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Global Security and Resources:
Venezuela and Greenland

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THE POLICY
OF NATIONAL
SECURITY

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FOREWORD

Dear readers,

Although we publish every four months (three times a year), we strive, as far as possible, to cover the most current issues in security at the national, regional, and global levels. This is, of course, not always easy, given the dynamics of contemporary political developments, but we make every effort to keep pace with them. This is also the case with the present issue, in which we bring you highly up-to-date analyses of exceptionally significant events that have caused a veritable political and security “earthquake”, such as the arrest (and abduction) of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, U.S.–Venezuela relations, and the “Greenland case” (in which U.S. President Donald Trump expressed his desire to incorporate this Danish territory into the United States). We are proud that, within such a short period, we have obtained several highly expert analyses of these topics. Accordingly, this issue is entitled “Global Security and Resources: Venezuela and Greenland”.

Our colleagues from the Faculty of Security Studies in Banja Luka (Ivana Ignjić, Saša Mićin, and Predrag Čeranić) have written a highly innovative and significant paper addressing the use of directed-energy weapons in the context of the arrest of Venezuelan President Maduro. I am certain that our readers will gain a wealth of useful information about the weapons – both conventional and unconventional – used in this case, which has unquestionably intrigued and shocked the entire world.

In the wake of the same events, our colleague Vladimir Trapara analysed contemporary U.S. foreign policy, with particular reference to the developments in Venezuela and the distinctive approach of President Trump. This will further contribute to an understanding of the political course pursued by Latin American countries towards the United States, and *vice versa*.

We are pleased that younger colleagues are also interested in analysing current security issues in the context of the developments in

Venezuela, and we have therefore decided to publish a paper by Nikola Preradović in this issue. He elaborated on the role of personal prestige in Donald Trump's foreign policy decision-making, using Venezuela as a case study.

The next section of this issue is devoted to a security and legal analysis of the "Greenland case", which our colleague Dejan Vuletić examined thoroughly and expertly in his paper entitled "Secondary and National Security: A Case Study of Greenland".

The remaining papers in our journal address other significant security topics. Boris Bursać and Marina Mijatović have written a paper on the challenges of protecting family identity in the context of contemporary security challenges. We are confident that this paper will attract the interest of numerous readers.

Maida Bećirović Alić and Tanja Varađanin have conducted an innovative analysis of contemporary legal modernisation in Italy, which examines not only civil justice reform but also the protection of fundamental rights and security.

Traditionally, our journal has devoted attention to topics concerning the national security of the Republic of Serbia (and our province of Kosovo and Metohija), as demonstrated by Miloš Tomić's paper, "Security Aspects of Demographic Transition: The Case of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija".

This is what we have prepared for you in the new August issue of the journal *National Security Policy*. Our team of associates has worked diligently to prepare an issue worthy of our loyal readership. The fact that we have officially been added to the *Erih Plus* list demonstrates that we are also working tirelessly to improve the journal's status.

We wish you a peaceful, pleasant, and safe summer with the academic journal *National Security Policy*.

Kind regards,

*Editor-in-Chief of the journal
Policy of National Security,
Ph.D. Marija Đorić*

GLOBAL SECURITY
AND RESOURCES:
VENEZUELA AND
GREENLAND

VENEZUELA IN THE SECURITY
AND ENERGY CONTEXT

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**OPERATIONAL APPLICATION
OF DIRECTED ENERGY WEAPONS:
CASE OF VENEZUELA
(Translation in *Extenso*)**

Abstract

This paper analyzes the development and potential operational use of Directed Energy Weapons – DEW, with particular emphasis on the Havana Syndrome and the U.S. operation *Absolute Resolve* conducted in Venezuela in 2026. The central hypothesis of the study is that the technical and technological development of these systems has reached a level that enables their practical application in

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contemporary military and security operations. The research is based on the analysis of available scientific, media, and institutional sources, employing comparative methodology and a case study approach. The paper examines the phenomenon of Havana Syndrome as a possible indicator of the existence of microwave and other directed-energy systems capable of causing neurological, cognitive, and auditory disorders in humans. Particular attention is devoted to the microwave auditory effect and recent media reports suggesting the existence of portable electromagnetic devices associated with these symptoms. The second part of the paper analyzes Operation *Absolute Resolve*, during which the United States conducted a complex military-intelligence operation in Venezuela. Based on available reports and eyewitness testimonies, the study considers the possible use of an unidentified weapon referred to as a *discombobulator*, whose effects reportedly included disorientation, loss of balance, and physical impairment among members of the Venezuelan forces. The paper indicates that such effects demonstrate certain similarities with known directed-energy weapon systems. Special attention is given to the U.S. programs Active Denial System – ADS, Mob Excess Deterrent Using Silent Audio – MEDUSA, and Long Range Acoustic Device – LRAD, as examples of systems employing microwave and acoustic effects for military and security purposes. The analysis demonstrates that these weapons have been the subject of intensive development for decades, accompanied by substantial financial investments and the gradual enhancement of their operational mobility and effectiveness. The paper concludes that directed energy weapons no longer represent exclusively a theoretical or futuristic concept, but rather an increasingly significant component of contemporary warfare. Their further development may substantially influence the nature of future military and police operations, while simultaneously raising important security, medical, legal, and ethical questions about their control and consequences.

Keywords: directed-energy weapons, Havana Syndrome, ADS, MEDUSA, LRAD, microwave weapons, acoustic weapons, Absolute Resolve, contemporary warfare, security technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Maintaining technological superiority has become more challenging due to rapid innovation and the global spread of advanced technologies. China has increasingly used developments from the commercial sector to strengthen its military capabilities, reducing the traditional advantage once held by the United States in advanced weapons systems (Stekić 2025). Contemporary developments in science and technology are driving radical changes in the concept and design of weapons systems, with DEW development occupying a particularly significant position. Although research on the military applications of laser, microwave, and sonic systems has been ongoing for decades, this field remains shrouded in a high degree of secrecy. Global military powers such as the United States of America, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China disclose information on the status of their projects only sporadically, thereby directly limiting the precision of scientific evaluation of the tactical and technical performance of these systems under real operational conditions. The lack of empirical data and the inability to verify the effects of DEW systems in combat environments have led these technologies to be viewed predominantly through theoretical models.

The emergence of the Havana Syndrome in 2016, and particularly the U.S. operation conducted in Caracas under the name Operation Absolute Resolve, which resulted in the arrest and detention of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, initiated a new wave of interest among the international professional and academic communities in the fields of security and defense technologies. Havana Syndrome, also referred to as Anomalous Health Incidents – AHIs, represents one of the most controversial and complex security-medical phenomena of the contemporary era. Since the first reported cases among American and Canadian diplomats in Havana in 2016, this phenomenon has attracted intense attention from scientific, security, and political circles. Symptoms, including unusual sensory experiences, dizziness, cognitive impairments, and neurological and vestibular disorders, have subsequently been recorded among officials at other locations

worldwide, further deepening suspicions that the phenomenon may possess broader geopolitical and technological implications.

In the case involving Maduro, field reports, testimonies of surviving members of the Venezuelan presidential guard, and official accusations issued by the Venezuelan Ministry of Defense indicate that previously unseen and classified combat systems were allegedly employed during the operation. Testimonies describing mass disorientation, temporary paralysis, and physical side effects among defenders, accompanied by statements from officials in Washington regarding the use of advanced classified systems, the so-called *discombobulator*¹, have raised questions concerning the level of technological maturity and operational readiness of non-conventional weapon systems.

Based on the foregoing, the principal hypothesis of this paper is that the technical and technological development of directed-energy weapons has reached a level sufficient to ensure operational readiness and deployment under real-world conditions. The aim of the research is to examine the validity of this hypothesis through the analysis of available technical indicators, the application of comparative methodology, and a case study approach.

HAVANA SYNDROME AND NEW UNKNOWN WEAPONS

Since 2016, officials from the United States and Canada have reported cases of AHIs, also known as Havana Syndrome, which involve unusual sensory experiences followed by long-term neurological, cognitive, and balance-related symptoms (Dutta 2025). Subsequently, other individuals serving in similar roles in multiple locales (e.g., Austria, Germany, Russia, Vietnam, and within the continental U.S.) experienced similar subjective symptoms (Giordano 2025). Furthermore, Dutta states that the source of these incidents remains widely disputed, with major explanations ranging

¹ Meaning of discombobulate: to confuse someone or make someone feel uncomfortable (Cambridge Dictionary 2025).

from psychological and social influences to the possible use of directed-energy technology, making the issue a complex medical and international security concern. Havana Syndrome has presented a complex diagnostic challenge for both clinicians and government entities. All have described an acute onset of a constellation of subjective symptoms, including directional auditory phenomena, vertigo, cognitive disturbances, and pressure sensations, accompanied by objective neurological, vestibular, and autonomic disturbances (Giordano 2025).

On March 1, 2023, five U.S. intelligence agencies published the conclusions of a comprehensive investigation into Havana Syndrome and its possible causes. Their assessment found it highly improbable that the symptoms experienced by affected individuals were the result of attacks using sonic or microwave technology, and they found no convincing evidence connecting the incidents to the actions of a foreign adversary. According to their findings, many of the reported symptoms could be explained by existing medical conditions, psychological stress, reactions to environmental circumstances, and other ordinary factors (Bartholomew and Baloh 2023).

On January 13, 2026, CNN published an article stating that the Pentagon had acquired a device through an undercover operation, which is suspected to be linked to Havana Syndrome. In the final months of the Biden administration, Homeland Security Investigations, a branch of the Department of Homeland Security, acquired a device through an undercover operation funded by the Department of Defense. The Pentagon has spent more than a year examining the equipment because some investigators believe it may be linked to the unexplained health problems associated with Havana Syndrome. Reports indicate that the device remains under active testing and can emit pulsed radio-frequency waves. For several years, officials and academic researchers have suggested that this type of energy could potentially explain the neurological and physical symptoms linked to Havana Syndrome (Lillis et al. 2026).

The CBS News program “60 Minutes” presented an in-depth report on Havana Syndrome. Through investigative reporting, they established that undercover agents of the United States Department

of Homeland Security acquired a microwave weapon from a Russian criminal network in 2024 for \$15 million. They further state that the microwave weapon is “portable, concealable, and requires relatively little power, small enough to be carried by a person, operates silently, and does not produce heat”. The report also notes that the weapon is “programmable for different scenarios and can be operated by remote control” (60 Minutes 2026).

