

ПОЛИТИКА НАЦИОНАЛНЕ
БЕЗБЕДНОСТИ

THE POLICY OF
NATIONAL SECURITY

Identity, Terrorism, and National Security

ISSN 2334-959X

УДК 351.862/.863(497.11)

№. 3/2025.



ПОЛИТИКА НАЦИОНАЛНЕ БЕЗБЕДНОСТИ

The Policy of National Security

Publisher

Institute for Political Studies
Address: Dobrinjska 11, Belgrade
www.ips.ac.rs
Tel.: 011/3349 204;
E-mail: pnb@ips.ac.rs

ISSN 2334-959X UDC 351.862/.863(497.11)

No. 3/2025 vol. 30.

JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED THREE TIMES A YEAR

For publisher

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Printing

Donat graf, Belgrade

Circulation

50

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FOREWORD

Dear readers,

The new issue of the journal *Policy of National Security* brings the most current topics related to questions of identity, national security, and terrorism. In today's world, filled with dynamic political relations, these topics are addressed using scientifically grounded methodological approaches, thereby providing you with expert and impartial analyses.

As energy security is crucial for current international relations and, in general, for the existence of any state, we begin with a paper that elaborates on the energy relationship between China and Azerbaijan, viewed through the prism of pragmatic relations and strategic partnership. We have also addressed current identity-related issues in the ever-unstable Balkans, shedding light on some of the darker chapters of our region, while simultaneously offering a new framework for understanding identity divisions, which are often referred to as “the curse of small differences”. This issue, in the context of contemporary developments both internationally and regionally, explores the concept of revolutions, with particular emphasis on social, democratic, and the so-called “colour” formats. Through comparative analyses of selected case studies, the phenomenon of revolutions is explained, along with their etymology and the consequences they produce for social processes.

Since our journal, in addition to security, also addresses principles of defence, we have decided to dedicate several papers to the military profession. Thus, we have published a study that examines the correlation between modern technologies and the military education of officers within the Serbian Armed Forces. We have also devoted considerable space to exploring the role of the reserve officer corps in the national security system of the Republic of Serbia. These papers are significant because, in addition to their theoretical grounding, they offer relevant empirical findings that clearly confirm the initially formulated research hypotheses.

Once again, we have striven to publish topics relevant to our national security, but being aware of international interconnectedness, we have also prepared subjects significant at the global level. For this reason, we decided to publish a paper examining the activities of Hezbollah and its ideology, which will facilitate a better understanding of the crisis in the Middle East, as well as contemporary crises in international relations (and international law). We have also published a comparative analysis of the Wahhabi movement in the Balkans and the Middle East, drawing attention to specific security-relevant movements that often correlate with radicalisation and violent extremism.

As we aim to cover as many different formats of security as possible, in this latest issue, we have also prepared a fascinating study on the potential use of dangerous goods as a means of committing the criminal act of terrorism. We are very proud that in this issue, we have set aside space for a paper dealing with the magnificent Battle of Košare, which is also the result of an academic gathering we organised at the Institute for Political Studies, in honour of the heroes of Košare. The media and political portrayal of this battle is explained, thereby offering our own contribution to the scholarly elaboration of the significance of the Battle of Košare.

We hope that this multitude of interesting topics will be helpful primarily to the scientific reading audience, but also that this issue will reach “ordinary readers” who are not engaged in science but who nonetheless fully understand the importance of objective and expert analysis of contemporary security phenomena.

Editor-in-Chief of the journal

Policy of National Security,

Ph.D. Marija Đorić

IDENTITY,
TERRORISM, AND
NATIONAL
SECURITY

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ENERGY RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND AZERBAIJAN: BETWEEN PRAGMATIC COOPERATION AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Abstract

This paper analyses the contemporary relations between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Azerbaijan, focusing on the energy dimension of their cooperation and the impact of these relations on regional and broader energy security. In the context of China's growing involvement in the South Caucasus and Azerbaijan's strategic positioning as an essential transit and export energy hub, the paper seeks to address the key question of whether the relationship between Baku and Beijing represents a sustainable partnership based on complementary strategic interests or a limited, pragmatic cooperation driven by current economic and geopolitical circumstances. Special attention is given to the analysis

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of energy projects in which both states are directly or indirectly involved such as oil and gas pipelines as well as infrastructure initiatives like the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway, which connects China’s Belt and Road Initiative with Europe through Azerbaijani territory. Methodologically, the paper relies on a qualitative analysis of official bilateral documents, relevant scholarly and analytical literature, official government and institutional statements, reports from international energy organisations, and key infrastructural and energy project case studies. The theoretical framework is based on energy security, geoeconomics, and *realpolitik*, focusing on modelling energy relations as instruments of foreign policy influence. The paper also considers global geopolitical shifts, including the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine, changes in European energy strategy, and China’s position within the emerging multipolar order. The research contribution of this paper lies in its systematic assessment of the level of interdependence between China and Azerbaijan in the energy sector, as well as in evaluating the potential long-term stability of this relationship from the perspectives of regional security, economics, and politics.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, China, energy security, “Belt and Road”, geopolitics, energy, South Caucasus, infrastructure.

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, geopolitical and energy transformations across Eurasia have significantly influenced the redefinition of bilateral relations between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Azerbaijan. Although geographically distant, these two countries are linked by shared interests primarily in energy, infrastructure, and trade. China, as a global economic powerhouse, and Azerbaijan, an energy-rich country located at the crossroads of East and West, have recognised the potential to enhance cooperation within the Belt and Road Initiative – BRI framework. This partnership represents a higher stage of bilateral cooperation and signals a substantial shift toward deeper political, economic, and security coordination between the two countries. In the context of global geopolitical redistribution and growing great-power competition, this development carries significant

implications for Azerbaijan's positioning as an active actor within Eurasian dynamics.

The concept of energy security in this study is viewed through the theoretical lens of international relations, emphasising realist and geoeconomic approaches. As a dominant paradigm in power relations, realism emphasizes the state as the primary actor in a system where energy resources serve as strategic instruments for maintaining sovereignty and projecting influence. From this perspective, cooperation between China and Azerbaijan can be interpreted as a mutual attempt to strengthen national capacities and expand strategic manoeuvring space amid global instability. Conversely, the geoeconomic approach underscores economic instruments and infrastructural connectivity as the foundations of contemporary power, understanding energy cooperation not merely as a matter of supply and export, but as a means of long-term positioning within the Eurasian trade, transport, and investment network. In this context, energy security represents a synthesis of security, economic, and political dimensions, a domain where the interests and strategies of primary and middle powers overlap. Such a theoretical approach enables a deeper understanding of China-Azerbaijan relations within the broader context of an emerging multipolar order.

During Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's state visit to Beijing in April 2025, a series of agreements was signed, elevating the relations between the two countries to the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership. These agreements cover the areas of energy, green energy, the digital economy, and infrastructure (Reuters 2025a). Particularly significant is cooperation in renewable energy, where China provides technological and financial support to Azerbaijan in developing solar and wind farms, thus contributing to the diversification of the energy sector and reducing dependence on fossil fuels (Sharifli 2025). The political dimension of the partnership is reflected in the mutual support for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Azerbaijan has expressed support for China's "One China" policy, while Beijing has reaffirmed its support for Azerbaijan's independence and stability. Through this move, Baku clearly demonstrates its commitment to a balancing policy, maintaining close relations with the West, Russia, Turkey, and Iran, while simultaneously building and deepening ties with China as an increasingly influential global actor. This approach

reflects a multi-vector foreign policy, characteristic of small and medium-sized states at geopolitical crossroads.

The partnership's economic component focuses on enhancing cooperation in key sectors: renewable energy, the digital economy, industry, and petrochemicals. The Azerbaijani Ministry of Energy and China Energy Engineering Group – CEEC have agreed to establish a Working Group for Investment Cooperation within this cooperation. This group aims to promote collaboration in areas such as solar and wind energy, energy storage, and green hydrogen production (Zohrabov 2024). This orientation also contributes to China's energy diversification, as its interest in the Caspian region's resources grows amid instability in the Middle East and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Beyond energy, transport, and logistics, cooperation is gaining momentum. The signed agreements on multimodal transport and support for Trans-Caspian corridors, particularly the Middle Corridor, emphasise Azerbaijan's strategic role within the BRI. The country is positioning itself as a key transit hub between China and Europe, which brings economic benefits and strengthens its geoeconomic and geopolitical relevance. Alongside the financial and transport dimensions, the Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in April 2025 includes security and socio-cultural elements. Of particular note are the commitments to combat terrorism, cyber threats, and extremism jointly, as well as to intensify cooperation in education, culture, and scientific research. Abolishing visas for ordinary passport holders is a symbolic yet important step toward enhancing people-to-people exchanges and developing what is known as "soft power" (President of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2025).

The document's overall tone and the agreement's nature suggest a pragmatic yet ambitious relationship that extends beyond traditional trade cooperation. This agreement serves as a tool for diversifying partners and ensuring Azerbaijan's autonomy in its foreign policy. At the same time, for China, it serves as a means of expanding influence in a region connecting Europe and Asia. Thus, this partnership can also be interpreted as an attempt at geoeconomic consolidation amid global instability.

At the same time, Azerbaijan is positioning itself as a key transit point within the Middle Corridor, which links China with Europe through Central Asia and the Caucasus. This corridor offers an alternative to traditional transportation routes and has the potential to

enhance trade flows and regional economic integration (EU Reporter 2025). However, despite the intensification of cooperation, it remains unclear whether the relationship between China and Azerbaijan is based on a long-term strategic partnership or on pragmatic interests arising from current economic and geopolitical circumstances. This paper aims to analyse the nature and scope of China-Azerbaijan cooperation in the energy sector, focusing on the impact of these relations on regional energy security and geopolitical stability.

Based on the aforementioned circumstances and current developments in the Eurasian space, it is necessary to apply an appropriate methodological framework that enables a systematic analysis of the nature and scope of cooperation between China and Azerbaijan. In this regard, the following section of the paper presents the methodological approach, which defines the structure, sources, and analytical procedures applied in the research.

RESEARCH APPROACH AND ANALYTICAL FOUNDATIONS

The research is based on a qualitative approach, employing content analysis, comparative analysis, and case study methods. The primary objective was to investigate the nature and scope of energy cooperation between China and Azerbaijan, its impact on regional energy security, and the geopolitical positioning of both countries.

Primary sources included official documents from government bodies and ministries of energy, international agreements, and official statements from institutions such as BP Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan, the European Commission, and the International Energy Agency, along with relevant academic papers and analytical reports (The Jamestown Foundation, Asia Development Bank Institute – ADB, Trend News Agency, Reuters). Within the case study framework, key infrastructural and energy projects were analyzed, including the Southern Gas Corridor, TANAP, the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway, Alat Port, and the Middle Corridor, which collectively represent a convergence of China’s and Azerbaijan’s energy and transportation interests.

The methodological approach allows for an interpretive analysis of data within the context of geoeconomic and political transformations in Eurasia, aiming to integrate empirical findings with theoretical

frameworks of energy security, geoeconomics, and realpolitik. The research was not experimental but descriptive and analytical, relying on verifiable and publicly available data. Such an approach contributed to a more reliable assessment of the impact of bilateral cooperation on energy security. It confirmed the validity of the chosen methods in achieving the stated research objectives.

ENERGY COOPERATION BETWEEN CHINA AND AZERBAIJAN

Relations between China and Azerbaijan in the energy field represent one of the key pillars of their overall bilateral cooperation, but also a complex domain where economic interests, geopolitical influences, and global energy trends intersect. Although cooperation between the two countries remains moderate compared to China's relations with other major energy producers in the region, it has shown steady growth. It is gaining importance in the global shift toward energy security and the transition to green energy.

According to Yiyun Su's analysis (Su 2024), cooperation in the energy sector between China and Azerbaijan is based on the long-term strategic interests of both sides. However, there remains room for deeper institutional linkage and technical collaboration. While China maintains significant partnerships with other Caspian energy producers such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan occupies a unique position as a transit and production hub within the broader framework of the BRI. Nevertheless, bilateral cooperation is often subject to the influence of regional political instability and global geopolitical crises, which limit the pace of institutionalisation (Su 2024, 75–85).

At the same time, cooperation in the energy sector is increasingly shifting toward joint projects in renewable energy. China, a global leader in green energy technologies, and Azerbaijan, increasingly committed to the Sustainable Development Goals and carbon emission reduction, view their partnership as an opportunity for technological transfer and joint investment. This new phase of cooperation enables their energy relations to take on a long-term dimension, in which green solutions, such as solar and wind energy, gradually complement fossil fuels. In this context, China provides financial assistance and infrastructural expertise, which is especially valuable for developing

energy zones and new production capacities in western and southern Azerbaijan (Zeynalli 2024, 163–169).

From a geopolitical perspective, Azerbaijan is a significant partner in China's energy strategy. As a stable country in the South Caucasus, with well-developed oil and gas infrastructure and access to European markets, Azerbaijan has the potential to become a key link in China's energy diversification efforts. In this regard, the TANAP and the Southern Gas Corridor gain strategic importance as infrastructural components that, in the future, with Beijing's support, could be adapted to serve China's energy transport interests toward Central Asia or within the intermodal projects of the BRI.

However, cooperation remains in a steady but limited growth phase despite shared interests. The main challenges include competition with Russian, Turkish, and Iranian interests in the region, greater transparency in energy contracts, and the limited volume of direct gas trade between the two countries. Nonetheless, joint commissions and signed memoranda of understanding demonstrate both sides' intention to elevate the energy dialogue, particularly within the framework of the green transition (Novruz 2024).

Despite current limitations, energy cooperation between China and Azerbaijan shows significant potential for strategic expansion. Azerbaijan's position as a stable and energy-relevant partner, combined with China's technological and investment capacities, provides a solid foundation for further advancement of relations, with the potential to become an essential part of Eurasia's new energy security map.

INFRASTRUCTURAL CONNECTIVITY AND LOGISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Trade corridors in the Caspian region are gaining increasing importance in the global economy, especially in the growing connectivity between China and Europe. Historically, Central Asian routes were vital for trade between the East and West; however, since the 16th century, they have been largely supplanted by maritime routes. Today, the region again emerges as a key logistical hub thanks to its energy resources and infrastructural development. Oil and gas pipelines primarily connect producers with markets, stimulating economic growth and stability. At the same time, railway corridors linking China and Europe through Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan represent a

vital alternative to traditional maritime lines. The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the significance of these land routes due to disruptions in global supply chains. However, further investment in infrastructure, political stability, and regional cooperation is essential for these corridors to become sustainable and competitive. In this regard, the Caspian region, and Azerbaijan in particular, have the potential to become a key link in Eurasia's trade network, provided that existing resources and geographical advantages are strategically leveraged (Kalyuzhnova and Pomfret 2021, 1–9).

Azerbaijan's role in modern geoeconomic processes has gained a new dimension through its active participation in China's BRI. Although it was not among the key member states in the initiative's early phase, Azerbaijan has positioned itself as a significant transit hub within the Middle Corridor, which connects China with European markets via Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. This corridor represents an alternative to the northern (Russian) and southern (Iranian) routes, making it particularly attractive in the context of sanctions, geopolitical instability, and the need for trade route diversification (Asian Development Bank Institute [ADBI] 2024).

One of the most strategically significant infrastructure projects in this context is the Port of Alat, located on the western coast of the Caspian Sea. The port serves as a multimodal logistics hub, integrating maritime, rail, and road transport. It represents a key node for the transportation of Chinese goods through Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan and Europe via rail and road routes. In addition, the establishment of the Alat Free Economic Zone – AFEZ holds special importance, attracting foreign investment and fostering the development of export-oriented manufacturing industries (Alat Free Economic Zone [AFEZ] 2025).

In 2024, Azerbaijan significantly consolidated its position as a key transport hub of Eurasia, relying on the robust development of its railway and logistics infrastructure. According to data from the official company Azerbaijan Railways (ADY), the country transported over 18.5 million tons of cargo during the year, with notable growth in both transit and import traffic (an increase of 5.7% and 10%, respectively, compared to 2023). The role of the Middle Corridor was particularly strengthened as the main alternative route connecting China and Europe. In March 2024, the first block train from Xi'an arrived in Baku in only eleven days, demonstrating Azerbaijan's capacity to provide a fast and reliable transit route. Over the year, more than 27,000 containers were

transported via this corridor, exceeding the previous year's figures. Furthermore, Azerbaijan initiated the formation of a new branch of the Middle Corridor along the eastern Caspian coast, linking with Central Asian countries, and established joint international enterprises with Kazakhstan and Georgia to improve coordination of transport flows (e.g., Middle Corridor Multimodal Ltd. and BTKI Railways LLC). These steps form part of Baku's strategic vision to transform itself from a raw material exporter into a regional logistics leader, thereby reducing its economic dependence on the oil sector and positioning itself as a reliable partner within the BRI and the wider Eurasian region (Azerbaijan Railways [ADY] 2025).

Figure 1. The Middle Corridor: The Foundation of the Strategic Partnership between Baku and Beijing



Source: (Mammadov 2025)

Azerbaijan is also intensifying cooperation with Chinese companies in digital logistics, cargo tracking, and transport management. Chinese investments in logistics, digitalisation, and the development of “smart” border systems enhance the efficiency of goods transit. Accordingly, Chinese companies such as Huawei and ZTE Corporation are present in the Azerbaijani market as part of initiatives to modernise Information and Communication Technologies – ICT infrastructure (Zeynalli 2024, 163–169).

The Middle Corridor, also known as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route – TITR, has gained increased significance due to geopolitical challenges affecting alternative routes, such as

sanctions on Iran and the war in Ukraine. This route connects China with Europe via Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, forming a multimodal transport network consisting of 4,256 kilometers of railway and 508 kilometers of maritime routes. Azerbaijan plays a key role in ensuring the efficiency and reliability of this route. Major infrastructure projects such as the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway, launched in 2017, and the Baku International Sea Trade Port, opened in 2018, have significantly reduced delivery times for goods transported from China to Europe by more than 50% in some cases compared to sea routes. Additionally, the Alat Free Economic Zone presents further opportunities for investors and contributes to the country's economic development (Rafi 2024).

To enhance its transit potential, Azerbaijan established the Coordinating Council for Transit Freight in 2015 and, in 2023, adopted an Action Plan for Increasing the Transit Potential of International Transport Corridors for 2024–2026. These measures aim to enhance the regulatory framework and improve the efficiency of transportation procedures. According to statistical data, the volume of freight passing through the Middle Corridor increased by over 120% in the first three months of 2022 compared to the same period of the previous year. Although total transit volume in 2022 amounted to 33,000 TEU, still lower than the Northern Corridor (410,500 TEU), the growth potential remains considerable. Reports by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development – EBRD suggest that the Middle Corridor could reach a transit capacity of 1.4 million TEU. Through strategic infrastructure investments, regulatory reforms, and regional cooperation, Azerbaijan has successfully positioned itself as a key player in global trade networks, contributing to economic diversification and the development of non-oil sectors (Rafi 2024).

GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC POSITIONING

The geopolitical dimension of China-Azerbaijan relations is a crucial aspect in understanding the more profound logic of their cooperation, particularly in light of ongoing regional and global transformations. Both countries aim to maintain balanced and pragmatic foreign policies, taking into account their respective interests and the sensitivities of their partners and other influential regional actors.

Although previously a peripheral zone in China's strategy, the South Caucasus has gained importance due to geopolitical changes, particularly following the 2022 Ukraine crisis. The region now serves as a key transit route for China within the BRI, particularly through the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), also known as the Middle Corridor, which links China with Europe via Central Asia and the South Caucasus. The article "China's Foreign-Policy Strategy in the South Caucasus – a Transit Window to Europe?" by Albert Kumukov and Sergey Luzyanin, published in Russia in *Global Affairs*, provides a comprehensive analysis of the South Caucasus' significance in China's foreign policy, with particular attention to Azerbaijan. The article reviews differing academic perspectives on the region's role in China's strategy. Some scholars argue that the South Caucasus holds a secondary role, citing the limited activity of Chinese financial institutions and the cautious approach of local countries toward Chinese investments. However, others highlight the region's potential, particularly in transportation, logistics, and energy, emphasising that China is increasingly interested in developing projects in these sectors (Kumukov and Luzyanin 2024, 178–179). The authors also note that China has expanded its regional presence through infrastructure projects and economic cooperation, especially with Azerbaijan. This includes investments in transport infrastructure and the energy sector, as well as strengthening bilateral relations and positioning Azerbaijan as a significant partner in China's foreign policy (180–182). The South Caucasus, particularly Azerbaijan, is increasingly important in China's transcontinental connectivity and economic cooperation strategy. This trend is driven by geopolitical shifts and China's need to diversify its transport routes to Europe, making the region a crucial element in the future development of China's foreign policy.

China maintains a neutral position in regional conflicts, including the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. Since establishing diplomatic relations with the South Caucasus countries in 1992, Beijing has refrained from participating in controversial United Nations votes concerning Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia (Mammadov 2025). For its part, Azerbaijan pursues a multi-vector foreign policy, seeking to maintain balance in its relations with the West, Russia, Turkey, and China. This strategy enables Baku to attract investments and ensure security, particularly in light of its long-standing conflict with Armenia.

Diplomatic pragmatism between China and Azerbaijan is reflected in the intensification of bilateral cooperation in various fields. A mutual visa exemption for holders of ordinary passports has also been established, which is expected to stimulate tourism, educational exchange, and business travel (Reuters 2025b). This approach allows both countries to advance their interests without engaging in confrontational politics, thereby contributing to stability and creating potential for the long-term development of their relations.

AZERBAIJAN IN THE CONCEPT OF ENERGY SECURITY

Azerbaijan occupies an increasingly important position in the global energy architecture as a stable and reliable partner, a crucial factor in the era of profound global energy security changes. Its geographic position at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, combined with proven natural gas reserves exceeding 2.6 trillion cubic meters and well-developed infrastructure, allows it to serve as a strategic supplier of energy resources to multiple regions (International Energy Agency [IEA] 2023). Through the Southern Gas Corridor, Azerbaijan already supplies the European market via the TANAP and Trans Adriatic Pipeline – TAP, which enable the direct transport of gas from the Shah Deniz field to consumers in the European Union, significantly contributing to Europe’s energy diversification and reducing its dependence on Russia (European Commission 2022). These corridors ensure Europe’s oil and gas supply while bypassing Russia and Iran, which increases Azerbaijan’s strategic significance not only for Western actors but also for China, which sees in this arrangement alternative routes and partnerships within its BRI. At the same time, through cooperation with China under the BRI framework, Azerbaijan is expanding its energy and transit relevance to Asian markets. This position, supported by active participation in multilateral energy initiatives such as the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) and long-term investment partnerships with companies like BP and TotalEnergies, contributes to Azerbaijan’s perception as a stable energy hub in an otherwise volatile region (BP Azerbaijan 2023). Domestic political stability, pragmatic foreign policy, and neutrality toward regional conflicts enable Azerbaijan to position itself as an “energy bridge” of Eurasia, connecting Caspian resources with European and Asian consumer

centres. Such a role makes Azerbaijan an indispensable player in global energy security's current and future map.

In modern geopolitics, energy security has become one of the key factors shaping bilateral relations between states possessing significant energy resources and those that are major consumers. Azerbaijan, as a supplier located at the intersection of Europe and Asia with projects such as the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Southern Gas Corridor, has managed to diversify its export routes and position itself as a reliable partner not only for Europe but also for China. Within the context of China's BRI, Azerbaijan gains strategic value as a hub through which energy and infrastructure projects can develop. China's recent energy diversification policy focuses on stable partners across Eurasia, and Azerbaijan is assuming an increasingly important role. As noted, during Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's state visit to Beijing in April 2025, more than twenty bilateral agreements were signed in the fields of renewable energy, digital economy, and petrochemicals, signalling the growing complexity and institutionalisation of relations (Reuters 2025). Furthermore, in November 2024, in preparation for The 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference or Conference – COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan's Ministry of Energy signed agreements with China Datang Co. Ltd. – CDT and China Energy Overseas Investment Co. Ltd. – CEOI for the construction of solar power plants and the development of renewable energy projects (Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan 2024). Establishing a Joint Working Group on Investment Cooperation with CEEC further confirms the strategic partnership in developing solar and wind energy, as well as producing green hydrogen (Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan 2024). Energy cooperation between China and Azerbaijan is no longer based solely on fossil fuels but is increasingly shifting toward the green transition, which aligns with global climate goals. This partnership allows China to diversify its supply sources while enabling Azerbaijan to expand its export infrastructure, solidifying its role in international energy flows and contributing to preserving a multi-vector foreign policy amid rising geopolitical uncertainty.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between China and Azerbaijan in the energy sector represents one of the most compelling examples of modern geo-economic cooperation between a mid-sized state striving to preserve its energy independence and a global power seeking to expand its influence through infrastructure and investment. Despite geographical distance, the two countries have, over the past decade, built a stable and functional framework of cooperation grounded in mutual interests, political realism, and economic pragmatism. China views Azerbaijan as a reliable partner and stable anchor in the South Caucasus. At the same time, Azerbaijan regards cooperation with Beijing as a means to diversify its foreign partnerships and reduce economic dependence on Western and Russian markets. This cooperation spans multiple levels from energy and green transition to infrastructure, logistics, digital economy, and education, making it multidimensional and resilient to political change.

However, despite the depth and dynamism of this relationship, it can be concluded that China-Azerbaijan energy relations have not yet reached the level of a fully developed strategic partnership in the classical sense. Their nature remains primarily pragmatic, based on economic benefits, mutual political moderation, and the avoidance of confrontation with other regional actors. Although both Beijing and Baku formally use the term “comprehensive strategic partnership”, it is functional and dominated by economic projects rather than security alliances or political commitments. There is a clear tendency toward the gradual evolution of relations from pragmatic cooperation to a pragmatic strategic partnership, built through institutionalised bilateral mechanisms, collaboration in renewable energy and infrastructure, and growing technological connectivity. The success of this process will largely depend on the stability of the South Caucasus, China’s priorities within the BRI framework, and Azerbaijan’s domestic political consolidation. The research contribution of this paper lies in the systematic analysis of China-Azerbaijan energy relations as an example of a new model of cooperation between major and middle powers within a shifting geopolitical architecture. It enhances understanding of the energy interdependence between China and Azerbaijan as a reference model for analysing the impact of energy

on states' foreign policy behaviour in the post-crisis Eurasian structure, with special attention to the period 2022–2025.

From the perspective of the coming decade, China-Azerbaijan cooperation can potentially become a significant factor in Eurasia's energy security. Developing joint projects in green energy, expanding the Middle Corridor's logistics capacity, and growing technological cooperation could create preconditions for a new model of regional integration, connecting Europe and Asia through energy and infrastructure interdependence. In this context, Azerbaijan could emerge as an energy and transport hub within the Eurasian network, while China would consolidate its influence without direct political dominance.

Overall, China-Azerbaijan relations exemplify a flexible and evolutionary partnership, adaptable to global changes while maintaining a balance between national interests and regional stability. If the current cooperation trends continue, this model could become a reference point for understanding the new patterns of energy diplomacy in Eurasia in the coming decade.

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ЕНЕРГЕТСКИ ОДНОСИ КИНЕ И АЗЕРБЕЈЦАНА: ИЗМЕЋУ ПРАГМАТИЧНЕ САРАДЊЕ И СТРАТЕШКОГ ПАРТНЕРСТВА

Резиме

У априлу 2025. године, током званичне посете председника Азербејцана Илхама Алијева Пекингу, Азербејцан и Народна Република Кина формализовали су успостављање свеобухватног стратешког партнерства. Ово партнерство представља виши степен билатералне сарадње и указује на снажан заокрет ка дубљој политичкој, економској и безбедносној координацији између две земље. Овај догађај имао је политичке рефлексije на позиционирање Азербејцана као активног актера у евроазијском региону. Политичка димензија партнерства огледа се у узајамној подршци суверенитету и територијалном интегритету обе државе. Азербејцан је изразио подршку политици „једне Кине”, док је Пекинг поновио подршку азербејцанској независности и стабилности. Овим потезом Баку јасно исказује приврженост политици балансирања, у оквиру које паралелно одржава блиске односе са Западом, Русијом, Турском и Ираном, али истовремено гради и продубљује везе са Кином као све утицајнијим глобалним чиниоцем. Такав приступ одражава вишевекторску

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спољну политику, карактеристичну за мале и средње земље на геополитичким раскрсницама. Економска компонента партнерства фокусирана је на унапређење сарадње у кључним секторима: обновљивим изворима енергије, дигиталној економији, индустрији и петрохемији. Кроз споразум о оснивању Радне групе за инвестициону сарадњу, истиче се институционализација економских односа. Обе стране изразиле су спремност да продубе заједнички рад на развоју глобалног партнерства за чисту енергију, што рефлектује растући значај зелене енергетике као инструмента економске и еколошке безбедности. Ова оријентација доприноси и енергетској диверсификацији Кине, чији интерес за ресурсе Каспијског региона расте у контексту нестабилности на Блиском истоку и сукоба у Украјини. Поред енергетике, сарадња у области транспорта и логистике добија на замаху. Потписани споразуми о мултимодалном транспорту и подршка транскаспијским коридорима (нарочито Средњем коридору) наглашавају стратешку улогу Азербејџана у иницијативи „Појас и пут”. Земља се позиционира као кључна транзитна тачка између Кине и Европе, што не само да доприноси економској добити, већ и оснажује њену геоекономску и геополитичку релевантност. Упоредо с економским и транспортним аспектима, сарадња се паралелно одвија и на безбедносној и друштвено-културној сфери. Посебно се истиче договор о заједничкој борби против тероризма, сајбер претњи и екстремизма, као и интензивирање сарадње у области образовања, културе и научних истраживања. Укидање виза за носиоце обичних пасоша симболично је али важно средство за унапређење људских контаката и развој тзв. „меке моћи”. Укупне активности усмерене на све дубљу сарадњу две земље указују на прагматичан али амбициозан однос који превазилази класичну трговачку сарадњу. За Азербејџан, ова сарадња је средство за диверсификацију партнера и осигурање спољнополитичке аутономије, а за Кину начин да прошири утицај у региону који повезује Европу и Азију. Стога се ово партнерство може тумачити и као покушај геоекономске консолидације у времену глобалне нестабилности.

Кључне речи: Азербејџан, Кина, енергетска безбедност, „Појас и пут”, геополитика, енергетика, Јужни Кавказ, инфраструктура.

* This paper was received on October 25, 2025, and accepted for publication at the Editorial Board meeting on November 5, 2025.

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CONFRONTING IDENTITIES IN THE BALKANS AS A SECURITY CHALLENGE**

Abstract

Identity, whether national/ethnic, religious/confessional, or cultural, is one of the key determinants by which an individual or community defines who they are, what they are part of, and/or what they believe in. However, although identity determination plays a significant role in building community and fostering belonging, it can also become a source of instability, which is especially pronounced in multi-ethnic and multi-confessional societies. Tensions escalate when different identities are pitted against each other in a confrontational relationship and exploited for political manipulation. History is replete with examples in which differences in identity have triggered wars, mass suffering, and social divisions. If identity is presented as untouchable and monolithic, or when it is perceived as exclusive and unchangeable, it manifests itself as a primary factor of constant instability. The example of the dissolutive processes in the former Yugoslavia, from the beginning of the 90s, in the name of identity differences, is the most blatant one. The consequences of this antagonism persist today, in the third decade since the end of the complex conflicts in this region. The rhetoric of the 90s continues to contribute to radicalization, the strengthening of populism, and efforts

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** The paper was created as part of the Ministry of Defence project: "Security Challenges of the Western Balkan Countries within the European Security Paradigm", No. ИСИ/ДХ1/24–25, which is being carried out by the research team of the Strategic Research Institute and external associates during the 2024–2025 period.

to impose the identity policies of these countries as a top-tier political issue. Starting from the basic assumptions of identity as a confronting category, the paper analyzes the survival of conflict rhetoric in the former Yugoslavia, which is still based on “irreconcilable identity differences”, that is, what impact does the “truth” established in this way have on the political and security stability of the region.

Keywords: Balkans, identities, conflicts, propaganda, security.

INTRODUCTION

Across all societies, people interact with each other, regardless of their level of development and organization. These interactions are primarily observed through the sphere of human movement – migration (Subotić 2022), as Anthony Giddens suggests, through images transmitted via the media and the Internet (Giddens 2003, 283). Some accept this cultural complexity as an essential part of a cosmopolitan society. Others see it as a danger and threat “to cultural identities and the welfare system” (Matijašević and Todorović 2024, 50). Those who maintain fundamentalist worldviews seek refuge in established traditions and reject dialogue with those who are different (Giddens 2003, 284).

Prejudice and stereotypes are often the stepping stones in creating the negative image of Otherness. If prejudices are based on uncritical thinking, stereotypes can be defined as templates that always give the same image. Stereotypes, analyzed from a historical perspective, appear as irrefutable arguments that are persistently maintained and difficult to correct (Milosavljević 2022, 21). Stereotyping functions as a mechanism in forming a discourse on Otherness, wherein it reduces a person to a simplified figure or reduces them to several characteristics, thereby streamlining a people’s essence. According to Hall, a stereotype is a one-sided description that arises when complex differences are reduced to one-dimensional representations, which are further attributed to a subject and then become evidence that defines the essence of their being (Hol 2018, 55). Gilman points out that stereotypes are also characterized by dualism, which divides people into pairs of opposite meanings (good and bad). “The deep structure of

our self and the world rests on an illusory image of the world divided into two camps of us and them – good or bad” (Gilman 1985, 84).

As the most collectively exposed of all identity characteristics, national stereotypes represent exemplars of their social categorization. Since they encourage generalization, they enable the perception of an entire group (usually another nation) as individuals with dominant, less valuable traits, in the same way that they allow the perception of one’s country as individuals with prevailing desirable traits (Milosavljević 2002, 22). Problematizing how public opinion is shaped, which reinforces dominant stereotypes, Milosavljević cites the media, publishing, school textbooks, and the education system as necessary. “The characteristics that are attributed to oneself and Others (martyr, hero, separatist, libertarian, troublemaker, etc.) most often do not stem from everyday life, but rather, stereotypes about other nations are created purposefully and are conditioned by political interests, and are created by political and intellectual elites since only they have access to all the ways of influencing public opinion in terms of forming a desirable image of the Other” (22). Although Hall’s essay on the discourse of the West and the rest of the world is primarily concerned with the context of the “colonization of the new world”, this discourse, in its modified and adapted form, is very relevant in the modern world and continues to influence the West’s image of itself and the Others, the experience of them and us, and power relations. It is essential for the languages of racial inferiority and ethnic superiority, which are widely present worldwide (Hol 2018, 71). Hall also believes that each society or culture tends to impose its classifications of the social, cultural, and political worldview with varying degrees of closure. These classifications constitute the dominant cultural order, where the key issue is the structure of the ruling discourses. “Different areas of social life appear as embedded in discursive domains, hierarchically organized into ruling or preferred meanings” (19).

In personality psychology, identity is defined as the experience of the essential sameness and continuity of the “I” over a long period, regardless of its changes in different periods and circumstances. A specific identity is acquired by birth or through belonging to a particular group, and it can also be defined by the specific determinations, affinities, or orientations of a person. Each identity can be changeable over time, and there can be multiple identities. Each of these categories can be changed, from age to any other, and can be changed in whole or at least

partially by the characteristics of the individual or social circumstances. Even the affiliation given to us at birth can be changed by our decisions throughout life (from ethnicity to, say, first and last name, etc.) - each person's overall identity changes throughout life (McAdams *et al.* 2021). However, things are not so unambiguous or straightforward. According to Bugarski, if the division of identity is reduced to ascribed and acquired characteristics, then from a sociological point of view, ethnicity is given only insofar as no individual can choose the ethnic community into which they are born. However, it is also changeable (like other types of identity) because it is up to us to decide whether ethnicity or ideological affiliation will be part of our identity and to what extent (Bugarski 2005, 69). As Dušan Ristić states, ideologies, in a broader sense, represent discursive resources that contribute to forming collective social identities by encompassing aspects such as history, collective experiences, social positions, and social ties with other groups (Ristić 2018, 31).

Language is a fundamental indicator of power relations, control, and discrimination, which will be discussed in more detail in the section on some of the more recent identity conflicts in the Balkans. The relationship between language and power is primarily addressed through critical discourse analysis, which examines its role in the interaction of power relations and the dominance of certain members of a community over others. This analysis aims to influence the eradication of social inequalities, differences, prejudices, and stereotypes by interpreting specific linguistic phenomena. Considering how discourse expresses and reproduces basic prejudices about Others in a particular socio-political context, Van Dijk explains that a speech strategy based on ethnic prejudices and stereotypes is based on positive self-presentation and negative presentation of the Other. As he concludes, many studies of ethnic and racial inequality reveal a marked degree of similarity between stereotypes, prejudices, and other forms of verbal discrimination with discursive strategies, media, and established national boundaries (Dijk and Adrianus 2015, 11). The dehumanization of the Other, as explained by Zygmunt Bauman, opens the way for their exclusion from the categories of persons who legitimately possess human rights. People excluded from our moral responsibility are attributed with qualities that do not deserve attention and respect, thus justifying disrespect and lack of care as "deserved punishments for the incurable vices or evil intentions of those we

have deprived of respect and ignored, treated rudely, or recklessly neglected” (Bauman 2018, 79).

As Volkan (*Vamık Cemal Volkan*) points out, in the written history available to us, we constantly see interactions between pseudo-species, with one group maliciously viewing the other as less than human (Volkan 2017, 115). Social stigma and stigmatization, according to the definition of UNICEF, represent extreme disapproval or dissatisfaction with a particular person or group because of assumed or real characteristics, beliefs, or behaviours that are considered to distinguish them from other members of society, whether in economic, political, cultural, or social norms (United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF] 2019). In its most severe forms, stigma leads to the exclusion of individuals or entire groups from spheres of social functioning and creates feelings of guilt, shame, fear, inferiority, and a desire to hide.

According to Bauman, accustomed to using our characteristics as a yardstick by which to judge the humanity of other people, we “normal” people believe that a person with a stigma is not entirely human, and the immediate effect of all this is a rude refusal of social acceptance of people who are branded as animalistic, that is, their forced alienation (Bauman 2018, 42). Labelling others and those who are different as a danger to us represents a significant step in the transition from the phase of antagonism to the phase of open conflict, in which identities are treated as destructive and devastating categories. Therefore, in the rest of the text, we will focus precisely on the destructive component, mainly ethnic identities, which are characteristic of the Western Balkan region over a more extended period.

IDENTITY AS A DESTRUCTIVE CATEGORY

Certain aspects of identity can give rise to intense and destructive conflicts. If an identity is highly reinforced or very important to someone, such as ethnicity (nationality) or religious/confessional identification, then threats to that identity are difficult to ignore. Also, specific cultural patterns with an overemphasized uniqueness in the group can create conflict. These patterns include a pronounced tendency to distrust and belittle other groups, and even deny their cultural identity. If a particular group believes it is a victim of another group, it develops a feeling of permanent threat. In fear of retaliation or other attacks, moves are triggered that are intended to prevent these

attacks, but often in a manner that threatens the other party. As an epilogue to this double threat, according to the principle of “all against all”, a long-term destructive struggle most often develops. Identity is most often based on experiential interactions. Suppose a group is accustomed to coercive interactions. In that case, their identity will tend to treat harsh members of the group with respect while at the same time perceiving enemies as extremely violent and cruel. Finally, identities are typically asymmetrical. Powerful groups will often seek to define and marginalize other groups. The Nazis forcibly imposed their perception of who and what Jews were as a grotesque example of this tendency (Malek 2013).

Social identity theory considers how group membership is incorporated into our self-concept and influences our views of other members and non-members of our groups and members of rival groups (Hogg 2011). Social identity is a concept that refers to the social use of cultural markers to assert, achieve, or attribute group membership (Ohlagaray 2020). This definition of social identity leads us into the field of politics, as it refers to different dimensions of what is commonly called political identity. Sometimes, these identity disagreements escalate into mutually destructive conflicts, adopting a formula in which belonging to a group identity (or identity groups) becomes the ultimate value. For some, these identity groups can be nationalism and ethnicity; for others, race, religion, or sexual orientation (2020). Identity antagonism can also be based on the fan subculture or fanatical loyalty to a sports club (Đorić 2024, 167).

