability of losing control over subcontracting chains and working conditions.

Country (Project)	Key social challenges and problems	Solutions and compensation mechanisms	Lessons for Serbia
Bangladesh (Rooppur)	Forced relocation, real estate inflation, subcontractor corruption.[72]	Creation of a well-equipped satellite town; economic anchor for the region.[71]	Strict anti-corruption control over infrastructure tenders is required.

Country (Project)	Key social challenges and problems	Solutions and compensation mechanisms	Lessons for Serbia
UAE (Barakah)	Epidemiological risks (COVID-19), need for large-scale personnel training.[77]	Complete isolation of the construction site; investments in community centers (Maan).[79]	Importance of integrating local communities through sports and culture.
Poland (Choczewo)	Potential NIMBY syndrome, complex geology.[84]	Microgrant program for municipalities ("Wind-Driven Commune").[84]	Preliminary investments in the local community secure 90% support.
Turkey (Akkuyu)	Wage non-payments, strikes, discrimination, high injury rates, forceful suppression of protests.[87]	Systemic problems are solved slowly; intervention of political leadership.[92]	Risks of the BOO model: the state must not abandon control over occupational safety.

4. Architecture of Responsibility and Financial Mechanisms for Mitigating Social Reactions

Mitigating social tension and ensuring an equitable distribution of risks and benefits does not happen spontaneously. It requires a clear allocation of roles among participants in the process and reliable, transparent sources of funding.[60]

4.1. Entities Addressing Social Problems

In accordance with international standards and the IAEA Milestones Approach, the management of a nuclear program is distributed among three key independent pillars [93]:

1. **Nuclear Energy Programme Implementing Organization (NEPIO):** Represents the national government. In Serbia, this structure is being formed on the basis of a specialized Directorate.[3] NEPIO is obligated to develop a national stakeholder engagement strategy, ensure transparent communication, and align national interests with the concerns of local communities.[96] To enhance competencies, Serbia can engage the IAEA's Stakeholder Engagement Advisory Service (SEAS), which conducts independent audits of communication strategies and helps build a trusting dialogue.[96]

2. **Independent Regulatory Body:** A state institution responsible for nuclear and radiation safety.[98] In the context of social reactions, the strict independence of the regulator from political pressure and corporate influence is the main factor in building public trust (as seen in Finland or Canada).[93]
3. **Owner/Operator of the NPP and EPC Contractor:** Parties bearing direct responsibility for managing the construction site.[100] They must control subcontracting chains, ensure strict occupational safety standards, prevent discrimination against local workers, and minimize environmental damage in the construction zone.[100]

4.2. Sources of Funding for Social Reactions and Compensations

Nuclear megaprojects are characterized by high initial capital expenditures (CAPEX) and long payback periods.[101] Managing social risks (including relocation, municipal grants, and retraining programs) requires the integration of corresponding budgets into the overall financial model at the earliest stages.[102]

1. State Guarantees and Price Subsidization (CfD): In liberalized electricity markets, attracting private investment is impossible without state guarantees.[101] A classic funding example is Poland's experience, which secured European Commission approval for a state aid package of up to 14 billion euros (equity capital) and a Contract for Difference (CfD) mechanism for 40 years.[82] A CfD guarantees stable revenue to the operator: if the market price falls below the agreed price, the state pays the difference; if it is higher, the operator returns the surplus to the budget.[104] Such financial stability allows the operator to sustainably allocate a portion of its revenues to long-term social programs and tax contributions to local budgets, dampening public discontent.

2. Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and ESG Standards: Even if the funding of the Nuclear Island is provided by the vendor (e.g., export credits from Russia, the US, or France) [69], the development of ancillary infrastructure and scientific institutes in Serbia can be sponsored by international banks. As the World Bank's SAIGE project in Serbia demonstrates, international financing is strictly tied to compliance with Environmental and Social Standards (ESF).[106] Mandatory documents include the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) (ESS10 standard).[107] These budgets are targeted toward forging inclusive dialogue, protecting labor rights (ESS2), and ensuring community health and safety (ESS4), depriving contractors of the opportunity to cut corners on worker safety.

3. Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs): This tool involves a legally binding contract between the developer and the host municipality. In exchange for supporting the project, the corporation commits to investing a percentage of the budget in local infrastructure, education, and local business development.[77] The experience of Canada (Bruce NPP) and South Korea confirms that redirecting a portion of financial flows to modernize roads, hospitals, and grant programs completely neutralizes the NIMBY syndrome, transforming depressed regions into prosperous technopolises.[77]

4. Climate Philanthropy and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): Analysts note that independent

philanthropic foundations long avoided nuclear topics, focusing instead on renewables.[109] However, as nuclear energy is increasingly recognized as necessary for decarbonization (COP28 consensus), grants from climate funds can become a crucial funding source for neutral environmental audits, youth educational programs, and the protection of local community rights.[110] Funding from independent sources enhances institutional trust, as it is perceived by the public as objective rather than corporate PR.[109]

Conclusions

Serbia's decision to lift the 35-year moratorium on the development of nuclear energy opens a historic window of opportunity for reindustrialization, achieving energy sovereignty, and fulfilling climate obligations. However, an analysis of global behavioral models and the experience of newcomer countries convincingly proves that the technological choice of the reactor is only a secondary task relative to the problem of managing social perception.

The success of the implementation of the Serbian nuclear program until 2040 will depend on the ability of the state and business to implement an integrative strategy based on the following principles:

Transforming risk perception through economic inclusion: Suppressing the NIMBY syndrome among the rural population is impossible without direct and legally secured financial injections into the infrastructure of host communities (following the model of Poland's "Choczewo" and Emirati "Barakah"). Local residents should become the main beneficiaries of the project.

Proactive management of labor risks: The experience of the Akkuyu NPP (Turkey) demonstrates the catastrophic reputational consequences of losing control over subcontractor chains. The Serbian regulator and operator are required to integrate strict occupational safety and non-discrimination standards (in accordance with ESS2 standards) at the EPC contractor contracting stage.

Monetization of the expat potential: Tens of thousands of highly qualified Russian engineers and scientists located in Serbia can and must be used to overcome the critical personnel shortage that has arisen during the years of the moratorium.

Overcoming the gender gap and involving youth: The government needs to abandon dry technocratic language. Communication with women should be built through the prism of the "ethics of care" and the ecological cleanliness of the future, and work with youth — through the introduction of STS (Science, Technology, Society) disciplines in schools to overcome irrational

"nuclear anxiety".

Institutional transparency: The formation of NEPIO and an independent regulator should be accompanied by the continuous involvement of IAEA missions (in particular, SEAS) to legitimize processes in the eyes of a skeptical society. Only the synergy of advanced engineering solutions with a deep understanding of sociocultural dynamics will allow Serbia to safely and effectively enter the global nuclear club.

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