On February 14, 2026, The Washington Post published an article about another weapon that may be linked to Havana Syndrome. In 2024, operating under highly confidential conditions, a Norwegian government researcher developed a device capable of emitting microwave pulses and, in an attempt to demonstrate that the technology posed no danger to humans, tested it on himself. Reportedly, he experienced neurological effects resembling the symptoms associated with Havana Syndrome. The Norwegian government informed the CIA about the findings, leading to at least two visits to Norway in 2024 by representatives of the Pentagon and the White House. The experiment suggested that devices capable of releasing concentrated bursts of electromagnetic energy can influence human biological functioning (Strobel and Nakashima 2026). In the following days, this information was reposted by numerous media outlets, all of which cited The Washington Post as the original source. Even one of the largest Norwegian media outlets, Verdens Gang – VG, reported on the matter the same day, also referencing The Washington Post as its source (Tronstad 2026).

It is important to emphasize that the microwave auditory effect offers a possible scientific explanation for Havana Syndrome. Unlike normal hearing, microwave hearing does not depend on sound waves passing through the outer and middle ear. Instead, short pulses of microwave energy absorbed by brain tissue create rapid thermal expansion, producing pressure waves within the skull that travel to the cochlea, where they are interpreted as sound (Lin 2021).

On February 20, 2026, the U.S. War Department announced that the Anomalous Health Incidents Cross-Functional Team – AHI CFT will move to the Office of Research and Engineering. The Department emphasized that this change reflects a growing and increasingly

complex mission and will ensure that the team has the expert support needed to address current and future challenges (U.S. Department of War 2026).

OPERATION ABSOLUTE RESOLVE

In August of 2025, a covert team of CIA operatives entered Venezuela with the objective of gathering intelligence on President Nicolás Maduro. The agents operated secretly throughout Caracas for several months without being detected. Using intelligence on Maduro's daily activities, information from a source close to the Venezuelan leader, and surveillance conducted by stealth drones flying covertly above the city, the agency developed a highly detailed understanding of his movements and routines (Barnes, Pages, and Schmitt 2026). General Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that intelligence gathered by the team allowed the United States to know "where Mr. Maduro moved, what he ate and even what pets he kept" (ABC News 2026). The operation resulted in a highly coordinated and rapidly executed mission that successfully removed Nicolás Maduro from Venezuela without any casualties on the U.S. side. President Trump praised the outcome, even though the operation sparked broader debate over the legality and justification of U.S. actions in Venezuela (Barnes, Pages and Schmitt 2026).

On January 3, 2026, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores de Maduro, had been taken into custody during a joint overnight U.S. military operation conducted in Caracas. Trump also stated that the couple would be prosecuted in connection with a 2020 U.S. Department of Justice case involving several federal accusations, including drug trafficking and narco-terrorism (Olay 2026). Operation Absolute Resolve, the joint military and law enforcement operation aimed at capturing Nicolás Maduro and Cilia Flores de Maduro, was carried out after months of detailed planning and operational rehearsals involving U.S. joint forces and special operations personnel from several branches of the military. Air Force General Dan Caine, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated that the operation also included close

coordination and extensive intelligence collaboration with multiple U.S. intelligence agencies (ABC News 2026).

Inside Venezuela, the mission began with a cyberoperation that disrupted power across large areas of Caracas, plunging the city into darkness and enabling aircraft, drones, and helicopters to approach undetected. More than 150 military aircraft, including drones, fighter jets, and bombers, participated in the operation, launching from approximately 20 military bases and naval vessels (Berg 2026). The operation started with overnight strikes targeting areas in and around Caracas, the Venezuelan capital. Venezuela subsequently declared a nationwide state of emergency, while the number of casualties and the full extent of the destruction remained yet to be confirmed. The Venezuelan government condemned the action as an “extremely serious military aggression” carried out by the United States. The operation followed months of escalating tensions, including a significant U.S. military buildup near the Venezuelan coast and several deadly attacks on suspected drug-trafficking vessels. In the weeks leading up to the operation, the United States had also ordered the seizure of sanctioned oil tankers while warning that ground operations could be launched to remove Maduro from power (UN News 2026). Air Force General Dan Caine stated that “the mission to extract the Maduros was so precise that it involved more than 150 military aircraft from across the Western Hemisphere launching in close coordination to provide cover for the ground-based extraction force in Caracas” (Olay 2026).

While many of the operational details remain vague and likely classified, the U.S. military appeared to overrun Venezuela’s air defenses, while special operations forces and law enforcement agencies participated in the raid on Maduro’s house. The operation appears to have been an overwhelming success on the tactical level, as the U.S. Air Force controlled the skies, Venezuela’s radars and electrical grid were jammed, and many of its air defenses were destroyed (Berg 2026).

On January 10, on the online *platform X*, social media influencer Mike Netter presented an interview with a Venezuelan security guard loyal to Nicolás Maduro. The security guard explained that all their radar systems had suddenly shut down without warning, and shortly afterward, numerous drones appeared above their positions, leaving

them unsure how to respond. He added that only a few helicopters arrived, no more than eight, carrying around 20 soldiers who appeared far more technologically advanced than any enemy they had previously encountered. Despite their numerical superiority, he emphasized that they stood no chance, as the opposing forces fired with extraordinary speed and precision, rendering them completely powerless. At one point, he recalled, the opposing forces deployed what he could only describe as an intense sound wave, after which he felt as though his head were exploding from the inside. He explained that they all began bleeding from the nose, some even vomiting blood, and soon collapsed to the ground, unable to move. According to his account, the twenty attackers suffered no casualties while killing hundreds of his men. He stressed that they were unable to compete with such advanced technology and weaponry, adding that he had never witnessed anything like it before, and that after the deployment of the sonic device, they were not even able to stand. After that, Mike Netter's post was shared on the online platform X by Karoline Leavitt, who is currently the Assistant to the President and the 36th White House Press Secretary, with the caption: "Stop what you are doing and read this [...]" (Leavitt 2026). Aside from that, the United States has provided no medical records, forensic evidence, or independent verification to support the claim, and it has not denied it either (Firstpost 2026).

Based on the previously presented interview, the question arises whether the United States used new, modern high-tech weapons. In an interview with the New York Post, President Donald Trump addressed this question, acknowledging that a new type of weapon had been used in Operation Absolute Resolve but stating that information regarding that weapon remains classified. During the interview, he referred to the weapon as the *discombobulator*. The offered further explanation for its name: "None of their equipment worked. Everything was discombobulated" (NBC News 2026). In an interview on "Katie Pavlich Tonight", President Donald Trump stated that there are weapons that no other country possesses and that the United States has weapons that no one knows about. When the host Katie Pavlich referred to the mentioned weapons as "sonic weapons" during the interview, Trump did not object (NewsNation 2026). President Donald Trump also stated

that they had used weapons that had never been used on battlefields (Montagu-Smith 2026).

On 23 January 2026, on the official X account of the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering, it was stated that the U.S. Department of War possesses directed-energy weapons and is scaling them (Department of War 2026). A day later, on 24 January 2026, in an interview with the New York Post, Donald Trump stated that a new weapon had been used and called it the “discombobulator” (Nelson, Goodin, and Schultz 2026). In the days that followed, several major media outlets reported the same information in their coverage. CNN published a report on January 25 (Iyer and Sciutto 2026), followed by PBS News on January 26 (PBS News 2026), and Al Jazeera on the same day (Montagu-Smith 2026). Most of these outlets focused primarily on the incident itself and the interview with the bodyguard, rather than engaging in an assessment of the nature or characteristics of the alleged weapon. In contrast, Al Jazeera presented the topic in considerably greater detail, identifying potential examples such as the Long Range Acoustic Device (LRAD) and the Active Denial System (ADS) (Montagu-Smith 2026), both classified as directed energy weapons.

The topic remained highly prominent in the media until the end of January, during which time the *discombobulator* was widely discussed. However, media attention declined in February, with fewer outlets continuing to report on the issue. One of the last notable reports was published by The New York Times on February 20, 2026 (McIntyre 2026).

AMERICAN PROGRAMS, TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT, AND OPERATIONAL APPLICATION OF DIRECTED-ENERGY WEAPONS

The United States Department of Defense budget request for fiscal year 2025 in Science and Technology was 17.2 billion dollars (United States Department of Defense 2024). The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) states that the United States is spending \$1 billion annually developing directed-energy

weapons, such as high-energy lasers and high-powered microwaves (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2023). In November 2025, the U.S. Department of War stated that “directed energy, hypersonics, and artificial intelligence are among the six technology focus areas”. Emil Michael, undersecretary of war for research and engineering, said that “focusing on directed energy will allow the department to rapidly scale high-energy lasers and high-power microwave systems, providing widely accessible defense capabilities with a low cost per shot” (Lopez 2025).

The global directed energy weapons market is projected to reach \$17.4 billion by 2029, up from \$ 9.24 billion in 2022. The growing demand is driven by increasing military operational requirements worldwide, particularly following the Russia–Ukraine war, by the effectiveness of DEWs against small drones and multiple targets, and by rising investments in research and development (Khurshid 2024). It has been alleged that, over the past two decades, the United States military may have employed three non-lethal directed energy weapons used against personnel. Those are Active Denial System (Raytheon Company 2019), Mob Excess Deterrent Using Silent Audio (Hambling 2020), and Long Range Acoustic Device (Lewer and Davison 2005).

According to the U.S. Department of War, Active Denial Technology – ADT generates a concentrated beam of directed energy intended to provide Joint Forces with a method of stopping, discouraging, or forcing back suspicious individuals while minimizing the risk of injury. The system uses an invisible beam of millimeter-wave radio-frequency radiation that travels at the speed of light and penetrates the skin to a depth of approximately 1/64 of an inch, roughly equal to the thickness of three sheets of paper. The exposure creates an intense heating sensation on the skin, causing the targeted person to instinctively move away from the beam (U.S. Department of War n.d.).

The development of an electromagnetic heating weapon was originally financed in 2002 by the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory and the U.S. Department of Defense’s Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate. The first version of the system, known as Active Denial System I, was tested and later deployed to Afghanistan in 2010. However, it was withdrawn only a few months later and has not been

used against enemy combatants in military operations since that time (Physicians for Human Rights 2020).

Also in 2010, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department revealed plans to deploy a new non-lethal weapon that emitted an invisible energy beam. The department intended to use Active Denial System I in a county jail as a tool for controlling inmates, particularly during fights and other violent disturbances. However, negative media coverage and opposition from the American Civil Liberties Union, which argued that the system threatened civil rights and liberties, ultimately stopped the weapon from being introduced (Weinberger 2014). The system has reportedly undergone more than 11,000 tests involving approximately 700 volunteers, including members of the media. According to the U.S. military, the probability of injury is estimated at only 0.1%, since the energy beam penetrates the skin to a depth comparable to three sheets of paper. Although the beam produces an intense, nearly unbearable heating sensation, military testing concluded that it does not cause lasting physical harm (Cairns 2010).