Most deeply rooted and persistent conflicts are characterized by antagonism between identity groups. Therefore, more and more research is turning to this fact, and terminology such as ethnocentrism, prejudice, stereotypes, xenophobia, and the like speak of the existence of a broad descriptive apparatus of the role that social identity plays in conflict. The identity factor is so influential that, once invoked, it excludes or nullifies any other analysis and even the need for a rational attitude towards these phenomena. In other words, deeply rooted social identities can be the product of conflict, just as deeply rooted conflicts are the product of confronted social identities (Ohlagaray 2020). As David Pilgrim points out, identity politics is like a “priest’s egg”¹ –

¹ Curate’s egg is a metaphor that originated from an anecdote described in a late 19th-century comic strip, according to which a curate at a bishop’s breakfast, not wanting

partly good, partly bad. However, besides taking up a lot of our time, the bad parts have also proven to be a divisive factor in “progressive” debates over the past few years. Namely, they have occasionally led to political paralysis and factionalism among those who, at least on paper, were on the same side. Political parties have split, and even new ones have been created due to resentment and dogmatism (Pilgrim 2024, 8).

In line with Pilgrim’s view, applied to identities more broadly, one can conclude that there are two directions between identity and conflict: identity does not necessarily lead to conflict, but some form of identity is a necessary prerequisite for philanthropy, solidarity, and altruism. What drives identity toward conflict is a characteristic of a particular kind of identity – *the narcissistic identity*, one of the most important transmitters of conflict. This identity is most often based on a foundational myth that describes the noble or divine origins of the group, praising past achievements or ancient injustices that have hindered the group’s development and well-being. Narcissistic identity creates conflicts in at least three ways (Ohlagaray 2020): a) Founding myths are monolithic – they cannot be changed, nor can any (even reasoned) disagreement with them be expressed. They are about “saving the inalienable and absolute truth shared by the group”, which is typical of so-called groupthink; b) The narcissistic group contrasts a positive image of itself with a negative vision of another (opposed) group. For “us” to improve, “they” must be worse; c) Narcissistic identities raise the value of their group by underestimating others, denying their ethical relevance, and even the very basis for the existence of the other group.

Starting from an ontological understanding of the human essence, psychiatrist Jovan Rašković, in his study “Narcissism”, establishes a relationship in which there is a deep connection between narcissism and aggression to show that narcissistic aggression is the most widespread form of aggression. The human aggressive potential and its specificities lead him to believe that human aggression, as the oldest irrational biological creation, is linked to passion, which this author sees as “the youngest child of instincts” and irrational energy. He believes that passion has no better partner than aggression, but also that aggression has no better instigator than passion (Božović

to offend his host, who served him a rotten egg, assured him that some parts of the egg were good after all (Hanks 1986, 381).

2018, 116). Among the many different forms of aggression, this author believes that narcissistic aggression is “the most widespread form of aggression” (Rašković 1988, 62).

The recent history of the Balkan turmoil has shown that the “Narcissus-leader” was established on nationalist narcissism as a collectivist foundation. It is difficult to say who encouraged whom more to realize the destructive political idea. Perhaps the worst thing is that the narcissists in the position of leader have combined their fanaticism with collective narcissism and nationalist fanaticism. An atmosphere of nationalist narcissism has been created, in which “my people” is crowned with superlatives, never controversial or problematic. In numerous cases of ethno-nationalist conflicts, the most profound hatred is between the peoples who, according to the most noticeable features, show the least differences. This is one of the great contradictions of civilization and one of the most significant sources of dissatisfaction, and Sigmund Freud named this phenomenon “narcissism of small differences”. In his words: “It is precisely the minor differences in otherwise similar people that form the basis for their mutual hostile feelings” (Freud 1991, 255).

Narcissistic leaders are often characterized by what Orwell refers to as the national personality (Orwell 2018). The characteristic elements of what he defines as the nationalistic personality are: a) Rallying around a sense of defeat; b) Finding a common enemy, often responsible for this emotional defeat, who is to blame for all the ills of our society; c) The rise of a national hero, often represented by an ideal citizen and a sense of superiority over others, whom we should all aspire to and admire.

The nationalist personality, according to Orwell, sees history, especially modern history, as an endless rise and fall of great powers, and every event that occurs seems to him to be confirmation that his side is on the rise. Some hated rivals are on the decline and weakening. However, it is essential not to confuse nationalism with the mere idealization of success. The nationalists do not act on the principle of simply siding with the strongest side. On the contrary, having chosen his side, he convinces himself that it is the strongest and can stick to his conviction even when the facts are completely against him. Nationalism is a hunger for power reinforced by self-deception (Orwell 2018). In the context of the sources of collective identity, nationalism is considered the most persistent spiritual offshoot of the French Revolution (Keitner

2020). It seems as if the bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia, based on “irreconcilable identity differences between regional actors” (Subotić 2024a, 62), refuted the position of Eric Hobsbawm, who believed that the theme of his book was, historically speaking, in complete retreat (Hobsbawm 1990). The idea of the nation, especially in the countries of Southeastern Europe, has filled the void that ideology once occupied in those areas.

SOME OF THE RECENT BALKAN IDENTITY FRICTIONS

The numerous examples that testify to the antagonism in the name of opposing identities on the territory of the countries of the former Yugoslavia, especially the innumerable and repeatedly discussed examples from the 1990s, ground us in the knowledge that the existence of different identities (religion-nation-ethnicity) in the Balkans is marked by difficulties, suffering and suffering. Or rather, by manipulations of identity properties (Subotić 2024b). According to this “reality”, it turns out that the local identities were created to suffer. If we do not go into the distant past but take the 1980s as a reference period (when they began to be frequently discussed), the laments over their fate and the increasingly frequent calls to stand in their protection do not cease. This is one of the constants of contemporary politics in the Balkans. It would seem that the political leaderships of the Balkan states, as well as the official and self-proclaimed representatives of their cultural elites, view their most important task as “mourning” the supposedly severely damaged identities and issuing panicked calls to protect them from further suffering. Examples from the last few years demonstrate that, more than 25 years after the previous military conflicts in this area, identity antagonism persists. Recognizing that the role of identity in the wars of the 1990s has been extensively studied academically, this text will focus on some recent examples of regional antagonism in the name of identity.

While the “new reality” (Đorić 2021) due to the coronavirus epidemic lasted, the “guardians” of local identities did not leave their “guard posts”. They continued to observe and record everything that allegedly threatened these identities and to warn the public in their countries about it. However, since life in these countries gradually began to return to normal, news about these identities suffering has suddenly

multiplied. One gets the impression that they fear the authorities, and the people may be preoccupied with the epidemic, leading to a decrease in public hatred towards the nation's enemies. Therefore, they are attempting to address this issue by "pumping" an increased dose of this, as they undoubtedly believe, vital national sentiment into the public (Čolović 2020). Information about new conflicts between Balkan identities has continued to reach the media. We learned that merciless confrontations are underway between Serbian and Albanian, Albanian and Macedonian, Macedonian and Bulgarian, Bosnian and Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian, Bulgarian and Serbian, Serbian and Montenegrin, and Croatian and Serbian (predominantly ethnic/national) identities – *Bellum omnium contra omnes* – war of all against all.

One of the more paradigmatic clashes in Balkan identity conflicts occurred when a TV film entitled "The Great Serbian Historical Deception – How the Serbs Stole Albanian History" was shown in Albania. It claims, among other things, that since the time of Stefan Nemanja, the Albanian people have been victims of identity denial and theft, that the Serbs have taken away their churches² (including Gračanica, the Church of St. Petka in Prizren, and the Peć Patriarchate),³ and that the people and clergy have either been baptized or driven away. The text published by *Koha Ditore* states the thesis that Serbs occupied Kosovo, that the cradle of Serbian churches and monasteries

² The cultural identity of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija is affirmed by the existence of over 1.500 documented cultural monuments (monasteries and churches), which attest to the centuries-old presence of the Serbian nation, as well as the Christian religion within the framework of almost every denomination that emerged in these regions as a result of the intertwining influences of Eastern and Western Christian cultures. Building one's own identity through the destruction of all symbols of the other in the community is merely a sign of weakness and an underdeveloped sense of identity, as evidenced by the destruction of 156 monasteries and churches across Kosovo and Metohija, with the most significant losses suffered by the historically important city of Prizren, once the capital of the Serbian Empire – 13 (Medojević and Milosavljević 2022, 244–250). This factual situation, on the other hand, is today superficially portrayed through political maneuvers as a centuries-long struggle of the Albanian population to preserve their own identity and integrity.

³ Seizing or destroying sacred sites as places of communal gathering for a nation was actually a *modus operandi* of Albanian extremists in achieving their ultimate goal, which is the displacement of non-Albanian, i.e., Serbian, populations. They then attempt to portray this as evidence of the centuries-old existence of the Albanian nation in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija (Avramović *et al.* 2010, 20–21).

during the Nemanjić rule “was not located within Kosovo”,⁴ and that “the territory of present-day Kosovo was not the epicenter of Serbian church-building activities during the Nemanjić era” (Kosovo online 2020). The Serbian Ministry of Culture responded to all these “new narratives” from Albania by announcing that the film was a dangerous forgery. Still, that responsibility for it did not lie solely with the Albanian side but also with its Balkan allies, and that it was the fruit of “orchestrated activities from chauvinistic circles in some neighboring states in the region aimed at nullifying, erasing from history and seizing Serbian cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible” (Politika 2020). The Ministry has discerned the ultimate goal of the enemies of Serbian national identity, which is nothing less than the destruction of the Serbian people. “Such attempts”, the statement reads, “have all the hallmarks of cultural genocide, and as history teaches us, it is often a prelude to physical genocide” (Politika 2020).

In constructing the identity principles of the Kosovo Albanians, and in parallel with influences originating from Albania, the Albanian political and intellectual leadership in Kosovo and Metohija increasingly emphasizes the authenticity of its European affiliation through a “centuries-long identification with Christianity.” In this context, the “participation in the Battle of Kosovo under the banners of Christian noblemen has been presented as significant evidence that Albanians were on the ‘right side,’ thereby being represented as guardians of the gate” (Lelio 2020, 25). Within this particular revision of mythological narratives, the official Albanian discourse displays ambivalent attitudes toward Islam, accompanied by a tendency to marginalize the memory of the Sultan and broader Islamic cultural heritage. Consequently, the “revival of the narrative concerning the Albanian assassin of the Sultan” primarily serves as a symbolic instrument in constructing the identity of the new European state of Kosovo, rooted in an imagined pre-Islamic Christian past (Subotić i Milenković 2022, 70).

Around the same time, a collection of papers entitled “On the Official Language in the Republic of North Macedonia” (Българска

⁴ One of the many attempts to rewrite history in order to build a national identity by denying the existence and activities of the Nemanjić dynasty in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija can be refuted by relevant historical sources, primarily Byzantine, which unambiguously testify that these regions were governed by Grand Prince Stefan Nemanja from the late 12th century, that is, after the death of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1118–1180) (Avramović *et al.* 2010, 16).

Академия на науките 2020) was published by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, which caused “alarm” in the Macedonian and Serbian media. According to the announcement of its promotion on May 7, 2020, in Sofia, the collection is “the fruit of the efforts of Bulgarian linguists to reach a unified position on the Macedonian language”. Moreover, they unanimously and finally concluded that this language is a “southwestern variant of the Bulgarian language” (Преспански n.d.). More than enough for Macedonian linguists to sound the “red alarm” and warn the public of their country that the suffering of the Macedonian national identity continues. As linguist Katica Culavkova said: “Macedonian identity has experienced metaphysical amputation” (Ќулавкова 2023). Now, as she points out, it is threatened with final destruction. “When we thought we were done with identity ultimatums, Bulgaria stepped in with the claim to amputate the other part of Macedonian history, the Slavic one, from the 9th century to 1945” (Ќулавкова 2023).

Serbian linguists, defenders of Serbian national identity, have also intervened in this Macedonian-Bulgarian identity showdown because the book of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences on the Macedonian language also mentions testimonies about the alleged presence of the Bulgarian language in Serbia in the speech of the people from the Danube to Kopaonik. The guardians of the Serbian language were alarmed by the Cultural and Information Center of Serbs in Macedonia – SPONA, reporting that a “brutal attack on the Serbian language” had been carried out, that this was the latest “brutal claim on the Serbian language, and thus on the national, historical and cultural space”. The SPONA Center appealed to the professional community in Serbia to react because Bulgarian academics claim that the Bulgarian language is spoken in the area from the Danube to Gevgelija and from Kopaonik to Timok, Pcinja, and Ohrid. Their “alarm” was echoed in the Serbian media, and thus, a commentary appeared in *Večernje Novosti* under the title “The ripping off of the Serbian language. Bulgarians in action”. In a statement to this newspaper, RS academic Slobodan Remetić said that “Bulgarians have been attacking the Serbian language for a long time and that they have once again, after a certain period, taken the plunge” (Begenišić 2020).

The latest turbulence on the Sofia-Skopje route arose after the North Macedonian flag was not displayed in Sofia during an informal meeting between the heads of state, Rumen Radev and Gordana

Siljanovska Davkova. The Deputy Prime Minister of North Macedonia, Aleksandar Nikoloski, described Bulgarian President Radev as “uncivilized” for this act (Kompas info 2024). This was seen in Sofia as a provocation, to which Skopje responded by reminding it that the development of good neighbourly relations is of key importance for the European future of North Macedonia.

Among those who defended the Serbian language and national identity against the Bulgarians, Viktor Savić, a research associate at the Institute of the Serbian Language of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, also stood out. He stated that “at the time when the Serbian language was formed, the Bulgarians were not Slavs at all”, that they were a nomadic people of the Turkish group who came to the Balkans after the Serbs, and that some Serbian dialects from Metohija migrated to Sofia. However, the Bulgarians only incorporated them into the Bulgarian language because they resembled it. The following headlines accompanied Savić’s statement on the portals: “Bulgarian Academy attacks Serbian; Our roots are in Serbian land; Dr. Savić reveals the painful truth” (Matić 2020).

This kind of alliance between Macedonian and Serbian identity guardians in the fight against these narratives from Bulgaria did not prevent them from also reopening old disputes over identity. The occasion was the release of a postage stamp featuring a map of Croatia, published by the Macedonian Post in 2020. It shows a large part of Serbia within Croatia’s borders because the Macedonians mistakenly published a map of the Independent State of Croatia. However, some media outlets in Serbia interpreted this as a provocation by the Macedonian authorities aimed at disrupting good relations between the Serbian and Macedonian people. In an interview with the newspaper *Kurir*, published with the subtitle “They do not mind the NDH, they mind the Nemanjićs and Serbian warriors”, art historian Jasmina S. Ćirić spoke about this. She said that in this country, Serbian medieval heritage is “presented as part of Byzantine Macedonia”. In contrast, Serbian monastery properties are called “occupation bases”, and “the concept of Serbomania orchestratedly replaces the very concept of Serbianness” (Kurir 2020b).

In recent years, new clashes have arisen in the long-standing dispute between the guardians of Serbian and Montenegrin identity,

which has intensified since Montenegro gained independence.⁵ A stronger exchange of “fire” and new lamentations over the damaged identities also occurred when the news was published that the Montenegrin police had detained the Serbian Orthodox Church Bishop Joanikije and seven priests for a procession they organized in Nikšić on May 12, 2020, despite the ban on public gatherings due to the epidemic. Several rallies were held in Belgrade to support the detainees, and the Serbian Orthodox Church supported them through a special prayer service at the Temple of Saint Sava in Vračar, led by Bishop Stefan. “Let us pray especially”, he told the gathering, “for our people in Montenegro, where we are currently suffering the most” (FoNet 2020).

This was another reason for the Montenegrin side to activate accusations and complaints that Serbs continued to deny their national identity. The then Prime Minister Marković complained that “the denial of Montenegrin identity and the right to their state is more radical than it was a decade and a half ago” (Čolović 2020). The artistic director of the Montenegrin National Theatre, Željko Sošić, reacted more strongly to the new denials of Montenegrin national identity, saying in an interview with the Montenegrin newspaper *Dnevne novine* that Montenegrins are “faced with obvious clerical-fascist, hostile attacks” on their people and state. “We are”, he explained, “the only people in the world to whom someone dares to say that we are not who we are, that we do not speak the language we speak, that we do not have the name we have, and that we belong to something else, and that we do not know it” (Čolović 2020).

The latest example of the identity struggle between the guardians of Serbian and Montenegrin national identity is the broadcast of the song “Heart of Serbia”, which is accompanied by a video dominated by national and historical symbols, mainly in the territory of Cetinje, in the narrative of the guardians of Montenegrin national identity, marked as the “capital of Montenegro”. “The video represents a shameless misuse

⁵ A built national identity makes the community capable of working in the direction of achieving the political unity necessary for the functioning of society and the state, which would be lacking in Montenegro and thus lead to the destructive actions of a certain group. Without a developed consciousness and with the disappearance of national memory, the ability to appreciate the values that have been handed down to us is lost. Insufficient awareness of national identity leads to the need for conflict under the pretext of preserving national unity, even where it is not in question, and against the aspirations of those who supposedly strive for their own goal, i.e. the disintegration of the state (Šijaković 2018).

of the cultural assets and symbols of Cetinje”, assessed the president of the Cetinje municipality, Nikola Đurašković (Janković 2024).

The identity war has also flared up between Serbian and Croatian identity formations. The reason for the new showdown was the news that on a European Union website, where children were offered interesting information about EU member states, the article about Croatia states, “The famous Croat Nikola Tesla was among the first to discover X-rays” (Radio Televizija Srbije [RTS] 2020b). Although the EU removed the controversial item about Tesla (RTS 2020a), the question of the origin of the famous scientist was reopened.⁶ For the Serbian Ministry of Culture, this was an insidious attack by Croats on Serbian identity, and it immediately issued a public statement stating that this was “a forgery repeated countless times to shamelessly appropriate and Croatize Serbian cultural and historical identity”. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivica Dačić, further intensified the rhetoric by stating that “Tesla was a Serb who, if he had lived in Croatia during World War II, would have ended up in the Jasenovac concentration camp” (Kurir 2020a). When the editors of this EU website changed the controversial sentence about Tesla, in the sense that it did not state his nationality, but only that he was “Nikola Tesla, born in Smiljan (present-day Croatia)”,⁷ the Serbian side welcomed this as a victory for its identity. In contrast, the Croatian side experienced it as a shock. “Serbs organized everything – Croats in shock”, reads the title of an article on a Croatian portal (Dnevno.hr 2020).

The incident on the Serbian-Croatian identity “border” was caused by an article in the Zagreb-based *Večernji list*, published on May 21, 2020, under the title “Americans write about a Croat who is celebrated by the whole world, but forgotten here”. This Croat forgotten

⁶ Taking into account the fact of the suffering of the Serbian people within the Independent State of Croatia and the information about the suffering of as many as 91 members from the Tesla family, it is completely unnecessary to continue the question about the origin of the famous scientist who, quite possibly, would have shared the fate of his relatives if he had shared the place of residence with them at that time (RTS 2021).

⁷ Perfidious removal or opportune listing of only the most basic biographical data while omitting the facts about the origin of a fruitful scientific worker represents not only an attack on his personality and work, but also on the nation to which he belonged. A scientist devoted to his work did not consider it appropriate to emphasize his own national affiliation, but his family genesis and origin within the Serbian Orthodox and priestly family give the right to claim that his national affiliation could not be determined only territorially (Subotić 2020, 34-39).

in Croatia is the famous geophysicist, climatologist, and astronomer Milutin Milanković (1879–1958), born into a Serbian family in the village of Dalj, today in Croatia, where he was buried at his request (Vitas 2020). A major conflict between Serbian and Croatian identity guardians erupted when *Matica Srpska*, in its edition “Ten Centuries of Serbian Literature” (*Deset vekova srpske književnosti*), published the works of the Dubrovnik writer Marin Držić (1508–1567).

The Croatian public was alarmed by statements issued on this occasion by *Matica Hrvatska* and the Croatian Writers Association, among others. *Matica Hrvatska* stated it was “obliged to react to this shameless theft”. *Matica Hrvatska* found the reason for the Serbian “annexation of the Croatian literary corpus”, that is, the Dubrovnik writers from the 16th and 17th centuries, in the desire of the Serbian cultural elite to “repair the Serbian literary-historical discontinuity, which caused understandable national frustration” (Blic 2020). In other words, the Serbs did not have writers created in the aforementioned two centuries, so they are stealing them from the Croats to fill this vacuum. The Croatian Writers’ Association (DHK) sent a public letter of protest to the Serbian Embassy in Zagreb. Croatia, the letter states, has become “a victim of the plundering of its cultural heritage”, behind which lies the “political idea of Greater Serbian hegemonism” (DHK 2020).

The Croatian writer and member of the Presidency of *Matica Hrvatska*, Slavica Stojan, went the furthest in denigrating Serbian national identity. In an article for *Dubrovački list*, she compared Serbs to bugs that needed extermination. “When something like that creeps into the house, one must fight it seriously or leave it. One must fight the bugs, never let them overwhelm the house, but patiently and permanently eradicate them”, Slavica Stojan wrote in the article (Oslobođenje 2023).

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

Relations between ethnocultural minorities and the majority in heterogeneous societies, such as the breakup of Yugoslavia, have always been complex and often conflictual. Consequently, such conflicts have been characterized as “intractable” or “deeply rooted” due to the psychological dimension that prevails over rational policies and economic reasons. Problems between majority and minority communities, which could be treated on an iterative level,

are complicated by how ethnocultural groups perceive both themselves and the “other” through the lens of their history, viewing them as a threat directed against their existence.

News about the new Balkan identity conflicts does not come from an independent source but is published by the “warring parties”, limiting themselves to the conflicts in which they participate. However, there is no doubt that these conflicts are interconnected, overlap, and are better understood when viewed together. It can then be observed that the leading cause of these conflicts and the primary source of the discomfort and hatred that accompany them are not, at least not primarily, the famous Balkan differences (ethnic, cultural or religious) but the common understanding of national identity among the Balkan political and cultural elites and its use to achieve the same kind of goals. Everyone exaggerates and overestimates its value, reducing politics to the so-called politics of identity and, thus, culture to an instrument of such politics based on national interests. As social anthropologist Stef Jansen has noted, researching the lives of people in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina, “by emphasizing (ethno)national ‘culture’, the inhabitants of BiH primarily, if not exclusively, present themselves in an identity register, which is presented as a relevant criterion for understanding life” (Jansen 2020, 44). This, he adds, is the basis of nationalist rhetoric, which “has been able to mobilize many people, but has also been able to demobilize alternative approaches to politics” (44). The examples of recent identity conflicts in regional contexts testify to the fact that politics based on the “identity register” is today dominant in the Balkan countries (it seems especially in the countries that emerged after the collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), that it demands that every people that claims the status of a nation must first of all have an autonomous and homogeneous culture, which means that its basic task is to sacrifice for it, fight and suffer in the confrontation with those who threaten its national identity. The fact that this task is unachievable does not worry the Balkan political and cultural elites much because the continuous struggle for national identity ensures their acquisition and maintenance of power and privileges.

When these identity battles are viewed as part of a broader picture and compared with each other, it can also be seen that the “warring parties” are mainly applying the same strategy. It consists of not primarily talking about the victories and successes of fighters on

identity borders, but rather about hostile attacks on national identity and its suffering. National identity exists almost exclusively in this context, within the discourse of vulnerability, grief, and cultural and political panic. In the examples given (identity attacks from the domain of culture, language, and other ornamentation) cited in this manuscript, the victim is a victim of crime, abduction, appropriation, renaming, extermination, suppression, obliteration, annexation, and various calculations. If these terrible things had not happened to it, as Čolović well notes, we would know almost nothing about it (Čolović 2020).

However, not all the suffering of Balkan national identities has the same weight. It is not the same level of observation when you hear that something has been taken from you, appropriated and/or reshaped, and when you learn that the bearers of a “monolithic identity” claim that you are mistaken if you think your identity exists. When the guardians of identity lament the losses that occur when an identity is marked as a victim of appropriation and the erasure of its treasures, and when they accuse almost all their neighbours of this, we will not worry about the fate of the identities they protect, because the goal of lamenting such losses is not to show the devastation that the “kidnappers” have left behind, but rather to highlight the inexhaustible wealth of an identity that has not been significantly damaged, even though it is “kidnapped” and “appropriated” by culturally poor neighbors.

Denial of neighbouring identities most often occurs during so-called identity panic, when a particular community feels threatened. The mainstay of the observed identity denial strategies relates to claims that some of our neighbours are “fictional”, i.e., “nonexistent” nations, created by hostile great powers using apostates from “our” country and “our” faith. Identity deniers also claim that members of these “fake” nations have suffered for generations from collective remorse over past betrayals and that this is why they hate us in the first place (Marković 2024).

Spending the third decade since the end of the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia, we are witnessing the persistence of the politics of irreconcilable identities. Although circles inclined towards analytical and critical reflection on reality have long believed that such narratives are primarily oriented towards preserving the political power of local elites, a large part of the population still considers the conflicts of the 1990s to be unfinished. Collective identities (ethnic, religious, and cultural) persist as an issue that often competes with the need for

orderly institutions, the rule of law, and the living standards of citizens. The fact that the political priority of the European Union has remained for too long, “the stabilization of the Western Balkans, instead of finding long-term and sustainable solutions to frozen conflicts and the democratization of the countries of the region” (Barišić 2024, 88), makes the problem even more complex. Therefore, this region is still recommended as a space where, in the name of “irreconcilable” identity differences, dissolutive processes with significant potential for new instability and conflicts can be activated.

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КОНФРОНТИРАЈУЋИ ИДЕНТИТЕТИ НА БАЛКАНУ КАО БЕЗБЕДНОСНИ ИЗАЗОВ**

Резиме

Идентитет, било да је реч о националном/етничком, верском/конфесионалном или културном, представља један од кључних детерминатива којима појединац или заједница одређује ко су, чему припадају и(или) у шта верују. Међутим, иако идентитетско одређење има значајну улогу у изградњи заједништва и припадности, оно може постати и извор нестабилности, што је нарочито изражено у мултиетничким и мултиконфесионалним друштвима. Када се различити идентитети доведу у супростављен однос, односно када се користе као средство политичке манипулације, долази до пораста тензија. Историја је препуна примера у којима су разлике у идентитету биле покретач ратова, масовних страдања и друштвених подела. Уколико се идентитет представи као недодирљив и монолитан, односно када се перципира као искључив и непроменљив, он се манифестује као покретач и одржилац нестабилности. Пример дисолутивних процеса у бившој Југославији, са почетка деведесетих, у име идентитетских разлика, један је од еклатантнијих. Последице ове антагонизације присутне су и данас, у трећој деценији од завршетка компликованих сукоба на овом подручју. Опстајање реторике из деведесетих и даље доводи до радикализације, јачања популизма и настојања да се идентитетске политике овдашњих земаља наметну као прворазредно политичко питање. Иако се у круговима склоним аналитичком и критичком промишљању стварности већ одавно сматра да су овакви наративи примарно оријентисани ка очувању

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** Рад је настао као део пројекта Министарства одбране: „Безбедносни изазови земаља Западног Балкана у европској безбедносној парадигми”, бр. ИСИ/ДХ1/24–25, а који истраживачки тим Института за стратегијска истраживања и спољних сарадника реализује у периоду 2024–2025.

политичке моћи овдашњих елита, велики део популације и даље сматра сукобе из деведесетих незавршеним. Колективни идентитети (етнички, верски, културолошки) и даље опстају као питање које неретко односи победу у такмичењу са потребом за уређеним институцијама, владавином права и животним стандардом грађана. Чињеница да политички приоритет Европске уније превише дуго остаје „стабилизација Западног Балкана”, уместо напора да се успоставе одржива и дуготрајна решења у оквиру демократизације држава региона, проблем чини још сложенијим. Стога се и даље овај регион препоручује као простор на којем се, у име „непомирљивих” идентитетских разлика, могу активирати дисолутивни процеси са значајним потенцијалом за нову нестабилност и конфликте. У раду се, полазећи од основних поставки идентитета, као конфронтирајуће категорије, анализира опстајање конфликтне реторике на простору бивше Југославије, која је и даље заснована на „непомирљивим идентитетским разликама”, односно какав утицај има овако успостављена „истина” на политичку и безбедносну стабилност региона.

Кључне речи: Балкан, идентитети, сукоби, пропаганда, безбедност.

* This paper was received on April 30, 2025, and accepted for publication at the Editorial Board meeting on October 15, 2025.

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SOCIAL, DEMOCRATIC AND COLOR REVOLUTIONS

Abstract

This text first outlines the sociological and philosophical meanings of the term “revolution”, and then confronts the meaning of this term with the phenomena of “democratic” and “color” revolutions. Unlike the social revolution, neither democratic nor color revolutions imply a radical change in the production of life, and their goals are heterogeneous, because the intentions of the participants and supporters, who are not directly involved in the course of these revolutions, differ. On these grounds, democratic revolutions are analyzed in the countries of the Visegrad Group, particularly in Poland, as well as in the Balkans, with special attention paid to the comparison of the democratic revolutions in Ukraine and Serbia. In this paper, with the help of the previously defined research directions, the following hypotheses are constructed and defended: (1) Color revolutions manifest first in the form of democratic revolutions – in which the political system institutions are called into question; (2) The color revolutions of recent decades primarily had geopolitical goals, as opposed to the preceding period (the end of the previous and the beginning of this century), when they had a transitional peak; (3) Color revolutions cannot be identified with *civil disobedience*, since there is no solid moral principle at their core, but rather a diffuse justification.

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Keywords: revolution, democracy, color revolution, transition, civil disobedience.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary political theory, *color revolutions* are defined as methods of non-violent overthrow of legal forms of political power. Therefore, their cause is always transcendent in comparison to the legal and political system of states in which color revolutions occur, most often including various forms of economic pressure (i.e., suspension of financial aid), creating condition for “non-violent protests”, rallies, marches and demonstrations organized by *internal* social groups, influenced indirectly or directly – through financing their activities or indoctrination through media and social networks (Сорокин 2014, 16). In the said context, *color revolutions* have quite an illusory social sense, i.e., the dissatisfaction of the masses is directed not to establish a different political system, but towards an immediate change of the regime, without touching on the core of social issues, social distribution, or social order (Сундиев и Смирнов 2016, 44).

This paper aims to draw attention to the difference between social revolutions, which implied major and radical social changes, and the so-called “color revolutions”, which, in our times, do not imply a change in the social paradigm, or, if such a change is asked for, it refers to the old, *pre-revolution* forms of social organization. Moreover, this paper will defend the belief that *color revolutions* are usually instigated “from above”. This does not exclusively mean that and “external factor”, i.e., the influence of a foreign country, that is, an intelligence service, is crucial for its organization, but that, above all, *color revolutions* presuppose certain (already) accepted social principles (Максимов 2010, 18) Therefore, their domain is primarily – *functional*, meaning that *color revolutions* do not imply leaving a specific social context, abandonment of ruling principles that define the social order (Parezanović 2024, 382).

A certain devaluation of the term ‘*revolution*’ in the syntagm ‘*color revolution*’ is not accidental, but can also be marked as one of the *distinguishing features* of this social phenomenon. This implies that a shift in the meaning of the term ‘*revolution*’ occurred in the social sciences, although this was not extensively discussed *in the scientific*

literature (Mesquita 2010, 460). In the social sciences, denouncing the term ‘revolution’ to describe the illegal actions of certain social groups attempting to achieve specific goals beyond established social rules has become a common practice. Upon providing such a definition, what is left in the background is what goals are at stake, whether the purpose of the actions of social groups is emancipatory, i.e., whether it can be universalized, that is, whether these goals require a radical change of social relations or just a change of roles in the existing social paradigm. In other words, contrary to *revolution* seen as a *production*, *color revolutions* are *reproductive*, which means that they are too short for the new-age synthesis of practical and poetical, i.e., they are *technical* in the pre-new-age sense of the word, as mere instruments of action.¹

In this paper, it will be demonstrated that color revolutions emerged in the Cold War era, serving as a means to fulfill political goals with minimal military escalation.² In accordance with the previously mentioned terminological restrictions, we are, above all, speaking of *techniques* developed by intelligence services of capitalist states for dismantling socialist social orders and establishing social order and political systems that favor the interest of the large capital (Šolte 2009, 62), and then transformed into techniques for fulfilling geostrategic interests, the background of which is usually dominated by significant capital.

REVOLUTION AS A PHENOMENON

The term “*revolution*” emerged within the natural sciences, specifically in celestial mechanics. In this sense, the term “*revolution*” was first used by Nicolaus Copernicus, denoting the circular movement of celestial bodies (their orbit around the Sun). In his work titled *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, Copernicus starts

¹ The synthesis of the ancient terms of *praxis* and *poiesis* was already hinted at by Machiavelli, for whom politics is characterized by *tehne*, and not *soprosyne* or *phronesis*. In other words, politics in the modern context is not just acting within the framework of an already defined measure, but transcending the existing state, implementing a political interest that is not tamed or subordinated to some measure (Habermas 1980, 54–60).

² The post-Cold War milieu implies a specter of innovative techniques, from hybrid war to causing migration crises (Matijašević and Todorović 2024, 29).

from the etymology of the Latin word *revolution*, based on the verb *re-volvo*, which we can translate as “to return”, “to roll” (Divković [1900] 1990, 929). However, this term was also adopted in the field of social sciences, which necessitated its fundamental revision (Đurić 1979, 21). In social sciences, revolution implies change, not just any change, but a radically different human *practice*. In this sense, we can clearly differentiate its destructive and constructive characters: revolution destroys the existing social relations, *abolishes* the form of production of life in some epochal context, but at the same time, it *produces* different social relations (23). Contrary to evolutionary changes, which are gradual and accidental, revolution is “more sudden and faster”, and besides that, its culprit is society, emancipated from the natural chains of causality (Filipović 1984, 299).

Before a revolution in the social sense of the word (which happened in 1789 in France), its meaning had already been conceptually prepared. For this reason, Karl Marks stated that Kant’s philosophy enabled the French Revolution (Kangrga 1989, 54). Kant’s definition of a man is based on moral autonomy, that is, on legislation that is not any natural determination (“natural law”), establishing a clear distinction between what should be and *should not be*. And just as the moral law is never naturally given, but represents an imperative of action which cannot be wholly fulfilled, that is, realized, so what is revolutionary in social action is in fact the establishment of previously inexistent social relations, what Marxist literature calls *the production of the lifeworld* (78). The negative side of the revolution is criticism of society, coming from the idea of freedom, and its positive moment is depicted in the production of social relations under the paradigm of freedom as autonomy (Arendt 1963, 34–40).

In simple words, this means that, in a revolution, a social order deemed insurmountable and cosmically necessary is confronted with the idea of freedom as indeterminacy, devoid of any external causality; in specific social circumstances where some estate or class cannot realize its freedom, a *revolutionary situation* arises, albeit revolution does not only imply the establishment of a political order that will enable the freedom of the rebelling estate, but an entirely new social context, a different *production* of the world and relations in it. The French Revolution and similar events in America and England did not imply only the establishment of new forms of government, but also

the development of science, the Enlightenment project, and a new socioeconomic order.

Socialist revolutions are also based on the idea of freedom as autonomy. At the root of these revolutions is the relation between producers (proletarians) and products of their work (production), which is not decided by the producers themselves, but by the owners of the production means. The socialist revolution is therefore not just a problem of income revolution, but the establishment of a social order in which there will be no appropriation of surplus value, but productivity will be directed towards the emancipation of the entire society. In other words, as Gajo Petrović succinctly puts it: “only a socialist revolution, which is not a replacement of *one* form of exploitation with *another*, more progressive, but the abolition of all exploitation is a revolution in its best and most comprehensive sense” (Petrović 1986, 76).

Therefore, revolution should be differentiated from *reform*, a change in the functioning of a society, which remains within the framework of the same social paradigm. For example, the so-called *welfare state*, a form of capitalist state in Western Europe during the 1950s and 1960s, still implied capitalist frameworks and not socialist social relations, and thus represented only a *reform* within the capitalist social order (Meretz and Sutterlütli 2023, 42).

Given that we are speaking of a sudden and radical change, revolution implies the use of violent means. In other words, revolution is a conflict with existing social circumstances, with the forces firmly resisting the establishment of new social relations. In fact, social revolution can be more or less violent, but it necessarily implies *violence*, because it is faced with the resistance of representatives of these groups that are rooted in the existing social reproduction.³

³ This can also manifest through the imposition of a certain form of social production, which members of the ruling class resist in the previous social order. In Marxist literature, the term “dictatorship of the proletariat” is used to denote this phenomenon, emphasizing that it is not about the exploitation of any stratum or social class, but about the introduction of production relations that enable universal class emancipation. Bourgeois revolutions also included an element of force, which was more consistently implemented in revolutionary Paris (the so-called “revolutionary terror”).

THE EVE OF THE COLOR REVOLUTIONS

The idea of non-violent resistance against the incumbent government was born during a significant liberation movement in India, when this country was a British colony. Admittedly, some forms of civil disobedience were recorded during the so-called *Quaker rebellion, which occurred* due to religious discrimination at the end of the 17th century in America and racial discrimination in the 19th century (Molnar 2001). Although these protests were designed around the idea of resistance through non-violent means, by ignoring regulations or not paying taxes, the forms of disobedience did not imply protests that expressed a clear political attitude opposed to the current government's policies. However, Mahatma Gandhi, who led the large protests in India against racial discrimination, was influenced by David Thoreau's work, in which he explained his reasons for refusing to pay taxes in slaveholding America. Gandhi successfully applied Thoreau's methods during the strongly non-violent actions, aiming for India's independence. The first of Gandhi's actions was directed against the Salt Act, which led to a 300-kilometer-long march joined by thousands of Indians. All subsequent actions also had a pronounced non-violent character, in which Gandhi resisted not only the British Empire but also the violent form of Indian nationalism (Fleisch 1989, 97).

Gandhi's path of political struggle indeed has elements of revolutionary action, but in the sense of establishment of a nation-state, thus adopting the character of the Indian capitalist revolution, and therefore, it is not an accident that, after gaining independence, a war broke out in India between Muslims and Hindus (Molnar 2001, 268). However, the effectiveness of non-violent struggle will soon be applied as an integral part of the strategies of so-called civil unrest that is likely to break out in countries with a socialist social order.

During the Cold War, the techniques of resistance that did not involve direct military engagement or denouncing them were perfected in the West. In a certain way, such techniques resulted from the Cold War ambiance itself: the division of the world into the spheres of influence of socialist and capitalist countries conditioned global fight, especially from the Third World countries; in these countries existed suitable conditions for socialist revolutions, and on the other hand,

the previously mentioned countries represented a potential source of natural resources and cheap workforce, which made them attractive for neo-colonial aspirations of the rich capitalist nations of the West (Chamberlin 2014). Instead of direct military engagement, it turned out that the doctrine of foreign influence through international financial institutions, and above all, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, that is, inciting local right-wing organizations, is far more successful. Triggering an economic crisis and the simultaneous rise of pro-Western political parties led to uprisings that toppled pro-socialist governments. Examples from South America, deemed by the United States of America as its field of influence and of special importance for the US security, are especially striking.

The cause of the military coup in Chile is especially pragmatic. Namely, after the victory of the pro-leftist candidate Salvador Allende in the 1970 presidential elections, economic reforms threatened the interests of not only the Chilean bourgeoisie but also American companies. Instead of direct meddling, the US chose a much more cunning tactic. On one side, economic pressure was exerted on Chile, which strengthened popular discontent and encouraged the opposition, while on the other, under the guise of providing aid, young economists were educated in the US in the spirit of the new liberal capitalism – to prepare the economic takeover of the main economic resources, that is, their sale or lease to foreign companies, after the overthrow of Allende (Hellinger 2021, 214). A few months after Allende came to power, the US's economic support to Chile was suspended, reflecting the gradual loss of support for Allende's radical reforms. Two years later, in 1970, in Santiago, but throughout the country, anti-government demonstrations were held. The state of emergency was introduced in the Santiago province. In parallel, under the direct influence of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agents, strikes were organized, of which the ones held in the Candelaria and El Toqui mines were indeed the most serious. It is reported that American intelligence services at the time spent ten million dollars on strengthening the Chilean opposition and liberal economic reforms propaganda (Kos-Stanišić and Šunjić 2020, 135).