However, testing conducted on military volunteers documented several incidents involving skin burns, blistering, and persistent pain. Electromagnetic waves can penetrate roughly 0.5 mm beneath the skin, potentially reaching tissue below the dermal layer, where blood vessels, nerves, and glands are located. Certain areas of the body with thinner and more sensitive skin, particularly the face and eyelids, may therefore be especially vulnerable to injury. Prolonged exposure to the system can increase the risk of burns and damage to underlying tissue (Weinberger 2014). Joint Intermediate Force Capabilities Office – JIFCO continues to invest in ADS technologies. Investments in solid-state semiconductors aimed at reducing the size, weight, and power consumption of ADS units date back more than a decade, with the first experimental units delivered around 2011 and the latest version scheduled for delivery before the end of 2025 (Dechant et al. 2024).

Although significant progress has been made in developing and demonstrating the ADS technology, future improvements to the system are expected to focus on reducing the size, weight, and overall cost of the main ADS components (LeVine 2009). In his 2012 paper, Stew Magnuson discusses the size and weight limitations of the Active

Denial System (ADS), noting that the technology had been under development since the 1990s. In 2005, during the height of the Iraq War, engineers mounted the system on the rear of a Humvee. At the time his paper was published, the system still depended on a tactical vehicle for both transportation and power supply (Magnuson 2012). On April 4, 2017, an Active Denial System developed by the Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate was presented during a counter-personnel demonstration conducted during the Weapons and Tactics Instructor course (Defense Visual Information Distribution Service 2017). As shown in the attached image in this article, the weapon still must be mounted on a tactical vehicle. In March 2025, the U.S. Department of War reposted older articles on ADS testing from 2012 on its official DVIDS website (Pellerin 2025), but there was no indication in those articles that a new ADS would be introduced. The size and weight of the ADS system would prevent its use in the Absolute Resolve operation.

In the early 2000s, the Sierra Nevada Corporation developed *MEDUSA* for the U.S. Navy. The system was intended to generate a microwave auditory effect strong enough to cause extreme discomfort and disperse groups of people. A major technological advancement of the project was the development of an electronic antenna capable of producing a narrow beam directed at a single target. Despite these innovations, *MEDUSA* remained at the prototype stage, and Sierra Nevada has not publicly commented on any further progress or later versions of the technology (Hambling 2020). *MEDUSA* was publicized in 2003. The system was intended to produce the microwave auditory effect, also known as the Frey effect² or “silent audio”, to create the perception of an extremely loud explosive sound. It was also described as capable of disturbing balance, inducing fever-like sensations, and triggering epileptic seizures (Kyriakopoulos 2025). In his paper, Deruelle states that a strong auditory sensation can be produced in the human head when it is exposed to carefully selected low-energy

² The Frey effect (also called the microwave auditory effect) is a phenomenon where pulsed microwave radiation can produce perceived sounds inside a person’s head, even though no external sound is present (MacDonald 2018).

microwave pulses. It is further specified that “the system should be portable, require little energy, and be able to control a crowd or a single individual” (Deruelle 2024).

The MEDUSA system is based on a combination of pulse parameters and pulse power, designed to elevate the perceived auditory effect to a level of discomfort to discourage personnel from entering a secured perimeter. While the project’s current status or results may remain classified, available information suggests that prototypes were built and power measurements were conducted to verify the necessary pulse specifications (Lin 2021). At present, the status of this program remains unknown (Deruelle 2024).

In his paper, Vinokur describes LRAD as “a giant loudspeaker that can deliver a shrill 145 dB tone or booms over a distance of more than 300 m, causing headaches and panic”. He further notes that the sound is significantly more powerful than that of a standard smoke detector and cannot be substantially reduced with earplugs (Vinokur 2004). One of the primary deterrent features of the LRAD is its siren system. It is specifically engineered to project sound within the frequency range to which human hearing is most sensitive, approximately 2,000–4,000 Hz. This design is intended to maximize discomfort for the targeted individual. The significance of the LRAD’s power lies in its potential to produce long-term physiological effects on the human body (English 2022). In their paper, Lewer and Davison suggest that some acoustic devices have been associated with side effects, including ear pain, dizziness, vomiting, and migraines. Also, Lewer and Davison further suggest that “such weapons, once fully developed, could potentially knock people off their feet” (Lewer and Davison 2005).

In a press release issued on April 2, 2025, Genasys reported orders totaling \$2.5 million from the U.S. military. These orders include LRAD systems for Army, Navy, and Air Force units stationed both domestically and internationally (Putnam 2025). The most recent documented use of an LRAD occurred on January 26, 2026, when the Minnesota State Patrol deployed a Long Range Acoustic Device during a protest in Maple Grove, Minnesota. The device was used to issue dispersal orders. Authorities stated that officers checked the volume,

delivered verbal warnings, and did not employ deterrent tones or sirens (James 2026). As shown on the Genasys website, LRAD systems can be deployed in multiple configurations, including vehicle-mounted systems such as the LRAD 950NXT, tripod-mounted setups, and portable carry configurations such as the LRAD 100X Carry Pack. Regarding LRAD size and weight, they do not pose a problem, and this weapon could have been used in Operation Absolute Resolve (Genasys 2024).

It should be noted that all three systems were introduced in the early 2000s. Consequently, more than two decades of sustained research, supported by substantial personnel and funding, could have led to significant advancements in their technological capabilities. The level of confidentiality surrounding these systems further contributes to their significance and limits a comprehensive assessment of their capabilities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the development of directed-energy weapons represents one of the most significant technological trajectories in the evolution of modern armed forces, as evidenced by substantial United States investments, the growth of the global market, and the increasing operational relevance of these systems. Laser, microwave, and acoustic systems are being developed to enable rapid engagement, low operational costs, and effectiveness against multiple targets, particularly in the context of contemporary asymmetric threats and urban operations.

The case of the Havana Syndrome has raised questions regarding the potential use of microwave and other directed-energy systems against humans. Although U.S. intelligence agencies have not confirmed the existence of a foreign attack, numerous media reports, scientific analyses, and experimental findings suggest that technologies capable of producing neurological and auditory effects in humans do exist technically and are actively being researched. This indicates the need for further scientific, medical, and security-related research, as well as the development of international legal and ethical frameworks to regulate the use of such technologies.

Donald Trump's foreign policy was characterized by unpredictability and unconventional decision-making, largely shaped by the principles of deterrence, containment, and coercion (Proroković 2026). Operation Absolute Resolve reflected this strategy through the use of advanced military capabilities and strategic force projection without engaging in a prolonged large-scale war. Based on available information, Operation Absolute Resolve represents a contemporary mode of conducting military and intelligence operations that integrates cyber capabilities, unmanned systems, electronic warfare, precise coordination of special units, and potentially new forms of directed-energy weapons. The high level of coordination among U.S. military and intelligence structures, alongside simultaneous disruption of Venezuelan radar systems, communications, and electrical infrastructure, indicates technological superiority that enabled rapid, tactically effective execution of the operation without reported U.S. casualties.

Particular attention has been drawn to claims regarding the use of an unidentified weapon described as a *discombobulator*, whose alleged effects included disorientation, bleeding, loss of balance, and impaired mobility. Although there is no independently verified forensic or medical evidence conclusively confirming the use of such a system, eyewitness accounts, media reports, and indirect statements by U.S. officials have fueled speculation that this may represent an advanced form of directed-energy or acoustic-electromagnetic weapon system. Comparisons with existing technologies, such as ADS and LRAD, further indicate that these concepts have been the subject of military research and development for decades.

At the same time, the case of Absolute Resolve demonstrates the difficulty of distinguishing verified facts from information operations, psychological warfare, and media narratives in contemporary conflicts. The lack of transparency, the high level of classification, and reliance on limited sources leave many questions unresolved. Nevertheless, the increasing public discourse on technologies capable of affecting human physiology through sound, microwaves, or electromagnetic impulses suggests a possible transformation in future warfare.

Accordingly, Operation Absolute Resolve should not be viewed solely as an isolated military action, but also as a potential indicator of broader developments in new generations of non-lethal and directed-energy systems. Their possible use raises significant security, legal, ethical, and humanitarian issues, particularly regarding control, transparency, and consequences for human health.

The analysis of ADS, MEDUSA, and LRAD systems demonstrates that directed energy weapons have been the subject of intensive research and testing for decades. Although these systems are largely presented as “non-lethal”, available data indicate that they may cause serious physiological and neurological effects, including burns, hearing damage, loss of balance, cognitive impairment, and other health disorders. It is particularly significant that more portable and operationally flexible versions of these systems have been developed over time, increasing their potential applicability in various security and military scenarios.

Overall, directed-energy weapons are no longer purely futuristic concepts but rather a real and increasingly present component of modern warfare and security operations. Their continued development could significantly transform the nature of military and police operations, while simultaneously raising serious questions regarding the protection of human rights, medical consequences, and the control of such systems.

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ОПЕРАТИВНА ПРИМЈЕНА ОРУЖЈА УСМЈЕРЕНЕ ЕНЕРГИЈЕ: СЛУЧАЈ ВЕНЕЦУЕЛЕ

Резиме

Рад анализира развој и потенцијалну оперативну употребу оружја усмјерене енергије (*Directed Energy Weapons – DEW*), са посебним освртом на Хавана синдром и америчку операцију Апсолутна Одлучност (*Operation Absolute Resolve*) у Венецуели 2026. године. Полазна претпоставка рада јесте да је техничко-технолошки развој ових система достигао ниво који омогућава њихову реалну примјену у савременим војним и безбједносним операцијама. Истраживање је засновано на анализи доступних научних, медијских и институционалних извора, уз примјену компаративне методе и студије случаја. Појава Хавана синдрома 2016. године, а нарочито америчка операција изведена у Каракасу под називом Апсолутна Одлучност, која је резултирала хапшењем и привођењем венецуеланског предсједника Николаса Мадуре (*Nicolás Maduro*), покренула је нови талас интересовања

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међународне стручне и научне јавности из области безбједности и одбрамбених технологија. У раду се разматра феномен Хавана синдрома као могући индикатор постојања микроталасних и других усмјерених енергетских система способних да изазову неуролошке, когнитивне и аудиторне поремећаје код људи. Посебна пажња посвећена је микроталасном аудиторном ефекту и новим медијским извјештајима који указују на постојање преносивих електромагнетних уређаја повезаних са овим симптомима. Други дио рада анализира операцију Апсолутна Одлучност, током које су Сједињене Државе извеле сложену војно-обавјештајну акцију у Венецуели. Извјештаји с терена, искази преживјелих припадника венецуеланске предсједничке гарде и званичне оптужбе Министарства одбране Венецуеле указују на то да су током ове операције употребљена до сада невиђена и класификована борбена средства. На основу доступних извјештаја и изјава очевидаца разматра се могућност употребе непознатог оружја означеног као *discombobulator*, чији су ефекти укључивали дезоријентацију, губитак равнотеже и физичке сметње код припадника венецуеланских снага. У раду се указује да такви ефекти имају одређене сличности са познатим системима оружја усмјерене енергије. Посебно су анализирани амерички програми *Active Denial System – ADS*, *Mob Excess Deterrent Using Silent Audio – MEDUSA* и *Long Range Acoustic Device – LRAD*, као примјери система који користе микроталасне и акустичне ефекте у војне и безбједносне сврхе. Анализа показује да су ова оружја већ деценијама предмет интензивног развоја, уз значајна финансијска улагања и постепено повећање њихове оперативне мобилности и ефикасности. Треба напоменути да су сва три ова система првобитно уведена почетком 2000-их година. Сходно томе, више од двије деценије континуираног истраживања, уз значајну подршку у људству и финансијама, могло је довести до значајних напретака у њиховим технолошким способностима. Ниво повјерљивости који окружује ове системе додатно доприноси њиховом значају и ограничава свеобухватну процјену њихових могућности. Полазећи од наведеног, главна претпоставка овог рада јесте да је техничко-технолошки развој оружја усмјерене енергије

достигао одговарајући ниво који обезбјеђује оперативну спремност и могућност употребе у реалним условима. Закључује се да оружја усмјерене енергије више не представљају искључиво теоријски или футуристички концепт, већ све значајнију компоненту савременог ратовања. Њихов даљи развој може значајно утицати на природу будућих војних и полицијских операција, али истовремено отвара важна безбједносна, медицинска, правна и етичка питања у вези са контролом и посљедицама њихове употребе.