In August 1973, a series of sabotage at power plants followed, and right-wing demonstrations in Santiago escalated into street riots (right-wingers clashed with left-wingers who pointed to the real source of the crisis in the country and defended President Allende).

The same month, around 150 officers and soldiers of the Chilean Army attempted to seize control of the Presidential Palace, but were thwarted by resistance from forces loyal to the legally elected president. Even though, after the foiled military coup, Allende succeeded in dealing with some of his right-wing opposers, the opposition in Parliament openly called for the army to take over, and thus, already in September, General Pinochet carried out a successful military coup during which Allende allegedly committed suicide in the besieged Presidential Palace. The economists schooled in the West begin their reforms, which lead Chile a few years later to the verge of bankruptcy, and the leftist resistance and new outbursts of popular discontent due to growing poverty are prevented by the extraordinary terror conducted by the military junta, leaving thousands of dead behind (Smith 2012, 85).

If we keep in mind the fact that Allende's reforms were conducted within a democratic social order that still maintained the traits of parliamentary democracy, the overthrow of a legally elected president was motivated primarily by economic interests. If, economically speaking, Allende's reforms were in the spirit of collectivism and thus had a revolutionary sense, his overthrow was a pronounced anti-revolutionary act and implied not only a return to the olden ways (economic system which suited foreign investors and shareholders the most), but to an even more pronounced exploitation of Chile, with the help of political and military elite which rose to power after the coup. Namely, even though the coup interrupted a decades-long democratic tradition in Chile, the US accepted and extensively helped the non-democratic military junta. The brutality of Pinochet's regime was justified by the need for a consistent fight against communism.

The events that led to the violent change in power in Chile represented merely a rehearsal of the establishment of *neoliberalism*, that is, the abandonment of the achievements of the so-called "humane capitalism" or welfare society, which dominated especially in Europe after World War II. Reaganism, on the one hand, and Thatcherism, on the other, represent a departure from the economic model of the welfare state, which was deemed the cause of recession, as the progressive tax rate allegedly limited investment development.

The Chilean experience demonstrated how a combination of economic pressure, incitement of parliamentary or non-parliamentary

opposition, and instigating unrest and civil protests can successfully influence a change in power in a country, without necessitating direct military engagement. In this way, the concept of a color revolution was created, which was later developed independently or within the context of *hybrid war* strategy. Given that hybrid warfare implies the application of a broad spectrum of activities to achieve a strategic advantage for the side that employs it (Mitrović 2017, 325), not only the activities of cyber warfare, but also propagandic and psychological actions gain prominence, influencing public opinion to change the government illegally.

These methods first gained prominence in the Eastern Bloc countries, and subsequently in the Soviet Union itself, ultimately influencing the dissolution of the country and the decline of the USSR in international relations. The systemic support for the Solidarity movement in Poland, which persisted despite the introduction of a state of war and the establishment of General Wojciech Jaruzelski's military power, was the first successful attempt at peaceful change of a social order in a country behind the Iron Curtain. The distinctiveness of the event in Poland lies in the fact that the agents of change were indeed the workers, who, at least declaratively, held power (sovereignty) in the socialist social order.

The so-called "Polish Transition" occurred in two phases, of which only the second one can be deemed the predecessor of contemporary color revolutions. Namely, the first phase was based on resistance against bureaucratic socialism and had a primarily leftist orientation. At the beginning of the 1970s in Poland, workers' protests and demands for the introduction of self-governed socialism, "like in Yugoslavia". This echo of the 1968 demand was not anti-socialist in spirit. Like student protests in Yugoslavia, in Poland as well, the demands for a consistent path to socialism that would improve workers' social position were at the forefront. Worker revolts followed, above all in Polish shipyards, due to harsh material conditions and the denial of the right to form a free trade union organization.

The foundation of "Solidarity" did not imply the promotion of any restoration of capitalism, but the trade union fight was directed towards the party bureaucracy. The fundamental demand referred to the rights of workers to form trade unions and pass decisions on workers' councils (assemblies) about their work and income distribution, which

is why this period is called “the workers’ revolution” (Kowalewski 2001, 199).

The second phase of the transition in Poland occurred after the war and on the eve of elections, in the late 1980s. The inability of the state leadership to provide necessary goods, primarily food, and resistance to any political system reform, occur in parallel with problems occurring in the Eastern Bloc. The difficulties within the USSR enabled foreign organizations, partially with the help of the Catholic Church as well, to play a significant role in turning the dissatisfaction with the poor social position of most Polish inhabitants into a “democratic revolution”. Even in Poland, just as in Chile before, the Chicago School of Economics is at play, and the program of economic transition, conducted after the victory of “Solidarity”, was influenced by Jeffrey Sachs, a close collaborator of Milton Friedman himself (Kowalik 2012, 40).

Contrary to Chile, in Poland, the economic pressure from the West was not necessary, given that the mere political system accumulated social dissatisfaction with its inefficiency. Propaganda influence, characterized by the exaggeration of liberalism’s advantages and a hint of abundant foreign economic aid in the event of the collapse of the socialist system, was the primary propaganda tool. It is without a doubt that money arrived in Poland through George Soros’s organizations and was later invested in promoting a capitalist social order. All the previously stated caused mass mobilization. Therefore, the “democratic revolution” in Poland was, in essence, a *counterrevolution*. Introduction of radical liberal reforms, the so-called “shock therapy”, will condition serious social issues, the burden of which will be borne most by those who were most responsible for the restoration of capitalism – the production workers (Konat 2009, 40–41).

The transitions in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary were initiated in a similar manner. The economic crisis, caused by an inefficient system of state socialism and the inability to service foreign loans, i.e., the financial problems faced by the population daily, was largely articulated as a means to restore the capitalist social system, thanks to propaganda and skilled mobilization methods. Citizen protests in the streets, the police siding with the demonstrators, and the collapse of state institutions all took place mostly without violence. In the end, the former socialist states became attractive destinations

for foreign investment, which, on the other hand, implied inevitable deregulation – that is, a reduction of social subsidies for a vast number of people who were left jobless and without any monthly benefits in the first years of the transition.

THE CONCEPT OF THE COLOR REVOLUTIONS

The examples previously discussed, in Chile and Poland, show that the path from social revolutions to what is nowadays known as the color revolution implied, first, the devaluation of the term 'revolution,' that is, denouncing it as merely a change of political regime. For this reason, the concept of society (sociopolitical order) remained in the background, and the need for democratization of society was emphasized. The regime changes in socialist countries essentially had a dual function: in this way, the victory in the Cold War was finalized, since the Eastern military alliance (the Warsaw Pact) practically dissolved with the exit of member states from the socialist bloc. On the other side, new markets opened, and a direct influence on the politics of sovereign states with the help of international financial institutions was enabled. The said changes occurred peacefully, through civil unrest, in the form of the so-called *democratic revolution*.

At the root of the so-called democratic changes in Eastern Europe were not only the inherent problems emerging from the statist economic model, but also the influence of foreign intelligence services of capitalist states. The inefficiency of the planned economy, characterized by almost non-existent competitiveness and government-regulated markets, resulted in a decline in the quality of goods and services, increased production costs, and reduced wages. The socialist countries behind the Iron Curtain had to take loans, and the most radical example is depicted in Romania, whose debt was increased by the unsuccessful reform of the then socialist leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu, who attempted to revive the economy with the help of international loans, maintaining his statist assumptions about its functioning (planned economy).

The poor state of the economy and low living standards of citizens in Eastern Bloc countries created dissatisfaction, not only due to the domination of the Soviet Union, which largely exported social

tensions, but also with the state's handling of problems affecting its own citizens. The economic dissatisfaction thus took the form of a rebellion against the political order itself, which not only prevented the freedom of private initiative but also made it impossible to express dissatisfaction with the existing economic circumstances.

Samuel Huntington, who headed the so-called Trilateral Commission, argued that the existence of states with planned economies represents an obstacle to the economic growth of Western countries, as their capital seeks new markets and cheaper production methods (Fridman 2012, 54). The state deregulation model implied the withdrawal of the state apparatus from the social field, the dominant role of market relations, and the state apparatus's direction towards preserving the liberal economic order. In other words, economic freedoms were the primary goal, and the real democratization of society, secondary.

Liberalization of the economy, as Western economists knew well, does not lead to an increase in wages overnight. The initial effect is downsizing, since non-rentable companies should be closed first, and workers should be laid off while reducing social subsidies in unemployment cases. Only an economically efficient market guarantees the opening of new workplaces, and this process is too long for the "transition losers". Still, Western economists suggested "shock therapy", implying a lightning-fast transition to a market economy, privatization, and equally fast state withdrawal from the social sphere (Klajn 2008, 46).

Understandably, changes in socialist countries could only be successful if they stemmed from the dissatisfaction of the masses. Therefore, a revolt over low wages and shortages of certain items grew into dissatisfaction with the political system in which the socioeconomic model was built. The workers who demonstrated in democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe were indeed never told that the majority of them would become the losers of the transition, that their social position would first deteriorate drastically, and that there are no guarantees that this state will be "just temporary", since the market system also imposes personal competition on the labor market. Although the changes in the former socialist countries were referred to as "democratic revolutions", the primary focus was actually on economic liberalization.

Western theoreticians, on the other hand, clearly differentiated democratization from populism. Namely, in a democratic society, the majority should not decide on everything, but only on those issues allowed to be the subject of decision-making. For example, the people should not arbitrate populistically on the economic system, since they do not possess knowledge of autonomous market laws. Between the freedom of entrepreneurship and democracy, freedom based on a market economy takes precedence (Madžar 2000, 29).

The relationship between democratic processes and improved living conditions in the context of a market economy was first defended theoretically. According to Ralph Dahrendorf, introducing a market economy is impossible without democratization, since the authoritarian ways of managing the economy must first be dismantled. On the other hand, the underdevelopment of the economy suggests a weak state of democracy, characterized by the power of a small number of people who rule in the name of the communist party, the vanguard of the working people and citizens (Dahrendorf 1990, 93). However, the citizens' *free* decision-making should be limited; that is, its scope must be defined from the beginning to not interfere with the economic transition (Hertz 1955, 130).

The demands for democratization, therefore, have a hidden agenda, and political freedoms are primarily expressed through the liberalization of entrepreneurship, which entails "unburdening," a reduction in tax rates, and labor legislation. According to a liberal scenario, inciting entrepreneurship with deregulation should lead to opening up new factory facilities, and thus ensuring new workplaces, which should enable an increase in employment. In the first years of the transition, as previously stated, there is an inevitable decline in living standards for a vast population. This process is followed not only by deregulation, that is, the reduction of social subventions, but also a change in social values: solidarity and sympathy are not cherished anymore, and the level of competitiveness in social action is on the rise (Senet 2007, 45).

The democratic transition, therefore, represents a transition from socialism to capitalism (Švob-Đokić 2002, 180). Given that the democratic changes "cannot be realized democratically" (Puhovski 1990, 37), a non-violent illegal takeover is necessary to establish democracy. The term "revolution" thus gains a new meaning; its content does not imply anymore a radical change of the existing,

but the dissolution of a social order which prevailed in socialist revolutions (Сундиев и Смирнов 2016, 49).

Social revolutions implied a crisis of the ruling class: its inability to maintain its dominance. The crises of the capitalist social order, for example, caused the rise of poverty, that is, worsening of economic conditions for the majority of people, and the deepening of social antagonisms, which represent a consequence of this cleavage (Сундиев и Смирнов 2016, 69). In social revolutions, the political activity of the masses, mobilized around a clear idea, is rapidly on the rise, with immediate consequences including the improvement of the economic position and the establishment of a system that should permanently enable fair social distribution.

Following the collapse of socialism and the rise of liberal ideology worldwide, criticism of capitalism has gradually diminished. Conflicts, from ideological to political ones, therefore, do not hold a principal sense anymore, but are reduced to the efforts of actors to occupy the most favorable position in the geopolitical context. Rebellion and forms of civil disobedience in the so-called post-modern era are thus characterized by an absence of ideological content (McFaul 2005, 7). The doctrines insisted upon in the protests are mostly *simulations* of former principled demands, behind which immediate geopolitical motives are hidden (Minkina and Kaszuba 2021, 82). This significantly defines the characteristics of color revolutions as follows:

1) Unlike social revolutions, which require not only political and socioeconomic changes but the establishment of new axiological and ethical principles, color revolutions are not based on *grand ideas*. In other words, the values towards which color revolutions strive have long been adopted in the corpus of liberal-democratic values (Пономарева 2012, 88). Therefore, insisting on specific liberal values, which are not actually questioned even in the system being protested, represents a kind of smokescreen, and in essence, it is about efforts to bring about a *change of regime*;

2) One of the key differences in relation to social revolution lies in the fact that, in color revolutions, a so-called *revolutionary situation*, i.e., radical deterioration of economic conditions, which specifically affects a specific class or a social stratum, is absent. Therefore, the establishment of a *revolutionary class*, that is, a specific social group capable of abolishing the existing form of social production and establishing a new form of production, is also missing;

3) Color revolutions are not aimed at changing the *political system*, the form of distribution or living production as a whole, but their goal is only the change of the political regime, which, in practice, comes down to replacing the representatives of the government. By simulating a radical social change, color revolutions hide the real reasons for causing unrest (Bessinger 2007);

4) Unlike the relatively long-term maturation of *revolutionary conditions*, which characterizes social revolutions, everything happens without prior theoretical or organizational preparation in color revolutions. Instead, color revolutions rely on financial power (budget) and media propaganda (Сундиев and Смирнов 2016, 89);

5) Color revolutions do not involve highlighting movement leaders; organization and communication are never individualized. In this way, influence is achieved on the broadest constituency, because the movement's formulated goals lack specific social demands (of a class or social group). This shows not only that color revolutions are ideologically void, but that they are not based on the interest that is declaratively emphasized. In one word, color revolutions represent a Rorschach inkblot into which each social group projects its own dissatisfaction. For this reason, declared leftists, liberals, and rightists, not only ideologically distant but also principally opposed, participate side by side in color revolutions (Parezanović 2024, 384);

6) Color revolutions often activate after elections, when the opposition is expressing dissatisfaction with the results achieved, and the masses take to the streets, to significantly influence the public opinion about the current political regime in a situation of unrest and instability (Сундиев and Смирнов 2016, 92);

7) An important feature of color revolutions is the foreign factor. Some foreign power is financing the organizer, thus significantly contributing to the construction of motives that can move the masses, as well as strategies – action of demonstrators in the streets (Сундиев and Смирнов 2016, 93). The foreign factor acts indirectly, through non-governmental organizations or anti-regime movements. In an advanced phase of a color revolution, the foreign factors take up the role of the arbitrator, that is, they assess the demands of the demonstrators as justified, the possible election results questionable, and the regime's response to the citizens' revolt as inappropriate or excessive. For this reason, color revolutions are followed by foreign-policy ultimatums (Сорокин 2014, 11).

Even though many theoreticians, not only in Russia but in the West, stress the previously presented short concept of color revolutions, the notion that the causes of color revolutions are internal persists in scientific circles. According to Maksimov, Russian political sociologist, the theses on the immanent causes of color revolutions represent a testimony and social sciences have become a medium for masking the roles of powerful countries in regime changes in less developed countries (Максимов 2010, 10).

If color revolutions are generated on internal dissatisfaction, this would imply that each is authentic and thus etiologically differs from others. Even a brief look points to a similar methodology in the conduct of color revolutions worldwide, but also a variation of similar symbols – such as the clenched fist, which was a trademark of color revolutions in the last decade of the previous century.

Moreover, the phases that precede or follow demonstrations and other forms of citizen dissatisfaction during color revolutions are also similar. The analysis reveals that, in nearly all cases recorded during the last decade of the 20th century, the outbreak of unrest was preceded by sanctions or threats of sanctions from the IMF, the World Bank, or investment funds. The current leadership is blamed in the media (most often financed by foreign capital) for economic problems, i.e., the increase in prices, inflation, and the slowdown of social reforms (in transition societies). Of course, the reasons may differ, but the accusations made by current government representatives always involve a foreign-controlled media sector (Parezanović 2013, 88).

One of the first color revolutions took place in Georgia in 2003. The demonstrations and other forms of dissatisfaction lacked a clear ideological basis. It was clear from the beginning that the main target was Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze (*Эдуард Амвросиевич Шеварднадзе*), a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR. Shevardnadze, in fact, led a moderate policy, accepting liberalization in both the political and economic spheres, while also attempting to maintain good relations with Russia, as a direct, powerful neighbor and a significant foreign trade ally. It appears that this was the primary reason for Western support of the opposition in Georgia. The Western influence was secured through the foundation of the Liberal Institute in Tbilisi, right after Georgia gained independence. Through this Institute, the opposition movement “KMARA”, which accused Shevardnadze of cooperating with Russia, was deemed as opposed

to Georgian national interests. Immediately after the 2003 elections, in which Shevardnadze won a convincing victory, the “KMARA” movement, then led by Mikheil Saakashvili (*Міхейл Ніколозович Саакашвілі*), stated that they did not accept the election results, setting in motion a series of demonstrations. The demonstrators clashed with the police and, at one moment, occupied the Parliament building. The army and police refused to intervene, encouraging protesters to gradually occupy other institutions in Tbilisi, after which Shevardnadze was forced to resign. These events, better known under the name *Rose Revolution* (Parezanović 2013a), opened the doors to a long-term foreign influence in Georgia. The long and successful career of Mikheil Saakashvili, who, after serving as Prime Minister, also served as President of Georgia in two mandates, was apparently ended by Russia’s meddling, which sparked a media war against the president in Georgia (Šuvaković 2023, 22). After the second mandate, Saakashvili, who, per the Constitution, could not run to perform this duty for the third time, was accused of corruption and violence against the demonstrators (while he was President), ran away to the US, only to later continue his political career in Ukraine, as an “American man”. Upon his return to Georgia in 2021, he was arrested and is currently serving time in prison.

The geostrategic efforts of the West to isolate Russia from other former Soviet Union republics continued a year after Georgia, in 2004, in Ukraine. In the second round of the presidential election, Viktor Yanukovich (*Віктор Фёдорович Янукович*) won against Viktor Yushchenko (*Віктор Андрійович Ющенко*), but immediately afterward, Yushchenko’s campaign headquarters made accusations that the elections were stolen. One of the arguments put forward by Yushchenko’s campaign team was the still unsolved “poisoning attempt” on the presidential candidate in September 2004 (Kappeler 2023, 277). Yushchenko also had a small lead in this round, but in the second round Yanukovich still won convincingly with 49.5% to 46.6% (277). Accusations that the election results were irregular soon followed. Foreign observers also confirmed this. Even on the night Yanukovich declared victory, demonstrations broke out. Because of orange-colored emblems and flags of Yushchenko’s supporters, this event was named “Orange Revolution” (*Помаранчева революція*). Thanks to the support of the West, Yushchenko became the winner of the color revolution and Ukraine ended up being under a dominant

influence of the West for several years, until the new crisis broke, a specific *Color counterrevolution*, when after a cleavage between the Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko (Юлія Володимирівна Тимошенко) and President Viktor Yushchenko – the power transferred once again into the hands of Yanukovich (Petrović 2008, 182). However, this does not mark the end of color revolutions in Ukraine. From 2010 to 2013, Viktor Yanukovich was once again the President of Ukraine, while Mikola Azarov (Микола Янович Азаров) served as Prime Minister. The government's policy was pro-Russian, despite the President and Prime Minister simultaneously attempting to move closer to the European Union. This rapprochement, however, was for a certain period of time burdened by the conditions presented by the EU, which the Ukrainian leadership could not fulfill (they demanded the release of the former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, who was legally convicted, from prison).

In the fall of 2013, a new color revolution occurred in Ukraine. The crisis emerged after Yanukovich and Azarov refused to sign the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU. The protests were led by a united opposition comprising a heterogeneous group, ranging from the extreme right-wing of Galicia to the former party of Yulia Tymoshenko (center-left) and supporters of Viktor Yushchenko (center-right). The crowning glory of this color revolution was the so-called Euromaidan, named after the main square in Kyiv (Maidan). The regime first tolerated demonstrations, which persistently did not simmer down. In January 2014, the Ukrainian Assembly (*Verkhovna Rada*) passed stricter laws on punishing protesters, which raised tensions and spread demonstrations throughout the entire country. According to Swiss historian Andreas Kappeler, none of the opposition leaders could control the protesters, as the “Euromaidan revolutionaries themselves determined the course of events” (Kappeler 2023, 285). Under pressure from protesters, the statutes on demonstrations were suspended, and a general amnesty for the protesters was declared. This, however, did not stop the protests and unrest, including occasional armed conflicts, from continuing throughout the country. The opposition's demands indeed radicalized, so Yanukovich was asked to resign, and the Verkhovna Rada reinstated the Constitution in force until 2004, which significantly reduced the president's powers. Since Yanukovich refused to step down, bloody clashes broke out between the protesters and the police, after which Yanukovich was ousted from

power in a coup on February 22, 2014. The violent takeover of power was approved by the Western media, deeming it a forced move due to Yanukovich's persistent ignoring of the *will of the people*. However, demonstrations surpassed the framework of violent protests, combined with international pressure. Due to dissatisfaction of the pro-Russian population, conflicts broke out in Crimea. The crisis ended with the Minsk 2 Agreement (Petrović and Bukvić 2019, 110–134).

A turbulent period in Ukraine, in fact, showcases the geostrategic fight between the West and Russia. At the same time, the West supports anti-Russian and pronouncedly pro-European political parties and movements; demonstrations and illegal takeover of power are taking place under the banner of economic prosperity. The protesters are mobilized by socioeconomic problems that are coming to the fore. The rapprochement with the European Union is non-critically equated with economic well-being, just as good relations with Russia are, thoughtlessly equated with social poverty and hopelessness. Specific elements of the color revolution were also used by Russia, using the second significant topic for mass mobilization: the corruption charges, which led to the ouster of Saakashvili in Georgia and Yulia Tymoshenko in Ukraine. Regardless of how much truth there was in these accusations, there is no doubt that the demonstrations against the pro-Western politicians in the two former Soviet republics were also fueled by the Russian geostrategic interests.

What also catches the eye is the term “revolution”, which refers to the mobilization of protesters. This term should emphasize that the essence of a protest is radical, referring to a radical change that needs to be achieved because it is based on legitimate goals, even though illegal means may be used. In this way, the insufficiently defined goal of the demonstrations remains hidden; participants in color revolutions are not acquainted with the political program that should lead to fulfillment of their expectations (improvement of socioeconomic conditions), because such articulation indeed is not possible, due to the alliance of leftist, rightist, and liberal parties participating together in the uprising.

COLOR REVOLUTIONS IN YUGOSLAVIA

Comparing the 1968 student protests with the 1991 student demonstrations (these protests were named – “Velvet Revolution”) as well as with other “events of the people” that later followed, calls for a strict differentiation between the protests of 1968 and the ones that followed, and then an assessment of their possible “revolutionary significance”. The social position of students sparked the 1968 student protests, but the dissatisfaction was soon articulated into political demands, which were, by their vocation, consistently socialist. The demand for improving the material position of the University was only one segment of the final, fourth demand in the student demonstrations’ Resolution, passed on June 3, 1968 (Jakšić 2020, 9). The most significant demand implied the establishment of social equality, so that the social structure of students reflects the social structure of the society, as well as the abolition of privileges emerging from political positions, democratization of all sociopolitical organizations, and especially the League of Communists, democratization of the media, and freedom of association and protest. Even though some of these formulations at first glance sounded quite liberal, as they were dominated by the demands of liberty and equality, for the Action Committee, which formulated the demands, the socialist framework was unquestionable for fulfilling the previously mentioned demands. The equality that the students demanded was not a legal equality before the law, which can only be achieved in a social context, but rather a redirection of “surplus knowledge” towards the social well-being of primarily the working class, and all citizens of Yugoslavia.

One should not lose sight of the fact that the student protests in Belgrade were, in a specific sense, part of the broader student rebellion that was incited in Paris. At the time, so-called pro-communist discourse was pronounced in Europe, and the Paris demonstrations bore that leftist stamp, as did other student protests in the Federal Republic of Germany and the US. The ideas of a permanent revolution, i.e., a social criticism, were understood through Marxist lenses, as a form of human self-production and the constant dominance of social causalities. The party bureaucracy in socialist countries was seen, in this sense, as an anti-revolutionary occurrence, while the student protests in Belgrade were understood as a revolutionary act,

in conflict with bureaucratization (Petrović 1986, 188), which initiates increasingly visible social differences.

The meaning of the 1991 student protests was completely different. These protests occurred in the aftermath of the large demonstration on March 9, which was relatively easily suppressed, despite the police being unprepared for this gathering and overestimating the number of participants (Marković 2009, 280). The tanks appeared on the streets of Belgrade in the evening, when the police had already dispersed the protesters.

The following day, a peaceful gathering of students occurred, first at the faculties and then in the streets, at the Terazije Fountain. These protests were called the “Velvet Revolution”, and this name was supposed to stress their non-violent character. These protests, coordinated by the actor Branislav Lečić, had the form of a *democratic revolution* in Eastern Europe in 1989. The so-called “street parliament” was established. And the demands centered, above all, around political freedom, with a barely noticeable accentuation of the need to establish the liberal system, i.e., accelerated economic transition (abandoning the social economic model and establishing free market relations). A year later, in March 1992, in a month-and-a-half-long protest, the students formulated demands, among which only some referred to freedoms and rights at the university. Number one, the resignation of the then President of Serbia, Slobodan Milošević was demanded, followed by the cessation of the regime’s control over the media, the adoption of the law that would guarantee the autonomy of the university, the publication of the names of students who died in the war in Croatia, and the resignation of the leadership of the Belgrade Students’ Union (Tomić 2015, 192). At first glance, not one of the demands touched on the political system, i.e., the future state structure, but the demand for the resignation of Slobodan Milošević was covertly directed towards the rest of the social system, as testifies the slogan “Red gang”, which will remain in use for years later, when the student protests renew again.

The subsequent large student protests during Slobodan Milošević’s time took place in 1996 and 1997. The cause of a student protest, which later evolved into a large-scale citizen rebellion, was the regime’s attempt to avoid accepting defeat in local elections in dozens of cities and municipalities in Serbia, where the opposition had secured victory. The first student demand referred to the establishment

of an independent commission to determine election results. The second two demands, referring to the resignation of the rector and the student vice-rector of the University of Belgrade, were added to the list a few days after the beginning of the protests, because rector Veličković and student vice-rector Đurđević stated on the RTS that nothing but a handful of students were behind the protest (Tomić 2015, 195). The traces of the color revolution are also visible in these protests. First of all, the demonstrations occurred after the election results were presented, and soon enough, the entire case was internationalized, with the arbitration of the former Spanish President Felipe Gonzalez, and Milošević's admission of defeat in local elections in municipalities and cities throughout Serbia, in the form of a *lex specialis*. However, these protests, especially when they turned into civil demonstrations throughout Serbia, had a clear anti-regime angle. If we bear in mind the fact that removing Milošević from power in 1992 was one of the goals of the US and powerful European countries (and above all, Germany and Great Britain), mobilization to admit victory in local elections to an ideologically diverse and non-compact opposition should have weakened Milošević (or the protests should have spontaneously led to his removal). In any case, the anti-regime character of these protests is not contestable, as the absence of social demands is noticeable. The incoherence of the opposition came to the fore only a few months later, when in the Belgrade City Assembly, the Serbian Renewal Movement [SRM] broke off cooperation with the Democratic Party, after which the mayor, Đinđić, was deposed, and Milan Božić, one of the vice-presidents of the SRM, took his place. In other words, the reasons for the demonstrations were indeed an attempt at election theft (Marković 2009, 395–396), but the support coming to the protesters from abroad also had the form of pressure on the regime, motivated by completely different foreign-policy reasons.

A similar form of protest as in 1996 and 1997 was also applied after the first round of the 2000 presidential elections, whereas students were not put to the fire in this plan, but the united opposition. The course of the October 5th protests significantly resembled the events that several years later took place in Georgia and Ukraine: from the iconography of the resistance force to the legitimate inflow of funds from abroad and other forms of support, as well as propaganda media and economic activities conducted to topple Milošević's regime (Đurković 2000, 247). The October 5th changes included application of

force, segments of the former regime which switched sides, including the army and the police, but an enormous number of protesters played a pivotal role in all of that (Antonić 2000, 51). The protest's demands, which referred to the acknowledgment of Vojislav Koštunica's victory in the first round of elections, represented nothing but a matrix into which the protesters introduced their own motives. In this sense, the October 5th events had elements of a *democratic revolution* since afterwards a significant inflow of foreign capital and pronounced privatization were recorded, the geostrategic sense (after the victory of the DOS coalition, the Army of the FR Yugoslavia was downsized, tanks and cannons were destroyed, etc.), as well as "control" over the relations between Serbia and Russia.

COLOR REVOLUTIONS AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Unlike perceiving color revolutions as demonstrations incited from the outside, for geopolitical (geostrategic) reasons, there is a tendency among the professional public to understand color revolutions as forms of civil disobedience (Minkina and Kaszuba 2021). There are different perceptions of civil disobedience, and in recent times, the views of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas are the most influential in scientific circles. According to Rawls, civil disobedience is manifested in "public non-violent, conscious, but legally conflicted actions which, as a rule, should contribute to a change in the law or government policies" (Habermas 1989, 55). Therefore, Rawls constructs civil disobedience as a response to the nonconformity of moral imperatives and current legal norms. This means that every law, starting from the highest legal act, is measured by its conformity with the principles, and in Kant's sense of the word – therefore, with the possibility of universalization of the norm (a norm that cannot be viable universally, always leads to the fact that individuals and social groups are a means, and not the goal, and thus, too short for the moral law).

Rawls limits the right to civil disobedience by the inability to resolve the conflict between law and justice in the existing institutions of the system. Therefore, citizens can resort to violating the law and thus draw attention to the absence of fair solutions only if all institutional tools have been previously exhausted. Moreover, Rawls

insists on the non-violent character of civil protests, allowing this form of fight for justice only in exceptional conditions. As Rawls believes, those conditions are not met by socioeconomic dissatisfaction, because the demands for awarding special subsidies cannot be universalized. An objection could be raised to Rawls's attitude, stating that there are states in which democratic institutions are not well-developed, where the judiciary is not free from the influence of executive power, and where legislative power is in the hands of a specific, hermetic group of people. In other words, Rawls' insights imply that democratically developed societies are necessary, thus confirming the notion that one cannot transition from a non-democratic society to a democratic one through democratic means.

Habermas takes a much broader view of civil disobedience. Born out of student protests, for Habermas, civil disobedience is an expression of moral dissatisfaction with the *law*. Therefore, civil disobedience emerges in the cleavage between legality and legitimacy (Habermas 1989, 54). Civil protests emerge from the constant questioning of some legality; that is, they guarantee the constant legitimization of a social practice. In this sense, even the attitude of a legal order towards civil disobedience represents a test of its maturity. When stating this, Habermas had in mind exactly the intolerance towards civil disobedience that the politicians Zimmerman and Pinger characterized as a "form of non-violent violence", not understanding its deep democratic justification.

At this moment, a question arises as to whether student protests or other forms of demonstrations against the regime can be viewed uniquely from the perspective of the need for social legitimization of legality. Rawls and Habermas agree that moral imperatives are the root of civil disobedience and universal principles. This, however, cannot be said for the protests in which the goals are not clearly articulated, or the goals are, in fact, partial. On the other hand, a question of the legitimacy of the demands for legitimacy arises: each group of people protesting can invoke the legitimacy of the law. Who should decide in such a case whether the set demands are justified: the representatives of the regime, or an independent intellectual community? And in the end, if rational mediation of legality and legitimacy is an imperative, this still does not encompass the rational behavior of the actors involved in the dispute, the regime, and the protesting citizens.

In the context of Moderna, these problems highlight the need to establish an open society in which all members have the opportunity to become familiar with research conducted by social scientists. The assessment of legal norms, that is, the determination of their legitimacy, presupposes the institution of impartial judgment, the results of which should be made known to the general public (Appel 1987, 25).

However, the post-modern dispersion of sense calls into question the very universal principles. Color revolutions, therefore, do not require a rational foundation, but only a simulation of some principle whose satisfaction is sought. And when the principal foundation is lost, it refers to evoking the “natural state”: *bellum omnium contra omnes*. In this sense, color revolutions are a force of argument hidden behind the seemingly legitimate rebellion, in which, however, at least a certain number of protesters project their social dissatisfaction.

Color revolutions, therefore, have their *form of manifestation*, which is nothing but a simulation of civil initiatives, based on some fundamental principle (noticing the unfairness of some legal provisions compared to morally universal laws), and their *current form*, the basic goal of overthrowing a regime, within specific geostrategic interests. The more diffuse and unclear the demands of protesters are, the less it is about the elements of civil protests, and more about a *color revolution*.

Of course, in specific social contexts, it is challenging to differentiate moral demands from the diffuse causes for demonstrations, and thus, exactly in the spirits of the open society, in the way Habermas and Appel view it – in terms of a critical communicational community – one should look not only at the manifestation of protests, but at the broader social context of their development and actions strategy as well.

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СОЦИЈАЛНЕ, ДЕМОКРАТСКЕ И ОБОЈЕНЕ РЕВОЛУЦИЈЕ

Резиме

Анализа обојених револуција у овом тексту подразумева два правца истраживања. Најпре је анализиран сам појам „обојена револуција“, а посебно промена значења термина „револуција“ – а потом и значењски склоп појма „демократска револуција“. Други правац истраживања фокусиран је на особености обојених револуција, и њихову повезаност са десуверенизацијом, као последицом глобалног капитализма. На овим основама анализирани су демократске револуције, у земљама Вишеградске групе, посебно у Пољској – као и на Балкану, а нарочита пажња посвећена је поређењу демократске револуције у Украјини и Србији. У овом тексту, путем предочених правца истраживања, постављене су и брањене следеће хипотезе: (1) Обојене револуције манифестују се у форми демократских револуција – у којима се доводе у питање институције политичког система; (2) Обојене револуције током последњих деценија имају примарно геополитичке циљеве, за разлику од претходног периода (крај прошлог и почетак овог века) када су имале транзициону сврху; (3) Обојене револуције не могу да се идентификују са *грађанском непослушношћу*, зато што у њиховом средишту не постоји чврст морални принцип, него дифузно оправдање.

Кључне речи: револуција, демократија, обојена револуција, транзиција, грађанска непослушност.

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* This paper was received on May 29, 2025, and accepted for publication at the Editorial Board meeting on October 15, 2025.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN THE MILITARY EDUCATION OF OFFICERS**

Resume

The integration of technology into military education and education in general represents the reality, need, and necessity of efficient functioning and survival in the information society. Military education is vital to the military profession and the army's future. This requires future officers to be capable and creative, learn, think, and adapt to new situations. Applying new technologies undoubtedly results in greater efficiency in mastering the planned teaching content. It makes teaching and training safer, more interactive, and more engaging, resulting in officers becoming more qualified and better equipped to face modern challenges, risks, and security threats. New technologies significantly enhance education, facilitate the transfer of theoretical knowledge, and support the development of practical skills, thereby preparing future officers to perform complex professional and combat tasks. The integration of technology into military education represents a transformative shift that enhances efficiency and prepares officers for modern warfare. In addition to building competencies, military education is crucial for fostering the interoperability of personnel (the ability to work

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** This article is the result of the work on the project "Military profession in Serbia in the modern security environment" of the Strategic Research Institute (ИСИ/ДХ/3/24–26). 81.

together, communicate effectively, and comply with regulations) within the various structures of a country's military and its allied countries. Integrating technology into military education presents a significant challenge for military education organizations. To address this, military educational institutions have begun developing specialized training modules that focus on emerging warfare technologies, intelligence analysis, and joint operations. This trend continues as military education increasingly emphasizes interdisciplinary approaches to prepare officers for the complex challenges of the future. In some underdeveloped segments, it is necessary to implement, invest in, or adapt processes to meet the security environment's requirements. The role of new technologies will be increasingly prevalent and characterized by new, innovative tools.

Keywords: military, education, training, officers, new technologies.

INTRODUCTION

The world is characterized by a significantly more complex security environment than it was several decades ago. The contemporary environment is complex, presenting increased challenges (Porkoláb and Zweibelson 2018; Vuletić and Stanojević 2022). The service within modern armed forces asks for increasingly complex knowledge, skills, and abilities, such as developing critical thinking, understanding military operations, implementation of various joint military capabilities, understanding of the operational planning process, rules of engagement, and risk management, the necessity of adapting to different positions and functions, etc. (Barreiros dos Santos 2019, 128). New technologies significantly enhance education, facilitate the transfer of theoretical knowledge, and aid in the development of practical skills, thereby preparing future officers to conduct complex professional and combat tasks.

Military organization is based on professional competencies. The most critical management task is understanding and suitable interaction with the operational environment. The operational level of organizational action implies analytical thinking. Higher levels in the hierarchy ask the officer to visualize problems and find solutions. Education is crucial for managing and adapting to change in any

organization or field of endeavor. When a change in environment and demands occurs, officers should accept the new facts and methods of work, i.e., the new way of thinking. As the world “moves” towards increasing uncertainty, the ability of officers to think innovatively and strategically and apply finely honed critical skills and knowledge bases in any situation is quite significant. If military forces do not adequately understand the nature of the security environment and the implications of key trends in this environment (on the battlefield), the consequences can be catastrophic. On a micro level, such failure could be a matter of life or death; on a macro level, it could be the question of national survival (Kenney 1996, 52).

Over the past half-century, various scientists have researched the nature of professions. Samuel P. Huntington started the debate in “The Soldier and the State”. Huntington believes that the officer corps is the key component of professionalism in the military. He perceives professionalism through three attributes: responsibility, corporateness, and expertise. Responsibility implies that the military forces are loyal to the state and strictly subordinate to the civilian government. Corporateness encompasses various aspects of the military organization’s functioning, characterized by internal relations, communication methods, uniforms, and other elements. Their expertise is significant for the well-being of society and implies long-term acquisition of professional knowledge and formal education. The education and training of officers form the foundation for the development and maintenance of expertise (Huntington 1957, 7–18, cited in Moten 2011, 15).

The modern security and technological environment requires continuous transformation of the military education system. Traditional forms of teaching and training are often insufficient to respond to the complex and dynamic conditions in which officers may find themselves. New technologies offer significant opportunities for enhancing military education, but their application is often insufficiently researched or limited to specific segments. The question is how to optimally integrate new technologies into military education to achieve higher quality, efficiency, and adaptability to modern challenges. The subject of this research is the analysis of the importance, methods, and effects of applying new technologies in the military education process, as well as the possibility of their further integration to enhance the quality of officer training. The research aims to point out the importance and

potential of new technologies in military education. The research was conducted using content analysis, synthesis, deduction, and the case study method.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MILITARY EDUCATION IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MILITARY COMPETENCIES OF OFFICERS

Military organizations of the 21st century are constantly and rapidly changing due to changes in security threats, technological changes, and other factors (Vuletić 2017). Military education continually adapts to these changes, enabling armies and their members to respond to emerging demands. Changes in military education in the 21st century occurred in three dimensions: the adoption of rigorous academic standards, the continued development of military education activities, and the expansion of international cooperation. Contemporary Western armed forces usually have a three-tiered system of education, that is, the training of officers. In the first basic tier, officers acquire knowledge according to the demands of their chosen specialization. The second tier prepares officers to be, above all, commanders and staff officers. The third tier of training focuses on operational and strategic levels, preparing officers to perform the duties of the highest-ranking commanders (brigades and above) and key tasks in operational-level commands (Libel 2019, 79). In the structural sense, the first tier is conducted at military academies, the second in command and staff training, and the third at specialized military academies or colleges. In the United States of America (USA), the officers trained through the military education system are educated at the United States Military Academy West Point and the National Defense University, the British at the Royal Military College of Defense Studies, and the German at the receive career advancement education (command and general staff) at the “Vojvoda Radomir Putnik” School of National Defense.

Military education has always been a significant component of military officers' development. It is founded on two key principles: train for certainty, so that military staff acquire and master the skills needed for known tasks, and also for uncertainty, so that they possess a broader base of knowledge and skills necessary for taking action in unclear and unforeseen situations. Military education is the backbone of the nation's military power development. A state needs to invest in

military education to prepare and train officers to face the difficulties of complex political and military crises and potential armed conflicts. Military academies, defense universities, and other military educational institutions mainly focus on the education and training of future military thinkers, strategists, and decision-makers (Mallick 2017, 1; Kharbanda 2018, 26–29).