Кључне ријечи: оружје усмјерене енергије, Хавана синдром, ADS, MEDUSA, LRAD, микроталасно оружје, акустично оружје, Апсолутна Одлучност, савремено ратовање, безбједносне технологије.

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REVOLUTIONIZING U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: THE CASE OF TRUMP'S APPROACH TOWARD VENEZUELA**

(Translation in *Extenso*)

Abstract

A limited U.S. military operation against Venezuela in January 2026, which resulted in the arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, sparked considerable debate among observers regarding the factors that led the second administration of Donald Trump to cross the threshold into direct military confrontation with the Chavista regime in Caracas. This paper argues that the decision was neither accidental nor opportunistic, but rather formed part of a broader grand strategy that prioritizes the Western Hemisphere as the primary region of U.S. interest – one in which Washington seeks to reassert its hegemony. This approach contrasts with the policies of previous administrations, which emphasized pursuing global hegemony while largely taking U.S. dominance in the Western Hemisphere for granted, thereby tolerating some dissent among regional actors. In the case of Venezuela, oil

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interdependence had long acted as a constraint on escalation, with Washington resorting to more radical measures only opportunistically – typically when the Chavista regime appeared particularly vulnerable. Trump’s strategic shift, as articulated in his National Security Strategy, placed the recent intervention within a more coherent regional policy framework. The paper concludes that Trump’s approach toward Venezuela illustrates that the most visible and consistent outcomes of his broader attempt to revolutionize U.S. foreign policy are to be found in the Western Hemisphere.

Keywords: The United States of America, Donald Trump, Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, Western Hemisphere, grand strategy.

INTRODUCTION: TRUMP VS. VENEZUELA, ROUND TWO

On the early morning of January 3, 2026 – the 36th anniversary of the capture of Panama’s dictator Manuel Noriega by invading U.S. forces – a dozen helicopters from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, carrying Delta Force soldiers, entered Venezuelan airspace, supported by U.S. Air Force jets and bombers. The target of operation “Absolute Resolve” was the presidential residence in Caracas, and Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. After neutralizing their Venezuelan and Cuban security, American commandos succeeded in capturing and arresting the couple, who were subsequently flown to New York City to stand trial in a U.S. court on charges of “narcoterrorism”. Justifying the operation, U.S. President Donald Trump stated the United States “will run the country until we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition”, since “we can’t take a chance that someone else takes over Venezuela who doesn’t have the interests of Venezuelans in mind”, adding that major U.S. oil companies would enter Venezuela to restore its oil infrastructure (Reuters 2026). However, he left the Venezuelan regime formally intact, with Maduro’s vice president, Delcy Rodríguez, assuming power, in the expectation of her cooperative stance toward Washington on matters of U.S. interest. “We just received from our new friend and partner, Venezuela, more

than 80 million barrels of oil”, Trump later declared in his State of the Union address (Associated Press 2026).

In his first term, amid the 2019 Venezuelan presidential crisis, Trump had already approached the brink of military intervention but ultimately backed off. His successor, Joseph Biden, returned to a more conventional U.S. policy toward the Venezuelan Chavista regime, one that has been largely characterized, since its establishment in 1998, by restraint and the avoidance of decisive measures aimed at removing Venezuelan leaders from power. This paper argues that the more hawkish approach of Trump 2.0 to Venezuela, culminating in Maduro’s arrest, was neither accidental nor merely opportunistic. Rather, it is part of his broader foreign policy strategy, which prioritizes the Western Hemisphere as the region where the United States must reassert its hegemony after decades of taking it for granted. The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. First, it examines the standard post-Cold War U.S. approach to regional hegemony, often marked by opportunism and selective engagement. It then analyses the innovations introduced by Trump, as reflected in his latest National Security Strategy. The subsequent section reviews recent U.S.-Venezuela relations, culminating in the 2019 presidential crisis and its aftermath. Finally, the paper traces the evolution from Biden’s policy of appeasement toward Caracas in expectations of electoral change, to Trump’s shift to decisive action in disciplining a leading regional outlaw. The theoretical approach applied in the paper is neoclassical realism, with an emphasis on grand strategy. The paper presents a combination of a qualitative case study, historical analysis, and policy document analysis.

OPPORTUNISTIC REGIONAL HEGEMONY: THE LEGACY OF TRUMP’S PREDECESSORS

The United States is the hegemon of the Western Hemisphere. Since the Monroe Doctrine of the 1820s (and especially since Theodore Roosevelt’s “corollary” to it), Washington has viewed the rest of the American continent as its strategic backyard, seeking to limit the influence of external powers and secure its own predominance. There is broad consensus within the U.S. foreign policy establishment and

the academic community that hegemony over the Western Hemisphere constitutes a core national interest. Even the most vocal critics of American global hegemony rarely challenge this premise in the Americas. Already, classical realist Hans J. Morgenthau, drawing on the Federalists, identified three fundamental U.S. interests: securing a dominant position in the Western Hemisphere; maintaining the balance of power in Europe; and maintaining the balance of power in Asia (Morgenthau 1952, 4–6). Among contemporary scholars, offensive neorealist John J. Mearsheimer advocates Washington’s abandoning the pursuit of global hegemony – later termed “liberal hegemony” – in favour of grand strategy of “offshore balancing”. This approach would preserve U.S. hegemony in the Americas while preventing other powers from achieving regional hegemony in Europe, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf (Mearsheimer 2018). Another prominent realist, Stephen Walt, similarly endorses “offshore balancing” along comparable lines (Walt 2018). Barry R. Posen, for his part, rejects liberal hegemony in favour of the strategy of “restraint”, which likewise challenges U.S. global, but not regional hegemony (Posen 2014).

None of these authors criticizes American global hegemony primarily on moral grounds; rather, they regard it as unfeasible and therefore strategically unrealistic. According to Mearsheimer, the “stopping power of water” renders the sustained projection of power across the oceans inherently difficult (Mearsheimer 2001, 41–42). Posen devotes the entire chapter in his book to calculating the direct and indirect costs of liberal hegemony (Posen 2014, 24–68). By contrast, hegemonic policy within the Western Hemisphere is seen as both feasible and justified. Yet this is where a paradox emerges. Proponents of American global (liberal) hegemony, who have dominated U.S. foreign policy decision-making in the post-Cold War era, have often taken regional hegemony for granted. Accustomed to projecting power abroad, they have allowed themselves the luxury of not maintaining constant control over every part of their “home” region, particularly when doing so proves costly due to local resistance or the involvement of extra-hemispheric powers. As a result, the U.S. has frequently tolerated temporary disloyalty among regional actors, refraining from extreme measures against them to avoid exhausting resources needed

for broader strategic objectives – as illustrated by its decades-long policy toward Cuba. Washington has also demonstrated flexibility in the means it employs to secure regional alignment. For example, in the late 1980s, it shifted its approach in Latin America from supporting right-wing authoritarian regimes to facilitating their removal and promoting moderate democratic movements. Both the doctrine and practice of U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere have thus been characterized by a degree of opportunism: an assertive pursuit of control when conditions are favourable, coupled with restraint, and even retrenchment when they are not. U.S. policy toward Venezuela before the recent events closely fits this pattern. Washington's opportunism, shaped in part by oil interdependence, restrained it from pursuing overly radical measures against the Chavista regime during periods of stability. Yet when the regime entered a phase of profound crisis, that same opportunism drove the U.S. toward escalating the conflict to the brink of military intervention – even at the cost of temporarily disrupting oil ties. Ultimately, the shift under Trump 2.0 – from opportunism to sustained assertiveness in the Western Hemisphere, combined with restraint elsewhere, led to crossing even that threshold.

TRUMP'S FOREIGN POLICY REVOLUTION: BACK TO THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Upon returning to the U.S. presidency in 2025, Donald Trump shocked the world with a series of statements targeting the Western Hemisphere. These ranged from proposing to rename the Gulf of Mexico as the American Gulf, to expressing intentions to annex Greenland and the Panama Canal (and even to incorporate Canada as the 51st U.S. state), announcing new tariffs on neighbouring countries, and reviving confrontational rhetoric toward the Venezuelan regime, which, as will be shown, became the clearest case in which he moved from words to deeds. These were not random rhetorical flourishes characteristic of Trump's first term, but rather signals of a more assertive policy toward the Western Hemisphere, embedded within a broader Trump 2.0 revolutionizing U.S. foreign policy away from the pursuit of global hegemony toward a more restrained grand strategy

– paradoxical as it may initially appear. In fact, the reassertion of hegemony in the Western Hemisphere is fully consistent with a more defensive global posture, one aimed not at imposing U.S. dominance worldwide, but at preventing rival powers from achieving hegemony in their own regions. This congruence between realist critiques of liberal hegemony and the practice of the new administration’s foreign policy is most clearly reflected in Trump’s recent National Security Strategy – NSS.