Depending on the level to which they will be deployed, officers must possess specific skills and abilities, such as tactical expertise, operational competence, and strategic vision. Development at the level of tactical proficiency entails a comprehensive understanding of fundamental military duties, gaining experience in applying these skills, and fostering efficient and ethical leadership. Operational competence implies developing a broader understanding of the use of force and integrating various specialties and abilities in operational execution. Most military officers perform duties at the level of tactical expertise and operational competence. At the highest level, an officer must possess a developed strategic vision, including highly developed personal and institutional competencies, the application of broad organizational abilities, and the ability to lead and direct extremely complex and diverse units (organizations). The officer performing the duties on this level uses their capabilities, has developed operational and strategic skills, knows units (their own and the coalition units), and focuses on reaching strategic goals (*Air Force Handbook I* 2021, 136).

The construct of the development of forces is a framework linking all developmental needs with basic competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities for successful completion of work) through continuous learning. Along with the defined competencies, lifelong learning is aligned to ensure that officers are trained and ready to respond to the challenges of the current and future operational environment. Continuous learning is a development process in which experiences are combined with education and training (*Air Force Handbook I* 2021, 136). Contemporary, modern armed forces have shifted from traditional, internal forms of military education towards interagency, civil-military concepts. Military agencies go through changes at different levels, from one form of “production” of military knowledge at military academies to the military education model at defense universities (Libel 2019, 79).

The military profession, analyzed from the expert or professional standpoint, demands a broad spectrum of comprehensive competencies to fulfill its duties and obligations within the required management and

command functions. Education and training should align with what the army must do to fulfil its mission. The difference between training and education is that training provides instruction on what should be done (or thought), while education teaches one to think critically. The fundamental goal of education is to make officers informed, competent, and responsible. Military education teaches officers how to think and transform knowledge into skills perfected during service. One of the challenges faced by the armed forces is the comprehensiveness and necessary proficiencies of future officers. Future officers require a broad range of competencies, including emotional intelligence, communication skills, physical and psychological endurance, and more (Schatz *et al.* 2017, 81–86).

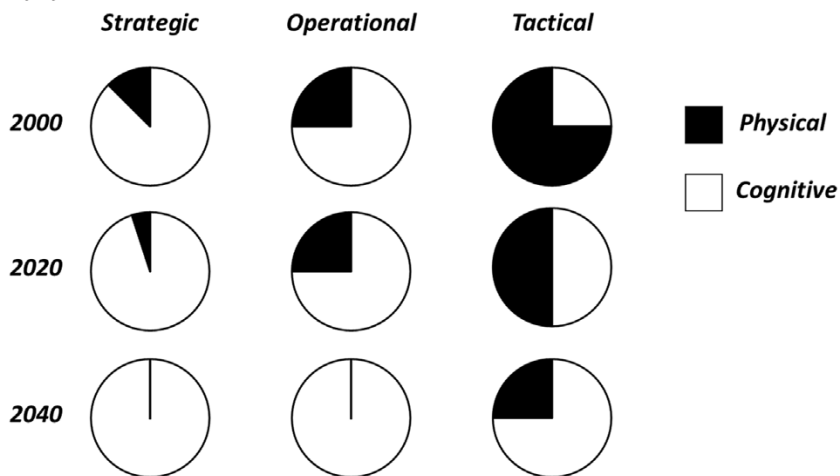
One of the main challenges of military education is transforming traditional education and applying new technologies. This implies the introduction of new curricula and new teaching methods to increase the competencies of future generations of officers (Pînzariu and Ionaşcu 2023, 115). Military education covers a broad spectrum of activities. In one sense, this refers to training, continuous education, and other activities designed to ensure the advancement and development of officers at various phases of their careers, preparing them for the next level of responsibility. The strategy of development of military education refers to the balance between training, education, and experience. The three elements mentioned above are combined to create the “link between theory and practice”, resulting in the ability to defeat the enemy. For a military to be truly adaptable, it must maintain a coherent and balanced investment in these elements (Iskandarov and Gawliczek 2019, 37).

The changing nature of war demands permanent investment in military education to develop an intellectual advantage. Officers in the army require specific abilities that encompass productive, cognitive, and interactive skills, including those related to creativity and communication. They must be highly adaptable and capable of dealing with complex and ambiguous problems (Iskandarov and Gawliczek 2019, 38). Military education in the 21st century must incorporate elements and lessons learned from past experiences and analyses of events. Military education should recognize the most capable officers and enable their advancement and development. Future officers must be ready to act in all domains (*Developing Today's Joint Officers for Tomorrow's Ways of War* 2020).

Institutions responsible for military education must include active and experiential learning to develop practical and critical thinking skills that officers need. These methodologies involve case studies from the past to help them develop reasoning, analysis, and problem-solving skills, which can be applied to challenges emerging in peacetime situations, especially in the context of war. Curriculums and programs should contain virtual, constructive methodologies, wargames, and exercise methodologies, which include multiple scenarios and repetitions to give officers better insight into possible situations and develop creativity (Lacey 2020). Military academies tend to fulfill academic standards while also preserving the professional values and motivations of young officers to face new challenges (Last, Morris and Dececchi 2019, 105).

Reviewing the assessment of the accuracy of long-term predictions regarding military education, Knott and Perconti concluded that predictions over 20–30 years are realistic and sufficiently precise to make decisions on education, research, and investment priorities. Technological advancement conditions cognitive and physical balance, especially on a tactical level. In illustration 1, we can see that these cognitive capabilities (thinking, learning, and concluding, among others) become increasingly significant, especially at higher decision-making levels (Kott and Perconti 2018; Billing, *et al.* 2021).

Illustration 1. Evolution of cognitive and physical relations of soldiers on strategic, operational, and tactic levels in 2020 and 2020, and forecasts until 2040



Data source: Billing *et al.* 2021.

The importance of military education is recognized within NATO. With the development of technology and the increase in the volume of information exchange, NATO's operational areas are becoming more complex and potentially more challenging to predict. Therefore, as the epicenter of global security, NATO should align with the challenges its member states and partners face. Education and training are the two main domains of cooperation between NATO and its partner states. NATO member states focus on joint, multinational, and interagency education and training of officers who will be capable of developing and implementing doctrines, strategies, and policies that integrate all instruments of power – political, military, economic, and informational (Iskandarov and Gawliczek 2019, 36).

Some highly positioned officers in the American Army have analyzed their military education and concluded that it has stagnated, falling short of creating favorable conditions for victory in future wars (Fisher 2022, 658–659). The Joint Staff document or publication *Developing Today's Joint Officers for Tomorrow's Ways of War* can be seen as a direct response to such a state. The document states that their vision is to direct and lead the most promising officers throughout their careers through the military education system. The military education system should identify, follow, and direct the most capable, creative,

and strategically oriented officers to prepare for future wars. Future conflicts are likely to occur across all domains. Globally integrated operations in all domains represent challenges for officers to be produced by the military education system (*Developing Today's Joint Officers for Tomorrow's Ways of War* 2020).

APPLICATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN MILITARY EDUCATION

Introducing new technologies into the educational process and the need for the information society are realities. The application of new technologies can significantly enhance the academic level of officers, thereby elevating their knowledge. Teaching methods should be directed towards making learning as easy and efficient as possible. Utilizing new technologies in the educational process is key to educating officers who will contribute to shaping the institution's image, having been trained in their competencies. The multifunctional, integrative, continued, and complex nature of military education calls for the implementation of innovative teaching methods (Khizhnaya *et al.* 2016).

Throughout history, military education has suffered significant transformation, adjusting to the changeable needs of warfare and technological advancements. Over time, military education shifted from purely military (tactical) training to a comprehensive curriculum, which includes theoretical concepts and practical implementations, leadership development, a deeper understanding of international relations, etc.

Interdisciplinary approaches in military education include integrating various fields of study to "produce" more trained and more ready officers, in line with the needs of contemporary society. For example, introducing psychology into military education improves understanding of team dynamics and stress management. Training that combines warfare skills with ethical decision-making contributes to critical thinking and moral reasoning, which are essential for contemporary leaders (commanders, heads) facing complex global challenges (Stanar 2024, 14). Cooperation with civilian universities and research institutions additionally enriches their competencies.

Many contemporary challenges are related to the breadth and diversity of knowledge, as well as the necessary skills, of new

generations of officers. New generations (i.e., the millennials and the generation Z)¹ learn differently from the previous ones (Barreiros dos Santos 2019, 124–125). The increasing use of new technologies can significantly contribute to fulfilling the projected goals. The use of new technologies is inevitable in military education, but it also presents certain risks; therefore, officers must educate themselves on cybersecurity.

As new technologies emerge, they provide innovative methodologies and tools that enhance the efficiency of education and training (Khizhnaya *et al.* 2016). Contemporary armies use advanced technological solutions, from virtual reality simulations to comprehensive data analysis. The application of advanced simulations and digital resources in the education and training of officers presents scenarios they may face in the future, as well as opportunities for developing decision-making skills, which can help them be better prepared for operations in an increasingly complex global environment. Technology also serves as a channel for information exchange and cooperation between military educational institutions (Mallick 2017). By integrating platforms for cooperation, military schools can facilitate the exchange of information, thereby optimizing learning outcomes.

Mobile learning solutions are gaining popularity, providing flexible educational options for military personnel. These solutions provide access to resources for training at any time and from anywhere, thereby enabling officers to adapt to the demanding obligations and tasks assigned to them. Such a possibility promotes continuous learning and creates favorable conditions for skill improvement. A good example of the application of technology in military education is the *Enhanced Learning Environment – ELM*² of the American army, which represents an efficient integration of virtual reality and simulations to transfer officers' experiences from training, in parallel with the development of necessary military skills. The British military's increasing use of

¹ The Millennials, i.e. the Y generation, is the generation of people born in the period from 1981 to 1996 and that grew up in the transition period, that is, in the times of technological changes (Internet, smartphones, social networks), while Generation Z (1997–2012) grew up in a completely digitalized world. After these, the so-called Alpha generation comes into play (from 2013), which is growing up in the era of advanced technological achievements (virtual reality, artificial intelligence, etc.).

² An enhanced educational environment implies the implementation of technologies that improve the learning experience, making it interactive, more engaging, and efficient.

mobile learning apps enables access to materials from a distance, thereby encouraging continuous education even in challenging and unstable environments. In Australia, integrating artificial intelligence into education and training modules has transformed curricula based on performance measurement, resulting in improved outcomes in officer education. The case studies illustrate that technology enhances military education and training methods, but it also deals with the unique needs of officers, which, in the end, leads to more efficient and more adaptable military leaders (Khan *et al.* 2024).

Online platforms enable students and instructors to present and edit documents online in real-time and project them on the screen. Such a platform allows for exchange among officers and the documentation of their words. The presentation software enables teachers, along with textual content and oral lessons, to also display photographs, diagrams, high-resolution video footage, and audio files. Different devices (i.e., tablets, smartphones, etc.) can be connected to computers, projectors, and the so-called “cloud” (cloud computing),³ where texts, illustrations, and diagrams were previously uploaded. In this way, one could acquire feedback from the auditorium, conduct surveys, and so on. Recording tools enable teachers to record their lessons, which can later be viewed by the students who were prevented from attending for some reason (Barreiros dos Santos 2019, 129).

For example, distance learning is one of the most significant forms of educating students in the information society (Vulić 2016, 146–148). The Simulation and Learning Centre of the University of Defence offers the members of the Ministry of Defence and the Military of Serbia (MD and MS) the possibility to educate and train themselves during their career with minimal absence from their workplace. The National Simulation Center for Security Risks, located within the Faculty of Security at the University of Belgrade, is also available to officers and other members of the MO and MS for scientific research, education, and the improvement of expert knowledge and skills, as well as for conducting joint exercises. The training and shooting simulators at the Military Academy of the University of Defence are of great importance in the military education of future officers, as they enable realistic and safe training in controlled conditions.

³ Cloud computing enables users to access some computer resources via the Internet (servers, databases, apps, etc.) with permission of specific subjects.

Moreover, social networks enable a rapid exchange of information among officers, allowing them to quickly share current information, attitudes, analyses, and results of scientific research projects, among other things (Jaćimovski 2024, 14–15). Blogs and other social media platforms play a crucial role in disseminating new knowledge, facilitating the exchange of opinions, and fostering group discussions. Future officers can practice various operations through simulation, possibly adjusting the parameters or variables (Mallick 2017). According to Neil, even though simulators are increasingly used in training programs, one should bear in mind that contexts of training in which simulators contribute to an increase in efficiency are calculated in advance. The integration of e-learning platforms enables officers to participate in both theoretical and practical training from a distance. This flexibility enhances learning efficiency, enabling independent learning that satisfies officers' individual styles and needs. E-learning tools ease cooperation between officers, thus creating a more interactive educational environment. Multimedia resources, such as video footage and simulations, complement the traditional teaching methods, offering richer experiences that incite a deeper understanding of the teaching materials. Ultimately, the role of technology in military education, primarily through e-learning, enables officers to develop the key skills necessary for modern warfare.

Artificial intelligence has a significant impact on military education by introducing innovative learning methods and enhancing officer evaluation and training. Its application enables personalized learning experiences, adjusting to the unique needs of each officer. Consequently, this encourages a more efficient education system within educational institutions. Adaptive learning technologies use algorithms to analyze learner performance, identifying areas to be improved (Đorić i Glišin 2023, 62–65; Miljković i Beriša 2023, 77–78; Proroković i Parezanović 2023, 24–26). This real-time feedback enables teachers to adjust curricula by increasing officer engagement and knowledge acquisition. Evaluation methods led by artificial intelligence simplify the evaluation process by providing timely and precise assessments of officer proficiency. The Department of Defense (DOD) of the USA signed 2019 a nine-year contract with *Microsoft* for 7.6 billion USD (General Services Administration 2019). As a result of cooperation, *Microsoft* released the *Copilot* artificial intelligence platform, which assists soldiers in everyday activities. Within the scope of military

education, the military can provide its soldiers with relevant and realistic learning experiences. Artificial intelligence software, such as Microsoft Copilot, can enhance the learning environment by encouraging creative thinking while preparing officers for the rapidly evolving technological landscape of the real world. The rapid adoption of new technologies has a profound impact on the global environment. The US Department of Defense is aware that artificial intelligence offers a competitive advantage in terms of speed, precision, adaptability, and effectiveness (Clark 2023).

Virtual and augmented reality enable the modelling and simulation of military actions and the management of certain elements. Software applications, such as the Ada Viewer software, allow the creation of specific presentations and simulations (Virca 2021, 338–343). A virtual learning environment creates real-life simulations, providing officers with the ability to learn in a safe and controlled environment (Chen, 2021). Officers use a variety of equipment, including screens, specialized glasses, helmets, and gloves, that simulate environments similar to real ones. Virtual reality can be utilized for driving training, vehicle maintenance, pilot training, medical education, and combat training. Augmented reality is a type of mixed reality that combines real-world elements with virtual ones. This relatively new technology enables the digital generation of three-dimensional presentations that should be integrated with real stimuli from the environment. Technological solutions related to augmented reality can be utilized with the aid of smartphones, tablets, and other devices, thereby creating a stimulating learning environment and providing practical experience. The use of augmented reality, due to its distinct advantages, is also increasingly characteristic of military education (Chmyr *et al.* 2024).

By applying data mining (the search and analysis of data), it is possible to predict whether a military career will be chosen as a life calling among young people. Data mining is the process of analyzing large datasets and extracting relevant information using mathematical and statistical methods. Data mining automatically detects previously unknown patterns in large datasets. Large amounts of data are automatically analyzed, and patterns and rules are rapidly processed and extracted. Some well-known tools are utilized in the military, including *the Multi-State Anti-Terrorism Information Exchange (MATRIX)*, *the Able Danger program*, and *the Automated Targeting System (ATS)*, among others. The analyzed data are being uploaded to

the system, specifically to the databases for the Learning Management System (*LMS*). Through big data analysis, educational institutions can track the progress, i.e., the results and areas for improvement, of officers. Based on the acquired information, it is possible to take some corrective measures to improve the efficiency of military education and training (Ionita 2015, 297–298).

Cybersecurity education and training involve the transfer of information and the development of necessary skills to enable individuals to recognize and defend themselves against cyber threats. Given the increasing occurrence of cyberattacks, this specialized and indispensable knowledge creates the preconditions for a higher level of security culture, protection of information, and critical infrastructures, thereby improving both personal and national security. Additionally, creating conditions for the military educational system to be protected from cyber threats is of pivotal importance for successfully applying and protecting vulnerable information. Blockchain technology⁴ integration can improve security in military education systems. By applying the aforementioned technology, confidential teaching materials can be protected, reliable methods for monitoring educational achievements and qualifications can be implemented, human resources management can be streamlined, and other benefits can be achieved.

CONCLUSION

Military education is vital for the military profession and the army's future. This, in turn, requires future officers to be capable, creative, and willing to learn, think, and adapt to new situations. Future wars will demand adaptable officers who use doctrine as a guide, rather than a rigid set of rules, and who are capable of devising their own solutions. They will be able to repurpose weapons or technology and find a way to fulfill their goal. The officer's most significant tool is not his weapon but his mind. Better military education results in success on the battlefield. If a unit is commanded by an officer who is incapable of analyzing and understanding the situation, the mission may fail, and lives could be lost.

⁴ Blockchain technology enables data protection by dividing data into so-called blocks that are cryptographically linked into a chain. The said technology is characterized by invariability, i.e., once recorded, information cannot be changed.

The integration of technology into military education represents a transformative shift that enhances efficacy and prepares officers for modern warfare. The role of new technologies will become increasingly prominent in the future, characterized by the use of innovative tools and solutions. Besides building competencies, military education has a significant impact on constructing interoperability among personnel (the ability to work together, communicate, and be in tune) within different structures of a state's army, as well as among allied states.

The integration of technology into military education presents a challenge that organizations involved in military education must address. The development of new, advanced technologies has also dramatically impacted military education. Besides financial limitations, the problem within military education can also be resistance to change among staff accustomed to traditional education and training methods. This reluctance can hinder the adoption of innovative technological solutions. Additionally, there is often a lack of suitable training for educators (instructors) to effectively utilize new technologies. Inadequate preparation can lead to inefficient education methods, preventing the realization of the potential advantages of the technology. Military educational institutions have begun developing specialized training modules on new warfare technologies, intelligence analysis, and joint operations. This trend has continued, as military education increasingly emphasizes interdisciplinary approaches to preparing officers for the complex challenges of the future.

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ЗНАЧАЈ НОВИХ ТЕХНОЛОГИЈА У ВОЈНОМ ОБРАЗОВАЊУ ОФИЦИРА **

Резиме

Интеграција технологије у војно образовање, али и образовање уопште представља реалност, потребу и нужност ефикасног функционисања и опстанка у информационом друштву. Предмет овог рада представља анализа значаја и примене нових технологија (вештачке интелигенције, виртуелне реалности, појачане реалности, итд.) у војном образовању. Циљ рада јесте да се укажу пре свега на потребе и могућности примене нових технологија и позитивних ефеката њихове имплементације на офицере, будуће руководиоце (командире, команданте, начелнике и др.). Анализом садржаја односно анализом релевантних научних извора, и примера из праксе, сагледава се које су то најзначајније нове технологије које се примењују у војном образовању. Примена нових технологија несумњиво резултује већом ефикасношћу у савладавању планираних наставних садржаја. Наставу и обуку чини безбеднијом, интерактивнијом и занимљивијом, а као крајњи резултат добијају се офицери оспособљенији и спремнији да се супротставе савременим изазовима, ризицима и претњама по безбедност. Нове технологије већ имају значајну улогу и примену у војном образовању. У одређеним, недовољно развијеним сегментима, нужно је извршити процесе имплементације, инвестирања односно прилагођавања да би се одржао корак са захтевима безбедносног окружења. Улога нових технологија ће у будућности бити све заступљенија и карактерисаће је употреба и неких нових, иновативних, алата.

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** Чланак је резултат рада на пројекту Института за стратегијска истраживања „Војна професија у Србији у савременом безбедносном окружењу” (ИСИ/ДХ/3/24-26).

Кључне речи: војска, образовање, обука, официри, нове технологије.

* This paper was received on March 31, 2025, and accepted for publication at the Editorial Board meeting on October 15, 2025.

UDC: 327.5(5-11)"20"
DOI: 10.5937/pnb30-60750
Original scientific paper

Политика националне безбедности
(The Policy of National Security)
Year XVI vol. 30
No. 3/2025
pp. 105-132

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THE IDEOLOGY, ROLE AND ACTIVITIES OF HEZBOLLAH IN THE CONTEXT OF MIDDLE EASTERN CONFLICTS AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY***

Abstract

This paper offers an in-depth examination of Hezbollah, tracing its origins, evolution, ideological foundations, organisational architecture, and operational strategies. It also evaluates its multifaceted impact on regional and international arenas. Grounded in a rigorous definition of terrorism and the defining traits of modern terrorist organisations, the study underscores Hezbollah's significance as a paradigmatic hybrid actor simultaneously functioning as a political party, social movement, terrorist entity, and paramilitary force. In this capacity, Hezbollah occupies a pivotal position within the complex geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. The primary objective of this research is to systematically examine the key factors that contributed to the

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*** The paper was written as part of the scientific research work of a scientific research organization under the Contract concluded with the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia, No. 451-03-136/2025-03, dated January 27, 2025. 101.

formation of Hezbollah, the dynamics of its internal organisation and structure, the ideological foundations that shape its strategic objectives, and the multidimensional aspects of its activities. The analysis encompasses a detailed overview of Hezbollah's military operations, political participation, social and humanitarian initiatives, funding mechanisms, and the evolving global perceptions surrounding the organisation. Special attention is given to Hezbollah's role in Middle Eastern conflicts, such as the 2006 Second Lebanon War and the Syrian civil war, along with its international operations. The research methodology is based on analysing secondary sources, including relevant academic literature, reports from international organisations, media archives, and available primary documents issued by Hezbollah. A comparative and historical approach has been applied to contextualise Hezbollah's development within the broader political and social landscape of Lebanon, particularly in light of the civil war, the 1982 Israeli invasion, and the influence of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. This multifaceted analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the Hezbollah phenomenon and its regional and international security implications. It offers a foundation for further inquiry into the Middle East's complex relationships between state and non-state actors.

Keywords: Hezbollah, Middle East, Lebanon, terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to provide a scholarly analysis of Hezbollah, an organisation whose multifaceted nature, significant influence in the Middle East, and its role in international relations make it a subject of considerable academic interest. Before delving into a detailed examination of Hezbollah's role and activities, it is essential to precisely define the key concepts that will be used throughout the analysis. Considering that terrorism is a complex and controversial phenomenon that affects numerous aspects of modern society, its scope extends across international, regional, and domestic levels, encompassing various forms of organised violence, whether in the form of individual acts or collective actions (Bursać and Tančić 2024, 112).

Terrorism is widely regarded as the most extreme manifestation of extremism. Based on its ideological orientation and strategic objectives, extremism can be categorised into several forms: ideological (far-left and far-right), ethno-separatist, and religious (Đorić 2021, 60). Within the scope of this study, terrorism is conceptualised as a multidimensional political phenomenon – a complex form of organised, individual, and, less frequently, institutionalised political violence. It is characterized by the use of brutal physical force and psychological intimidation as methods of political struggle, typically employed during periods of political and economic crisis, and less frequently in conditions of stability. Such acts aim to achieve far-reaching goals through disproportionate means incompatible with the prevailing sociopolitical context (Simeunović 2009, 78). Terrorist organisations often exhibit a distinct hierarchical or network-based structure, operate with a high degree of secrecy, and rely primarily on violence as a tool for achieving their objectives. Their motivations are frequently rooted in ideological or religious beliefs, which are used to legitimise their actions. Readiness for every form of political violence, and therefore for terrorism, implies that its potential perpetrators exist in an environment contaminated by an extremist ideology, and are susceptible to radicalization up to the level of willingness to apply violent acts (Đorđević i Miljković 2025, 181).

The selection of Hezbollah as the subject of this research stems from its social and academic relevance. This multifaceted organisation functions not only as a terrorist group but also as a significant political and societal actor within Lebanon. Socially, Hezbollah operates as a popular movement with broad public support, while militarily it acts as a paramilitary force engaged in regional conflicts. Its hybrid character, marked by the integration of military, political, and social roles, makes Hezbollah a unique case study within the fields of political science, international relations, and security studies. Moreover, it offers valuable insights into the geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East and the broader challenges to global security.

This research aims to examine the origins and development of Hezbollah through a multidisciplinary lens, focusing on the historical circumstances, political dynamics, and ideological influences that have shaped the organisation. The study provides an in-depth analysis of Hezbollah's internal structure, examining its military, political, and social branches, as well as its financing mechanisms. Special emphasis

is placed on the ideological foundations of the movement, which are deeply rooted in Shia religious tradition. Furthermore, the research aims to explore Hezbollah's modes of engagement, ranging from military operations and political participation to its societal influence within Lebanon, and to evaluate its role and perception within the regional and international arenas.

The methodology of this research is primarily based on the analysis of secondary sources, including relevant academic literature, reports from international organisations, analytical studies, media archives, and available primary documents. A historical and comparative approach will be employed to place the development of Hezbollah within a broader political, security, and social context of contemporary Lebanon. Particular emphasis will be placed on analysing key historical events that have shaped the emergence and evolution of the movement, such as the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Hezbollah's structure, ideology, and role within regional and global contexts through a critical analysis of primary sources and an interdisciplinary framework.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Understanding the emergence and development of Hezbollah necessitates a detailed analysis of the turbulent political landscape in Lebanon that preceded its formation, as well as an appreciation of the far-reaching implications of the Iranian Revolution. These factors created the conditions necessary for the rise of a new Shia organisation.

Throughout the 20th century, Lebanon was characterised by a fragile confessional balance. Its political system, based on the National Pact of 1943, envisaged the distribution of power among the main religious communities Maronite Christians,⁴ Sunni Muslims

⁴ The Maronite Church is an Eastern Catholic Church in full communion with Rome, tracing its origins to the 4th century Syrian hermit Saint Maron. Maronites constitute the most prominent Christian community in Lebanon and, according to the 1943 National Pact, traditionally provide the country's president, thereby playing a pivotal role in Lebanon's political life. While their primary concentration is in Lebanon, the Maronites also have a substantial diaspora spread across the globe.

and Shia Muslims – according to demographic proportions established by the 1932 census (Stefanović and Grubić 2015, 8). However, over time, the confessional power-sharing system in Lebanon became unsustainable, primarily due to shifting demographic trends. Notably, the Shia community, historically marginalised and economically disadvantaged, experienced significant demographic growth, concentrating mainly in Southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and the suburbs of Beirut, such as Dahieh.

According to Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimates from 2025, Muslims constitute the majority of Lebanon's population at 67.8%, with Sunnis accounting for 31.9% and Shias 31.2%, alongside smaller groups such as Alawites and Ismailis. Christians comprise 32.4% of the population, predominantly Maronite Christians, while the Druze represent approximately 4.5% (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] 2025). These figures highlight a significant demographic shift compared to the last official census, conducted in 1932, which served as the basis for the National Pact. At that time, Christians formed the majority, comprising around 53% of Lebanon's population. This evolution has resulted in a substantial mismatch between the historical foundations of Lebanon's political power-sharing system and its contemporary demographic realities. This internal imbalance, combined with growing socio-economic inequalities and regional interventions by Syria, Israel, and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, escalated into the Lebanese Civil War, which lasted from 1975 to 1990. The conflict was a complex, multilayered struggle involving various religious, political, and paramilitary factions, wherein internal issues were deeply intertwined with external influences.

Despite its significant numerical presence, the Shia community was initially relatively unorganised. Movements such as *Afwaj al-Muqawamah al-Lubnaniyyah* – AMAL,⁵ led by the charismatic Imam Musa Sadr,⁶ sought to articulate Shia demands for equality and development. However, the mysterious disappearance of Musa

⁵ AMAL is an acronym for the Arabic name *Afwaj al-Muqawamah al-Lubnaniyyah*, which translates as the Lebanese Resistance Detachments. AMAL is a political party and militia that, at its peak, had around 14,000 fighters.

⁶ Musa Sadr al-Din al-Sadr (1928–1978) was a prominent Lebanese-Iranian Shia cleric, politician, and revolutionary who played a significant role in the founding and revitalization of numerous Lebanese Shia institutions.

Sadr (*Musa al-Sadr*) in 1978⁷ created a leadership vacuum that, despite AMAL's efforts, hindered its ability to fully protect the Shia population and consolidate their position during the war. The Syrian military intervention in June 1976 further complicated the conflict. In a notably paradoxical geopolitical move, Syria initially supported Christian factions against Palestinian forces.⁸ Nevertheless, driven by its interest in maintaining regional dominance, Syria later shifted its alliances, supporting Palestinian factions and effectively establishing political and military control over Lebanon—a presence that lasted until the withdrawal of Syrian troops in April 2005 (Ochsenwald and Kingston 2025).

A critical turning point that significantly reshaped Lebanon's security and political environment, primarily affecting the Shia community, was the 1982 Israeli invasion, referred to as Operation Peace for Galilee. The main goal of the invasion was to dismantle the Palestine Liberation Organisation (*Munazzamat at-Tahrir al-Filasṭīniyyah*) – PLO bases in southern Lebanon, which were used to launch attacks against Israel. Israeli forces quickly advanced to Beirut, leading to the city's siege and substantial destruction (Newby 2024; Shlaim Avi 2000, 384; Rabinovich 1999, 121). This occupation of southern Lebanon and parts of Beirut had a complex impact on the Shia population. Initially, some Shia groups greeted the Israeli arrival with a measure of relief, perceiving the PLO as a *de facto* occupying force that destabilised their regions. However, this sentiment was short-lived, as the Israeli occupation soon became a source of repression, violence, and oppression, fueling strong resistance. Thus, the Shia community in Lebanon—already deeply frustrated by political marginalisation and previous foreign interventions—felt abandoned and vulnerable.

⁷ On 25 August 1978, Musa Sadr, along with Sheikh Mohammad Yaqub and journalist Abbas Badreddine, traveled to Libya at the invitation of Muammar Gaddafi. After August 31, however, they disappeared without a trace.

⁸ After being expelled from Jordan (1970–1971), the PLO relocated its headquarters to Beirut. Under the Cairo Agreement of 1969, the PLO was granted control over Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon established after the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967 – as well as the right to launch military operations against Israel from Lebanese territory. The agreement also legalized the presence of weapons in the camps, effectively creating a “state within a state”.

THE IMPACT OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION ON THE SHIA MOVEMENT IN LEBANON

While Lebanon was engulfed in the chaos of civil war and foreign interventions, the Shia movement was further influenced by the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran was transformed from a secular monarchy into an Islamic republic. This revolution exerted a profound ideological and practical impact on Shia communities worldwide, including those in Lebanon. Khomeini's vision of "Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist" (*Wilāyat al-Faqīh*),⁹ which advocated for the leading role of religious leaders in politics and society, inspired many Lebanese Shia clerics and activists. It offered them a model of resistance and self-determination in their long-standing marginalisation and leadership vacuum.

Iran provided not only an ideological framework but also concrete material and military support to the Shia in Lebanon. Shortly after the 1982 Israeli invasion, the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – Pasdaran¹⁰ deployed approximately 800 members of its unit to Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, tasked with training and organising local Shia fighters (Levitt 2021, 5; Ranstorp 1997, 110–113). In this endeavour, Iran viewed Lebanon as a crucial arena for "exporting the revolution" and conducting a proxy war against Israel and the United States. Khomeini's rhetoric, which identified the United States as the primary enemy (symbolising global hegemony) and Israel as the regional adversary (symbolising oppression), along with a strong emphasis on resistance and the establishment of Islamic justice, resonated deeply among Lebanese Shiites. Thus, Iranian support, combining ideological leadership with operational assistance, served as a key catalyst in the emergence of an organisation like Hezbollah,

⁹ *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, or "Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist", is a Shia Islamic doctrine developed by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, which establishes the supreme authority of a religious jurist (faqih) over all state and societal affairs. This concept forms the foundation of the theocratic governance of the Islamic Republic of Iran and serves as an ideological model for Shia movements throughout the region.

¹⁰ In Persian, *Sepāh-e Pāsdārān-e Engelāb-e Islāmi*, commonly abbreviated as the *Pasdaran*, represents the primary branch of Iran's armed forces, tasked with multiple roles and functions.

providing operational structure, training, and weaponry, and a clearly defined doctrine and purpose.

FORMATION OF HEZBOLLAH

In the context of a profound regional crisis marked by external aggression and the strengthening of Shia identity under Iranian influence, Hezbollah (*Hizbu 'llāh*) was formed.¹¹ The emergence of Hezbollah was not an isolated event but rather the result of the consolidation and unification of various smaller Shia militias and religious groups, such as (*Lebanese al-Da'wa, the Association of Muslim Ulama in Lebanon, and the Association of Muslim Students*) that were already active in Lebanon, especially following the Israeli invasion (Ranstorp 1997, 26). Among the key figures in Hezbollah's founding and early development were religious leaders educated in prestigious Iranian and Iraqi seminaries, such as those in Qom and Najaf, who were deeply imbued with Khomeini's revolutionary ideology. Prominent figures during this period included Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli, the first Secretary-General of Hezbollah, and Sayyed Abbas al-Musawi, who succeeded al-Tufayli and played a significant role in uniting various Shia factions. Later, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, a disciple of al-Musawi, assumed leadership of Hezbollah. Although Ayatollah Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah denied direct involvement in the formal establishment of Hezbollah, his intellectual and religious influence was undeniably significant in shaping the attitudes of Lebanese Shiites and preparing the ground for the emergence and development of radical movements. While Khomeini established a broader revolutionary theological-political model that Hezbollah adopted as the foundation of its ideology, Fadlallah provided a specific theological and moral framework that legitimised Hezbollah's actions and ideology within the Lebanese context, shaping public opinion and offering spiritual guidance (Robin 2001, 97), albeit without direct organisational control over the group. Hezbollah's primary objectives were clearly defined: the expulsion of Israeli forces from Lebanon and the establishment of an Islamic regime modelled after Iran (Rabinovich and Reinharz 2007, 427).

¹¹ Hezbollah, which translates from Arabic as the "Party of God", derived its name under the direct influence and inspiration of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Considering the complexities of Lebanon's social structure and regional dynamics, Hezbollah initially maintained a relatively flexible political program, with a primary focus on armed resistance. However, Hezbollah distinguished itself from earlier Shia movements, such as AMAL, through its markedly radical anti-Western and anti-Israeli rhetoric. Their explicit goal of Israel's destruction and hostility toward the United States and France set them apart from more moderate factions (Hezbollah 1985, 5). A crucial distinction also lay in Hezbollah's direct dependence on Iran. This relationship with Tehran has been fundamental to shaping Hezbollah's identity, operational capabilities, and strategic autonomy within the Lebanese and broader regional contexts.

THE EARLY PERIOD OF ACTIVITY

Hezbollah's early phase of activity, spanning from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, was characterised by a series of intense and violent operations primarily targeting Western – mainly American and Israeli – interests in Lebanon. These actions contributed to Hezbollah's reputation as one of the most formidable and lethal paramilitary organisations in the Middle East. During this period, the group was responsible for several of the era's most infamous terrorist attacks, including the bombings of Multinational Force barracks stationed in Lebanon as part of peacekeeping efforts during the Lebanese Civil War. These attacks alone resulted in the deaths of 307 individuals (Hammel 1985, 394).

In addition to its military actions, Hezbollah was also responsible for a series of hostage crises¹² and suicide attacks targeting Israeli forces. During this period of intensified armed resistance, the organisation simultaneously worked to expand its influence within Lebanese society. With substantial financial support from Iran,¹³ Hezbollah established a comprehensive network of social services in neglected Shiite regions, including hospitals, schools, and charitable institutions. This social infrastructure proved crucial

¹² The Lebanese hostage crisis, spanning from 1982 to 1992, involved the abduction of 104 foreign nationals, the majority of whom were Americans and Western Europeans.

¹³ According to Professor Dragan Simeunović, during Khomeini's era, Iranian support – supplemented by smaller donations from other Arab countries – reached up to 80 million dollars annually (Simeunović 2000, 198).

in garnering deep-rooted support and loyalty among the Shiite population. Although Hezbollah initially abstained from participating in Lebanon's parliamentary system, its military effectiveness against Israel, combined with its extensive provision of social services, helped solidify its role as an indispensable actor within the country's socio-political landscape.

Over time, Hezbollah developed into a multifaceted organisation with two core pillars. Its military wing concentrated on armed resistance against Israel and Western influence, while its socio-political wing focused on winning popular support through extensive social programs and the creation of a parallel governance structure. Fueled by regional instability and driven by Iran's revolutionary ideology, this dual strategy resulted in a distinctive entity that remains a powerful force shaping Lebanon's trajectory and the broader regional landscape.

IDEOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES OF HEZBOLLAH

The core of Hezbollah's ideology is rooted in radical Shi'a Islam, particularly shaped by the vision of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. One of the fundamental characteristics of Islam is that it is not only a religious system, but also a political and legal system. It should be noted that Islam, unlike some other religions, has a significant political role in countries with a Muslim majority, as well as in Muslim communities around the world (Vukoičić 2017, 131). Before Hezbollah's emergence, most Shi'a religious institutions in Lebanon were largely apolitical, focusing on religious rituals, theology, and education, while deliberately avoiding direct involvement in governance. However, Khomeini's doctrine of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist) fundamentally altered this paradigm. It advocated that in the absence of the Twelfth Imam,¹⁴ the highest religious authority should assume direct political power and lead the Muslim community.

¹⁴ In Shiite theology, the Twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, is regarded as the last in the line of Prophet Muhammad's successors. He is believed to have entered a state of "occultation" (Ghaybah) in 869 CE. The term "absence of the Twelfth Imam" refers to his current hidden state, during which he does not appear publicly, preventing believers from direct communication or leadership through his physical presence.

The doctrine of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* thus provided Hezbollah with ideological legitimacy not only for active political participation but also for armed struggle. Khomeini's influence on Hezbollah was twofold: on one hand, he offered a theological and political model through the concept of an Islamic state and revolutionary resistance against the United States, which represented a symbol of global hegemony, and Israel, a regional adversary. On the other hand, he established a direct hierarchical link through an oath of allegiance to the Iranian Supreme Leader initially to Khomeini himself, and later to Khamenei (Jaber 1997, 54–55). While Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah was an influential spiritual figure, his contributions were primarily manifested in the local theological discourse and in granting moral and religious legitimacy to the resistance within Lebanon's unique context. This enabled the adaptation and broader acceptance of Khomeini's ideas among the Lebanese masses while preserving autonomy from direct organisational control over Hezbollah.

ANTI-ISRAEL DISCOURSE AS A COMPONENT OF HEZBOLLAH'S IDEOLOGY

A central and clearly articulated objective of Hezbollah is the resistance against the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory. This aim emerged directly as a response to Israel's 1982 invasion and the occupation of southern Lebanon, which enabled Hezbollah to position itself as the foremost resistance movement. This stance earned considerable support not only within the Shi'a community but also among wider segments of Lebanese society opposed to Israel's presence. Hezbollah's anti-Israel rhetoric goes beyond tactical considerations; it constitutes a fundamental ideological conviction that regards Israel as an occupying force and denies the legitimacy of the so-called "Zionist entity". The organisation maintains that its primary goal is the liberation of Lebanon and the eradication of Israel (Norton 2014).

This narrative enabled Hezbollah to successfully portray itself as the guardian of Lebanese sovereignty and national pride, significantly

This concept is fundamental to Shiite theology and carries significant implications for religious and political leadership within the community.

bolstering its support across diverse segments of Lebanese society. Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, along with Hezbollah's role during the 2006 Lebanon War, further solidified its reputation among the Lebanese people as a powerful and effective regional actor capable of standing up to the Israeli military.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS OF HEZBOLLAH'S ACTIVITIES

Alongside its military activities, Hezbollah has developed an extensive social network that forms the foundation of its popularity and legitimacy in Lebanon (Cammatt 2014, 20). Leveraging significant financial support from Iran, supplemented by funds from the Shiite diaspora, Hezbollah has effectively established a "state within a state" in Shiite regions, filling the institutional vacuum created by the long-standing neglect of the central Lebanese government. Hezbollah provides a wide range of essential social services, including healthcare (operating a network of hospitals and clinics offering affordable medical care), education (founding and managing schools and educational centers at all levels, often emphasizing Islamic values), social welfare (supporting people experiencing poverty, widows, orphans, and families of fallen fighters), financial assistance, scholarships, and infrastructure development (actively involved in the reconstruction and development of infrastructure in Shiite areas, including housing, roads, water supply, and electrical networks) (Ranstorp 1997, 106; Kiameh 2023, 85–91).

Through its social dimension, Hezbollah has cultivated deep loyalty and dependency among the population, extending beyond mere military support to build a robust foundation for its political influence. Hezbollah legitimised its political role by participating in the first parliamentary elections after the civil war in 1992, securing a continuous presence in the Lebanese parliament (Norton 2007, 98). Over the following decades, it consistently won parliamentary seats and gained ministerial portfolios, acquiring direct influence over national decision-making processes. In the formation of Lebanon's current government in February 2025, Hezbollah was allocated two ministerial positions: Rakan Nasreddin as Minister of Health, and Muhammad Haidar as Minister of Labour (Beeri 2025). This political role enables Hezbollah to impact policymaking at the national level,

protect the interests of the Shiite community, and advance its agenda from within the government. Hezbollah's ability to navigate Lebanon's complex confessional political system while maintaining its military strength ensures its long-term sustainability and significant influence domestically and across the broader regional landscape.

LONG-TERM GOALS OF HEZBOLLAH: REGIONAL INFLUENCE AND VISION

Hezbollah's long-term objectives go beyond the Lebanese context and are closely tied to a broader regional vision inspired by the Iranian Islamic Revolution. Hezbollah's doctrine has evolved from the radical "Open Letter" – the 1985 Manifesto (*An Open Letter: The Hizballah Program*) – to the more pragmatic "Political Document" (*The New Hezbollah Manifesto*) or *New Manifesto* of 2009. The original manifesto was distinctly revolutionary, advocating the expulsion of Western influence, the destruction of Israel, absolute loyalty to Iran's Supreme Leader, and the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon modelled after the Iranian system (Hezbollah 1985, 6).

However, the 2009 Manifesto reflects Hezbollah's significant adaptation and integration into the Lebanese political system. Explicit calls for the creation of an Islamic state in Lebanon were omitted, and the group expressed greater openness toward democratic processes and active participation in government. Its rhetoric became more universal, aiming to attract broader support, while still maintaining a strong anti-American and anti-Israeli discourse. Nevertheless, despite changes in tone and approach to domestic politics, the 2009 Manifesto preserved continuity in its core ideological principles, continuing to reject the existence of Israel and any form of peace settlement. It also retained a clear, though more subtly expressed, loyalty to Iran's Supreme Leader and the principle of Wilayat al-Faqih (Hezbollah 2009, 5–9).

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FINANCING

Hezbollah is a complex hybrid organisation that effectively integrates substantial military capabilities, active political engagement, and an extensive social infrastructure. This multilayered structure grants it dominant influence within Lebanon and enables power projection on a broader regional scale. The organisation's funding model is characterised by a diversified network of sources, contributing to high operational autonomy and long-term institutional sustainability. At the head of Hezbollah is the Shura Council, which makes comprehensive strategic decisions. Although long-time Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah was killed in an Israeli airstrike on Hezbollah's headquarters in Beirut in September 2024, he was soon succeeded by his former deputy, Naim Qassem.

Beneath the Consultative Council operate the Executive, Jihad, Judicial, Parliamentary, and Political Councils. The Executive Council, currently headed by Ali Damoush following the assassination of Hashem Safieddine, consists of nine units: 1) Information Unit; 2) Electronic Unit; 3) Social Unit; 4) Education Unit; 5) Islamic Health Unit; 6) Jihadi-Financial Unit; 7) Labour Unions Unit; 8) Foreign Relations Unit; and 9) Liaison and Coordination Unit (Beeri 2025). The Jihad Council is Hezbollah's highest military command body, equivalent to a general staff, responsible for all aspects of the organisation's military and security activities. As the new Secretary-General of Hezbollah, Naim Qassem chairs the Jihad Council. Other members include:

Mohammad Haydar – considered the *de facto* chief of staff of Hezbollah; Haytham Ali Tabatabai – commander of the elite Radwan Forces;¹⁵ Talal Hamiyah – commander of Unit 910 (External Security Organisation); Khudr Yousef Nader – commander of Unit 900

¹⁵ In addition to the Radwan Unit specifically trained for cross-border incursions and operations requiring precise execution several other units fall under the direct control of the Jihad Council: the Badr Unit, specialized in guerrilla warfare; the Aziz Unit, responsible for special operations outside Lebanon; the Haidar Unit, designated for rapid response; and the Al-Qaim Unit, tasked with logistics and support.

(Counterintelligence, Internal Security, and Counterterrorism Unit); Wafiq Safa – head of the Liaison and Coordination Unit.¹⁶

The Judicial Council, established as a Shia network of courts, is mandated to adjudicate and mediate disputes, applying Sharia law. Its jurisdiction covers the Shia population as well as internal conflicts or violations of Hezbollah's internal rules by its members. Mohammed Yazbek currently heads the council. The Parliamentary Council plays a key role in consolidating party discipline and enhancing the effectiveness of Hezbollah's elected representatives in the Lebanese legislative body. Its function is also to ensure the subordination of Hezbollah's elected officials to the Advisory Council. Mohammed Raad heads this body.

The Political Council is responsible for continuously monitoring and operationalising Hezbollah's political activities. Its key functions include drafting political programs and electoral platforms, organising election campaigns, and forging and maintaining coalitions. Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyed currently heads the council.

Hezbollah's funding operates through a complex, multi-tiered network that sustains its extensive military, political, and social infrastructure. The primary and most dependable source of financial support is Iran; U.S. officials estimate that Hezbollah received 700 million dollars from Iran in 2018 alone (Karam 2018). A significant share of resources also originates from the Shiite Lebanese diaspora, especially communities in West Africa, the United States, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil (Labaki 2006, 15–16). Moreover, Hezbollah finances its activities through various illicit enterprises.

These illegal activities encompass drug manufacturing and trafficking – primarily cocaine, with documented involvement in marijuana production and distribution (Mucci 2014) alongside arms smuggling, and trading in cigarettes and “blood” diamonds. Additionally, they engage in currency counterfeiting, including the production of “Supernotes”, complex money laundering through international networks, forgery of passports and other identification documents (Burman and Blanga 2025, 102–107), as well as the

¹⁶ It is important to note that Hezbollah, for security reasons, does not publicly disclose the names of all members of its councils, especially those of the Jihad Council.

exploitation of natural resources like Venezuelan gold (Giambertoni 2025, 3–6).

These illicit channels include the production and trafficking of drugs, most commonly cocaine. However, there is also evidence of marijuana production and trade (Mucci 2014), arms trafficking, as well as dealing in cigarettes and “blood” diamonds. Additionally, they engage in currency counterfeiting, such as “Supernote” bills, sophisticated money laundering through international networks, forgery of passports and other identification documents (Burman and Blanga 2025, 102–107), and exploitation of natural resources, including Venezuelan gold (Giambertoni 2025, 3–6).

We can conclude that the combination of diverse funding sources, primarily driven by Iranian support, has enabled Hezbollah to solidify its position as a hybrid actor with significant military, political, and social capabilities, establishing it as one of the most prominent non-state actors in the Middle East.

HEZBOLLAH OPERATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES: AN ANALYSIS OF DYNAMICS

Hezbollah’s operations span three primary domains. The first domain includes military actions on Lebanese territory, primarily directed against Israel. The second domain involves transnational military engagement, demonstrated through interventions and support in conflicts such as those in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. The third domain encompasses terrorist activities outside Lebanon, often characterised by the phenomenon of suicide terrorism. Regarding military operations within Lebanon, Hezbollah can be seen as a central actor in direct armed conflicts with Israel. The most notable of these is the 2006 Second Lebanon War, during which Hezbollah showcased significant military capabilities. Beyond this central conflict, Hezbollah continuously maintains low-intensity clashes along the border, including sporadic rocket attacks. The latest such attacks occurred in October 2023, when Hezbollah, along with allied groups, launched as many as 781 attacks against Israel in just eight days (Dhaybi and Hussein 2024). These actions form part of Hezbollah’s self-proclaimed role as a “resistance movement” against

Israeli control, which grants them legitimacy among specific segments of the Lebanese population.

Hezbollah's activities outside Lebanese territory often take place in a "grey zone", involving training, advising, and support, which complicates the precise documentation of all military interventions. Nevertheless, their significant military engagements can be identified. Hezbollah began its transnational military involvement during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995), providing training and advice to the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of broader Iranian support. Their members primarily acted as instructors and participated in small combat units.¹⁷ According to British journalist Robert Fisk, approximately 150 Hezbollah fighters, led by Fuad Shukr, took part in the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Fisk 2014). This was confirmed in a speech by former Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah at Shukr's funeral in 2024 (Paunović 2024). Hezbollah's engagement intensified significantly from 2003 during the Iraq conflict, where Unit 3,800¹⁸ oversaw the training of Iraqi Shiite militias such as the Mahdi Army, the League of the Righteous (*Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq*), and Hezbollah Brigades (*Kata'ib Hezbollah*). Their role included acting as military advisors, instructors, and coordinators in guerrilla warfare tactics and the use of explosives.

In 2011, Hezbollah became involved in the Syrian civil war. By 2013, its role had evolved into a full-scale military engagement, marked by the deployment of thousands of fighters providing direct support to the Bashar al-Assad regime. This intervention was crucial for the regime's survival, with Hezbollah forces playing a decisive role in major offensives such as the battles of Al-Qusayr (Choucair 2013) and Aleppo, where Hezbollah committed around 2,000 fighters (Morris 2013), significantly contributing to the takeover of strategic territories.

¹⁷ Based on motivation criteria, Marija Djorić and Strahinja Obrenović divide foreign terrorist fighters in the Balkans into two main groups. The first consists of fighters recruited for ideological reasons, while the second includes mercenaries, popularly referred to as "dogs of war" (Đorić and Obrenović 2024, 13–14).

¹⁸ Unit 3800 is a specialized Hezbollah unit established in 2003 at Iran's request. Its primary mission is to support Shia militant groups in Iraq and Yemen, making it a key instrument of Iran's proxy warfare strategy. The unit is led by the experienced fighter Khalil Youssef Harb.

Starting in 2014, Hezbollah began supporting the Houthis in Yemen by training their fighters, advising on military strategies, and, most importantly, assisting in the development and production of sophisticated weaponry such as ballistic missiles and drones. This transfer of knowledge and expertise has enabled the Houthi rebels to enhance their asymmetric warfare capabilities (Minor 2024; Jones *et al.* 2021, 1).

An essential domain of Hezbollah's activities is terrorism. Their terrorist actions are not isolated incidents but are deeply rooted in the organisation's ideology. Hezbollah has been linked to numerous terrorist attacks outside Lebanon, often targeting interests connected to Israel or the West. The ideological foundation of Hezbollah is firmly embedded in the concept of martyrdom, which justifies the use of suicide terrorism. Geopolitically, Hezbollah was the first to demonstrate the effectiveness of this tactic, especially during the 1980s in Lebanon, when suicide attacks influenced the withdrawal of foreign forces. A typical example of such terrorist acts is the 1984 attack on the U.S. Embassy, where a single suicide bombing killed 23 people and wounded 90 (Kifner 1984). This showed that a non-state actor could achieve significant strategic goals at minimal cost. Recruitment and motivation of members are based on the concept of "istishhad" (*istišhād*), which represents a passion for martyrdom. Within this paradigm, death in battle is not seen as a failure but as an honourable path that elevates the fighter to a martyr, or "shaheed" (*Shahīd*). This ideological concept plays a crucial role in mobilisation, promising fighters spiritual rewards, social prestige, and support for the families of fallen combatants.

Hezbollah's ideology divides the world into oppressors and the oppressed. The oppressors are viewed as unbelievers and apostates, while the downtrodden—those who follow the true faith—include Hezbollah members (Simeunović 209, 198–199). Hezbollah was one of the first groups to systematically use suicide attacks as an asymmetric tactic against militarily superior forces. The 1983 attacks on American and French barracks in Beirut demonstrated how this relatively low-cost strategy could deliver significant psychological and strategic effects, ultimately compelling the Multinational Forces to withdraw from Lebanon. These suicide missions established Hezbollah as a pioneer in this form of warfare and influenced other groups to adopt similar methods.

Many countries and organisations classify Hezbollah as a terrorist group due to its attacks on civilian targets outside conflict zones. The United States takes the most rigid stance, designating the entire organisation as a terrorist and imposing comprehensive sanctions (US Department of State 1997). The European Union adopts a more nuanced approach, labelling only Hezbollah's military wing as a terrorist entity, which allows it to maintain political relations with the Lebanese government (Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/332). In contrast, Russia (Reuters 2015) and China¹⁹ do not designate Hezbollah as a terrorist group, instead viewing it as a legitimate political and military ally. Arab countries remain divided on this issue.

Here is the list of Hezbollah's most notorious terrorist attacks:

1) December 3, 1982: Hijacking of Kuwait Airways Flight 221, resulting in the deaths of two individuals; 2) April 18, 1983. Suicide bombing of the U.S. embassy in Beirut, killing 63 and injuring around 120 people; 3) October 23, 1983. Bombing of the multinational forces' barracks in Beirut, causing 307 fatalities; 4) September 20, 1984. Suicide attack on the U.S. embassy in East Beirut, killing 23 and wounding 90 people; 5) 1985–1986. Series of bombings in Paris, resulting in 20 deaths and 255 injuries; 6) 1992. Suicide bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, killing 29 and injuring 242 individuals; 7) 1996. Bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, which killed 19 and injured 498 people; 8) February 14, 2005. Assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in Beirut; 21 others were killed and 220 were injured in the bombing; 9) July 18, 2012. Suicide bombing targeting a tourist bus carrying Israeli tourists in Burgas, killing six and injuring 32; 10) 2012. Assassination of Brigadier General Wissam al-Hassan, a leading Sunni figure in Lebanon and head of internal security forces, resulting in the deaths of al-Hassan and seven others, with approximately 80 injured (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] 1985; Volo 2010; Hammel 1985; Kifner 1984; Rignault and Deligny 1989; Federation of American Scientists [FAC] 1992; Battles 2021; BBC 2014; BBC 2022; Chulov 2012).

¹⁹ Rather than a direct alliance, the relationship between Hezbollah and China is best described as a strategic alignment of interests. This connection is based on an indirect partnership primarily conducted through Iran, rather than through direct bilateral cooperation.

Before its latest conflict with Israel in 2023 and the subsequent invasion of Lebanon in 2024, Hezbollah had solidified its position as one of the most formidable non-state military forces. The group possessed a hybrid military capacity, blending conventional and asymmetric warfare capabilities. Its arsenal consisted of tens of thousands of missiles, including precision-guided weapons, drones, and advanced anti-tank and anti-ship systems. With a fighting force exceeding 100,000, Hezbollah's military strength was comparable to that of several nation-states (Al Jazeera 2024). However, following Israel's severe retaliation during the 2023 conflict and the invasion in 2024, Hezbollah endured substantial losses that significantly impacted its military and political influence. Estimates indicate that Hezbollah lost between 4,000 (The Times of Israel 2024) and 10,000 fighters (Clash Report 2025), marking the deadliest period in its history. Among the casualties were 14 high-ranking commanders, including Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, Executive Council Chairman Hashem Safieddine, and prominent leaders such as Fuad Shukur and Ibrahim Aqil. The organisation also severely damaged its military infrastructure, including bases, tunnels, weapons depots, and fortifications. Israeli strikes disrupted weapon supply lines through Syrian border crossings, with over 155,000 pieces of weaponry and equipment seized, including 12,000 explosive devices, drones, rockets, and anti-tank weapons (Bohbot 2024). Despite these setbacks, Hezbollah remains far from defeated. New leadership has been installed in key positions, and the organisation, still commanding tens of thousands of fighters, is actively rebuilding its capabilities and redefining its strategic approach in the evolving regional landscape.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we demonstrated that Hezbollah is a hybrid actor effectively combining elements of a political party, a social movement, and a paramilitary force, while simultaneously operating as a terrorist organization, as evidenced by the analysis of its terrorist activities. The organization's origins are closely intertwined with Lebanon's turbulent historical context, including the civil war, the Israeli invasion of 1982, and the far-reaching impact of the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

The paper also covers the analysis of Hezbollah's transformation following the 2024 conflict with Israel. During this period, the organization suffered its most severe losses in history, including the elimination of its long-time leader Hassan Nasrallah and much of its command structure, as well as the destruction of over 70% of its military infrastructure. This turn of events transformed Hezbollah from a "dominant regional power" into a "defeated force", shifting its primary focus from establishing regional influence to recovery and survival.

Looking ahead, Hezbollah faces unparalleled challenges. The new Secretary-General, Naim Qassem, must undertake the difficult task of consolidating authority and restoring the group's diminished capacities. Instead of conventional military engagement, the organization is expected to prioritize safeguarding its remaining resources and political influence. Similar to other embattled groups, Hezbollah might return to asymmetric tactics, making a resurgence of terrorist activities a possibility as a reaction to internal and external pressures. Its future will largely hinge on its adaptability and resilience in a transformed regional environment.

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ИДЕОЛОГИЈА, УЛОГА И ДЕЛОВАЊЕ ХЕЗБОЛАХА У КОНТЕКСТУ БЛИСКОИСТОЧНИХ СУКОБА И МЕЂУНАРОДНЕ БЕЗБЕДНОСТИ***

Сажетак

Овај рад пружа свеобухватну анализу Хезболаха, истражујући његову генезу, развој, идеолошке оквире, организациону структуру, оперативне методе и комплексни регионални и међународни утицај. Полазећи од прецизне дефиниције тероризма и карактеристика савремених терористичких организација, рад аргументује научну релевантност Хезболаха као хибридног актера који комбинује елементе политичке партије, социјалног покрета, терористичке групе и паравојне снаге, играјући централну улогу у геополитичким динамикама Блиског истока. Примарни циљ овог истраживања је систематско испитивање кључних фактора који су допринели формирању Хезболаха, анализу његове унутрашње организације и структуре, идеолошких постулата који дефинишу стратешке циљеве, као и мултидимензионалних аспеката његовог деловања. Истраживање обухвата детаљан преглед војних операција, политичке партиципације, социјално-хуманитарних активности и механизма финансирања Хезболаха, као и варирајуће глобалне перцепције. Посебна пажња посвећена је улози Хезболаха у блискоисточним сукобима, попут Другог либанског рата 2006. године и грађанског рата у Сирији. Методологија истраживања подразумева анализу

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*** Рад је написан у оквиру научноистраживачког рада НИО по Уговору склопљеним са Министарством науке, технолошког развоја и иновација РС број: 451-03-136/2025-03 од 27. 1. 2025. године.

секундарних извора, укључујући релевантну академску литературу, извештаје међународних организација, медијске архиве и доступне примарне документе. Примењен је компаративни и историјски приступ како би се разумео развој Хезболаха у контексту шире политичке и друштвене ситуације у Либану, нарочито у погледу грађанског рата и израелске инвазије 1982. године, као и утицаја Иранске револуције из 1979. године. Ова комплексна анализа доприноси дубљем разумевању феномена Хезболаха и његових импликација на регионалну и међународну безбедност, пружајући основу за даља истраживања сложених односа између државних и недржавних актера на Блиском истоку.

Кључне речи: Хезболах, Блиски исток, Либан, тероризам.

* This paper was received on August 10, 2025, and accepted for publication at the Editorial Board meeting on October 15, 2025.

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DANGEROUS GOODS AS A POSSIBLE TOOL OF COMMITTING THE CRIMINAL OFFENCE OF TERRORISM

Abstract

In times of pronounced globalization processes and no less strong multipolar geopolitical tendencies, the structure of global security is undergoing a serious endurance test, which is why the authors direct their research attention towards the growing potential of manifestation forms of terrorist activities. The phenomenon of dangerous goods is a subject of particular interest to the authors, who first define it conceptually in relation to existing theoretical sources and then examine its normative aspects. After establishing a theoretical and normative foundation, the authors establish a connection between the basic phenomenon of their research and the target problem of terrorism within the framework of criminal law. The authors present the essence of this connection through the possible role of dangerous goods as a tool of committing the criminal act of terrorism, thereby indicating the goal of their research, i.e., the criminal law categorization of the phenomenon of dangerous goods. The methodological concept adopted by the authors comprises a descriptive, historical, normative, analytical, and teleological approach. The authors analyze their research subject through four parts in the paper.

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After defining the concept and types of dangerous goods, their effective phenomenological positioning in the normative sphere of the criminal act of terrorism follows. The formal-legal segment of the paper gives way to the factual challenges of transporting dangerous goods in road traffic, which is a precursor to the final consideration of possible *modi operandi* of terrorist attacks using dangerous goods as a crime tool. It is precisely this phenomenological complexity and semantic multi-layering of the concept of dangerous goods, along with its normative and factual imprint on the construction of global security in our time, that form the backbone of the idea presented by the authors in this paper.

Keywords: dangerous goods, terrorism, tool of committing criminal acts, road traffic, security, terrorist attacks.

INTRODUCTION

A fact that is woven into the very foundations of social life, and therefore into the sustainability of a social community, is unequivocally social interaction. Human adaptability to the conditions of the natural environment, overcoming existential challenges, and ultimately tailoring the living environment to one's own needs and interests would be impossible without mutual social relations between individuals and social groups. Undoubtedly, overcoming natural obstacles and solving social problems in the development of the human community is the result of the manifestation of sociability as one of the key characteristics of a human being.

Respecting the boundaries of the conceptual field of our research subject, we will focus our thinking on the material dimension of social interaction with roads as its the civilizational expression. Considering that human sociability necessarily implies communication with other people, roads arise as an outcome of the intention to strengthen, secure, and develop social interaction. Consequently, road traffic emerges as a form of communication. Therefore, road traffic, or road transport, is actually an emerging form of social interaction that historically precedes other forms of transport. The existence of road transport has enabled and facilitated the forming and functioning of the market for goods and services. The transportation and distribution of resources,

particularly energy sources and foodstuffs, have transcended the dynamics of local and regional levels and assumed global proportions.

Dangerous goods, as the subject of our research, are the fuel for the engine of the industrial infrastructure of the modern world, which is why they are an indispensable part of the cargo transported in road traffic. Their importance in terms of global security derives from the fact of their high-frequency presence, both in national and international road traffic. It is precisely this global security significance of dangerous goods that opens up the possibility of the existence of global risks, as a phenomenological antipode with a wide range of manifestations. In the case of dangerous goods, we will limit our research attention to the potential criminal exploitation of this phenomenon, the scope of which ranges from illegal activities in the economic sphere to endangering human health and environmental pollution, as well as the possibility of carrying out terrorist attacks.

Considering that economic and environmental crime can be found in the function of the phenomenon of terrorism, we have determined the aim of the research in this paper to establish the possible phenomenological exposure of dangerous goods in the role of a criminal law category, i.e. to find an answer to the question of whether dangerous goods can be a tool of committing a criminal act of terrorism. In methodological terms, we believe that the following methodological procedures best suit the scientific profile of our research: descriptive, historical, normative, analytical, and teleological. The methodological tools mentioned are necessary for the most comprehensive research coverage of the complex phenomenological field related to the target concept, whose significance we analyze. These methods are also suitable in relation to the structure of the research flow that follows, as they are represented in key segments of the scientific consideration of the phenomenological conceptual autonomy of dangerous goods in relation to other related concepts. It is precisely this methodological arsenal that will contribute, as we deem, to confirming those determinants of dangerous goods that are *differentia specifica* in defining its conceptual uniqueness. However, to avoid the trap of a simplified approach in recognizing inter-conceptual relations, connections, and influences, and to respect the ancient message 'Hic Rhodus, hic salta', we will first become familiar with the concept and types of dangerous goods in order to determine the subject of our research more fully.

CONCEPT AND TYPES OF DANGEROUS GOODS

Failure to consider the conceptual boundaries of an investigated phenomenon can lead its determination down the cul-de-sac of theoretical analysis and the unfoundedness of the conclusions subsequently drawn. It is for this very reason that a reference is made to some of the author's views, which we have defined as guidelines for determining the notion of dangerous goods as the target phenomenon of our reflection.

According to Sylwia Bęczkowska, dangerous goods are “materials or objects with dangerous properties that, if not properly controlled, pose a potential danger to the health and safety of people, infrastructure or means of transport”, and an example of dangerous goods is “liquid fuels, chlorine, ammonia, gases, corrosive, radioactive, toxic and other dangerous substances transported daily by others” (Bęczkowska 2019, 1252). In this sense, Bęczkowska determines that “the transport of hazardous materials poses a significant danger to people and the environment” (1253). She points out that there are the following ways in which the harmful effects of hazardous substances spread: (1) through land, where there is no direct danger to humans but there is an evident serious environmental hazard; (2) through water, where there is no direct danger to humans but there is a direct threat to aquatic ecosystems; and (3) through the air, in which case human life and health are directly threatened. Bęczkowska cites the fact that “dangerous goods constitute an important sector of the transport market” because they are “indispensable for the functioning of industry and urban agglomerations”, and that therefore “their transportation poses a potential threat to people, road safety and the environment, regardless of the vehicle used for this purpose” (1259). Close to this understanding is the view that dangerous goods are “more commonly known as hazardous materials”, which are “flammable, explosive, radioactive, corrosive, oxidizing, suffocating, toxic, pathogenic or allergenic” and can “cause accidents and lead to fire, explosion and chemical poisoning or combustion with significant harm to humans and the environment” (Nowacki, Krysiuk, and Kopczewski 2016, 143).

Some authors situate the phenomenon of dangerous goods within a broader context and define it through its multiple significances in the areas of the chemical industry, production capacity, and economic development (Sattari, Macciotta, and Lefsrud 2020, 49–66). This

is why, according to some opinions, the safety of road transport of dangerous goods is a “serious, complex, socially and environmentally sensitive problem” (Ma *et al.* 2021, 1). Dangerous goods can also be collectively defined as “materials or products which by their chemical or physical properties may endanger human health, the environment and property”, while in an individual sense it can be “any material, industrial or other waste which is dangerous to man and nature” in the form of “packaged, scattered and liquid dangerous goods” (Batarlienė 2020, 2).

Inevitably, there are also views in theory according to which dangerous goods in the broad sense represent a source of risk to humans and the natural environment, and in the narrow sense a primary threat to the life and health of road traffic participants and the ecological balance of their natural environment due to the potential increase in the volume of emissions of harmful substances, especially in liquid and gaseous aggregate state, as well as the consequent impact on the increase in the number of traffic accidents and road accidents (Lukasik, Kuśmińska-Fijałkowska, and Kozyra 2017, 109). In the previous theoretical period, Philippe Cassini included in the population at risk from the possible harmful effects of dangerous goods, in addition to the direct participants in road traffic, persons living or working near the roads (Cassini 1998, 133). Somewhat restrictive dangerous goods are, in some theoretical approaches, determined through the indication of emergent forms of dangerous substances such as “flammable gases, chemicals, explosives and toxic substances”, which in both urban and rural environments unequivocally “carry significant risks and challenges for public safety and the environment” (Petrović *et al.* 2025, 29). The danger of dangerous goods for the safety of people and the natural environment, according to some aspects of theoretical thinking, may even be associated more heavily with its transport itself than with its physical and chemical properties because it is precisely the transport of dangerous goods that is subject to the greatest challenges to harmful consequences (Milošević, Pamučar, and Chatterjee 2021, 356). Last but not least, some authors link the risk of transporting dangerous goods to the increased presence of “greenhouse gases”, believing that reducing carbon dioxide can mitigate the potential harm of dangerous substances in road transport (Ziaei and Jabbarzadeh 2021, 1).

In a whole range of different theoretical aspects, approaches, understandings, considerations and points of view, we have decided on

a complex, but theoretically and normatively comprehensive, definition of dangerous goods that it is necessary to phenomenologically position in relation to the previous determination of the notion of dangerous substances, according to which they are “substances or mixtures that by physical and chemical properties or reactions (explosive, flammable, toxic, radiation hazard, corrosive, generally reactive) during production, transportation, storage, handling and use can endanger human health and life, pollute the environment and damage material goods” (Sremac i Matijašević 2021, 4). Therefore, *in nuce* “all those substances that have such characteristics that, due to irresponsible and/or unprofessional work, or any accident during production, storage, handling or transport, can cause consequences for health or the environment, belong to the group of dangerous substances” (Krstić i Mlađan 2007, 9). Then we consider the definition of commodities as “all products of human labor that by their properties satisfy the needs of the market where they are included in social use by trade exchange, i.e. have market, social and use value” (Tepić *i dr.* 2013). The normatively supplemented theoretical positions on dangerous substances and goods, conclude that dangerous goods are “materials and articles whose transport is prohibited or allowed” (Pravilnik o transportu opasne robe [PTOR] u Ministarstvu odbrane [MO] i Vojsci Srbije [VS], „Službeni vojni list”, br. 8/2018), if carried out under the conditions prescribed by the relevant legal acts (Sremac i Matijašević 2021, 4). We consider that the whole phenomenological connection of dangerous substances with dangerous goods is the legal definition of the concept of dangerous substances as dangerous goods that are “properly packaged, marked with certain markings and labels, with correctly completed transport documents and loaded into the vehicle” (PTOR u MO i VS, „Službeni vojni list”, br. 8/2018, čl. 2, st. 2).

The classification of dangerous goods is determined in accordance with the existing international regulations, according to which there are the following types distributed by classes: “Class 1 – Explosive substances and articles; Class 2 – Gases; Class 3 – Flammable liquids; or Class 4.1 – Flammable solids, self-reactive solids, polymerizable solids and explosive solids of reduced sensitivity; Class 4.2 – Self-igniting materials; Class 4.3 – Substances which in contact with water develop flammable gases; Class 5.1 – Oxidising substances; Class 5.2 – Organic peroxides; Class 6.1 – Toxic substances; Class 6.2 – Infectious substances; Class 7 – Radioactive materials; Grade 8 – Contaminants

and Class 9 – Other hazardous substances and articles” (Evropski sporazum o međunarodnom drumskom prevozu opasne robe [ADR], 2016, ECE/TRANS/257, viii).

In view of the characteristics of dangerous goods that have the potential to endanger the life and health of people, or the devastation of the environment, we consider it justified to link this phenomenon to the danger posed to the human community by the criminal act of terrorism in all its manifestations. We will illustrate this phenomenological connection by determining the importance of dangerous goods within the regulatory boundaries of one of the most dangerous criminal activities in the modern world.

DANGEROUS GOODS WITHIN THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK OF THE CRIMINAL OFFENCE OF TERRORISM

According to some authors, basically “the concept of security is expanded horizontally” which means “that the concept of security expands from military to political, economic and social security, environmental security, or *human security*” (Bajagić 2007, 54). It is precisely in such a phenomenological environment that the harmfulness of terrorism can be noticed, as a negative social phenomenon and a contemporary threat to security, which always presents a difficult-to-solve security problem both for states and for the international system as a whole. As a term *per se*, beyond any doubt, terrorism causes fear, especially in the case of the actions of terrorist groups that “driven by the maximization of victims resort to the use of dangerous substances” (Gavrić 2022, 22). In this context, it would be unjustified to neglect the importance of biological weapons, which, due to their connection with terrorist activities, are theoretically known as “the atomic bomb of the poor” (Čobeljić *i dr.* 2003, 8 cited in: Cvetković 2013, 123). “Generally speaking, biological weapons can be defined as one of the types of weapons of mass destruction, which in a narrower sense means nuclear, chemical, biological and radiological weapons, while in a broader sense it means all toxic chemical agents if they are used as a means or target of an attack; all microorganisms and their products if they are the means or target of an attack; all industrial plants that produce and use toxic chemicals and microorganisms in the production process, as well as all warehouses and all means of transportation in which they

are stored and transported, and are the target of military or terrorist actions” (Cvetković 2012, 37 cited in: Cvetković 2013, 123). Almost certainly, “the increased danger of its use has been contributed to by the development of molecular genetics and biotechnology, which has resulted in the demise of a huge number of research laboratories whose work can be abused by (‘dual use’)” (Cvetković 2012, 37 cited in: Cvetković 2013, 123). According to the above, we consider justified the conclusion that radioactive, explosive, flammable, toxic substances and biological agents, by their very nature, represent dangerous substances that can be misused as a means of committing a terrorist attack, i.e. a criminal act of terrorism (Gavrić 2022, 22 cited in: Cvetković 2013, 123).

In modern security and legal frameworks, the link between dangerous goods and terrorism is becoming more pronounced, which imposes the need for a precise regulatory approach to this problem. Dangerous goods such as explosives, radioactive materials, flammable and self-igniting materials, toxic chemicals, etc., can be a dangerous means of carrying out a terrorist act, which can cause serious consequences serious consequences for the environment and quality of life, as well as for the economic and political stability of the state. On the other hand, modern technological development is not possible without hazardous materials, because they are not just the product of traditional technologies, but a prerequisite for further technical - technological development of society. Given this, the question of how dangerous goods are covered by criminal law legislation, especially in relation to the crime of terrorism, becomes extremely important from a security perspective for the entire society.

As mentioned earlier, dangerous goods include substances and objects whose physical, chemical, or biological action can cause harmful effects to people, property, and the environment. In international law, the transport and handling of dangerous goods are regulated through various international treaties and conventions, all aimed at creating conditions for the safe conduct of transport processes involving dangerous goods. Based on uniform rules accepted by all countries that are signatories to international agreements, it is possible to transport dangerous goods easily and smoothly through different countries, without any restrictions on different packaging, handling, and transport standards. In domestic legislation, dangerous goods are defined through special laws and by-laws, harmonized with international acts, covering

the mode of production, storage, use, and transportation to protect safety against the misuse of dangerous substances. The importance of enforcing national regulations is reflected in the fact that a single error in the dangerous goods logistics system can have large-scale consequences (Sremac i Matijašević 2021, 19).

Criminal legislation of the Republic of Serbia in Chapter 34, Article 391 of the Criminal Code, entitled Crimes against humanity and other property protected by international law, provides as follows for the crime of Terrorism: “(1) Who with the intention to seriously intimidate the population, or to compel Serbia, a foreign state or an international organization to do or not to do something, or to seriously threaten or damage the basic constitutional, political, economic or social structures of Serbia, a foreign state or an international organization: 1) attacks the life, body or liberty of another person; 2) committing kidnapping or taking hostages; 3) destroy a state or public facility, a transportation system, infrastructure including information systems, an immovable platform in the epicontinental belt, a public good or private property in a way that may endanger human lives or cause significant damage to the economy; 4) commits hijacking of aircraft, ships or other means of public transport or transport of goods; 5) manufactures, possesses, procures, transports, supplies or uses nuclear, biological, chemical or other weapons, explosives, nuclear or radioactive material or device, including research and development of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons; 6) discharges hazardous substances or causes fire, explosion or flood or undertakes other publicly hazardous actions which may endanger human life; 7) interfere with or interrupt the supply of water, electricity or other essential natural resources which may endanger human life.

(2) Whoever threatens to commit an offence outlined in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be punished with imprisonment for six months to five years.

(3) If in the execution of an act referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article one or more persons are killed or serious damage is caused, the offender will be sentenced to a minimum of ten years in prison.

(4) If, in the commission of an act referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, the perpetrator intentionally takes the life of one or more persons, shall be punished with imprisonment of at least twelve years or with life imprisonment.

(5) Whoever procures or enables the means for the commission of the offence outlined in paragraph 1 of this Article or removes an obstacle to its execution, or agrees with others, plans or organizes its execution, or takes other action creating the conditions for its immediate execution, shall be punished with imprisonment of one to five years.

(6) Whoever, for the purpose of committing an act referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, sends or transfers to the territory of Serbia persons or weapons, explosives, poisons, equipment, ammunition, or other material, shall be punished with imprisonment of two to ten years”, (Krivični Zakonik [KZ] 2024, čl. 391).

The Criminal Code does not explicitly use the term “dangerous goods” in the article defining terrorism; however, through the nature of the acts, one can see how elements related to dangerous goods are integrated into the normative picture of criminal law. In the basic form of the crime of terrorism, in points 5) and 6) dangerous goods are listed which are used as a means of execution, to use the specified means and/or substances to intimidate the population, “or force Serbia, a foreign state or an international organization to do or not do something, or to seriously threaten or damage the basic constitutional, political, economic or social structures of Serbia” (KZ, čl. 391, st. 1), which is punishable by imprisonment for a period of six months to five years (KZ, čl. 391, st. 2). Also, paragraph 6 of the aforementioned Article stipulates that whoever, for the purpose of carrying out the act referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, sends or transfers to the territory of Serbia persons or weapons, explosives, poisons, equipment, ammunition, or other material, shall be punished with imprisonment from two to ten years (KZ, čl. 391, st. 6).

Dangerous goods (explosives, chemicals, poisons, radioactive substances, biological substances, etc.) actually constitute a high-risk asset, and its use by the perpetrator of a terrorist offence directly affects the classification of the offence as a serious form, which increases the responsibility of the perpetrator, determines more severe sanctions and requires special treatment in the investigation and during the conduct of judicial proceedings.

The importance of dangerous goods is also evident in the fact that the crime of using a deadly device is listed in Article 391c. The criminal code was introduced in response to modern forms of terrorist attacks and the use of sophisticated means to commit a crime. Also,

the crime prescribed by Article 391d. The Criminal Code Destruction and damage of a nuclear facility protects critical infrastructure and safety related to nuclear materials and facilities, such as nuclear power plants, reactors, nuclear waste deposits, etc. In this regard, international legal instruments in the form of United Nations acts, such as the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism of 2005 and the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1997, clearly link dangerous substances to terrorism as a type of global threat (Zakon o ratifikaciji Konvencije o sprečavanju nuklearnog terorizma 2006; Zakon o potvrđivanju Konvencije o zabrani hemijskog oružja 2000).

The misuse of dangerous goods for terrorist purposes necessitates an integrated approach by society, which requires States to develop control mechanisms with a clear definition of criminal liability for cases where dangerous goods are used as a means of committing terrorism. One of the challenges is precisely the fact that dangerous goods are regulated through multiple sectoral regulations, which further complicates a legally uniform approach in the context of criminalising terrorist activities.

RISKS OF TRANSPORTATION IN ROAD TRAFFIC

The transportation of dangerous goods by road is an inevitable and crucial component of the modern logistics system, enabling the supply of essential goods to various industries, including medicine, agriculture, and others. However, due to the inherent characteristics of dangerous goods, such as toxicity, flammability, explosiveness, or radioactivity, this mode of transport carries serious safety risks to both human life and the environment. Any traffic accident on the road can cause catastrophic consequences, including massive threats to human health, pollution, destruction of ecosystems, and great economic losses. In addition to the technical and operational challenges, an additional danger is the possibility of misuse of dangerous substances as a means of committing criminal offences, especially in the context of committing terrorism.

The risks associated with the transport of dangerous goods do not end with accidents caused by human error or technical failures of the transport unit itself or equipment. Terrorist groups, which use various forms of violence in their arsenal, recognize hazardous materials as

potential means of causing mass fear, injury, and death. The use of chemical, biological, radioactive, or explosive materials in terrorist attacks presents not only a serious security challenge but also a new dimension of threat that threatens the stability of society (Trbojević and Svirčević 2025, 150).

Risks can be categorized into several main areas, namely: 1) risk of occurrence of hazards to human life and health; 2) risk of occurrence of environmental hazards; 3) technical risks; 4) human error; 5) infrastructural risks and 6) lack of coordination of actors in emergency situations.