The document opens with an almost academic inquiry into the very meaning of “strategy”, criticizing previous editions for failing to define it adequately. It conceptualizes strategy as “a concrete, realistic plan that explains the essential connection between ends and means”, one that “must evaluate, sort, and prioritize”. Accordingly, the central focus of Trump’s NSS is “the protection of core national interests”, understood as “the purpose of foreign policy”. In contrast, “American strategies since the end of the Cold War... have not clearly defined what we want... and often have misjudged what we should want”. Within this framework, the document offers a clear rejection of the pursuit of global hegemony: “After the end of the Cold War, American foreign policy elites convinced themselves that permanent American domination of the entire world was in the best interest of our country. Yet the affairs of other countries are our concern only if their activities directly threaten our interest” (The White House 2025, 1). The NSS proceeds to define “overall” U.S. interests – such as survival of the U.S. as a sovereign republic, having the most powerful military, the strongest economy, and unrivalled soft power, American “spiritual and cultural health” – before specifying foreign policy interests, framed as “what do we want in and from the world” (The White House 2025, 3–4). In prioritizing among the world regions, the document closely mirrors the prescriptions of realist critics of liberal hegemony. A “reasonably stable and well-governed” Western Hemisphere, “free of hostile foreign incursion or ownerships of key assets”, with ensured U.S. “continued access to key strategic locations” is placed at the top of the hierarchy: “In other words, we will assert and enforce a ‘Trump Corollary’ to the Monroe Doctrine”. Other “United States’ core, vital national interests” include keeping the Indo-Pacific “free and open”, supporting allies

in “preserving the freedom and security” of Europe, and preventing “an adversarial power from dominating the Middle East, its oil and gas supplies... while avoiding the ‘forever wars’” (The White House 2025, 5).

The remainder of Trump’s NSS elaborates a series of principles that mark a clear break with the grand strategy of liberal hegemony in favour of a more restrained foreign policy. Notably, it explicitly endorses balance of power as the opposite of hegemonic logic: “As the United States rejects the ill-fated concept of global domination for itself, we must prevent the global, and in some cases even regional, domination of others”, but “without wasting blood and treasure to curtail the influence of all the world’s great and middle powers”, recognizing that “the outsized influence of larger, richer, and stronger nations is a timeless truth of international relations” (The White House 2025, 10). Applied to regions beyond the Western Hemisphere, this approach translates into a “focus on deterrence to prevent war in the Indo-Pacific”, particularly with regard to Taiwan, alongside “denying aggression anywhere in the First Island Chain”, and preventing any competitor from controlling the South China Sea; the pursuit of “strategic stability” with Russia¹ while encouraging European allies to restore their “civilizational self-confidence” as they “enjoy a significant hard power advantage over Russia by almost every measure, save nuclear weapons” and should therefore not regard it as an existential threat (with this goes “ending the perception, and preventing the reality, of NATO as a perpetually expanding alliance”) and a reorientation of Middle Eastern policy away from experimenting with forcing nations “into abandoning their traditions and historic forms of government” and “fruitless ‘nation-building’ wars” (The White House 2025, 19–29).

Finally, with respect to the Western Hemisphere, “Trump’s Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine” is more closely explained, stating that “after years of neglect, the United States will reassert and enforce the Monroe Doctrine to restore the American pre-eminence”,

¹ U.S.-Russian strategic stability is in line with “controlled confrontation”, an idea already employed during Trump’s first term, but also Biden administration (Proroković 2026, 30–32).

particularly by denying “non-Hemispheric competitors the ability to position forces or other threatening capabilities, or to own or control strategically vital assets”. The objectives in the Western Hemisphere are defined as “enlist and expand”. “Enlist” refers to mobilizing existing friends and partners to advance shared Hemispheric goals, such as migration control, counter-drug-trafficking efforts, or strengthening stability and security. “Expand” entails reaching out to other nations to encourage them to choose the U.S. “as their partner of first choice”, rather than aligning with Washington’s non-Hemispheric competitors: “The choice all countries should face is whether they want to live in an American-led world of sovereign countries and free economies or in a parallel one in which they are influenced by countries on the other side of the world” (The White House 2025, 15–19). In sum, the revolutionizing elements of Trump’s foreign policy relevant to this analysis, as articulated in his NSS, are twofold: first, a shift away from the pursuit of global hegemony toward a more restrained strategy centred on maintaining balances of power in vital non-Hemispheric regions – the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East – thereby conserving resources; and second, a more assertive policy in the Western Hemisphere, aimed at consolidating regional hegemony by expanding alliances and limiting the influence of non-Hemispheric rivals. In this context, Trump’s approach toward Venezuela, once a close partner, now a deeply adversarial, oil-rich state, fits squarely within the broader logic of his foreign policy thinking.

THE UNITED STATES AND VENEZUELA, FROM UNLIMITED COOPERATION TO CONTAINED CONFLICT: THE OMNIPRESENCE OF THE OIL FACTOR

“Oil + Latin America = trouble” would be an apt formula for capturing the Venezuelan issue. The country possesses the largest proven oil reserves in the world – approximately 300 billion barrels (Gallegos 2016, 150). The discovery of oil and the beginning of its exploitation a century ago have remained, to this day, not only the foundation of the Venezuelan economy, but also the core component

of national identity, as well a defining factor in its relationship with the United States (Salas 2015, 1, 4–5, 61–62, 67–68; Kovalik 2019, 33–34). Once Venezuelans recognized the benefits of administering the oil industry on their own, the country effectively became a petro-state, one in which the entire society grew accustomed to spending enormous amounts of unearned fortune extracted from the land (Salas 2015, 78; Gallegos 2016, 21–22, 75–76, 170). Being a petro-state in the Latin American context carried two major implications. First, the Latin American mentality of “anarchist individualism” hindered the efficient management of oil wealth, leading to patterns of overspending and underinvestment (Gallegos 2016, 112–113). Second, the country’s proximity to the powerful United States ensured the Venezuelan oil would remain a special point of interest to the Western Hemisphere’s hegemon. During the Cold War, Venezuela established a very close partnership with the United States, grounded in oil interdependence. Unlike in some other cases in Latin America, this relationship was not primarily exploitative. Under the umbrella of U.S. hegemony, Venezuela was able to use its oil revenues to raise the living standards of its society, develop advanced healthcare and education, maintain low fuel prices, construct the most advanced infrastructure in Latin America, and, since 1958, consolidate a stable two-party democratic system (Naím and Toro 2018, 126–127; Salas 2015, 91–96). Furthermore, during the presidencies of Rómulo Betancourt (1959–1964) and Carlos Andrés Pérez (1974–1979), Venezuela pursued an especially active foreign policy (Mijares 2015, 76–77; Salas 2015, 97–103; Gallegos 2016, 77, 83; Corrales and Romero 2013, 18–19, 119). Washington, for its part, tended to disregard minor political disagreements with Caracas to preserve a stable oil trade, viewing Venezuela as one of its most loyal regional allies.

The situation began to deteriorate rapidly with the decline in oil prices during the 1980s. Venezuela’s previously highest national per capita income in Latin America masked one of the highest inequality rates in the population. Once this income contracted, the burden fell disproportionately on the poorest segments of society, particularly following the introduction of International Monetary Fund – IMF designed neoliberal measures (Salas 2015, 106–107, 118).

In 1989, Pérez was re-elected president after campaigning against such measures, only to fall short on his promises once in office. The sharp increase in public transport prices triggered mass protests in the poorer suburbs of Caracas, prompting the authorities to respond violently, resulting in several hundred deaths in what became known as the “Caracazo massacre”. This generated deep disillusionment of Venezuelans with the country’s political and economic system (Kovalik 2019, 39–41, 53–54; Salas 2015, 110–120; Gallegos 2016, 88–90). The political consequences were swift. In 1992, a failed coup attempt was launched by a leftist movement led by sublieutenant Hugo Chávez, who was subsequently arrested and spent two years in prison before being pardoned. Originally a member of a military unit tasked with suppressing internal unrest, he embraced leftist ideas, viewing the army as a potential vehicle of social transformation. He also cast himself as a continuer of the work of Simón Bolívar, envisioning the liberation of Venezuela – and the rest of Latin America – from U.S. dominance, as well as the emancipation of the poor from the higher classes (Kovalik 2019, 52–55, 58; Salas 2015, 122–128). What he failed to achieve through force, Chávez accomplished through legal political means, winning the 1998 presidential elections decisively by capitalizing on widespread dissatisfaction with the country’s economic and political conditions (Salas 2015, 125–135). The Chavista era in Venezuela – renamed the Bolivarian Republic – thus began, characterized by radical changes in its social, economic, and political systems, as well as a fundamentally altered relationship with Washington.

How and why did the United States allow Venezuela to suddenly shift from being one of its most loyal and valuable regional partners to a major regional challenger? First, despite their close ties, Venezuela and the United States differed significantly in their domestic structures and foreign policy priorities. Washington failed to recognize in time the potential for profound socio-political change in Venezuela once declining oil revenues made social inequalities unsustainable. Furthermore, the end of the Cold War fostered a degree of complacency in U.S. policy toward the Western Hemisphere (Ciccarilo 2016, 25–28). Venezuela proved particularly conducive to the rise of a new leftist political project due to several factors: the element of surprise stemming

from U.S. mistaken assumptions of continued Venezuelan loyalty; Venezuelans' widespread nostalgia for the relative prosperity of the 1970s; the existence of a democratic system that permitted political mobilization without systematic repression of the far left; and the strength and social prestige of the army as an institution (Salas 2015, 9; Corrales and Romero 2013, 124).

In his effort to radically transform Venezuela, Chávez relied on the same flawed model as his predecessors – overspending on oil revenues rather than recognizing that dependence on oil was a problem, not a solution. However, he was lucky – during his rule, global oil prices had another dramatic surge, from ten dollars per barrel in 1998 to 133 dollars in 2008 (Mijares 2015, 77). As a result, Chavismo did deliver tangible social outcomes, particularly through expansive social programs targeting the poorest segments and through agrarian reform. Poverty declined from 49% to 25%, while extreme poverty fell from 21% to 7% (Kovalik 2019, 58–62; Salas 2015, 192–200; Gallegos 2016, 93). At the same time, however, despite the adoption in 1999 of one of the world's most progressive constitutions – expanding the rights of women and indigenous populations and introducing new institutions of participative democracy – the political system in practice moved toward increasing autocracy. Checks and balances were gradually eroded, the army was drawn to the service of the ruling party, and the Supreme Court was packed with loyalists (Salas 2015, 136–139, 167–168; Corrales and Romero 2013, 132–134). The state-owned oil company (Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. – PDVSA), along with most of the economy, was likewise placed under the control of party cadre, which contributed to declining efficiency and paved the way for later economic catastrophe (Naím and Toro 2018, 130; Corrales and Romero 2013, 79, 135–137; Gallegos 2016, 39–40, 94–99, 153).