The risk of danger to human life and health in the transport of hazardous materials is one of the key challenges facing modern road transport. Certain hazardous materials have the potential to cause significant loss of human life and lasting damage to human health if they are handled accidentally or carelessly. Acute toxicity, fire burns, poisoning, and long-term health problems, such as cancers or respiratory diseases, are just some of the effects that can result when hazardous materials are released into the environment. However, this risk becomes even more serious in the case of abuse by terrorists, to cause mass casualties and instill panic among the civilian population, in a way that would be far more destructive than the consequences of an uncriminalised accident. For example, chemical attacks using nerve agents such as *sarin* can cause death or serious damage to people over large areas, while biological agents such as *anthrax* can lead to the spread of infectious diseases. Such misuse of dangerous substances not only endangers immediate victims but also creates long-term psychological and social trauma in society.

The environmental hazards in the transport of hazardous materials, as well as their potential misuse as a means of carrying out terrorist attacks, pose a serious threat to the ecological balance and the long-term sustainability of natural resources. The transport of hazardous materials, such as chemicals, diesel fuel, or radioactive materials, can lead to serious environmental disasters in the event of an accident. Such accidents can result in soil, water, and air pollution, destroying ecosystems, plant, and animal life, and causing lasting consequences for local communities that depend on these resources. However, the danger of environmental damage becomes even more serious when considering the possibility that terrorists could use hazardous materials as weapons to cause environmental disaster.

Terrorist groups, having access to hazardous materials, may use them to deliberately pollute the environment and cause panic among the population. For example, by misusing chemical or toxic substances, terrorists can cause major pollution of watercourses, which could have catastrophic environmental consequences. The use of gasoline or other flammable liquids can lead to massive fires that destroy forest ecosystems and pollute the air, while biological and radioactive substances can contaminate soil and drinking water sources, causing long-term environmental and health problems.

Risks of a technical nature in the transport of dangerous goods, such as vehicle breakdowns, inadequate equipment, poor packaging, or lack of necessary protection, can have serious consequences, not only in the context of accidents and endangering human lives, but also in cases of misuse of dangerous goods as a means of carrying out terrorist attacks. Technical errors or inadequate transportation preparation can enable terrorists to exploit weaknesses in transportation infrastructure, security procedures, or existing security gaps, thereby achieving their goals, causing chaos, and spreading fear. Vehicles carrying hazardous materials must be technically sound and equipped with specialized equipment for safe transport. Terrorists may deliberately cause technical failures or sabotage vehicles. For example, tampering with the vehicle's systems can cause an accident with serious consequences. Also, technological weaknesses can be used to intercept or control the transport of hazardous materials, for the purpose of directing them towards targets of strategic importance (such as industrial zones, public facilities, or facilities that are safely protected). Terrorists may also exploit technical weaknesses in packaging and labeling to conceal dangerous materials and transport them undetected. For example, the smuggling of explosives or toxic substances, labeled as other "safe materials", may enable terrorists to transport weapons or dangerous chemicals to destinations where they could later be used in terrorist attacks. Marking manipulation can make it difficult for emergency services to respond, as accidents involving hazardous materials could be misidentified. Technical errors in tracking systems can lead to delays, misinformation, or accidents due to unrecorded deviations from the planned route. Such errors can be exploited by terrorists as weaknesses in tracking and communication systems to interfere with the transport of dangerous goods or to manipulate the movement of a vehicle, with the goal of directing it to a desired location.

Human-induced risks in the transport of hazardous materials, related to errors in the human factor, such as recklessness, inattention, inadequate training, poor situational judgment, or even deliberate reckless behavior, represent a key dimension of safety threats. The human factor can be decisive in the safe passage of dangerous goods or in the occurrence of accidents that can have catastrophic consequences, including the misuse of such goods for violent or terrorist purposes. Terrorists may recruit or use people within the transportation system, such as drivers, logistics workers, or administrative staff, to carry out sabotage. For example, workers with access to hazardous materials may knowingly tamper with packages, redirect transportation, or allow terrorists to access dangerous goods. Also, terrorists may use human weakness or profit motivation (such as through bribery or threats) to enable transportation or logistics employees to carry out a terrorist attack, so that dangerous materials are available to terrorists.

Infrastructure risks associated with weaknesses or inadequacies in the transport network (roads, bridges, terminals, warehouses, etc.) can have considerable consequences not only for the safety of transport but also for the wider safety of society. When these risks are combined with the potential for misuse of hazardous materials as a means of carrying out terrorist attacks, the danger is heightened. Terrorists may deliberately target infrastructure points, such as bridges or key sections of roads, in order to cause an accident. For example, placing a vehicle with a large amount of exposure on a bridge with increased traffic intensity can cause not only human casualties but also damage to important road infrastructure.

In situations where hazardous materials are used as a means to carry out a terrorist attack, inconsistencies in the response of emergency services can further aggravate the situation, increasing the damage and the number of victims. In such situations, terrorists can exploit weaknesses in the coordination of the relevant services to cause maximum damage and chaos. The integration of appropriate coordination among different services becomes key to reducing risks and preventing accidents or attacks. However, effective accident management in the transport of hazardous materials requires rapid and accurate communication between emergency services (fire brigade, police, ambulance, specialized environmental services, and others). If communications are not coordinated or there are some delays in the transmission of safety-critical information, emergency services

may respond inconsistently and out of sync, which increases risk. For example, if the fire department receives inadequate information about the hazardous material used in an attack, erroneous measures may be taken to extinguish the fire, which may lead to additional explosions and/or dangerous chemical reactions. Terrorists may exploit incoherent response, delays in the transmission of information, or poor preparedness of emergency services to maximize the effect of their attacks, causing more damage, more casualties, and destabilizing the wider community. It is therefore crucial to develop a comprehensive training system, in terms of simulation and coordination of all relevant services, in order to prevent such incidents and reduce the possibility of their abuse.

It is of the utmost importance to understand all aspects of the risks involved in the transport of dangerous goods, including the possibility of their misuse for terrorist purposes, in order to develop adequate security strategies and preventive measures to protect people, the environment, and critical infrastructure (Hassan, Šaljić, and Kraktus 2025, 2).

POSSIBLE METHODS OF COMMITTING TERRORIST ATTACKS

The lack of an integrated monitoring system at the national level, the omission of risk assessment, and the non-collection of data on the movement of dangerous goods are, without any doubt, the triple cause of the “Trojan horse” effects in the urban environment of today’s agglomerations (Bęczkowska 2019, 1259). “The development of the global economy, transport networks, and the free movement of people and goods increases the risk of the spread of infection throughout the world” (Cvetković 2013, 135). In making a model for choosing the route of road transport of dangerous goods in the urban environment, it is necessary as a mandatory criterion, in addition to the speed of movement of emergency services and risks related to the impact on the environment, traffic accidents and their consequences, as well as infrastructure facilities, to take into account the possibility of terrorist attacks (Milošević, Pamučar, and Chatterjee 2021, 360). Predicting when and where a terrorist attack will occur by abusing the transport of hazardous materials in urban conditions is not possible without first determining the critical points along the route of their transport

that are attractive for terrorist activities (Milazzo *et al.* 2009, 625). Nevertheless, only practical examples of the misuse of dangerous goods in road transport will best illustrate how dangerous goods can be used as a means of committing the crime of terrorism.

We distinguish the following terrorist attacks with hazardous materials in road traffic: 1) *Beirut, Lebanon, October 23, 1981* – two simultaneous attacks with one truck with explosives on American and French military facilities, after which 241 American and 58 French soldiers were killed (Bellinger 2023, 2); 2) *Oklahoma City, United States, April 19, 1995* – a terrorist attack carried out by a truck carrying ammonium nitrate and oil bedding, in which 168 people were killed and over 800 injured (Giordano 1997, 33–40); 3) *Nasiriyah, Iraq, November 12, 2003* – a truck with a flammable substance exploded near a warehouse next to a base of Italian soldiers, causing 31 deaths and 80 people (Bunker and Sullivan 2004, 5); 4) *Tal Afar, Iraq, March 27, 2007* – two chlorine-laden trucks exploded, killing 152 people (United States Government Accountability Office [GAO] 2009, 88); 5) *Arbil, Iraq, July 07, 2007* – truck attack carrying 4.5 tons of explosives at a bazaar, killing 150 people (89); 6) *Kirkuk, Iraq, July 16, 2007* – suicide truck attack with explosives that killed 85 people (89); 7) *Qahtaniya, Iraq, August 14, 2007* – four suicide truck attacks loaded with explosives at a village that killed 500 people (89); and 8) *Mogadishu, Somalia, October 14, 2017* – this attack was carried out with two trucks full of military explosives and explosive homemade bombs, which exploded near a traffic intersection killing 587 and injuring 316 people (Demir, Ali, and Boğan 2021, 1).

Based on the above examples of criminal exploitation of dangerous goods, it is concluded that such terrorist attacks have surely achieved the following goals: inflicting mass casualties, injuring large numbers of people, damaging large-scale infrastructure, and systematically spreading fear among the population. We can also assume that indications of misuse of dangerous goods can be the following indicators, as present in the road transport of dangerous goods: 1) falsified personal and driving documents of the driver; 2) falsified transport documents; 3) falsified documents about the cargo vehicle; 4) falsified documents about the trailer; 5) false data about the dangerous goods being transported; 6) false data about the transport company; 7) false delivery address and 8) false data about the place of loading (European Commission [EC] 2019, 9).

Thus, based on the analysis of the cases described, we consider that the possible means of carrying out terrorist attacks by transporting dangerous goods by road include: 1) that an explosive device detonates in the vicinity of a tank transporting dangerous material; 2) that a dangerous substance is misused as part of a device that is released by the explosion; 3) that an explosive can be misused as a dangerous goods in road transport; 4) that an explosive can initiate a terrorist attack with another type of dangerous goods; 5) that toxic substances can be misused as dangerous goods in road transport; 6) that flammable substances can be misused as dangerous goods in road transport; 7) that a freight vehicle carrying dangerous goods is hijacked for the purpose of carrying out a terrorist attack; and 8) that a freight vehicle carrying dangerous goods is decorated for the purpose of carrying out a terrorist attack.

The very existence of the above facts, relationships and circumstances fully justifies the normative determination of the phenomenon of dangerous goods with a high potential hazard as those “where there is a possibility of misuse for terrorist purposes that may lead to serious consequences such as mass loss of human life or mass destruction or especially in the case of Class 7 mass socio-economic destruction” (ADR 2016, Chapter 1.10, Clause 1.10.3.1.1).

CONCLUSION

Dangerous goods, although primarily regulated as a security and technical problem, occupy a significant place in the regulatory framework of criminal offences, especially terrorism. Criminal law regulation must keep pace with technological developments and the sophistication of terrorist methods, in order to encompass possible forms of misuse of dangerous substances. Continuous monitoring of the movements of dangerous goods, especially those with a high potential for danger (ADR 2016, Chapter 1.10, Clause 1.10.3.1.2), strengthening of the normative criminal law framework and enhancing inter-departmental and international cooperation in order to prevent and punish all forms of misuse of dangerous goods for terrorist purposes are needed.

On the one hand, it is necessary to monitor the flow of dangerous goods using tracking and communication systems, in order to prevent abuses and threats to the safety of people, property, and the environment,

while on the other hand, it is essential to regulate and harmonise criminal legislation at the international level. This would provide legal certainty, facilitate cooperation between states, and allow for more effective sanctioning of responsible actors. We believe that the security challenges of criminal exploitation of dangerous goods, especially in the context of road transport, are determined by the following Latin sentences: 1) *Quod verum, tutum*; 2) *Omni luci est umbra*; and 3) *Acta non verba*. It is precisely on the interconnectedness of the meanings of their messages, as we believe, that the working motto of the competent authorities is based on deterrence, prevention, and suppression of the possibility of misuse of dangerous goods as a means of carrying out terrorist attacks, which takes the form of the following acronym:

Unhesitatingly; Rapidly; Guardly; Efficiently; Notably; Trained.

In modern times, when the threat of terrorist attacks is becoming increasingly sophisticated and unpredictable, an urgent and decisive response by security agencies is needed. Preventing such illegal acts requires not only courage and intervention in action, but also clearly defined tactics, a high degree of training, and readiness among all security actors. Without delay, all actors must act in a coordinated, swift, and efficient manner, as any moment of hesitation could put human lives and societal stability at risk.

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ОПАСНА РОБА КАО МОГУЋЕ СРЕДСТВО ИЗВРШЕЊА КРИВИЧНОГ ДЕЛА ТЕРОРИЗМА

Резиме

Као централну категорију свог истраживања аутори у овом раду одређују опасну робу и њен кривичноправни феноменолошки потенцијал, који се остварује у функцији средства извршења кривичног дела тероризма. У уводном делу рада, аутори позиционирају појмовно поље опасне робе наговештавајући структуру кључних делова у својој даљој теоријској и практичној анализи циљног појма и његовог кривичноправног значаја. Посебну важност у одређивању феноменолошких граница опасне робе, аутори дају нормативном детерминисању овог појма истичући нарочиту повезаност значења термиолошког односа опасне материје – опасна роба – опасан терет и то у околностима транспорта у друмском саобраћају. Одређивање појма праћено је типологијом опасне робе у складу са важећим међународним прописима Споразума о међународном друмском превозу опасне робе. Након анализирања и утврђивања постојања узајамних веза појма опасне робе са одредбама Кривичног законика Републике Србије које се односе на дефинисање бића кривичног дела тероризма, аутори издвајају као суштинске следеће ризике транспорта опасне робе у друмском саобраћају: 1) ризик од настанка опасности по живот и здравље људи; 2) ризик од настанка опасности по животну средину; 3) техничке ризике; 4) људску грешку; 5) инфраструктурне ризике и 6) недостатак координације субјеката у хитним ситуацијама. Након анализе случајева терористичких напада злоупотребом опасне робе, који су довели до смрти и рањавања више стотина лица, аутори

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одређују као могуће начине криминалне експлоатације опасне робе у друмском саобраћају у виду терористичких активности: 1) детонирање експлозивног уређаја у близини цистерне која превози опасне материје; 2) злоупотреба опасне супстанце као дела уређаја који је експлозијом ослобађа; 3) злоупотреба експлозива као опасне робе у друмском транспорту; 4) злоупотреба експлозива за иницирање терористичког напада другом врстом опасне робе; 5) злоупотреба токсичне супстанце као опасне робе у друмском транспорту; 6) злоупотреба запаљиве материје као опасне робе у друмском транспорту; 7) отмица теретног возила којим се превози опасна роба ради извршења терористичког напада тим возилом и 8) крађа теретног возила којим се превози опасна роба ради извршења терористичког напада тим возилом. У супротстављању безбедносним изазовима од терористичких напада злоупотребом опасне робе, аутори предлажу предузимање следећих активности: 1) континуирано праћење токова кретања опасне робе (посебно оне са високом потенцијалном опасношћу), јачање нормативног кривичноправног оквира и унапређивање међуресорне и међународне сарадње у циљу превенције и кажњавања свих облика злоупотребе опасне робе у терористичке сврхе. Аутори закључују да се наведени модел поступања неизоставно базира на храбрости, интервентности, тактичности, неодложности и обучености.

Кључне речи: опасна роба, тероризам, средство извршења, друмски саобраћај, безбедност, терористички напади.

* This paper was received on August 29, 2025, and accepted for publication at the Editorial Board meeting on October 15, 2025.

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THE BATTLE OF KOŠARE 25 YEARS LATER: MEDIA AND POLITICAL NARRATIVES***

Abstract

The Battle of Košare was fought in the border area between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Albania. It began on April 9, 1999, and lasted 67 days. Although many young lives were lost in this battle, it was precisely this battle that prevented the deeper penetration of the terrorist KLA, supported by the regular Albanian army and NATO, into Kosovo and Metohija. However, as is often the case, military events are one thing, the political implications are another, and the media and political narratives surrounding the events themselves are yet another. “The Heavenly Guard of Free Serbia” or “sacrificed youth”, a feat that is remembered or a battle that is not mentioned so as not to offend foreign “partners”? The aim of this paper is precisely to investigate how the media and political elites in Serbia see the Battle of Košare 25 years later. In this sense, we will analyze the content of television news programs and other special programs (if any), online media reports, as well as media statements and social media pages of political parties and actors in Serbia during the period when the 25th anniversary of the

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*** This work was created as a result of research presented at the scientific conference of national importance “Košare – 25 years later”, which was held on December 3, 2024, at the Institute for Political Studies in Belgrade.

Battle of Košare was commemorated. With this analysis, we will try to determine whether and within which narratives the media and political elites commemorated this anniversary and spoke (or did not speak) about the battle itself and its implications, and whether there are differences between different media and different political actors in this sense, and what we can conclude from these differences.

Keywords: Battle of Košare, media narratives, political discourse, culture of remembrance, nation brand, communication, media content analysis.

INTRODUCTION

In 2024, we marked a quarter century not only since the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – [NATO aggression against Serbia⁷, but also since the Battle of Košare – a battle that has already been sung by the people and around which a myth of heroism is woven. This battle was fought in the border area between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Albania in 1999. It began on April 9 and lasted a full 67 days. Although many young lives were lost in this battle, it was precisely it that prevented the deeper penetration of the terrorist Kosovo Liberation Army – KLA, supported by the regular army of Albania and NATO, into Kosovo and Metohija.⁸ However, as is often the case, military events are one thing, the political implications are another, and the media and political narratives surrounding the events themselves are yet another.

While on the one hand we have a strengthening of the collective memory of this heroic feat through graffiti and popular culture, through literature and narratives about the “heavenly guard of free Serbia”, on the other hand the question of whether we “sacrificed our youth” in that battle in vain is being raised, and even the silence about this and other military feats of the Serbian army so as not to offend foreign “partners”.

⁷ The secession of Kosovo and Metohija, which was repeatedly supported by the NATO alliance, and NATO aggression removed obstacles to its future implementation, had significant effects on the national security of Serbia. See Gaćinović 2017.

⁸ One of the relevant aspects of the importance of the Battle of Kosare is related to the security challenges posed by the illegal secession of Kosovo and Metohija, due to changes in the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the size, shape, and borders of the Republic of Serbia, which affect the defensive sensitivity of the area. See Lukić 2024. On the security strategies of the modern state of Serbia, see Gajić 2020.

What remains as a dilemma is whether, as a society, we have a common “picture” of what happened at Košare in 1999 and what it means for us. The aim of this paper is precisely to investigate how the media and political elites in Serbia view the battle at Košare 25 years later, that is, which narratives and discourses are dominant and which are opposing them, and what conclusions can be drawn from them.

MEDIA AND LANGUAGE AS A MIRROR: A METHOD OF RESEARCH

“In political communication, the ‘image of the world’ is considered starting from the role of the mass media that contribute to its development – formation, consolidation or change” (Atlagić 2018, 30). The collective “image” of a specific topic or event is mediated by the placement of different narratives, either by the media, by “public opinion leaders” (Jensen 2016), or by a trusted environment. In this case, “public opinion leaders are not mere transmitters of messages and information, but rather load them with their own values and meanings” (Vujanović 2021, 345). Lou (*Eric Lou*) points out that certain values and views on events are created through “linguistically constructed images” (Lou 2013, 164) that are transmitted and “implanted” into the subconscious.

To investigate what kind of “images” about the Battle of Košare are constructed by the media in Serbia and political actors, as a specific group of “public opinion leaders”, and whether the language with which they build these “images” reveals their political and ideological background (Fairclough 2013), we will analyze the content⁹ of television news and other special programs (if any) and other media reports, as well as media statements and social media pages of political parties and actors in Serbia during the period when the 25th anniversary of the Battle of Košare was commemorated. As key dates for the analysis, we used the dates of the anniversary from the beginning to the end of the battle (i.e., April 9, 2024, and June 10, 2024), along with a period of +/- seven days from these dates. “Qualitative content analysis involves an orientation towards discovering the meaning of ‘what the communicator wanted to say’, relying primarily on the context of the expressed content” (Atlagić 2018, 32), and the discourse within which the content is expressed.

⁹ For more information on research methodology in political science, see Arežina 2021.

Discourse is understood in this research as “a set of ‘contextually dependent semiotic practices’ that are ‘socially constituted and socially constitutive’, ‘linked to a macro-topic’ and to argumentation” (Reisigl and Wodak 2008, 89, according to Pešić 2024, 259). Discursive macro-topics are therefore understood as the thematic contents of discourse. Each discursive macro-topic is a set of related topics and subtopics presented through content-related argumentative schemes and discursive macro-strategies (Reisigl 2018). Through discourse analysis, we will examine whether and within which discursive macro-themes the media and political actors in Serbia commemorated the anniversary of the Battle of Košare and spoke (or did not speak) about the battle itself and its political implications, and whether there are differences between different media and different political actors in this regard, and what we can conclude from these differences.

MEDIA AND POLITICAL IMAGE OF THE BATTLE OF KOŠARE: 25 YEARS LATER

Our research has identified the presence of four discursive macro-themes in the approach of the media and political actors to the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Battle of Košare: 1) The macrotheme of heroic defense; 2) The macro-theme of the continuity of the glorious battles of the Serbian Army; 3) The macro-theme of Košare as sacrificed youth; 4) The macro-theme of relativization through “objectivity”.

The first two macro-themes are intertwined and dominant. They were identified in the reporting of public services (Radio Television of Serbia – RTS, Radio Television of Vojvodina – RTV), national frequency media (Pink, Happy, Prva TV), and various media outlets, including Informer, Večernje Novosti, Politika, Blic, and Kosovo Online. When it comes to state actors, they were identified among government representatives (Serbian Progressive Party – SNS, Socialist Party of Serbia – SPS, Zavetnici) during the state commemoration of the beginning and end of the Battle of Košare and during their guest appearances on TV shows on that occasion (Informer TV 2024), as well as among the opposition nationally oriented New Democratic Party of Serbia (Novi DSS) and their coalition partners, the Movement for the Restoration of the Kingdom of Serbia – POKS. Within these macro-themes, the Battle of Košare is viewed as a continuity of Serbian

military and heroic history and a significant political and geopolitical event that should be part of the collective culture of memory, shaping the consciousness of future generations and part of Serbian “nation branding” (Novčić and Štavljanin 2015), or “national branding” as a form of “soft power” (Mirović Janković 2023, 520). When we talk about the culture of memory, we are talking about “how individuals, societies and states interpret the past from the position of the present” and how they “overall” publicly use it (Radojković 2024, 73).

The third and fourth discursive macro-themes, although significantly less prevalent, appear as opposing ones and are identified in media reporting, such as N1, Kossev, and BBC in Serbian, as well as among pro-EU political actors.¹⁰ They sometimes even build on the argumentative schemes (Reisigl 2018) of some of the first two macro-themes, e.g., in the form of asking questions like “The soldiers who defended Košare are heroes, but the question is whether their sacrifice makes sense”, or they give them opposing “present meanings” (Pešić 2024, 252) and a sense for the future. Within these macrothemes, the battle of Košare is viewed almost as an “accident”, and the participants in the battle as objects of “bad policies”.

The macro-theme of heroic defense

When it comes to media content, the discursive macro-theme of the Battle of Košare as a heroic defense was constructed in newspapers and on internet portals primarily through headlines in which this battle is presented in a highly positive emotional charge as *a symbol of heroism, a symbol of love for the homeland and a symbol of the defense of the homeland*, with calls to remember and celebrate that heroism. Examples of the construction of this discursive macro-theme are headlines such as: “A heroic epic that never fades” (Kosovo Online 2024); “Heroes from Košare on eternal guard” (Janjić 2024); “The day when the youth of Serbia showed how to love the homeland: 25 years since the Battle of Košare” (Blic 2024); “The hardest battle in the recent history of the Serbian army and a symbol of the defense of the homeland!”

¹⁰ Given the different political positions of opposition actors such as the Movement of Free Citizens – PSG, Democratic Party – DS, Freedom and Justice Party – SSP, Green Left Front – ZLF – we took their foreign policy orientation towards the EU as a common denominator of this group of actors, and at the same time what distinguishes them from another opposition group of national/sovereignist actors.

(Informer 2024); “What would have happened to us if it weren’t for that impenetrable wall” (Tanjug 2024a); “We have a duty to remember the sacrifice of heroes” (Politika 2024).

In television broadcasts on the anniversary of the battle, this discursive macro-theme was deepened by emphasizing the political and geopolitical significance of the defense of Košare, by characterizing the enemy and calling for action – that is, by constantly commemorating this battle and incorporating its symbolic values into the education of future generations and the political future of the country. Thus, heroism is emphasized despite suffering and a more numerous enemy (Prva TV 2024), which is characterized as a “terrorist organization” (RTS 2024b) and emphasizes the importance of this defense as a defense against NATO aggression (RTV 2024). Similarly, this macro-theme was shaped in the reports in the RTS and RTV news programs that were broadcast on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the beginning/end of the Battle of Košare, with emphasized optimism and assigning this heroic defense the role of an example to younger generations and a foundation for the future.

At the state level, the 25th anniversary of the Battle of Košare’s commencement was commemorated in April 2025, and a commemorative academy was held on June 14, 2025, marking the 25th anniversary of its conclusion. Political actors – state officials and members of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (Nikola Selaković, Petar Petković, Miloš Vučević, etc.) in their statements referred to the significance of this battle in the defense of the homeland and the importance of the culture of remembrance, calling it the “impenetrable bulwark of our sons” and the soldiers who participated in this battle the new Obilić’s (Politika 2024; RTV 2024). When it comes to opposition political parties represented in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, by reviewing and analyzing the content of statements by representatives of these parties and posts on their social networks during the period of commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the beginning and end of the Battle of Košare, we recorded statements and posts by representatives of the New DSS and their coalition NADA, as posts that also construct the discursive macro-theme of Košare as a heroic defense. Thus, their posts, through a “scheme of arguments” (Reisigl 2018) about the importance of this battle for stopping the “West and NATO aggressors” and defending the

state, celebrate the heroism and chivalry of our soldiers at Košare¹¹ and call for its remembrance and transmission to future generations.¹²

Here, and among the aforementioned media and political actors, we observe a tendency for the values that the Battle of Košare symbolizes for them (heroism, defense of the state, love of the homeland) to become part of the national culture of remembrance, and for sovereignism and resistance to NATO and separatism to become part of the political “legacy” and “memory” (Vankovska 2013) of this battle and calls for shaping future policies accordingly.

Macro-theme of the continuity of glorious battles

Intertwined with the first macro-theme is a second one – the creation of an “image” in which the Battle of Košare is not a single feat but represents the continuity of the glorious battles of the Serbian army throughout history. This macro-theme was established in TV shows through comparisons of this battle with battles against the Turks, references to the “age-old glory” of the Serbian army, and the continuous fight for freedom. The battle for freedom and the courage of the Serbian soldier appear as the central motif around which a discourse is created through various linguistic stylistic figures (Fairclough 2013). It is emphasized how the “115 young men” illuminated the “glory of our army” (RTV KV 2024), how “the fight with the UCK and the mujahedin was like the fight with the Turks” (Informer TV 2024),¹³ how the soldiers at Košare fought for freedom, “as it was in all wars” and how they are worthy successors of the Serbian knights (RTS 2024).

During the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Battle of Košare, state officials complemented this discursive macro-theme by shaping the myth of the existence of a “Serbian gene of love for freedom” and emphasizing that “Serb and soldier have almost always been synonymous” (Tanjug 2024b). Within the opposition corps, representatives of the NADA coalition and the New DSS contributed

¹¹ “Glory to the heroes of Košare. At Košare, the West and NATO aggressors were stopped, and the border of our state was defended”, reads a post by the New Democratic Party of Serbia on April 9, 2024, on social media.

¹² “Insert the fierce battle for Košare into primers, so that Serbian pupils know where heroes died”, reads a post on the Instagram page of the New Democratic Party of Serbia on June 14, 2024.

¹³ Informer TV, during the period marking the 25th anniversary of the start of the battle, had several special programs on this occasion.

to the creation of this discursive macro-theme, especially MP Ljubinko Đurković, who himself participated in the war events of 1999 and emphasized that the Battle of Košare was a symbol of the invincibility of the Serbian soldier (Informer TV 2024). In both the first and second discursive macro-themes, we see an active approach of certain media and political actors and the intention to make the Battle of Košare part of the “nation brand”. For “successful national branding” what is important is “the specificity of national identity characteristics” (Mirović Janković 2023, 965). Only “brand management, as a component of national policy, is aimed at building a unique identity, using one’s own history, heritage and contemporary values, as a marketing tool to generate increased awareness of the state” (Dinnie 2008, 25 according to Pešić 2024, 253). According to one study, in Serbia, “glorious history” is part of the brand culture for 93% of respondents as an essential element of the national identity brand (Novčić and Štavljanin 2015, 271), and in this sense, the discursive macro-themes of Košare as a heroic defense and Košare as a continuity of glorious battles complete the construction of the dominant view of the Serbian national “brand”.

The Macro-theme of Sacrificed Youth

Unlike the first two discursive macro-themes that unambiguously positively interpret the Battle of Košare and together create a narrative not only about the heroism of the soldiers, but also about the importance of the battle in political and geopolitical terms, as well as the upbringing of future generations, we have also noticed a slightly different discursive macro-theme that can be called the discourse of sacrificed youth.

Namely, through our research, we have observed that some media and political actors do not deny the heroism of the soldiers who participated in this battle, but rather deny its significance. Within this discursive macro-theme, a story is built about Košare as a “slaughterhouse of Yugoslav/Serbian youth” (Kossev 2024), and resistance is indirectly presented as a “mistake”. Through “linguistically constructed images” (Lou 2013, 164) of soldiers who were “just old enough to serve their military service” (Anđelković 2024) and who were “unnecessarily sacrificed” and “sent to their deaths” at Košare,¹⁴ a narrative is imposed about the “guilt of the Serbian state leadership” and the “senselessness

¹⁴ See, for example, the posts of PSG officials on social media X in the observed period.

of warfare” (even when it comes to resistance and defense of the state). This “transformation of the process” and the subjects of the actions into static “entities” reveal the “ideological potential of the language” used (Billig 2008, 783). Instead of glorifying and presenting this battle as historically significant, it is indirectly portrayed as part of “bad political decisions” and the soldiers themselves are presented as “objects” rather than “subjects” of the action.

This discursive macro-theme is present to a significantly lesser extent than the first two, and unlike them, it is not present in media with a national frequency nor among political representatives of the state leadership or nationally oriented political options. It is primarily observed in media outlets connected to Western European countries (such as the BBC, N1, and Kossev), as well as among political actors with a pro-EU orientation.

Macro-theme of relativization through objectivity

Connected to the third is a fourth discursive macro-theme that is built either through silence, i.e., ignoring the very dates of commemoration of the anniversary of the battle’s beginning or end, or through relativizing the significance of the battle itself by creating a discourse of “objectivity”. Within this discursive macro-theme, the starting point is not the significance of this battle from the Serbian perspective, but rather the media presents itself as “neutral”. Some by publishing short texts without any determinants or qualifications about the battle itself, its participants, or its outcome – except for the note that it lasted until the signing of the Kumanovo Agreement and that Košare is now an “empty village” (Srna 2024). Others relativize its significance by discussing the existence of different cultures of memory and various interpretations (Anđelković 2024). The fact of “two sides” is emphasized, which “25 years after the Battle of Košare still celebrate their heroes” but which share “one suffering” (Kossev 2024). In this way, both the reasons for the battle and the balance of power are completely relativized, creating an image of the existence of multiple truths and denying the need for a culture of remembrance and the transmission of collective values, such as courage, sacrifice, and the defense of the homeland. The sides are presented as equal in value, and the battle is almost an “unfortunate combination of circumstances”. Moreover, KLA soldiers are not referred to as terrorists and separatists, but in some of

these texts, they are even referred to as “Albanian rebels” who did not clash with the FRY/Serbia, but with the “security forces of the Slobodan Milošević regime” (Fund for Humanitarian Law, according to the BBC in Serbian in 2024). In this way, the battle itself is attempted to be given a completely different political context, and the reader is suggested that it is not “his battle” or “his heroes” but rather a conflict between the rebels and the “evil” Milošević. The categories of good and evil completely change sides, albeit indirectly, and under the guise of neutrality, a narrative of Serbian guilt is established, countering the dominant and authorized “heritage discourse” (authorized heritage discourse – AHD) (Thouki and Skrede 2024). In this way, it not only opposes the dominant narrative about the Battle of Košare, but also its geopolitical significance, but also the consequences and collective actions that are built on it in the future, because “our understanding of the past has strategic, political and ethical consequences” and “struggles over the meaning of the past are also competitions over the meaning of the present” (Pešić 2024, 252). The tendency to relativize the significance and context of the Battle of Košare seeks to impose a different way in which that past will influence our current political actions, as well as a different way in which we interpret the past and transmit it to future generations (Vankovska 2013).

When it comes to political actors, a review of social media pages and statements by relevant political party representatives during the period marking the beginning/end of the Battle of Košare shows that those who contributed to this macro-theme most often did so by ignoring the dates themselves and not attaching importance to them. This primarily concerns pro-EU parliamentary political actors, whose social media pages contained no content related to the Battle of Košare during the observed period.

CONCLUSION

In the year when we commemorated the 25th anniversary of the Battle of Košare, we asked ourselves whether there is a unique media and political discourse within which its significance is discussed in Serbia. In this sense, we used content analysis and discourse analysis to cover the content of television news and other special programs (that we could find), online media reports, as well as media statements and social media pages of political parties and actors in Serbia in the period

of +/- seven days from the date when the 25th anniversary of the Battle of Košare was commemorated.

Our research has determined the presence of four discursive macro-themes in the approach of the media and political actors to the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Battle of Košare: 1) The macro-theme of heroic defense; 2) The macro-theme of the continuity of the glorious battles of the Serbian army; 3) The macro-theme of Košare as a sacrificed youth; 4) The macro-theme of relativization through “objectivity”.

With none of these macro-themes do the media and political actors deny the heroism of the soldiers who participated in the battle itself; however, they assign different meanings to their participation, the battle itself, and its political and geopolitical implications. While within the first two macro-themes, soldiers are presented as subjects of a historical event, and the battle as not only the heroism of individuals, but also the continuity of Serbian military tradition and a symbol of the politics of resistance and sovereignty, within the second two macro-themes, soldiers are presented as objects (and even victims) of bad political decisions. While the first two emphasize the importance of Košare for the defense of the state (both from the KLA and NATO) and the need to incorporate the values of such resistance into the collective culture of memory (Radojković 2024), the second two relativize its importance and, instead of a national culture of memory, attempt to impose the understanding of “multiple truths” of equal weight that need to be “reconciled”, but within the framework of a particular ideological reading.

Given that we pointed out in the theoretical part that actors, through language, or the way they talk about events (Lou 2013), can contribute to the “formation, consolidation or changes” (Atlagić 2018, 30) of a certain “picture of the world”, it can be concluded that the first two discursive macro-themes are part of the continuity and consolidation of the dominant stream of the Serbian national culture of memory, while the other two macro-themes are part of the opposing discourse and tend to change the dominant picture.

The conclusions should certainly be interpreted and re-examined in more depth in further research. We particularly emphasize the need for research that would be more detailed in terms of the broader period covered, and in this sense, by deepening the conclusions and examples, since this research is narrowly focused on periods of +/- seven days from

the date of the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the beginning and end of the Battle of Košare.

Finally, we will also present a personal conclusion. Although scientific research and even an “objective approach” always require considering multiple sides and multiple facts (which was done in this research), we believe that the first two discursive macro-themes are and should be part of a “constructive macro-strategy” that constructs and strengthens “national identity by affirming unification, mutual solidarity and identification with jointly adopted values” (Pešić 2023 according to Pešić 2024, 269). This entails strengthening the culture of remembrance of the Battle of Košare, selecting values that need to be transmitted to future generations through narrative identity, the story of national heroes, and building a national brand (Mirović Janković 2023; Novčić and Štavljanin 2015). And such values, when we talk about the brand of the Serbian nation, as Marko Miljanov (Miljanov 2014) would say, are “humanity and heroism” (which were shown by the soldiers at Košare), that is, the readiness to resist the stronger and defend the sovereignty of one’s own state.

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БИТКА НА КОШАРАМА 25 ГОДИНА ПОСЛИЈЕ: МЕДИЈСКА И ПОЛИТИЧКА СЛИКА***

Резиме

Битка на Кошарама вођена је 1999. године на граници између Савезне Републике Југославије и Албаније. Иако је у овој бици изгубљено много младих живота, управо је то спречило дубљи продор терористичке ОВК, коју је подржавала регуларна албанска војска и НАТО, на Косово и Метохију. Али, као што је често случај, војни догађаји су једно, политичке импликације су друго, а медијски и политички наративи о самим догађајима су нешто сасвим треће. Да ли је ова битка била „небеска стража слободне Србије” или „жртвована младост”, херојски подвиг који треба памтити или догађај који је прећутан како би се избегла увреда страних „партнера”? Овај рад је испитао како су српске медијске и политичке елите доживљавале битку на Кошарама 25 година касније. У том циљу, анализирали смо телевизијске вести и специјалне емисије, извештаје онлајн медија, јавне изјаве и садржај друштвених медија политичких странака и актера током периода обиљежавања 25. годишњице битке. Истраживање је имало за циљ да утврди које дискурзивне оквире су медијске и политичке елите користиле када су се бавиле (или се нису бавиле) битком и њеним импликацијама, и да ли постоје разлике међу медијима и политичким актерима. Наши налази открили су присуство четири дискурзивне макротеме у медијском и политичком приступу: 1) Макротема

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*** Овај рад настао је као резултат истраживања презентованог на научном скупу од националног значаја „Кошаре – 25 година после”, који је одржан 03. децембра 2024. године на Институту за политичке студије из Београда.

херојске одбране; 2) Макротема континуитета славних борби српске војске; 3) Макротема Кошара као жртвоване младости; 4) Макротема релативизације кроз „објективност”. Ни у једној од ових макротема медији и политички актери не поричу херојство војника који су учествовали у бици. Међутим, они дају различита значења њиховом учешћу, самој бици и њеним политичким и геополитичким импликацијама. Док су у прве две макротеме војници представљени као субјекти историјског догађаја, а битка не само као херојство појединаца, већ и континуитет српске војне традиције и симбол политике отпора и суверенитета, у друге две макротеме војници су представљени као објекти (па чак и жртве) лоших политичких одлука. Док прве две макротеме истичу значај Кошара за одбрану државе (и од ОВК и од НАТО) и потребу да се вриједности таквог отпора уклопе у колективну културу сећања (Radojković 2024), друге две релативизују њен значај и, умјесто националне културе сећања, покушавају да наметну разумевање „вишеструких истина” једнаке тежине које треба „помирити”, али у оквиру одређеног идеолошког читања. С обзиром на то да смо у теоријском раду истакли да актери, кроз језик, или начин на који говоре о догађајима (Lou 2013), могу допринети „формирању, консолидацији или променама” (Atlagić 2018, 30) одређене „слике свијета”, може се закључити да су прве две дискурзивне макротеме део континуитета и учвршћивања доминантног тока српске националне културе сјећања, док су друге две макротеме део супротстављеног дискурса и теже промјени доминантне слике.

Кључне речи: Битка на Кошарама, медијски наративи, политички дискурс, култура сјећања, бренд нације, комуникација, анализа медијског садржаја.

* This paper was received on April 15, 2025, and accepted for publication at the Editorial Board meeting on October 15, 2025.

UDC: 316.647.7:32(27-29:497)

DOI: 10.5937/pnb30-61060

Review article

Политика националне безбедности

(The Policy of National Security)

Year XVI vol. 30

No. 3/2025

pp. 177-200

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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE WAHHABI MOVEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE WESTERN BALKANS

Abstract

This paper presents a comparative analysis of the Wahhabi movement in the Middle East and the Western Balkans, with a particular focus on the differences in institutional foundations, operational methods, and social consequences. In the Middle East, Wahhabism is an integral part of the political-religious order of Saudi Arabia, enjoying full institutional support from the state, including formal control mechanisms such as the religious police. In contrast, in the Western Balkans, Wahhabism represents an imported ideology without institutional backing, yet with significant influence from foreign actors and transnational networks. Its presence has caused ideological and organizational divisions within local Islamic communities, challenging traditional religious practices rooted in Ottoman heritage and Sufi traditions. Special attention is given to the security implications, including the potential for radicalization and community destabilization. The analysis demonstrates that, despite differences in the degree of institutional support and operational methods,

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Wahhabism in both regions possesses the capacity to significantly influence religious dynamics, social cohesion, and security trends.

Keywords: Wahhabism, Middle East, Western Balkans, religious fundamentalism, political-religious alliance, radicalization, security challenges, geopolitical influences.

INTRODUCTION

Wahhabism, as one of the most significant and controversial forms of Islamic fundamentalism, represents a key subject of interest in contemporary studies of religion, political science, and security. The reason for addressing this topic stems from its relevance to understanding the relationship between religion and the state in the Islamic world, as well as the influence that Wahhabi ideology exerts in spreading certain interpretations of Islam beyond its original context, particularly within transnational networks and the global Islamic community. It is crucial to comprehend how this movement, which originated in the 18th century in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, evolved into a powerful religious and political ideology that laid the foundations of modern Saudi statehood and remains one of the primary sources of influence on Islamic communities worldwide.

This research is particularly relevant in today's geopolitical context, where issues of religious identity, ideological mobilization, and institutional control of religious life are gaining importance. The need to address this topic now arises from the continued global influence of Wahhabi thought, through missionary activities and the funding of various Islamic initiatives, which affect the configuration of Islamic communities and also present potential security risks in certain regions.

The paper is based on a multidisciplinary theoretical framework that encompasses religious studies, political science, and historical analysis, using a combination of methods: a historical-analytical method to understand the origin and development of the movement; a comparative method to analyze the relationship between religious doctrine and state institutions; and an interpretative approach in the examination of religious and legal sources, particularly Sharia regulations within the Hanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence.

The paper's structure follows this analytical approach. The first part examines the historical context of the emergence of Wahhabism and the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (ابوالمولادبع نب دمحم). The second part is devoted to the institutionalization of the movement through its alliance with the Saudi dynasty and the formation of the modern Saudi state, with a special focus on the role of the religious police (*hisbah*) and the implementation of Sharia law. The third part examines the global influence of Wahhabi ideology through missionary activities and transnational connections, while the concluding section evaluates the impact of Wahhabism on contemporary religious and social trends.

WAHHABISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Wahhabism, as a reformist movement that emerged in the 18th century on the Arabian Peninsula under the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, was from its inception an attempt to return to a "pure" form of Islam, free from what its followers perceived as innovations and idolatry. Through its alliance with the House of Saud, the movement became the foundation of a new politico-religious paradigm in the formation of the Saudi state, where Wahhabism is not only the dominant religious doctrine but also a tool for institutional social organization.

In the Middle East, Wahhabism is deeply embedded in the religious and political system of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where it constitutes the ideological backbone of the ruling structure. Its influence is evident in the strict application of Sharia law, particularly through behavioral norms related to dress codes, prohibition of alcohol, gender segregation, and other aspects of both public and private life. In this context, state institutions and the religious police (*hisbah*) play a central role in overseeing and enforcing Wahhabi norms.

However, Wahhabism does not enjoy unanimous support across the Islamic world. On the contrary, it is frequently criticized by moderate Muslims as well as by Shiite and Sufi communities, who accuse it of intolerance, exclusivism, and a revisionist approach to theological tradition. One of the most controversial dimensions of Wahhabi thought is its militant potential. In the modern era, this ideological framework has played a significant role in shaping certain radical Islamic movements, whose actions are often grounded in exclusivity and aggressive interpretations of Islam (Čehajić-Clancy 2015). Particularly concerning

is the fact that Wahhabism promotes an intensely hostile attitude toward Muslims who do not adhere to its interpretation of Islam, often labeling them as *mushriks* (polytheists).

Due to these characteristics, Wahhabism is identified in numerous analyses as a potential security threat – not only within the Middle East itself, but also on a global level – given its influence on the radicalization of individuals and the transnational ideological networks that support extremist narratives.

WAHHABISM IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

In the Western Balkans, Wahhabism emerged predominantly in the late 20th century, spreading primarily in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and particularly in the Raška administrative district. Its penetration into the region is closely connected with the geopolitical influence of foreign actors, primarily Saudi Arabia and Turkey, which significantly impacted the transformation of the religious landscape and the internal dynamics within local Islamic communities. Although Turkey is neither the origin of Wahhabism nor an official supporter of its ideology, its geopolitical position, religious influence, and historical ties with the Islamic world make it an important factor in understanding how Wahhabism spreads and resonates throughout the wider region.

Wahhabism in the Balkans often clashes with traditional forms of Islamic practice, which are deeply rooted in Ottoman religious heritage and Sufi spirituality. Its presence has led to ideological and organizational divisions among believers, with traditional Muslims distancing themselves from new followers of Wahhabi teachings. In certain communities, Wahhabi groups operate informally as “religious police” seeking, through community pressure and the promotion of strict religious norms, to influence the behavior of believers, thereby directly challenging local customs and religious patterns.

Balkan Muslims remain inseparably tied to the fate of Muslims in other parts of the world, primarily in Turkey, as well as in the Middle East. The destiny of Balkan Muslims continues to be suspended between the states in which they live and the developments within the broader Islamic world. They themselves are not a homogeneous group; instead, they are

* This designation is without prejudice to status and is in line with UNSCR 1244.

divided into four linguistic-ethnic groupings: the Slavic (comprising Bosniaks, Gorani, Bulgarian Muslims – Pomaks, and several smaller Slavic Muslim communities), Albanian, Turkish, and Roma (Dragišić and Janković 2014).

In addition to religious activism, there are also significant security implications, since certain Wahhabi networks in the Balkans have been associated with processes of radicalization and recruitment for foreign conflicts. Although the majority of members of Muslim communities in the Balkans follow moderate and traditional forms of Islam, over the past two decades, small but active groups have emerged that have adopted Wahhabi–Salafist interpretations. Certain individuals from these circles have been involved in processes of radicalization and recruitment for participation in foreign armed conflicts – for example, the Syrian civil war (since 2011), the Iraqi conflict (2014–2019), and the wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan (during the 1990s and early 2000s). Although these do not encompass the entire community of adherents, such cases contribute to the perception of Wahhabism as a potential factor of destabilization and a source of social tensions.

Table 1: Comparative overview of origins, influence, implementation, and social impact between the Middle East and the Western Balkans

	Middle East (Saudi Arabia)	Western Balkans
Origin and Influence	Original birthplace; state religion with strong political influence	Imported ideology, shaped under the influence of foreign actors (Saudi Arabia, Turkey)
Implementation	Institutional religious police enforcing strict Sharia law	Informal community pressure and religious “policing”
Social Impact	Deep social control, strict gender segregation, and regulation of public morality	Contesting traditional Islamic practices, generating internal communal divisions

Source: The author’s elaboration.

THE WAHHABI RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT

Wahhabism is a fundamentalist Islamic current within the Sunni denomination, based on a strict and puritanical interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. It originated in the 18th century in the Najd region of present-day Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792). The movement was shaped as a reaction to religious practices that its followers considered deviant, particularly those stemming from Sufism and Shi'a Islam. According to their understanding, Islam over the centuries became burdened with superstition and innovations (*bid'a*), such as invoking the Prophet or saints as intermediaries, practicing magic and sorcery, and departing from the original methods of worship. Followers of Wahhabism rarely refer to themselves by that name, as it is associated with the personality of its founder, and they reject any notion of reverence toward a human above God (Allah). Instead, they often identify as *Salafiyya* (“followers of the ancestors”) or *al-Muwahhidun* (“monotheists”), emphasizing loyalty to the teachings of the first generations of Muslims (*salaf al-salih*). Their goal is the “purification” of faith and a return to its original spiritual beginnings (Hoare 2007).

Wahhabi doctrine requires strict adherence to *shari'a*, with prohibitions on the consumption of alcohol, wine, and other stimulants, including tobacco. Modest clothing is prescribed for both genders, with women expected to wear traditional garments covering the entire body, while wearing silk and gold is generally forbidden. Likewise, music, dancing, loud laughter, and demonstrative mourning are also prohibited, especially in the context of religious rituals and funerals. In Saudi Arabia, the enforcement of these rules is entrusted to the Islamic religious police (*Mutawwa'in* – “The Authority for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice”). This institution possesses the authority to sanction violations of public behavior and modesty, including the prohibition of public mingling of men and women, improper dress, or conduct that deviates from prescribed moral norms. Punishments include corporal punishment, amputations, and executions, in line with the strict interpretation of *shari'a* law.

Beyond its religious aspect, Wahhabism has also become a significant political and social factor. As the dominant religious doctrine of Saudi Arabia, it shapes the institutional framework of the state, and its influence has spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula. In the Balkans,

particularly in the administrative district of Raška, the presence of Wahhabi groups generates tensions within Muslim communities, as their strict interpretation of Islam often clashes with local religious traditions rooted in Ottoman and Sufi heritage.

WESTERN–SAUDI ALLIANCES AND THE SPREAD OF WAHHABISM IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

The cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Western states, particularly during and immediately after the conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s, had an indirect but significant impact on the spread of Wahhabism in the region. This phenomenon was the result of a complex interplay of geopolitical interests, security priorities, and humanitarian and religious engagement. During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995), Western powers, including North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] members, provided political and military support to Bosnian Muslims in their conflict with Serbian forces (North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] 2024). Saudi Arabia, as an essential ally in this process, secured extensive financial and humanitarian aid, while also facilitating the arrival of foreign Islamic fighters (*mujahideen*) to the battlefield (Schlesinger 2011, 1). Through such cooperation, space was opened for the entry of Saudi-funded religious institutions, which, under the guise of humanitarian assistance and post-war reconstruction, promoted Wahhabi doctrine (Bougarel 2007).

Saudi investments in the reconstruction of mosques, madrasas, and Islamic cultural centers during the post-war period amounted to hundreds of millions of euros (Bougarel 2007). These institutions, with the tacit or implicit approval of Western powers focused on regional stabilization, became channels for the spread of a conservative, rigid interpretation of Islam – one that largely differed from the traditionally moderate, Ottoman-influenced Islam present in the Balkans. The inflow of money, weapons, humanitarian aid, and the military experience of several thousand fighters who had arrived impacted the local population, gradually transforming Bosnia and Herzegovina into what some observers described as an “Islamic state” (Dragišić and Janković 2014).

Western intelligence services were aware of the financial flows and networks that supported Wahhabi groups, but short-term military and political objectives often took precedence over the assessment of long-term ideological consequences. Such tolerance enabled the institutional

and social entrenchment of Wahhabi structures, which in some cases complicated post-war reconciliation and security stabilization. Geopolitical partnerships between Western states and Saudi Arabia – motivated primarily by energy security and shared interests in combating terrorism – simultaneously strengthened Saudi influence in the region. This diminished Turkey’s ability to maintain its position as the leading religious authority among Balkan Muslims through its more moderate Sunni model, further intensifying religious-political competition. “Nevertheless, through its agency TIKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency), Turkey, in line with its strategy, directs most of its resources to countries with a strong Muslim community and where Turkey believes its compatriots live. For that reason, the largest amount of funds is allocated to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Metohija, the administrative district of Raška, Macedonia, and Albania” (Kočan and Arbeiter 2019, 183).

Overall, the alliances between Western states and Saudi Arabia during the Balkan conflicts facilitated the penetration of Saudi financial capital and ideological influence. Although the primary goal of these alliances was to end the conflict and establish stability, the consequence was the long-term embedding of more conservative forms of Islamic practice, with significant social and security repercussions for the region.

WESTERN TOLERANCE AND THE PROMOTION OF WAHHABI TEACHINGS THROUGH SAUDI AID IN THE BALKANS

During the armed conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s, Western states prioritized urgent humanitarian assistance to war-affected Muslim populations. Saudi Arabia, as an economically powerful Muslim-majority state, became a key partner in providing aid, rebuilding mosques and schools, and supporting refugees and orphans. Western governments welcomed this engagement, focusing on short-term stabilization and recovery rather than the long-term consequences for the region’s ideological structure (Rmandić 2017).

Within the framework of political alliances, particularly with the United States and the European Union, Saudi Arabia was regarded as an important ally in supporting the Bosnian Muslim resistance to “Serbian aggression”. This cooperation included facilitating the inflow of Saudi

financial resources and the operations of humanitarian organizations that played a central role in post-war reconstruction and social rehabilitation. During this period, the Western Balkans became a focal point of geopolitical competition among external actors, including Turkey, Iran, and the Gulf states. Concerned about the growing Russian and Iranian influence, Western countries tolerated and at times even encouraged Saudi presence, perceiving it as a counterbalance to rivals and as a means of preserving their own strategic influence.

Although Western intelligence and diplomatic structures were aware that institutions funded from Riyadh often promoted Wahhabi or Salafi interpretations of Islam, the priority remained maintaining short-term stability and resolving the conflict. Fears of jeopardizing relations with Saudi Arabia – a significant partner in the energy sector and counterterrorism efforts – outweighed concerns about the potential for ideological radicalization.

Saudi Arabia converted economic capital into an instrument of soft power by financing religious, educational, and cultural projects. Western governments often interpreted these investments as a contribution to post-war economic recovery and the integration of the Balkans into European structures, even when accompanied by ideological conditions. Although some Western institutions pointed to the risks associated with the conditionality of Saudi aid – including the promotion of rigid religious interpretations – oversight and control mechanisms remained minimal. The urgency of reconstruction and limited local resources further complicated the rejection of Saudi funds, thereby enabling the more enduring entrenchment of Wahhabi influence.

Table 2: Factors that led to tolerance of the influence of Wahhabism

Factor	Western Justification for Tolerance/Promotion during the Humanitarian Crisis
Urgent need for aid and reconstruction	Priority on immediate stabilization and recovery
Geopolitical alliances	Counterbalance to Russian, Iranian, and Turkish influence
Short-term stability	Preference over ideological risks; focus on peacebuilding
Economic development	Saudi investments seen as beneficial for recovery
Strategic partnerships	Maintaining strong ties with Saudi Arabia

Source: The author's elaboration.

Western countries tolerated or indirectly promoted Wahhabi teachings through Saudi Arabian aid in the Balkans, primarily due to urgent humanitarian needs, strategic alliances, and geopolitical calculations. Although the long-term consequences of ideological influence were recognized, they were often subordinated to the immediate priorities of stability, reconstruction, and alliance management in an unstable post-conflict environment. Turkey, too, in the Balkans, usually relies first on the use of soft power (Alpan and Erdi Öztürk 2022).

Saudi Arabia systematically promoted Wahhabism as an instrument for strengthening its geopolitical position. The key mechanisms included:

1) Financing of religious infrastructure – Saudi charitable organizations invested in the construction of Salafi mosques, madrasas, and cultural centers, directly challenging the traditionally moderate Islamic practices shaped by Ottoman and Persian legacies. These institutions presented Wahhabism as the “pure” form of Islam, distinct from local religious traditions.

2) Economic influence – Gulf states invested in key sectors, including tourism, construction (e.g., the *Belgrade Waterfront* project), and agriculture, with economic cooperation often accompanied by religious and cultural influence. Trade exchange between Saudi Arabia and Serbia alone exceeded €400 million.

3) Exploitation of post-war reconstruction – After the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995), Saudi aid encompassed not only community rebuilding but also the construction of religious facilities that advanced Wahhabi ideology, capitalizing on weakened and disrupted social structures.

Is Islamist Radicalization Returning to the Western Balkans?

The recent crossbow attack on a Serbian police officer guarding the Israeli embassy in Belgrade has raised concerns that the war between Israel and Hamas – initiated on October 7, 2023, following Hamas’s surprise assault on southern Israel – could once again trigger processes of radicalization in the region, given that this prolonged conflict has led to escalating tensions and a broader destabilizing impact across the Middle East. This raises the question – are these fears justified?

Traditionally, Islam has been practiced in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the administrative district of Raška, a region in southwestern Serbia, with a character of openness and tolerance. For centuries, Sunni

Muslims coexisted with Christians and Jews, developing a distinctive form of European Islam. However, since the 1990s, this religious landscape has been exposed to constant external influences that have altered its dynamics. “The Western Balkans is of geostrategic importance to radical Islamists, who seek to gain control over this area, aiming to establish an Islamist base from which they could further operate toward Europe. Due to the large number of Muslims in this region, they believe that through the development of Wahhabi communities and the spread of radical Islam, it will be easiest to radicalize the population” (Mijalković and Baškalo 2024, 36).

Before the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995), Salafi and Wahhabi currents were virtually unknown in the Balkans. During the conflict, Bosniak Muslims received significant military and logistical support from Islamic countries, including the arrival of around 4,000 mujahideen from the Arab world. Many of these foreign fighters remained in the country even after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, bringing with them radical interpretations of Islam, which, in the post-war period, became a foundation for the spread of political Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Political instability, together with socioeconomic difficulties of certain groups of the Bosnian society, does not lead to the growth of the Wahhabi community; however, they belong among factors that can potentially contribute to an increase of Islamic radicalisation in the country (Janková 2014, 4). “The presence of Wahhabis in Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina represents the greatest threat to the stability of the Balkans” (Rmandić 2017, 393).

Saudi Influence and the Development of Salafi Communities

Since the late 1990s, organized Salafi communities have emerged in certain parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the administrative district of Raška, some of which enjoyed open institutional and financial support from Saudi Arabia. Saudi funds were used to build mosques and cultural centers that promoted Salafi doctrine.

During the wars in Syria and Iraq, the so-called Islamic State attracted a portion of young people from the region, particularly those dissatisfied with socioeconomic conditions. Some of them traveled to conflict zones to join jihad. At that time, Bosnia and Herzegovina had one of the highest numbers of foreign fighters in ISIS (Islamic

State of Iraq and Syria) per capita in Europe. The majority of recruits came from the so-called “*Salafi villages*”, which today remain under intensive surveillance by security structures. For now, the goals and mission of Wahabi in Serbia and Bosnia are not to any great extent compromised by their links to terrorist groups and individuals (Stanković and Milosavljević 2025, 171).

Wahhabi organizations in the Balkans, particularly in the administrative district of Raška, region of Serbia, and in the village of Gornja Maoča in Bosnia and Herzegovina, represent politically, intellectually, and ideologically like-minded structures that demonstrate a tendency to establish connections with international terrorist organizations, most notably Hamas. “The most famous example of an international terrorist organization is certainly ‘Al Qaeda’ (دَاعِةُ الْقَاعِدَة), an organization that emerged during the Afghan war on the ideology of radical Islam and global jihad against Jews and Christians, to create a world Islamic state – ummah, based on Islamic religious law – Sharia” (Đorđević and Miljković 2025, 171).

After the military defeat of ISIS in 2019, the intensity of Islamist radicalization in the Western Balkans significantly declined. In recent years, Saudi Arabia has substantially reduced financial support for these communities. In January 2020, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (دَوْعَس لَأ نَامِلْس نَب دَمْحَم) declared that the Kingdom would no longer finance the construction of mosques abroad, and in 2021, he publicly stated that “ultraconservative interpretations of Islam are outdated” (Stojanović 2021, 26). Despite these changes, radical organizations still exist, and the 2024 incident in Belgrade – in which the attacker was a Serbian convert radicalized within one such group – serves as a reminder that security risks remain present, though largely under control (Milošević 2018).

THE IMPACT OF THE ISRAEL – HAMAS WAR ON POTENTIAL RADICALIZATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Although one of the key sources of extremism in the Western Balkans has weakened in recent years due to the reduction of international support for ultra-conservative Islamic interpretations, new and complex factors are increasingly shaping the security and social context in the region. In particular, the ongoing war between Israel and

Hamas, which began in October 2023, represents a potential catalyst that could reactivate or intensify processes of radicalization within specific segments of society, especially among young Muslims.

According to assessments by security agencies and analysts, the current impact of the Gaza conflict on the stability of the Western Balkans remains limited. However, given the possibility of prolonged hostilities, the risk of ideological mobilization should not be underestimated. Young people, sensitive to issues of religious and national identity as well as social injustice, may become fertile ground for propaganda by radical groups who use the conflict as a symbolic basis for activism and recruitment.

The Gaza conflict, marked by a high number of civilian casualties and a humanitarian crisis, evokes strong emotional reactions and deep resonance within Arab and broader Islamic communities worldwide, including in the Western Balkans. The sense of injustice and suffering can serve as a significant motivating force, enabling radical groups to legitimize their activism and attract new followers, particularly in environments where economic and social conditions are unfavorable. Furthermore, social media and modern communication technologies facilitate the rapid spread of propaganda, increasing the reach and influence of radical messages. International and regional actors must pay special attention to preventive measures that include education, interfaith dialogue, and youth engagement to reduce the likelihood that the Middle Eastern conflict becomes a trigger for extremism in the Western Balkans.

In this context, it is essential to emphasize that the Western Balkans is a relatively complex space where interfaith relations are sensitive, and radicalization can be inspired by both external influences and internal social and political problems. A proactive approach and continuous monitoring of the situation represent key elements for maintaining stability and security in the region in light of the new challenges posed by this conflict.

Events in the Middle East contribute to the strengthening of radicalization, although it is challenging to identify the number of newly radicalized individuals precisely. The perception of the war in Gaza in the Western Balkans is often framed as part of a broader “global campaign against Muslims”. The disproportion between strong Western condemnation of civilian casualties in Ukraine and the silence regarding events in Gaza creates an additional sense of resentment, reinforces anti-Western feelings, and fuels anti-Semitism.

SOCIAL INJUSTICE AND STRUCTURAL DISCONTENT

Although the majority of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the administrative district of Raška reject extremist ideologies and view them as an abuse of religion, socioeconomic factors remain a strong trigger for potential radicalization. The Islamic Community has clearly distanced itself from the terrorist attack in Belgrade, yet problems such as social inequality and unfulfilled promises of prosperity after the Bosnian war remain unresolved. “The principles of radical Islamic ideology and ‘Puritan Islam’, which increasingly found a foothold among the Muslims of the administrative district of Raška, particularly among the younger population, who were more susceptible to the influence of daily politics, propaganda, and intensive religious indoctrination” (Trifunović, Stojaković, and Vračar 2011, 272).

It is essential to note that the entire region experienced a profound social and economic decline during the 1990s, and the expected “catch-up process” with developed countries never materialized. The benefits of transition were reaped only by a small elite close to political structures, while the majority of the population faced marginalization, poverty, and living standards near the existential minimum. Young people, particularly affected by unemployment and lack of perspective, are leaving the region en masse, creating fertile ground for the acceptance of extreme ideologies – whether in the form of Islamist extremism or radical forms of ethno-nationalism.

Why did Wahhabism gain a foothold in the Balkans through regional geopolitical influences? The spread of Wahhabism in the Balkans is the result of a complex interplay of external geopolitical interests, post-war social vulnerabilities, and deliberately implemented religious-economic strategies. This process fits into the broader framework of competition among Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran for religious and political influence in the region.

Regional vulnerabilities and identity shifts

The socio-political context of the Balkans facilitated the entrenchment of Wahhabism. This was due primarily to the religious polarization caused by the war. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina deepened Islamic identity among Muslims, increasing receptiveness to external religious narratives. In addition, intra-Muslim divisions

have contributed to regional vulnerability. Wahhabism occupied an ideological space within communities fragmented by war, positioning itself in contrast to the Turkish model of Hanafi Islam (sometimes perceived as overly pragmatic) and in opposition to the Shiite influence of Iran. Finally, permanent socio-economic crises played a major role. In regions such as the administrative district of Raška, Wahhabi groups attracted followers through social programs, including initiatives for the rehabilitation of drug addicts, where assistance was conditioned upon the acceptance of rigid religious norms.

GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION OF EXTERNAL ACTORS

The Balkans have become an arena for an indirect clash of interests among key regional powers. First of all, there are Turkish-Saudi tensions. Saudi financing and the promotion of Wahhabism in the Western Balkans, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, often collided with Turkey's efforts to promote a more moderate and traditionally grounded form of Sunni Islam through the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, rooted in the Hanafi legal school. These tensions were not solely of a theological nature, although the doctrinal divide between the rigid, restrictive Wahhabi teachings and the more flexible Hanafi approach constituted a central line of demarcation. Their background also had a significant geopolitical dimension: Saudi Arabia sought to secure its influence through financing religious facilities, educational programs, and humanitarian activities, while Turkey, relying on historical and cultural ties from the Ottoman period, developed its own network of influence via institutions of religious education, cultural projects, and political support. "The Gulf monarchy became significant to Balkan Muslims because of the Hajj, especially when students and clergy started to travel to Saudi Arabia in the mid-1990s and established a strong link. That is what compelled Turkey to take a more competitive stance, as it considered Southeast Europe its own turf" (Bechev and Erdi Öztürk 2022). This competition led to a struggle for ideological and institutional leadership over Muslim communities in the region, shaping the religious identity, social attitudes, and political orientations of the local population.

The limited reach of Iran also contributed to this. Although Iran attempted to promote Shi'a interpretations of Islam in the Western Balkans, its influence remained marginal due to the predominance of

Sunni populations and the deep historical and cultural ties of local Muslim communities with Sunni legal schools, primarily the Hanafi tradition. An additional limiting factor was the significantly greater financial power and institutional capacity of Saudi Arabia, which systematically invested in religious infrastructure, educational programs, humanitarian activities, and media projects. In contrast to the Saudi approach, which was more aggressive and structured, Iranian initiatives relied mainly on cultural diplomacy, scholarships for studies in Tehran, and limited humanitarian programs, which were insufficient to establish a stronger foothold within local religious and social structures. Moreover, geopolitical circumstances and Western sanctions on Iran further reduced its ability to engage systematically in the region, leaving its role peripheral compared to the dominant Sunni actors.

As a consequence of all of the above, in terms of *security implications*, since the late 1990s and early 2000s, Wahhabi groups have been actively operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Metohija, and the administrative district of Raška, where they gradually assumed the role of an informal “religious police” within local Muslim communities. Through religious sermons, street actions, and pressure on believers, these groups sought to impose strict, puritanical interpretations of Islam based on Wahhabi doctrine, thereby challenging existing traditional Hanafi and other local Sunni practices. Such an approach not only provoked deep ideological and theological divisions but also intensified internal Muslim tensions, leading to open conflicts within certain religious communities. Wahhabis began to appear in the administrative district of Raška in 1997 but became ‘active’ only after the fall of Milošević in October 2000 (Morrison 2008, 7).

These networks did not have an exclusively local character. Due to financial, organizational, and ideological support from abroad, they established an infrastructure that included religious centers, NGOs, humanitarian foundations, and clandestine cells for logistics and recruitment. Their activities contributed to the departure of a significant number of individuals from the region to battlefields in the Middle East, primarily Syria and Iraq, where they joined various jihadist groups. This process had direct security implications for the countries of the region, as it increased the risk of radicalization, transnational terrorism, and the return of battle-hardened fighters, posing a long-term challenge to both national and regional security.

Risk Assessment of Returnees

The return of individuals from Middle Eastern conflict zones to the Western Balkans represents one of the most serious security challenges for the region. These are persons who, during their stay in war zones, acquired significant combat experience, underwent ideological indoctrination, and built networks of contacts with members of transnational terrorist organizations. Returnees – particularly those who remain committed to radical interpretations of Islam – can act as catalysts of further radicalization within local communities, through propaganda, recruitment of new members, and provision of logistical support for potential violent actions.

Beyond the direct security threat, there is also the risk of so-called “silent influence”, in which returnees, while avoiding open confrontation with the law, infiltrate religious, cultural, or humanitarian structures, using them as platforms for spreading radical ideas. This process is particularly problematic in environments marked by high levels of social marginalization, unemployment, and distrust in institutions, where radical messages can more easily find fertile ground. “The Western Balkans is the region with the highest concentration of returned foreign fighters in Europe, and the trend of returns is unpredictable and constantly increasing. Kosovo and Metohija tops the list, with 134 returnees per million inhabitants” (Mijalković and Baškalo 2024, 37).

Additionally, the phenomenon of the “second and third wave” – when descendants or close relatives of returnees continue their ideological legacy – represents a long-term challenge that requires coordinated measures by state authorities, religious communities, and civil society. Therefore, strategies to counter this risk must encompass a comprehensive approach: security surveillance, deradicalization and reintegration programs, as well as strengthening community resilience against extremist influences. “It is important to note that Serbia has a very harsh penal policy (compared to other Western Balkan countries). The range of prison sentences for terrorism-related crimes is large in Serbia, ranging from 7.5 to 11 years” (Đorić and Obrenović 2024, 17).

The long-term impact may be the convergence of geopolitical rivalries, post-war social and institutional vulnerabilities, and the targeted religious-economic expansion of external actors has led to profound and lasting changes in the religious, cultural, and socio-political landscape of the Balkans.

Erosion of Moderate Islam

Traditional Balkan Islamic practices, shaped by centuries of Ottoman and Sufi heritage, have been gradually displaced by more rigid and dogmatic interpretations systematically promoted by Saudi Arabia through its institutional, humanitarian, and educational infrastructure. This process has been particularly pronounced in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Metohija, and the administrative district of Raška, where, due to war devastation and the weakening of domestic religious institutions, external actors skillfully filled the resulting voids. Stricter forms of Sunni Islam, such as Wahhabism, not only altered ritual practices and the internal organization of communities but also influenced the transformation of value systems, social relations, and identity orientations (Marković 2017, 110).

In the long term, this transformation is not confined solely to the sphere of religious rites but carries broader socio-political consequences. Moderate Islam, which historically functioned as a factor of interreligious tolerance and social integration, is increasingly giving way to ideological currents that promote social segregation, political mobilization along religious lines, and resistance to Western cultural models. Unless adequately researched and addressed, this trend could deepen existing ethnic and confessional divides, threatening regional stability in the coming decades. “In comparison to that conflict, the potential new conflict between the Christians – the Muslims, could be increased with the activities of Wahhabi inspired Muslims against other Muslims” (Vascotto 2024, 131).

The spread of Wahhabism has significantly worsened relations both between Muslim and non-Muslim populations and within Muslim communities themselves. Wahhabi doctrine, with its exclusive interpretation of religious texts and emphasis on eliminating all forms of religious “innovations” (*bid'a*), often clashed with the more moderate and syncretic forms of Islam that had existed in certain regions for centuries. This ideological conflict gave rise to deep schisms between reformist currents that embraced modernist interpretations and traditionalist groups seeking to preserve existing practices. The consequences of these divisions extended beyond theological debates, frequently escalating into social, political, and security crises, fueling distrust and encouraging radicalization among different factions of the Islamic world.

Persistent External Influence

Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia, continue to exert significant cultural, religious, and economic influence in the region through a complex network of institutional and informal channels. This influence is manifested through the financing of religious communities, the construction or reconstruction of mosques, the sponsorship of studies at Islamic educational centers in the Middle East, and humanitarian donations. However, the lack of transparency in donation and investment processes, combined with the absence of effective oversight mechanisms, increases the risks of corruption and political dependency on foreign patrons. Consequently, this process may weaken the institutional capacity of regional states to independently define and implement their security and cultural policies (Vučković 2019, 46).

Overall, the Balkan foothold of Wahhabism did not emerge spontaneously but as the outcome of a deliberate and long-term Saudi foreign policy strategy, which systematically exploited post-war social fragility and institutional instability. This strategy – supported by substantial financial resources and ideological capital – found fertile ground in an environment burdened by ethnic tensions, economic insecurity, and identity crises. Additionally, geopolitical rivalries among major and regional powers turned the Balkans into an arena for religious and ideological competition, facilitating the penetration and institutionalization of Wahhabi influence. As a result, the region's religious landscape has been permanently altered, while new lines of socio-political division have emerged, with the potential to erode social cohesion and national security.

Considering the impact on regional security, the spread of Wahhabism has contributed to heightened security challenges in the region, fueling the radicalization of individuals and groups, which has often translated into terrorist activities and armed clashes. This ideological expansion – bolstered by foreign financial and logistical support – has weakened state capacities to maintain stability, undermined institutional control, and increased the risk of cross-border conflicts and the infiltration of extremist elements.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of Wahhabism in the Middle East and the Western Balkans reveals that, although rooted in the same ideological matrix, its development and operation vary significantly depending on the distinct political and social contexts. In the Middle East – most notably in Saudi Arabia – Wahhabism is firmly institutionalized and integrated into the state structure, forming the foundation of the politico-religious order. Its strength derives from direct support by state apparatuses, including formal mechanisms of control such as the religious police, which allow it to exert broad societal influence and achieve normative dominance.

In contrast, in the Western Balkans, Wahhabism functions as an imported ideology without formal institutional backing, but with significant influence from foreign actors and transnational networks. Its activity is most visible in the sphere of ideological confrontation with traditional Islamic practices, where informal mechanisms of “religious policing” and social pressure serve as primary instruments for imposing rigid norms. Such dynamics frequently generate divisions within local Islamic communities and open pathways to processes of radicalization, creating an additional security challenge for the region.

Regardless of differences in organizational structure and levels of political power, Wahhabism in both contexts exhibits the potential to deeply transform the religious and social fabric of the communities in which it operates. While in the Middle East it reinforces an existing authoritarian-theocratic model, in the Western Balkans it represents a destabilizing factor that may undermine religious cohesion and regional security. For this reason, any analysis of Wahhabism must encompass not only its theological foundations but also the geopolitical, sociological, and security dimensions of its expansion and influence.

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КОМПАРАТИВНА АНАЛИЗА ВЕХАБИЈСКОГ ПОКРЕТА НА БЛИСКОМ ИСТОКУ И ЗАПАДНОМ БАЛКАНУ

Резиме

Овај рад пружа компаративну анализу вехабијског покрета на Блиском истоку и Западном Балкану, са посебним фокусом на разлике у институционалном утемељењу, методама деловања и друштвеним последицама. На Блиском истоку, вехабизам је интегрални део политичко-религијског поретка Саудијске Арабије, где ужива пуну институционалну подршку државе, укључујући формалне механизме контроле попут верске полиције. Насупрот томе, на Западном Балкану вехабизам је увезена идеологија без институционалног ослоњања, али са значајним утицајем страних актера и транснационалних мрежа. Његово присуство изазива идеолошке и организационе поделе унутар локалних исламских заједница, оспоравајући традиционалне религијске праксе укорењене у османском наслеђу и суфизму. Посебна пажња у раду посвећена је безбедносним импликацијама, укључујући потенцијал за радикализацију и дестабилизацију заједница. Анализа показује да, упркос разликама у степену институционалне подршке и методама деловања, вехабизам у оба региона поседује капацитет да значајно утиче на верску динамику, друштвену кохезију и безбедносне токове.

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Кључне речи: вехабизам, Блиски исток, Западни Балкан, верски фундаментализам, политичко-религијски савез, радикализација, безбедносни изазови, геополитички утицаји.

* This paper was received on August 25, 2025, and accepted for publication at the Editorial Board meeting on October 15, 2025.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF RESERVE OFFICER CADRES FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA***

Abstract

One of the most important factors in achieving a country's national and defense interests is its organized armed forces, which are ready at any moment to protect its independence and sovereignty. According to the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, the Serbian Armed Forces represent the most important and influential formation on which the national security system is based, to ensure security for all its citizens. Today's armed conflicts demonstrate that, despite the need for a professional army, which is the primary carrier of combat operations, the key role on the battlefield is still played by the number of military personnel, with their inherent training and motivation. The Republic of Serbia, as a militarily neutral country with the concept of total defense, and with a vital interest in preserving its territorial integrity, is obliged to develop and improve its own army due to the risks in the security environment, in order to preserve the state and national existence. In addition to active members, the Serbian Armed

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*** The work was created as a result of research on the project "Responsibility in the Legal and Social Context" funded by the Faculty of Law, University of Niš, in the period 2021–2025.

Forces also consist of its reserve forces, which together represent a well-organized whole without which the concept of total defense could not function. History teaches us that the officer cadre is the spearhead of every army, and that its training and motivation are key to success. Additionally, the reserve officer cadre is also of great importance, especially in the event of war, when both are equally important. The subject of this paper is the importance of the reserve officer cadre in the defense system and its social role in peace, promoting the highest military values. The concept of training reserve officer cadres in Serbia has a long and rich history that remains alive today, but it needs to be updated in accordance with the current security challenges.

Keywords: Serbia, security, officer cadre, reserve, training.

INTRODUCTION

Serbian state development is closely linked to the development of the Serbian army, which has been the bearer of the national idea and the foundation of statehood for centuries. Military education, which aimed to create a trained and capable officer cadre, played a significant role in the historical whirlwind that befell the Serbian people. In crucial moments for Serbia, both the active and reserve officer corps were a key factor in protecting the homeland. Serbia produced a whole galaxy of active and reserve officers who were top intellectuals and experts in both military and other social fields, with unbreakable moral strength and steadfastness in the service of their homeland. Holders of the rank of Serbian reserve officer included numerous successful scientists, writers, professors, and academics who contributed significantly to the most glorious pages of Serbian military history, a topic that will be discussed in more detail in the remainder of the paper.

The first part of this paper provides a historical review of the development and education of reserve officers, covering the period from the end of the 19th century to the present. The beginning of the education of active officers in the Kingdom of Serbia is, in fact, connected with the education of reserve officer cadres, which was also a necessity. History has shown that this decision by the state and military leadership was of great importance, especially during the

First World War, when officers educated during this period played a significant role in the Serbian army's victories over the enemy. The following chapter analyzes the development of this type of education in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY).

Nowadays, it is necessary to modernize and harmonize with modern trends in all spheres, and this does not bypass the military sphere. By analyzing the concept of total defense, which unites all existing capacities suitable for defense, the key role of the Serbian Armed Forces, including its active and reserve components, has been recognized. The number of reserve personnel, as well as their good training and motivation, are important elements in the defense system, as well as the reserve officer cadre that manages it.

The following chapter analyzes the educational systems and programs for officers serving in the reserves in the United States of America (USA) and the Russian Federation. The remarkable similarity in this type of civil-military education suggests that such a system yields the expected positive results. Guidelines for improving the education of reserve officers of the Serbian Armed Forces based on domestic and foreign experiences represent one of the chapters of this paper, after which the conclusion is presented.

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION OF THE OFFICER CADRE OF THE WAR FORMS

The organized education of officers in the Kingdom of Serbia dates back to the late 19th century, when the need to improve the reserve officer corps first emerged. Namely, the Law on the Army from 1883 introduced general military obligation and regulated the education of officers for the reserve, so-called war officer corps of the Kingdom of Serbia. After completing civilian education, a student, after five months of active service, took an exam and earned the rank of reserve second lieutenant of infantry (Vuksanović Anić 1993, 83). In this way, young people who completed secondary and higher education, i.e., the intellectual elite of Serbian people, became an integral part of the military system of the Kingdom of Serbia. "The reserve included retired officers of the Serbian Army as well as former active officers who left military service for various reasons. Between

1914 and 1918, a total of 6,725 people held the rank of reserve officer in the Serbian Army. Of that number, there were four generals, 46 colonels, 31 lieutenant colonels, 250 majors, 867 captains of the first class, 1,086 captains of the second class, 1,236 lieutenants, and 3,205 second lieutenants. If we exclude generals, the reserve officer corps consisted of a total of three general staff, 5,292 infantry, 350 cavalry, 486 artillery, 251 engineering, six artillery-technical, 274 medical, 54 judicial, and five gendarmerie reserve officers” (Denda 2019, 17). The Balkan Wars contributed to the rich experience of Serbian reserve officers who emerged as excellent command personnel, especially for tactical units of the size of platoons and companies, “with whom their colleagues from the Austro-Hungarian army could not be compared in terms of expertise and experience” (18).

The epochal suffering of the Serbian people in the First World War ended with the magnificent victory of the Serbian army. A political decision followed that sacrificed Serbia on the altar of Yugoslavism. A new state Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (SHS), was created on the foundations of the former Kingdom of Serbia, which invested its own statehood and a quarter of its population in it (Dimić 2021, 24). This situation also significantly influenced the Serbian army, which was gradually becoming more Yugoslav. Numerous reforms also applied to military education, which had the task of rejuvenating the officer cadre that had suffered terribly during the years of the merciless war. In the newly formed state, the Reserve Officer School was established in Sarajevo in 1923. In mid-1934, a reform was implemented, dividing the School into two: one in Sarajevo, where reserve artillery officers were trained, and the other in the famous Bileća, which took over the training of reserve infantry officers (Bjelajac 1988, 55). The School for Reserve Artillery Officers in Sarajevo included a student anti-aircraft battery, which in 1934 grew into the School for Reserve Anti-Aircraft Officers. It is interesting to note that within the Yugoslav Army, special attention was given to the training of reserve pilot officers, which began in 1921 at the Valjevo airfield. Somewhat later, in 1925, the School for Reserve Aviation Officers was officially established in Novi Sad. The Reserve Officer School for Quartermaster Service of the Royal Yugoslav Army was formed in 1931 (Bjelajac 1988, 57).