Of particular relevance here is Chávez's use of oil revenues to sustain not merely an active, but hyperactive foreign policy, guided by three key objectives that were fundamentally at odds with U.S. interests: asserting Venezuela's sovereignty and international status; promoting socialist ideology beyond Venezuelan borders to reshape the ideological orientation of the states in the region; and fostering Latin American integration as a means of reducing dependence on U.S. hegemony and

securing a more autonomous position within an emerging multipolar world order (Romero and Mijares 2016, 182; Mijares 2017, 209–210; Corrales and Romero 2013, 174–175). Although this policy also involved cultivating ties with major global U.S. rivals (Russia, China, “rogue” states like Iran), its primary vector remained regional. Chávez made extensive use of oil revenues as an instrument of what has been termed the “diplomacy of social power”, directing financial and diplomatic support to ideologically similar governments and movements across Latin America. Cuba was the principal beneficiary, receiving subsidized Venezuelan oil in exchange for its qualified military, intelligence, education, and especially healthcare workforce (Corrales and Romero 2013, 17, 26–27, 34–36, 171). Venezuelan support was crucial to the emergence of the “pink tide” – a wave of leftist political leaders and movements critical of U.S. hegemony – and to the rise to power of these leaders and movements in many countries of the region. These included Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, Evo Morales in Bolivia, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, and Fernando Lugo in Paraguay. Caracas also provided support to Manuel Zelaya in Honduras, the Kirchners in Argentina, Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, among other leaders who swept over Latin America in the early twenty-first century (Corrales and Romero 2013, 24–25; Salas 2015, 144). In parallel, Venezuela promoted several alternative frameworks of regional integration, including ALBA (Bolivarian alliance for the people of our America), Petrocaribe (ALBA’s economic component), UNASUR (Union of South American nations), and CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean states) (Romero and Mijares 2016, 180; Mijares 2015, 78–79; Corrales and Romero 2013, 24, 27; Kovalik 2019, 55–56; Salas 2015, 145–146, 151).

Although the United States did not like to see a radical socialist and anti-American leader appearing in its “backyard”, initially it mostly ignored him, until Chávez emerged as its biggest post-Cold War Latin American challenge (Corrales and Romero 2013, 40–46). Signs of a more assertive U.S. approach appeared as early as 2002, when Washington supported conservative opposition protests against Chávez’s reforms to oil and agricultural laws. This culminated in tacit backing for a failed coup attempt, when segments of the military

briefly detained Chávez on Orchila Island, only for the U.S. to back off once his loyalists set him free and restored him to power (Salas 2015, 154–157; Kovalik 2019, 121–122; Mijares 2017, 210; Corrales and Romero 2013, 48–50). Later that same year, Venezuela faced renewed destabilization in the form of a U.S.-supported general PDVSA strike, but it also failed due to the regime’s loyalty among oil workers and Brazilian da Silva’s support for oil to Chávez. Finally, the opposition’s failure to impeach Chávez through the 2004 referendum further consolidated his power (Salas 2015, 158–162). After Chávez repelled this first series of domestic attacks, the U.S. shifted toward a strategy of external containment, strengthening its own regional integration frameworks, supporting removal of some of Chávez’s regional allies from power (like in Haiti and Honduras), and imposing sanctions on Caracas over its military cooperation with U.S. rivals and “rogue states” like Iran, but also over Venezuelan refusal to cooperate with Washington in its war against drug trade (Corrales and Romero 2013, 21–24, 29–31, 52–53, 166; Salas 2015, 143; Kovalik 2019, 132–142).

Nevertheless, the conflict never slipped out of control. On the contrary, since 2007, Washington adopted a more calibrated policy described as “speak quietly, sanction softly”, devised by the State Secretary deputy Thomas Shannon. This strategy involved ignoring Chávez’s rhetoric, downplaying the Venezuelan threat, applying moderate sanctions, and focusing on areas in which the two countries could cooperate (Corrales and Romero 2013, 56–57, 92–98). During the first administration of Barack Obama, the tensions between the U.S. and Venezuela were largely contained. This can be explained by the same factor that had previously underpinned both cooperation and conflict in their relations – oil. Oil interdependence between the U.S. and Venezuela survived throughout Chávez’s rule. Neither decently successful Venezuelan efforts to diversify its oil exports (particularly toward China) nor Washington’s reliance on Middle Eastern supplies could beat geographical proximity of the two countries, in addition to the unique technology that PDVSA-owned U.S. company CITGO possessed for refining extraordinarily thick Venezuelan oil (Romero and Mijares 2016, 182–183; Mijares 2015, 78; Corrales and Romero 2013, 66–72). Thus, oil interdependence proved to be a stabilizing constraint

on U.S.–Venezuelan relations. However, Chávez’s death from cancer in 2013, after he had hand-picked the foreign minister Nicolás Maduro as his successor, soon combined with a series of adverse international developments, would alter the trajectory of the relationship and bring an end to this uneasy coexistence.

THE 2019 PRESIDENTIAL CRISIS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Less than a year after Chávez’s death, the Ukrainian crisis erupted, contributing to a sharp decline in global oil prices and triggering one of the worst economic crises in Venezuela’s history. The country’s GDP (Gross Domestic Product) was soon cut in half, while poverty rose to levels exceeding those that had prevailed when Chávez first came to power. These developments were accompanied by a record-high inflation, shortages of basic consumer goods, and difficulties in the functioning of the healthcare system and the electrical grid (Naím nad Toro 2018, 134–135; Gallegos 2016, 47, 51–52, 99). Maduro, one of the most ideologically hardline members within Chávez’s administration, often described as “Cuban man”, was confirmed as president in the elections he won very narrowly – by just 1.5 percentage points over Henrique Capriles (Salas 2015, 207–210). Lacking Chávez’s charisma, he soon faced authority problems, particularly within the military, which he sought to resolve by stuffing them with cadres sent by the Cuban secret service (Mijares 2015, 80; Naím and Toro 2018, 127). In the years that followed, the centralization of power and the intensification of authoritarian tendencies in Venezuela further intensified. First violent opposition protests against the regime erupted already after Maduro’s election and reemerged in 2014, resulting in dozens of casualties and the arrest of several prominent opposition leaders, including Leopoldo López, María Corina Machado, and Antonio Ledezma (Kovalik 2019, 78; Salas 2015, 213–214; Briceño-Ruiz 2019, 185). In 2015, the opposition won a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly elections. In response, Maduro completely sidelined this body through a series of unconstitutional measures, prompting renewed protests that again resulted in fatalities

(Briceño-Ruiz 2019, 186; Antonopoulos and Cottle 2018, 50–52, 61). To contain unrest, Maduro initiated negotiations with the opposition in the Dominican Republic. After their failure, he called early presidential elections in 2018, which he won decisively (68%) amid a widespread boycott of opposition candidates. The legitimacy of these elections was subsequently rejected by around fifty countries (Antonopoulos and Cottle 2018, 63–64; Briceño-Ruiz 2019, 186–187).

As the economic crisis deepened, accompanied by a massive refugee crisis (approximately three million people left Venezuela), a new wave of the regime's repression followed – particularly following a drone attack on Maduro in August. At the same time, large-scale protests intensified (Pantoulas and McCoy 2019, 397–402). The opposition eventually consolidated in January 2019, when the young attorney Juan Guaidó was elected president of the National Assembly and subsequently declared himself interim president, invoking the Venezuelan constitution (Pantoulas and McCoy 2019, 404; Briceño-Ruiz 2019, 180). Despite his declining domestic popularity, Maduro managed to survive in power following several months of the presidential crisis and a failed coup attempt in April 2019, largely due to the loyalty of the majority of Cuban-infiltrated military and the assistance of pro-Chavista irregular armed groups, known as “colectivos” (Briceño-Ruiz 2019, 188). But not before the crisis acquired a distinctly international dimension. In addition to the catastrophic economic and political situation in the country, the regional environment had become increasingly unfavorable to Maduro's continuation of Chávez's hyperactive foreign policy. During the 2010s, the “pink tide” gave way to a resurgence of right-wing and pro-Washington governments across Latin America, including in some of Venezuela's former allies, such as Bolivia and Ecuador, as well as in major regional powers like Brazil and Argentina (Kovalik 2019, 146–150). These shifting domestic and international conditions created a window for a renewed, more assertive U.S. approach toward Venezuela.

This shift unfolded gradually, during the second term of Obama and, more decisively, during the first term of Donald Trump. At the initiative of Senate “hawks”, most notably Marco Rubio, the Obama administration imposed sanctions on individuals from the Venezuelan

establishment in 2014, expanding them in 2015 after declaring Venezuela an “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States” (Kovalik 2019, 154). The Trump administration not only continued but intensified this policy. Shortly after taking office, Trump met with Lilian Tintori, the spouse of imprisoned opposition leader Leopoldo López. In August 2017, he expanded sanctions, including limiting the Venezuelan government and PDVSA’s access to U.S. financial markets (Camilleri 2018, 189–192). That same month, twelve Latin American countries established the anti-Venezuelan Lima Group, while Trump and his Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, publicly raised for the first time the possibility of military intervention (Pantoulas and McCoy 2019, 402; Camilleri 2018, 194–195). Throughout 2018, particularly after refusing to recognize Maduro’s re-election, the U.S. continued to pressure Caracas. Finally, in early 2019, after Trump and his Vice President Mike Pence signaled their support for Guaidó, Washington took the unprecedented step of imposing sanctions on PDVSA and enacting an oil embargo against Venezuela (Kovalik 2019, 159–160).

Nevertheless, this escalation ultimately proved to be another instance of opportunism in U.S. policy toward Venezuela. Despite repeated threats of military intervention, the Trump administration refrained from crossing that threshold and decided to allow Maduro to survive the crisis. Several factors may explain this restraint. First, the crisis exposed the fragility of Maduro’s regime, leading many observers to believe that its collapse was imminent even without direct military action. Diplomatic isolation – Guaidó was recognized as Venezuela’s legitimate president by more than 50 countries, including many Latin American countries – and economic (particularly oil) sanctions were regarded as potentially sufficient to bring about regime change in the next crisis. Or, as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo remarked: “No food. No medicines. No electricity now. The next is – no Maduro” (Kovalik 2019, 94, 164). Second, the role of extra-Hemispheric great powers, especially Russia, likely contributed to U.S. caution. Moscow had become Venezuela’s primary weapons supplier, which over time served as the foundation of expanded military cooperation between the two countries, including numerous visits of Russian military

planes and ships to Venezuela, as well as the joint military exercises (Romero and Mijares 2016, 184; Corrales and Romero 2013, 32–33). We can only guess whether particularly frequent landings of Russian planes in Venezuela during the peak of the crisis deterred Trump from the intervention. Finally, disagreements within the U.S. security establishment, along with resistance from Washington’s key Latin American partners – particularly after Trump administration senior officials invoked the Monroe Doctrine as one of justifications for potential intervention – may have further constrained policy options (Kovalik 2019, 33). Taken together, these factors (especially the third one) suggest that the Trump administration’s first-term approach to Venezuela remained largely within the bounds of opportunism (Trapara 2021a, 95–97; Trapara 2021b, 158–160). Another circle of waiting for favourable outcome in Venezuela, without resorting to decisive measures, would follow before Washington ultimately embraced a more fundamental shift in its strategy.