After World War II, the new authorities retained only the name of Yugoslavia, with the obligatory addition of the words federation

and republic, indicating that it was a state with a completely new social order. The new revolutionary authorities of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia embarked on a total social reform, and the partisan units, as one side in the bloody civil war, became the official state armed force. Namely, socialist Yugoslavia did not interrupt the good tradition of training reserve officer cadres, but instead further developed this type of military education. State and military authorities established new schools for reserve officers who, upon completion of their training and promotion to officer rank, received a war schedule and took over command of military units (Bjelica 1983, 33).

Upon the World War II, the Yugoslav Army trained candidates for reserve infantry officers in educational units within the army command staffs for a period of nine months from 1947 to 1950. In 1948, the School of Reserve Aviation Officers, i.e., pilots for the needs of the Yugoslav Army Air Force, was established in Pančevo. The candidates were recruited voluntarily with a completed university degree or secondary school as a formal requirement (Grujić 1997, 28). In the same year, the School of Reserve Naval and Technical Officers began operating, admitting civilians who had completed schools in the field of maritime and shipping. The first class of reserve artillery officers was educated at the Artillery Officers School in Zagreb, while cadets from the second to fourth classes were trained at the teaching batteries of artillery regiments. The Artillery Officers School, re-established in 1949, became part of the Artillery School Center in 1952, which was renamed the Artillery School for Reserve Officers in 1955. Reserve Officer School for the Quartermaster Service, the Anti-Chemical Weapons (later the Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons Service), and the Financial Service were also actively functioning (Živković 1989, 78).

With the onset of the SFRY's collapse, most of these schools formally ceased operation, while the entire officer cadre of the Yugoslav People's Army faced a significant challenge. Namely, in the military conflicts of the "nineties" on the territory of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the most significant number of reserve officers actively participated in combat operations. This was followed by the declaration of a state of war in 1999, at which point the difference between active and reserve officers who contributed side by side to the defense of the homeland from the aggressors almost ceased to exist (Ministarstvo odbrane Republike Srbije [MORS] 2010, 195).

In early 2000, by order of the Chief of the General Staff, the KSRO, i.e., the Class of Students for Reserve Officers, was established as a modern military school, succeeding the Reserve Officer School. The students were selected from highly educated citizens who, after a year of schooling at training centers, were promoted to the first officer rank of second lieutenant in the reserve. Initially, the Logistics Training Center was located at the Military Technical Academy in Žarkovo, while Air and Air Defense students were stationed at Batajnica. The Army Training Center was established, with its centers located at various training facilities nationwide. In October 2006, the Training Center was unified in Belgrade, and since then, training of members of all military branches has been conducted at the Military Academy (MORS 2010, 197).

THE ROLE OF THE RESERVE OFFICERS IN THE CONCEPT OF TOTAL DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The National Security Strategy and the Defense Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, as the highest strategic documents, envisage the concept of total defense as the most effective way to protect state and national interests. The Republic of Serbia, as a militarily neutral country, is not a member of any military alliance and therefore relies exclusively on its own forces for potential defense in wartime circumstances.

The adoption of this concept of defense is in line with the state-building and national experience, which, along with elements of historical heritage, defines the cultural and identity determinants of the Serbian people, which are “explicitly linked to the army, or rather to the specific relationship between the Serbian people and their army, regardless of the name that army bore in different periods of history” (Starčević and Stanar 2024, 509). “Total defense, in its essence, represents a rational and integrated form of security and defense organization of all subjects of society and includes preparations for military, civilian, and other forms of defense” (Đukić and Vuletić 2023, 621–647).

Based on the example of other militarily neutral states, we can conclude that the concept of total defense, in a slightly modified form, is present as a means of addressing state needs and necessities, and

for the sake of protecting national security. Namely, Switzerland, as a militarily neutral state, bases its defense policy precisely on this concept, which envisages “the participation of the entire society in the defense of the country in the event of an external attack” (Đurašinović Radojević 2016, 58). A legally prescribed military obligation, a functional reserve system, and a well-developed civil defense mechanism form the foundation of the Swiss Armed Forces’ success (Đurašinović Radojević 2016, 59).

The concept of total defense is closely linked to the obligation to serve military service, which represents the pillar of the defense capabilities of countries that are not part of any military alliance. Namely, “neutral countries in Europe mainly base their credible defense capabilities on the concept of total defense, but it also implies a large number of citizens trained for military and civil protection tasks, which calls for the obligation to serve military service” (Starčević and Blagojević 2020, 86).

We conclude that, in addition to the obligation to serve military service or some of its modified versions, a trained reserve force and its command staff are of great importance, as they are not only well-prepared and motivated but also reasonably numerous. To maintain and rely on a strong and well-developed concept of total defense, state and military leadership cannot rely solely on active military personnel, as they may prove insufficient at a critical moment. History, as well as the current military conflicts in the world and Europe, teaches us that state and military leadership must not rely exclusively on professional military personnel, who, despite their high level of training, still represent only a tactical backbone in a strategic-level armed conflict. Readiness for the implementation of the proclaimed and adopted concept of total defense has a strategic character, on which the defense of the Republic of Serbia is based, meaning the activation of all available capacities, their networking, and coordinated action as a whole. We believe that the ability, training, motivation, and number of reserve officers who lead military units consisting of non-commissioned officers and reserve soldiers are essential for the successful implementation of the total defense concept.

The strategic and normative document governing the Serbian defense system is the National Security Strategy, in which “the national security system represents a normatively, structurally and functionally regulated entity whose activities ensure the protection

and achievement of the national interests of the Republic of Serbia” (Strategija nacionalne bezbednosti Republike Srbije [SNBRS] 2019, 13). Therefore, this system represents “a form of organization and functioning of society in implementing measures and activities on a preventive and repressive level in order to preserve the sovereignty and integrity of the state, its constitutionally established order, the rights and freedoms of citizens, as well as all other social and international values from all forms of threat” (Stajić 2005, 439). Namely, according to the aforementioned system, the bearer of military defense, as a key component of the state, is the Serbian Armed Forces, which represents the primary defense force that unites all available state and social capacities. The Serbian Armed Forces consist of an active and a reserve component, the latter being the larger, and its importance should not be underestimated (Stajić 2005, 440).

Therefore, reserve officers and the units they command are of vital importance for the army of any state, since in wartime they represent a key combat component, while in peacetime they can participate in responding to crisis events (Griffith and Ben-Ari 2020, 1–26). We believe that the management of complex operations in wartime at the tactical level is primarily the responsibility of reserve officers, and their peacetime training is of paramount importance for the functioning of the defense system and the successful implementation of the concept of total defense.

TRAINING OF RESERVE OFFICERS IN THE ARMIES OF THE WORLD

It is widely accepted that the USA and the Russian Federation represent the countries with the most powerful armies in the world. Namely, in addition to the technical superiority and size of their armed forces, we believe that the foundation on which their power rests is actually the system of military education. The experiences of many generations have contributed to the ongoing improvement of the system of training military officers, which in times of difficulty for these countries has proven crucial to their success. Based on research in this area, we can draw conclusions that we will explain in more detail later in the paper: both superpowers view the training of reserve military officers as a strategic defense issue and have traditionally paid special attention to it due to its great importance. Upon completing

this type of military-civilian education, a student graduates with the rank of first officer in the reserve, along with significant rights and privileges, as well as responsible obligations. We believe that in recent years, the systems of reserve military officer education in the USA and Russia have become increasingly similar, a trend that will be further explained in the continuation of this paper. Based on this, it can be concluded that such systems are also among the most effective. We will attempt to describe the functioning of education for reserve officers and officers in these complex military systems as concisely as possible.

In the USA, there is a long tradition of this type of education, but we will concentrate exclusively on the present day. Namely, in the Armed Forces of the United States, the so-called ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps). The Reserve Officers' Training Corps is a highly developed officer training program that operates at numerous universities and colleges in the United States. The mission of this program is "to educate officers who will meet the expectations of the active military and reserve forces in terms of quality, quantity, and academic disciplines". It is further stated that the mission of the program is to produce and "educate officers in academic disciplines that are consistent with the special needs of the military". The goal of the ROTC program, according to official documents, is to attract, motivate, and prepare selected students to serve as officers in the regular military, national guard, or reserve forces. Enabling cadets to acquire knowledge in the field of military sciences and skills while developing leadership, a strong sense of personal integrity, honor, and responsibility, and a sense of importance to the national security system is also stated as a goal of utmost importance (Headquarters Department of the Army Washington, DC [HD AW] 2011, 145–1).

This is achieved through the cooperation and joint efforts of the military and the host institution to provide the best possible training for future officers in the interest of US national security. This program exists at all major universities and numerous colleges throughout the United States and operates voluntarily. Namely, every university that has an accredited ROTC program within the Department of Military Sciences (as an academic and administrative department) allows its students to be included in this program in parallel (with the civilian) and voluntarily, acquiring theoretical but also practical knowledge and skills in military sciences. An essential component that the US military

provides to young men and women who are participants, cadets of this program, is “a scholarship that ensures financial stability through full or partial payment of tuition”. It is interesting to note that by receiving a scholarship, cadets acquire “an additional obligation to complete a semester of learning a foreign language from the Indo-European or Asian region” that they did not know before (HD AW, 145–1).

During their schooling 2011, they undergo numerous practical training sessions in the field, and the highlight of their education is an extensive military exercise where the knowledge and skills they have acquired over the years are showcased. This display is held annually, typically in the summer, at the Advance Camp at Fort Knox, and lasts almost a month. It is the largest military exercise of the US Army each year (U.S. Army ROTC Cadet Command 2025). This type, which we can freely call military-civilian education, although it does not make too much difference whether the cadet will become an active or reserve officer, is absolutely dominant in the US Army. Data from 2020 indicate that 70% of newly appointed active-duty officers in the US Army have completed the ROTC program (National Security Analysis [CAN] 2017).

We conclude that this system of education and training offers a great deal to the participants, but also demands as much from them in return. It is based on rights such as paid tuition, scholarships, bonuses, seniority, and status. Upon completion of the program, if an officer joins the reserve forces, their rights include a monthly financial allowance, personal and family healthcare, various bonuses, additional vacation days, scholarship-based continuation of education, and other benefits. The obligations of newly commissioned officers in the reserve are primarily loyalty and devoted service to the army, which is practically reflected in the annual two-week military exercise and one weekend during each month spent in the unit to which the officer is assigned (U.S. Army ROTC Cadet Command 2025). Incidentally, a large number of American presidents were officers in the reserve of the US Armed Forces, such as T. Roosevelt (colonel), Truman (colonel), Kennedy (lieutenant), Johnson, Nixon (lieutenant), Ford (lieutenant), Carter (lieutenant), Reagan (captain), and both Bushes (lieutenants). Additionally, P. Colin, who served as the Chief of the US General Staff from 1983 to 1993, completed ROTC (Powell 2012, 54).

The Russian Federation, as the successor state of the Soviet Union, has continued to nurture the tradition of training officers for

military formations. We believe that the former Soviet Union based its potential defense on what it had an advantage in, namely, the massiveness of its army. A million-strong army of well-trained and equipped soldiers, who had cultivated the cult of the successors of the warriors of the Great Patriotic War, had to have a well-developed system of training reserve officers and leaders who would lead that army. The Russian Federation has maintained the foundation; however, for many years, it has worked to improve this type of military training, which is reflected in the functioning of the so-called military departments at civilian universities, where training is carried out, as we will analyze in more detail below. Namely, the modern concept was regulated by the decree of the President of the Russian Federation, which came into force in 2019, when the so-called VUC (Военный учебный центр) military training center¹ (Government of the Russian Federation [GOV RU] 2018, N 309–Ф3) was introduced.

Therefore, students of civilian universities have the opportunity to, in parallel with the academic obligations that their home faculties provide, be voluntarily included in the VUC program (training begins in the second year of study). The main conditions for admission include the student's physical fitness, health condition, and security check. Students have the opportunity to receive a scholarship during their studies by participating in a military training program, which helps ensure their financial stability. VUC students who have chosen the program for active officers are entitled to a special scholarship. Namely, students attending the military training center have one so-called military day each week, which they spend at the VUC centers, located near the university. On that day, groups of subjects in the field of military sciences are studied, and practical military training is also carried out.

During the military day, lectures in civilian subjects are not held, both for VUC students and for students who do not attend the training. The crown of the training is similar to the American ROTC, culminating in an extensive military exercise lasting 30 days in the summer, after which students are eligible to take the final exam (Dolgosheva 2019).

¹ As of 2024, it is estimated that more than 137 military training centres have been established, with over 60,000 students participating in this form of civilian military education.

Upon successful completion of training and graduation from the faculty, the student receives an officer rank in the reserve and is assigned to a reserve military unit. As newly promoted reserve officers, they are exempt from mandatory military service in Russia and can also establish a permanent employment relationship with the Russian military, thereby becoming active officers. Upon successful completion of schooling and training, they receive a military ID card with which they exercise numerous rights in civilian life, mainly when employed. Namely, by completing the VUC program, graduates who were “in the active officer program” continue their military careers as active officers in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation for a mandatory period of three years (Poulsen and Staun 2021, 198–222).

We conclude that the long-standing tradition of training reserve officers in Russia remains a priority for state and military authorities today. Popularizing the officer vocation among young, college-educated individuals is of exceptional importance because it fosters an intellectual elite that is patriotic and highly motivated to defend the country. In this way, the social elite becomes inextricably linked to its own army with which it identifies.

GUIDELINES FOR IMPROVING THE TRAINING OF RESERVE OFFICERS OF THE SERBIAN ARMY

The examples of the most powerful armies in the world, previously analyzed, clearly demonstrate that the system of training reserve officers is of great importance for national security. A modern army, although professional, does not necessarily have to be small in number. We believe that a well-formed and well-trained reserve and its officer corps are the guarantor of the successful defense of the state from potential war threats. Therefore, we will examine the system of training reserve officers of the Serbian Army and propose particular possibilities for improving it.

Namely, since 2006, the Class of Students for Reserve Officers, also known as CSRO, has been operating at the Military Academy of the University of Defence in Belgrade. Participants, i.e., students, may be citizens with a university degree who are medically fit and have passed a security check. The training of students lasts six months, of which the first four months are spent on regular and special forms

of teaching. In the second period, which lasts slightly less than two months, students undergo internships in various organizational units and institutions of the Serbian Armed Forces. The training is carried out in two cycles per year (within the March and September generations). Upon successful completion, students of the CSRO are promoted to the rank of second lieutenant in the reserve, with the possibility of establishing a permanent employment relationship with the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces as active officers (MORS 2010, 198).

Assuming the return of regular military service, which is eagerly awaited and announced in Serbia, the number of soldiers who would undergo training annually would understandably be in the thousands of young men and women. In this way, the Serbian Army, i.e., its units that are filled with reserve personnel, would be greatly rejuvenated, and in this regard, a crucial need arises for a larger number of reserve officers. We believe that the current system of education at the CSRO would not produce a sufficient number of reserve officers unless the number of students increases significantly. It is also understandable that reserve officers, after completing their voluntary education at the CSRO, largely decide to continue their active career in the army, while formation positions in reserve units remain vacant. We conclude that in this way the CSRO represents an additional opportunity for the metaphorically “production” of active officers, while only a smaller number of them remain deployed in the reserves. To improve this situation, it is necessary to refine the system of this type of education in accordance with the aforementioned models and programs.

It is ambitious to compare the system of education for reserve officers in the Serbian army with those of the United States and Russia, which have incomparably greater needs and capacities, but it would undoubtedly be beneficial to implement viable examples of good practice. Namely, the model of hybrid civilian-military education would be feasible if, in addition to numerous other fields, military sciences were introduced at certain civilian faculties in Serbia, which would also study military sciences from the perspective of the main scientific field that the particular faculty specializes in. Students in these fields would undergo practical military training in the army units closest to them or located in their city. They would be provided with scholarships, and upon graduation, they would receive their first officer rank in the reserve. In this way, the army would increase the

influx of young officer cadres for the reserve, but would also receive potential active officers, specifically the deficient personnel that the army needs, and the academy does not “produce”. Such a potential modality requires profound changes in various areas, but making a strategic decision that would move towards this or a similar solution would be of immeasurable importance.

A specific action that would be extremely important, and at the same time easily achievable, is the possibility of opening military science centers at all civilian universities in Serbia. Within their scope of competence, they would carry out active, systematic, and planned information and promotion to students about the possibilities of continuing their education in the field of military science after graduation by enrolling in the CSRO. The director of the center could be someone with a teaching or scientific title from that university, who also holds the rank of officer in the reserve. Namely, the analyzed programs in the aforementioned armies of the world are based on the principle of specifically established rights and obligations. Therefore, we believe that it is necessary for future students of the CSRO, i.e., Reserve officers, must have specific benefits and obligations. The state needs to recognize the desire and specific patriotic work of the trainees to serve their homeland, in addition to their civilian careers, by allowing them to wear a military uniform. Upon returning to civilian life and its everyday activities, they must be holders of specific privileges, such as financial allowances, healthcare, tax relief, employment benefits, and identification. The obligations of reserve officers must not be reduced to a potential military exercise once every three years, but to frequent theoretical and practical training. Technological progress in the military sphere represents an obstacle that can only be overcome through serious training. It is necessary to organize courses for the training of senior reserve officers and their training for staff duties.² Work on achieving the greatest possible cohesion between active and reserve officer cadres, as well as soldiers, through various types of activities that are not exclusively of a military-training nature, such as organizing lectures on military topics and seminars. We believe that this way of developing and improving the education of reserve officers is a sure path towards a stronger Serbian Armed Forces, which

² As the former course for training commanders of war units at regimental and brigade level, intended for reserve officers of the Yugoslav Peoples Army.

is the guarantor of the sovereignty, independence, and security of the Republic of Serbia.

CONCLUSION

We can conclude that the Serbian Armed Forces, as the foundation of the national security system, play a crucial role in the concept of total defense, which entails all societal subjects participating in an organized and planned manner in the defense of the country's sovereignty and independence. We conclude that, in addition to the professional forces, the Serbian Armed Forces also have a reserve force that is many times larger, and its role should not be underestimated or its training neglected. The training and motivation of both active and reserve officers are a prerequisite for success, and their education is of exceptional importance. An analysis of the education systems for reserve officers in the USA and the Russian Federation reveals that they are widely available through a hybrid model of civilian-military education at hundreds of universities and faculties in these countries. We believe that for the Republic of Serbia, as a militarily neutral country with an adopted concept of total defense, the introduction of mandatory military service is a practical necessity. In this regard, it is necessary to improve the system of training reserve officers, giving special attention to quantity without neglecting quality.

Academic citizens, i.e., individuals with higher education, conditionally represent the intellectual elite of a country that largely determines the social movement of the entire population. If this "elite" has no points of contact with its own army and views it as an essential unknown, serious problems will undoubtedly arise, leading the social movement astray. The training of reserve officers at the Military Academy represents, in addition to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical training of future officers, the promotion and dissemination of top officer values in society. By creating a powerful officer corps within the military, a social stratum is established in the civilian community that represents one of the primary guardians and promoters of actual national, ethical, and military values. Top-notch academic knowledge from a specific scientific field that has been acquired for years in the civilian community, combined with knowledge of military sciences through mandatory practical training,

physical fitness, and moral worthiness, creates a true intellectual and officer for whom the patriotic ideal is a matter of honor. By performing everyday duties in responsible social and state positions in the civilian community, the values of which the Serbian Armed Forces are the protector and guardian, will permeate the entire academic social community through the reserve officer corps.

What a reserve officer acquires, in addition to knowledge of military science and professional qualifications, by receiving an officer's rank is officer honor. Colonel Rajić emphasized that the officer's honor of reserve officers is significant and that it must not be separated from the honor of professional officers (Rajić 2001, 114). Namely, officers, even if they are very professional and competent, are unreliable and insufficiently capable if their honor is vague, superficial, and especially false and duplicitous. Those with "built and unbreakable honor with the necessary military knowledge, skills and abilities are capable, reliable and worthy even in the most difficult war conditions" (144).

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ЗНАЧАЈ РЕЗЕРВНОГ ОФИЦИРСКОГ КАДРА ЗА СИСТЕМ НАЦИОНАЛНЕ БЕЗБЕДНОСТИ РЕПУБЛИКЕ СРБИЈЕ***

Резиме

Један од најважнијих фактора у остваривању националног и одбрамбеног интереса сваке државе представља организована оружана сила која је у сваком моменту спремна да заштити њену независност и сувереност. Војска Србије према Стратегији националне безбедности Републике Србије представља најважнију и најмоћнију формацију на којој се заснива систем националне безбедности, а са циљем обезбеђења сигурности за све њене грађане. Оружани сукоби данашњице нам показују да и поред потребе за професионалном војском која је главни носилац борбених дејстава, кључну улогу на бојном пољу и даље имају бројност војног састава уз подразумевану обученост и мотивисаност. Република Србија као војно неутрална држава са усвојеним концептом тоталне одбране, а са својим виталним интересом очувања територијалног интегритета, у обавези је да због ризика у безбедносном окружењу развија и усавршава сопствену војску зарад очувања државне и националне егзистенције. Војску Србије поред активних припадника чине и њене резервне снаге које заједно представљају једну добро организовану целину без које концепт тоталне одбране не би могао да функционише. Историја нас учи да је официрски кадар врх копља сваке војске, те да је његова обученост и мотивисаност кључна за успех, те је поред активног од великог значаја и резервни официрски

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*** Рад је настао као резултат истраживања на пројекту „Одговорност у правном и друштвеном контексту” који је финансирао Правни факултет Универзитета у Нишу, у периоду од 2021–2025.

кадар међу којима у случају рата готово да постоји знак једнакости. Предмет истраживања овог рада управо је значај резервног официрског кадра у систему одбране, те његова друштвена улога у миру као промотера највиших војничких вредности. Концепт школовања официрског кадра у резерви у Србији има дугу и богату историју која живи и данас, али коју је потребно усавршавати у складу са безбедносним изазовима данашњице.

Кључне речи: Србија, безбедност, официрски кадар, резерва, школовање.

* This paper was received on June 16, 2025, and accepted for publication at the Editorial Board meeting on October 15, 2025

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The academic journal *The Policy of National Security* publishes articles that result from the latest theoretical and empirical research in the field of political science. Authors should refer mainly to the results of scientific research published in academic journals, primarily in political science journals.

Manuscripts should be submitted in Serbian (Cyrillic script) with a mandatory English translation.

The journal is published three times a year. The deadlines for submitting manuscripts are February 1, June 1, and October 1.

Two consecutive issues cannot contain articles written by the same author, whether single-authored or co-authored.

Papers are submitted to the Editorial Board by uploading them to the CEON platform using the following link: <https://asestant.ceon.rs/index.php/pnb/login>.

Authors are obliged to submit a signed and scanned declaration of authorship when submitting their works. The declaration form can be downloaded from the journal's website: <https://www.ips.ac.rs/uputstvo-za-autore.php?id=5>.

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Authors are required to provide their ORCID numbers along with their (preferably) institutional email addresses, which they include in the manuscript text in a footnote alongside their names and surnames.

Research articles can have up to 40,000 characters, including spaces, and may include footnotes. When counting the characters leave out the reference list. Exceptionally, a monographic study can be larger in scope in accordance with the provisions of *the Rulebook on procedure, method of evaluation, and quantitative presentation of scientific research results*.

Reviews can have up to 15,000 characters with spaces.

Book reviews can have up to 10,000 characters with spaces.

CITING AND REFERENCING

The journal *The Policy of National Security* uses a partially modified Chicago style of citation (17th edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*), which implies specifying bibliographic parentheses (brackets) according to the author-date system in the text, as well as a list of references with complete bibliographic data after the text of the paper.

Data in bibliographic parentheses and the list of references should be written in **Latin script**.

Below are the rules and examples for citing the bibliographic information in the reference list and in the text. For each type of source, a citation rule is given first, followed by an example of citation in the reference list and bibliographic parentheses.

The bibliographic parenthesis is usually set off at the end of the sentence, before the punctuation mark. It contains the author's surname, the year of publication, and page numbers pointing to a specifically contextual page or range of pages, as in the following example: (Mearsheimer 2001, 15–17).

Books

Books with one author

Surname, Name. Year of publication. *Title*. Place of publication: Publisher.

Mearsheimer, John J. 2001. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

(Mearsheimer 2001)

Books with two or three authors

Surname, Name, and Name Surname. Year of publication. *Title*. Place of publication: Publisher.

Brady, Henry E., and David Collier. 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

(Brady and Collier 2010, 211)

Pollitt, Christopher, Johnston Birchall, and Keith Putman. 1998. *Decentralising Public Service Management*. London: Macmillan Press.

(Pollitt, Birchall and Putman 1998)

Books with four or more authors

Surname, Name, Name and Surname, Name and Surname, and Name and Surname. Year of publication. *Title*. Place of publication: Publisher.

Pollitt, Christopher, Colin Talbot, Janice Caulfield, and Amanda Smullen [Pollitt *et al.*]. 2005. *Agencies: How Governments do Things Through Semi-Autonomous Organizations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

(Pollitt *et al.* 2005)

Editor(s) or translator(s) in place of the author(s)

Surname, Name, Name and Surname, ed. Year of publication. *Title*. Place of publication: Publisher.

Kaltwasser, Cristóbal Rovira, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostigoy [Kaltwasser *et al.*], eds. 2017. *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

(Kaltwasser *et al.* 2017)

Chapter in an edited book

Surname, Name. Year of publication. “Title of the chapter.” In *Title*, ed. Name Surname, pages range. Place of publication: Publisher.

Lošonc, Alpar. 2019. “Discursive dependence of politics with the confrontation between republicanism and neoliberalism.” In *Discourse and Politics*, eds. Dejana M. Vukasović and Petar Matić, 23–46. Belgrade: Institute for Political Studies.

(Lošonc 2019)

Journal Articles

Regular issue

Surname, Name. Year of publication. “Title of the article.” *Journal* Volume, if available (issue): page range. DOI.

Ellwood, David W. 2018. “Will Brexit Make or Break Great Britain?” *Serbian Political Thought* 18 (2): 5–14. DOI: 10.22182/spt.18212018.1.

(Ellwood 2018)

Special issue

Surname, Name. Year of publication. “Title of the article.” In “Title of the special issue”, ed. Name Surname, Special issue, *Journal*: page range. DOI.

Chin, Warren. 2019. “Technology, war and the state: past, present and future.” In “Re-visioning war and the state in the twenty-first century.” Special issue, *International Affairs* 95 (4): 765–783. DOI: 10.1093/ia/iiz106.

(Chin 2019)

Encyclopedias and dictionaries

When the author/editor is known

Surname, Name, Name Surname, ed. Year of publication. *Title*. Vol. Place of publication: Publisher.

Badie, Bertrand, Dirk Berg-Schlosser, and Leonardo Morlino, eds. 2011. *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*. Vol. 1. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
(Badie, Berg-Schlosser and Morlino 2011)

When the author/editor is unknown

Title. Year of publication. Place of publication: Publisher.

Webster's Dictionary of English Usage. 1989. Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster Inc.
(*Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* 1989)

PhD dissertation

Surname, Name. Year of publication. "Title of the dissertation." PhD diss. University.

Munger, Frank J. 1955. "Two-Party Politics in the State of Indiana." PhD diss. Harvard University.
(Munger 1955, 17–19)

Newspapers and magazines

Signed articles

Surname, Name. Year of publication. "Title of the article." *Newspaper/Magazine* Date: page range.

Clark, Phil. 2018. "Rwanda's Recovery: When Remembrance is Official Policy." *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2018: 35–41.
(Clark 2018)

Unsigned articles

Title of the newspaper/magazine. Year of publication. "Title of the article." Date: page range.

New York Times. 2002. "In Texas, Ad Heats Up Race for Governor." July 30, 2002.
(*New York Times* 2002)

Corporate Author

Name of the corporate author [acronym, if needed]. Year of publication.
Title of the publication. Place of publication: Publisher.

International Organization for Standardization [ISO]. 2019. *Moving from ISO 9001:2008 to ISO 9001:2015*. Geneva: International Organization for Standardization.

(International Organization for Standardization [ISO] 2019) – *The first in-text citation*

(ISO 2019) – *Second and all subsequent citations*

Special cases of referencing

Citing editions other than the first

Surname, Name. Year of publication. *Title*, edition number. Place of publication: Publisher.

Bull, Hedley. 2012. *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 4th edition. New York: Columbia University Press.

(Bull 2012)

Multiple sources by the same author

1) *Multiple sources by the same author* should be arranged chronologically by year of publication in ascending order.

Mearsheimer, John J. 2001. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Mearsheimer, John J. 2010. “The Gathering Storm: China’s Challenge to US Power in Asia.” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3 (4): 381–396. DOI: 10.1093/cjip/poq016.

2) *Multiple sources by the same author from the same year* should be alphabetized by title, with lowercase letters attached to the year. Those letters should be used in parenthetical citations as well.

Walt, Stephen M. 2018a. *The Hell of Good Intentions: America’s Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

(Walt 2018a)

Walt, Stephen M. 2018b. “Rising Powers and the Risk of War: A Realist View of Sino-American Relations.” In *Will China’s Rise be Peaceful: Security, Stability and Legitimacy*, ed. Asle Toje. 13–32. New York: Oxford University Press.

(Walt 2018b)

3) *Single-authored sources precede multiauthored sources beginning with the same surname* or written by the same person.

Pollitt, Christopher. 2001. "Clarifying convergence. Striking similarities and durable differences in public management reform." *Public Management Review* 3 (4): 471–492. DOI: 10.1080/14616670110071847.

Pollit, Christopher, Johnston Birchall, and Keith Putman. 1998. *Decentralising Public Service Management*. London: Macmillan Press.

4) *Multiauthored sources with the same name and surname* as the first author should continue to be alphabetized by the second author's surname.

Pollitt Christopher, Johnston Birchall, and Keith Putman. 1998. *Decentralising Public Service Management*. London: Macmillan Press.

Pollitt Christopher, Colin Talbot, Janice Caulfield, and Amanda Smullen. 2005. *Agencies: How Governments do Things Through Semi-Autonomous Organizations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Exceptional cases of parenthetical citation

Exceptions to the rule of placing the parenthetical citation at the end of a sentence

1) If the *author is mentioned in the text*, even if used in a possessive form, the year must follow in parentheses, and page numbers should be put in brackets at the end of the sentence.

For the assessment, see Kaltwasser *et al.* (2017) ... (112).

According to Ellwood (2018) ... (7).

2) When *quoting directly*, if the name of the author precedes the quotation, the year and page numbers must follow in parentheses.

Mearsheimer (2001, 28) claims that: "...".

3) When *using the same source multiple times in one paragraph*, the parenthetical citation should be placed either after the last reference (or at the end of the paragraph, preceding the final period) if the same page (or page range) is cited more than once, or at the first reference. In contrast, the subsequent citations should only include page numbers. Do not use *ibid* or *op. cit.* with repeated citations.

Using brief phrases such as "see", "compare", etc.

Those phrases should be enclosed within parentheses.

(see: Ellwood 2018)

Using a secondary source

When using a secondary source, the original source should be cited in parentheses, followed by "quoted/cited in" and the secondary source. The reference list should only include the secondary source.

“Its authority was greatly expanded by the constitutional revision of 1988, and the Court of Arbitration can now be regarded as a ‘genuine constitutional court’” (De Winter and Dumont 2009, 109 cited in: Lijphart 2012, 39–40). Lijphart, Arend. 2012. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, 2nd edition. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Multiple sources within the same parentheses

1) When *multiple sources* are cited, they should be separated by semicolons.

(Mearsheimer 2001, 34; Ellwood 2018, 7)

2) When *multiple sources by the same author*, but published in different years, are cited, the name of the author is cited only the first time. The different years are separated by commas or by semicolons, where page numbers are cited.

(Mearsheimer 2001, 2010) or (Mearsheimer 2001, 15–17; 2010, 390)

3) When *different authors share the same surname*, include the first initial in parentheses.

(M. Chiti 2004, 40), (E. Chiti 2004, 223)

Chiti, Edoardo. 2004. “Administrative Proceedings Involving European Agencies.” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 68 (1): 219–236.

Chiti, Mario. 2004. “Forms of European Administrative Action.” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 68 (1): 37–57.

Legal and Public Documents

Sections, articles, or paragraphs can be cited in parentheses. They should be appropriately abbreviated.

Constitutions and laws

The title of the legislative act [acronym if needed], “Official Gazette of the state”, and the number of the official gazette, or the webpage and the date of last access.

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, “Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 98/06.

(The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, Art. 33)

The Law on Foreign Affairs [LFA], “Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 116/2007, 126/2007, and 41/2009.

(LFA 2009, Art. 17)

Succession Act [SA], “Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia”, No. 48/03, 163/03, 35/05, 127/13, and 33/15, and 14/19.

(SA 2019, Art. 3)

An Act to make provision for and in connection with offences relating to offensive weapons [Offensive Weapons Act], 16th May 2019, www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2019/17/pdfs/ukpga_20190017_en.pdf, last accessed 20 December 2019.
(Offensive Weapons Act 2019)

Government decisions and decisions of the institutions

The name of the government body or institution [acronym or abbreviation], the title and number of the decision, the date of the decision passing, or the webpage and the date of the last access.

Protector of Citizens of the Republic of Serbia [Protector of Citizens], Opinion No. 19–3635/11, 11 January 2012, https://www.ombudsman.org.rs/attachments/064_2104_Opinion%20HJC.pdf, last accessed 20 December 2019.

(Protector of Citizens, 19–3635/11)

U.S. Department of the Treasury [USDT], Treasury Directive No. 13–02, July 20, 1988, <https://www.treasury.gov/about/role-of-treasury/orders-directives/Pages/td13-02.aspx>, last assessed 20 December 2019.

(USDT, 13–02)

Legislative acts of the European Union

The title of the legislative act, the number of the official gazette, the publication date, and the number of the page in the same format as on the *EUR-lex* website: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>.

Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2011 laying down the rules and general principles concerning mechanisms for control by Member States of the Commission’s exercise of implementing powers, OJ L 55, 28.2.2011, p. 13–18.

(Regulation 182/2011, Art. 3)

Treaties

European Union founding treaties

Title of the treaty or title of the consolidated version of the treaty [acronym], information on the treaty retrieved from the official gazette in the same format as on the *EUR-lex* website: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>.

Treaty on European Union [TEU], OJ C 191, 29.7.1992, p. 1–112.

(TEU 1992, Art. J.1)

Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union [TEU], OJ C 115, 9.5.2008, p. 13–45.

(TEU 2008, Art. 11)

Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union [TFEU], OJ C 202, 7.6.2016, p. 1–388.
(TFEU 2016, Art. 144)

Other treaties

Title of the treaty [acronym or abbreviation], date of conclusion, UNTS volume number, and registration number on the *United Nations Treaty Collection* website: <https://treaties.un.org>.

Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization [Marrakesh Agreement], 15 April 1994, UNTS 1867, I-31874.

(Marrakesh Agreement 1994)

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR], 19 December 1966, UNTS 999, I-14668.

(ICCPR 1966)

Treaty of Peace between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan [Israel Jordan Peace Treaty], 26 October 1994, UNTS 2042, I-35325.

(Israel Jordan Peace Treaty 1994)

Decisions of international organizations

The name of the international organization and its body [acronym], the decision number, the title of the decision, and the date of the decision's passing.

United Nations Security Council [UNSC], S/RES/1244 (1999), Resolution 1244 (1999) Adopted by the Security Council at its 4011th meeting, on 10 June 1999.

(UNSC, S/RES/1244)

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe [PACE], Doc. 14326, Observation of the presidential election in Serbia (2 April 2017), 29 May 2017.

(PACE, Doc. 14326, para. 12)

Case law

Case law of the courts in the Republic of Serbia

The type of the act and the name of the court [acronym of the court], the case number with the date of the decision passing, the name and number of the official gazette where the decision is published, if available.

Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia [CCRS], IUa-2/2009 of 13 June 2012, "Official gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 68/2012.

(Decision of CCRS, IUa-2/2009)

Decision of the Appellate Court in Novi Sad [ACNS], Rzr-1/16 of 27 April 2016.

(Decision of ACNS, RZR-1/16)

Case law of the International Court of Justice

The name of the court [acronym], *the case title*, the type of decision with the date of the decision passing, the name and number of I.C.J. Reports issue where the decision is published, and the page number.

International Court of Justice [ICJ], *Application of the Interim Accord of 13 September 1995 (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia v. Greece)*, Judgment of 5 December 2011, I.C.J. Reports 2011, p. 644.
(ICJ Judgment 2011)

International Court of Justice [ICJ], *Accordance with the International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo*, Advisory Opinion of 22 July 2010, I.C.J. Reports, p. 403.
(ICJ Advisory Opinion 2010)

Case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union

The case title, case number, type of case, and date of the decision, along with the ECLI.

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland v. European Parliament and Council of the European Union, Case C-270/12, Judgment of the Court (Grand Chamber) of 22 January 2014, ECLI:EU:C:2014:18.

(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland v. European Parliament and Council of the European Union, C-270/12) or
(CJEU, C-270/12)

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland v. European Parliament and Council of the European Union, Case C-270/12, Opinion of Advocate General Jääskinen delivered on 12 September 2013, ECLI:EU:C:2013:562.

(Opinion of AG Jääskinen, C-270/12)

Case law of the European Court of Human Rights

The case title, number of the application, type of the case, with the date of the judgment passing, ECLI.

Pronina v. Ukraine, No. 63566/00, Judgment of the Court (Second Section) on Merits and Just Satisfaction of 18 July 2006, ECLI:CE:ECHR:2006:0718JUD006356600.

(Pronina v. Ukraine 63566/00, par. 20) or
(ECHR, 63566/00, par. 20)

Case law of other international courts and tribunals

The name of the court [acronym], the case number, *the case title*, the type of decision, with the date passing.

International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 [ICTY], Case No. IT-94-1-A-AR77,

Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic. Appeal Judgement on Allegations of Contempt Against Prior Counsel, Milan Vujin. Judgment of 27 February 2001. (*Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic*, IT-94-1-A-AR77) or (ICTY, IT-94-1-A-AR77)

Archive sources

Name of the repository [acronym], title or number of the fond [acronym], box number, folder number – if available, reference code, “title of the document” – or, if it is not available, provide a short description by answering the questions who? whom? what?, place and date – or n.d. if no date is provided.

Arhiv Srbije [AS], MID, K-T, f. 2, r93/1894, “Izveštaj Ministarstva inostranih dela o postavljanju konzula”, Beograd, 19. april 1888.
(AS, MID, K-T, f. 2)
(AS, MID, f. 2) – *When the folder number is known only*
Dalhousie University Archives [DUA], Philip Girard fonds [PG], B-11, f. 3, MS-2-757.2006-024, “List of written judgements by Laskin,” n.d.
(DUA, PG, B-11, f. 3)

Web sources

Surname, Name, or name of the corporate author [acronym]. Year of publication or n.d. – if the year of publication cannot be determined. “The name of the web page.” *The name of the website*. Date of creation, modification, or the last access to the web page, if the date cannot be determined from the source. URL.

Bilefsky, Dan, and Ian Austen. 2019. “Trudeau Re-election Reveals Intensified Divisions in Canada.” *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/22/world/canada/trudeau-re-elected.html>.
(Bilefsky and Austen 2019)
Institute for Political Studies [IPS]. n.d. “The 5th International Economic Forum on Reform, Transition and Growth.” *Institute for Political Studies*. Last accessed 7 December 2019. <http://www.ips.ac.rs/en/news/the-5th-international-economic-forum-on-reform-transition-and-growth/>.
(Institute for Political Studies [IPS] n.d.) – *First in-text citation*
(IPS n.d.) – *Second and every subsequent citation*
Associated Press [AP]. 2019. “AP to present VoteCast results at AAPOR pooling conference.” May 14, 2019. <https://www.ap.org/press-releases/2019/ap-to-present-votecast-results-at-aapor-polling-conference>.
(AP 2019)

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- Text font size: 12 pt;
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Установа запослења

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** Фуснота: Имејл-адреса аутора: Препоручује се навођење институционалне имејл-адресе аутора. ORCID:

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351.862/.863(497.11)

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