FROM BIDEN TO TRUMP 2.0: THE PATH TO AN (UN)EXPECTED OUTCOME

Upon taking office in 2021, the administration of Joseph Biden brought back the grand strategy of liberal hegemony, albeit with a note of tactical pragmatism (Trapara 2021c, 124–125) – once again deprioritized the Venezuelan issue within U.S. foreign policy. The Venezuelan presidential crisis formally came to an end in January 2023, when Guaidó’s term as president of the National Assembly and, with it, his claim to the interim presidency expired. In contrast to Trump’s hawkish approach, the Biden administration placed its hopes on the 2024 Venezuelan presidential elections, encouraging the opposition to unify and pursue a peaceful transition of power. Following renewed dialogue in Barbados, which produced an agreement between the opposition and the Maduro government on electoral conditions, Washington temporarily eased sanctions on the Venezuelan oil sector (Bryngel 2024, 54–55). However, this shift in U.S. policy failed to produce a meaningful change in Venezuela. The regime did not adhere to the terms of the agreement. Although María Corina Machado won

the opposition primaries, she was barred from running. However, her replacement as the unified opposition candidate, Edmundo González Urrutia, according to opposition-released tally sheets covering a large majority of polling stations, secured a decisive victory, reportedly around two-thirds of the votes. This outcome prompted the regime to take an unprecedented step, ordering the central electoral commission to falsify the results. Before 2024, the elections in the Chavista regime were neither free nor fair, given the uneven field between the government and the opposition, but they were never outrightly stolen. Maduro decided to retain a transparent and technologically very advanced system for counting votes, which made fraud at the polling station level very difficult. The logic behind this decision was: if I win, I would be able to rebuff the opposition's accusations of fraud; if I lose, the army would stand by me in cracking down on the protests after the post-election falsification of the results. It was the latter scenario that effectively materialized following the 2024 elections (Corrales and Kronick 2025). Maduro may have assumed that the U.S. would once again refrain from decisive action, but another change in the White House soon got him in for a rude awakening.

As soon as he returned to the office, Trump reinstated a more adversarial stance toward the regime in Caracas, yet this time as part of a broader strategy to reassert U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. The increased salience of Venezuela in U.S. foreign policy was signalled early on the appointment of Marco Rubio, a long-standing critic of Chavismo and a staunch supporter of the Venezuelan opposition, to the positions of Secretary of State and National Security Advisor. The primary justification in Trump's second term for increased pressure on Caracas shifted toward its alleged lack of cooperation in combating drug trafficking. Maduro was labelled as the head of a drug cartel, and Washington authorized strikes against Venezuelan vessels in the Caribbean suspected of transporting drugs to the U.S. soil. In late 2025, these measures were accompanied by a visible U.S. military buildup in the Caribbean. While many observers anticipated a full-scale military intervention aimed at regime change, Trump publicly denied such intentions and even engaged in direct phone communication with Maduro (Messari 2025). A fateful January

3 ultimately revealed Trump's design. Rather than pursuing a costly and potentially destabilizing full-scale intervention, the U.S. opted for a targeted operation aimed at removing the leader while leaving the broader regime structure intact. Conducted on the anniversary of the capture of Manuel Noriega, the operation carried clear symbolic weight. It sent a clear message not only to Venezuela but also to the broader international environment: the United States, under Trump's leadership, claims the Western Hemisphere as its own sphere of influence and is prepared to assert its authority decisively within it.

CONCLUSION: THE KING IS GONE, THE KINGDOM STANDS IN THE EMPEROR'S REALM

Although Trump pursued a hawkish policy toward Venezuela during his first presidential term, he ultimately refrained from military intervention. While plausible explanations for this restraint exist, such as persistence of oil interdependence between the two countries and the mysterious role of Russian planes, they can be subsumed under a broader argument: at that stage, Trump had not yet articulated a coherent grand strategy that would elevate the Western Hemisphere to the top priority, formally proclaim a Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, and thereby justify a more assertive posture toward Venezuela (Trapara 2017). Once such a strategy was formulated, the outcome was a move that symbolically reaffirmed U.S. hegemony in Latin America while leaving the Chavista regime formally in place, at least for the time being. Should the regime cease to cooperate, the U.S. President has already demonstrated both the willingness and the capability to act decisively. Moreover, Trump's signaling of readiness to assume responsibility for administering Venezuela's oil sector – through U.S. companies – marks a significant departure from his earlier reluctance to undertake such a measure (Bahar, Piccone, and Trinkunas 2018, 8).

In this context, it is worth considering whether Trump, only two months after the confrontation with Maduro, deviated from his newly articulated grand strategy by attacking Iran. Although this intervention (still ongoing at the time of writing) differs from the Venezuelan case in

most respects, one notable similarity stands out – the targeted removal of a top leader. In this instance, U.S. forces proved the same skill as in the Caracas operation, by eliminating Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in a matter of hours (in this case by assassination). Intervention against Iran can be partially reconciled with Trump’s overall strategy, as it has been justified as a response to direct threats to U.S. interests and may also be interpreted as an effort to prevent adversarial powers, whether Iran itself as a regional power, or Russia and China as its major great power partners, from dominating the Middle East. However, it also partially constitutes an exception to the strategy. Iran and its regional influence had already been weakened in preceding years, including through earlier strikes on its nuclear infrastructure. Furthermore, the intervention has already exposed gas and oil routes Trump claims to protect at risk, while its possible escalation and threatening Iranian collapse after the regime change could lock the U.S. in a new nation-building “forever war” he seeks to avoid. Explanations for this exception can be found in the long-standing U.S. grudge against the Iranian regime (since the 1979–1980 hostage crisis) and the influence of the Israeli lobby. The broader conclusion, therefore, is that Trump’s attempt at revolutionizing U.S. foreign policy does not represent a linear process. While his approach in the Western Hemisphere displays a high degree of consistency, policies in other regions, particularly in the Middle East, continue to reflect a more complex interplay of change and continuity.

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РЕВОЛУЦИОНИСАЊЕ СПОЉНЕ ПОЛИТИКЕ САД: СЛУЧАЈ ТРАМПОВОГ ПРИСТУПА ВЕНЕЦУЕЛИ**

Резиме

Ограничена америчка војна операција против Венецуеле у јануару 2026, која је резултирала хапшењем венецуеланског председника Николаса Мадуре, отворила је велику дебату међу посматрачима у погледу чинилаца који су водили другу администрацију Доналда Трампа ка преласку линије директне војне конфронтације са чавистичким режимом у Каракасу. У овом раду тврди се да одлука о интервенцији није ни случајна, ни опортунистичка. Она представља део шире велике стратегије, која поставља западну хемисферу као приоритетно подручје америчког интереса, где би Вашингтон требало да потврди своју хегемонију. Раније администрације су нагласак стављале на тежњу ка глобалној хегемонији, док су регионалну узимале здраво за готово, услед чега су биле спремне да донекле толеришу непослушност регионалних актера. У случају Венецуеле, нафтна међузависност је дуго служила као брана ескалацији. Она је успостављена још у време када су САД и Венецуела били блиски партнери, а Каракас водио активну регионалну спољну политику која се углавном поклапала с интересима Вашингтона. Након доласка Уга Чавеза на власт 1998, Венецуела активну спољну политику, финансирану приходима од нафте, претвара у хиперактивну, али овога пута уперену против интереса САД. Ипак, Вашингтон је

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према чавистичком режиму поступао углавном опортунистички, избегавајући радикалније мере, осим у случајевима када би овај режим испољио одређене слабости. Такав случај претходни пут се догодио у председничкој кризи 2019, кад је прва администрација Доналда Трампа привремено прекинула нафтне везе са режимом Чавезовог наследника, Николаса Мадуро, те признала његовог опозиционог ривала, Хуана Гваиду, за легитимног председника, али се ипак уздржала од оружане интервенције. Администрација Џозефа Бајдена вратила се старој политици и ублажила санкције Венецуели, у неиспуњеном очекивању да ће Мадуро моћи да буде смењен на изборима. Док у свом првом мандату Трамп није имао кохерентну велику стратегију, у другом ће је имати, те ће њене основне елементе – потврду хегемоније на западног хемисфери, те уздржанију спољну политику у Европи, Индо-Пацифику и Блиском истоку – изнети у својој Стратегији националне безбедности. Ова стратегија стога је сместила интервенцију у Венецуели у кохерентни оквир регионалне политике. Закључак рада је да Трампов приступ Венецуели илуструје чињеницу да су највидљивији и најконзистентнији исходи његовог ширег настојања да револуционише спољну политику САД присутни на западној хемисфери (за разлику од нпр. Блиског истока, што показује случај Ирана).

Кључне речи: Сједињене Америчке Државе, Доналд Трамп, Венецуела, Николас Мадуро, западна хемисфера, велика стратегија.

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THE ROLE OF PERSONAL PRESTIGE IN DONALD TRUMP'S FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING: THE CASE OF VENEZUELA

(Translation in *Extenso*)

Abstract

The paper analyses the US intervention in Venezuela in 2026 from the perspective of prestige policy, seeking to show that security, economic, and value-based explanations are insufficient to understand the decision of the Donald Trump administration. In this context, the arguments about the fight against “narco-terrorism”, the spread of democracy, the economic interest in Venezuelan oil, and the strengthening of the Monroe Doctrine are critically examined, concluding that they cannot fully explain the scope, manner, and symbolic dimension of the armed action. The paper offers an interpretation of the intervention as a demonstration of US military power in order to affirm Donald Trump's personal political prestige. Relying on classical realism and Hans Morgenthau's concept of prestige, the paper shows that the need for recognition of one's own value remains an important motivational factor for leaders who perceive international politics as an opportunity to prove personal superiority. The intervention in Venezuela is

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interpreted as an action aimed, more than at any real American strategic interest, at confirming Trump's historic role through a demonstration of force and determination.

Keywords: Donald Trump, USA, Venezuela, prestige politics, intervention.

INTRODUCTION

The decades-long crisis in relations between the United States (US) and Venezuela culminated on January 3, 2026, when integrated US military forces in operation "Absolute Resolve" captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife (Barnes, Pager and Schmitt 2026). The captured duo was detained in Brooklyn on charges of "narco-terrorism" (Suares Sang and Hubbard 2026). In the spirit of his earlier claims that Maduro's "days are numbered," President Donald Trump triumphantly described the operation as "bringing a renegade dictator to justice" and announced that the US would govern Venezuela for a limited period of time, guaranteeing safe access to its oil reserves for US companies (Politico 2025; Olay 2026; Aratani 2026). The dramatic escalation of tensions between Washington and Caracas has brought the "rogue" Latin American state back under the full control of "Uncle Sam". Two decades of hostility have ended in a matter of hours. A new example of the old practice of US interventionism in its own backyard has also reignited debates over its rationale. Is it a matter of national security, naked imperialism, regime change, or unscrupulous plunder of natural resources? Are the causes at the level of the international system and the renewal of great power competition, the state, and the special relationship of the US towards Latin America, or are they the personal whims of the returnee to the White House?

This paper aims to highlight the policy of prestige as an important factor in President Trump's decision-making. Specifically, the role that personal prestige played in the US intervention in Venezuela. The methodological approach relies on qualitative content analysis to examine statements by officials, key strategic documents, and other relevant sources. The following chapter is an analysis of different explanations for the US military operation in Caracas,

followed by a definition of the policy of prestige as a framework for interpreting the actions of the US president. The actions of the new administration towards Venezuela are examined in this light, indicating the continued importance of personal characteristics in foreign policy decision-making.

WHAT DOES TRUMP WANT IN VENEZUELA?

The beginning of Donald Trump's second term in the White House has predictably led to greater unpredictability in international politics. Despite the traditional isolationist impulses of the president's favourite slogan, "America First," the new administration's "move fast and break things" approach to foreign policy has chaotically made Washington omnipresent in global crises (Ashford 2025). For a leader who considers uncertainty and the element of surprise, in both business and political careers, to be one of his most potent tools, such a state of affairs is natural (Simić i Živojinović 2019, 290). It consciously increases unpredictability for both rivals and allies, seeking to preserve a wide range of options for the American president. In the whirlwind of the search for a comprehensive explanation of Trump's approach to foreign policy, possible motives for intervention in Venezuela have become a matter of dispute. What prompted the US president to deploy military power, leading to Maduro's capture?

The first formal reason, frequently cited by administration officials, is to protect the United States from drug trafficking, of which the Venezuelan president and his wife are accused. According to this interpretation, Maduro and other high-ranking officials of his regime not only facilitated the flow of drugs through Venezuela but also personally led a criminal organisation known as the "Cartel de los Soles," which Washington designated as a terrorist organisation late last year (Rubio 2025). The intervention was aimed at protecting American citizens from dangerous substances, for whose smuggling, according to President Trump, this Latin American country is largely responsible (Qiu 2026). This also fits into the broader rhetorical narrative of the returnees to the Oval Office about the "war" against drug cartels pompously announced during the election campaign (Blackburn Hudspeth et al. 2024).

However, Maduro's removal will not have a significant impact on the overdose epidemic caused by the illegal drug trade in the United States. Venezuela's overall role as a production site and a trafficking route for the two banned substances most frequently cited by Washington, cocaine and fentanyl, is minor. Almost all of the world's cocaine production takes place in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, while Mexico plays a key role in transit to the United States (Munir 2026). Last year's report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime shows that Venezuela figures as a regional transportation route, but it is not one of the primary producers of cocaine, nor a central smuggling corridor (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC] 2025). Fentanyl, on the other hand, is mainly produced in Mexico, using chemicals from China, after which it is illegally transported across the US-Mexico border (Munir 2026). Venezuela's role in this supply chain is virtually non-existent (Munir 2026). Furthermore, the notorious "Cartel de los Soles" is more fiction than reality. The term has been familiar to the Venezuelan public since the early 1990s, when it was used to refer to alleged links between high-ranking military officials and the drug trade (Antillano 2026). However, in the absence of evidence of clear vertical integration that would allow for control of production and drug trafficking routes, it is difficult to speak of a defined criminal organisation. This is probably why the indictment against Maduro and his wife does not even mention the alleged cartel (Vigna 2026). Another contradiction in the administration's overall anti-drug agenda is the fact that President Trump pardoned the former leader of Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernández, who was convicted of smuggling over 400 tons of cocaine into the United States (Yousif 2025). Such a decision suggests that punishing those responsible for drug-related crimes is not a central priority for Washington, nor a plausible explanation for the armed intervention in Caracas.

Another reason for intervention cited by administration officials and some authors is to secure access to Venezuela's natural resources, primarily oil (Johnson 2026; Murphy and McManus 2026). This Latin American country has the largest proven reserves of "black gold" in the world, but the gradual process of nationalisation during the rule of Hugo Chávez almost completely pushed American capital out of that economic sector (Worldometer 2026; Koivumäki 2015). Immediately

after the intervention, Trump emphasised that Caracas would hand over up to 50 million barrels of oil to Washington and encouraged major oil companies to invest at least 100 billion dollars in Venezuelan infrastructure to facilitate the extraction of this important resource (Epstein and Chia 2026; Aratani 2026). Should we look for the key reason for the intervention in this? Did the opportunity for the return of American oil oligopolists shape Washington's foreign policy?

This interpretation overstates the importance and role of Venezuelan oil. Despite holding almost a fifth of global reserves, Venezuela accounts for less than 1% of total daily barrel production (Financial Times 2026). An important reason for this is that most of it is heavy crude oil, which is extremely demanding and expensive to extract, transport, and process (Domonoske 2026). In addition, rebuilding and modernising the damaged infrastructure to double production would, according to estimates, require a long-term investment of 115 billion dollars, approximately three times the combined capital expenditures of the two largest US oil companies, ExxonMobil and Chevron (Financial Times 2026). In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the head of Exxon claims that Venezuela is currently unprofitable for investment (Kimball 2026). Even if oil production were to increase dramatically, without increasing demand, lower prices could hit many smaller US oil companies (Financial Times 2026). In addition, Trump's pompously announced, and at first glance impressive, 50 million barrels of oil is less than what is produced in the US in four days, and their total value, at current prices, would not reach three billion dollars (Jain 2026). Hopes that Washington will profit enormously from Venezuelan oil are illusory.

The third explanation for the intervention refers, directly or indirectly, to the American practice of regime change, drawing an analogy with the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, or Panama in 1989, when Manuel Noriega was overthrown (O'Sullivan 2026; Gonzalez 2026; Haass 2026). These authors point to the lessons of Iraq and the challenges that accompany any attempt to overthrow an authoritarian regime through military intervention and the long-term control of a foreign state's affairs. Claims of such intentions are partially supported by some of Trump's statements about governing Venezuela until a safe transition to legitimate authority is possible

(Olay 2026). The term “legitimate authority”, in line with earlier interpretations of the US’s ambitious strategy of “liberal hegemony”, which, in the unipolar era, implied military interventionism masked by rhetoric about the protection of human rights (Mearsheimer 2018; Stekić 2025, 128–129), could technically refer to the establishment of democratic institutions in Caracas.

However, the idea that foreign policy was shaped by any pretensions to a fundamental regime change and democratisation of this Latin American country was quickly refuted by practice. The best indicator of this is that Maduro was replaced by his Vice President, Delcy Eloína Rodríguez Gómez, rather than by an opposition figure, such as Nobel Peace Prize laureate María Corina Machado, whom Trump said was “not respected” in Venezuela (Adams 2026). In addition, the US administration has ruled out any possibility of a political transition through early elections, claiming that the country is not ready for such a thing (Davis 2026). All this suggests that this is not a matter of regime change, but of personnel changes within the regime. The servile Rodríguez replaced the recalcitrant Maduro. It seems that in this case, the legitimate authority, from the White House’s perspective, is the one loyal to Washington.

A fourth explanation refers to the renewed importance of the Monroe Doctrine for the new American administration (Long and Schulz 2026; Grey 2026). The 1823 proclamation of the fifth US President, James Monroe, has influenced Washington’s policy in the Western Hemisphere for more than two centuries, in various phases and forms. In his address to Congress in 1823, he unilaterally emphasised that “the American continents, by reason of the free and independent position which they have adopted and which they maintain, shall not henceforth be considered as objects of colonisation by any European power” (Sexton 2011, 3). It initially appeared to be a very paradoxical document. On the one hand, the proclamation was much more the aspiration of a young republic, which had not risen to the rank of a great power, than an applicable policy. Formed under the influence of the European constellation after the Napoleonic Wars, the doctrine was, at that stage, more a reflection of American insecurity in the face of renewed interventionism on the Old Continent than of self-confidence. On the other hand, despite its distinctly anti-colonial tone

and opposition to the European presence in the Western Hemisphere, at its core, from the very beginning, the United States imperial ambitions lurked (Sexton 2011, 3). It was, in the words of historian William Appleman Williams, “imperial anti-colonialism” (Sexton 2011, 5). By the end of the 19th century, it was clear that the first part of this phrase had prevailed. Thus, in 1895, US Secretary of State Richard Olney could claim that “the United States of America is practically sovereign on this continent, and its word is law in those matters in which it chooses to intervene” (Gilderhus 2006, 10). The key influence on the development of the Monroe Doctrine in the first half of the 20th century was exerted by two Roosevelts. The first, Theodore, with his famous addition to the doctrine, strengthened its militant and interventionist dimension. For him, the almost natural mission of “civilised nations” required assuming the role of international policeman in America’s neighbourhood (Gilderhus 2006, 11). Such an approach, along with the alleged concern for order, served Washington’s strategic and economic interests. His cousin Franklin, on the other hand, shifted the doctrine from the “Big Stick” to the “Good Neighbour” policy. Rejecting interventionism and interference in the internal affairs of Latin American states, he emphasised reciprocal trade agreements and new commercial opportunities (Gilderhus 2006, 13). The softer approach was aimed at repairing the United States image in the Western Hemisphere before World War II, which was looming large amid the rise of fascism in Europe and Japan’s imperial ambitions. During the Cold War, the doctrine was interpreted in the light of the global competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, and its interventionist component was frequently used as a weapon against leftist or pro-Soviet governments in South and Central America (Gilderhus 2006, 14–16). After the end of the rivalry between the two superpowers, despite proclamations of “the end of the Monroe Doctrine era,” as US Secretary of State John Kerry claimed in 2013, the Monroe Doctrine continued to influence Washington’s policy toward its backyard (Naranjo Caceres and Brincat 2025).

The second administration of President Trump, like the first, attaches special importance to this doctrine in its strategic documents and official statements. Thus, the National Security Strategy of 2025 emphasises that the United States will “consolidate and implement

the Monroe Doctrine to restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere” (The White House 2025, 15). The document also emphasises that Washington will “prevent competitors outside the Hemisphere from deploying military forces or other threatening capabilities, as well as from possessing or controlling strategically vital resources in our Hemisphere” (The White House 2025, 15). This “Trump’s corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine is presented in the strategy as a return to key American security interests. Additionally, in a press conference following Maduro’s abduction, President Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio used the intervention in Venezuela as an opportunity to threaten other Western Hemisphere states such as Cuba, Mexico, and Colombia (Johnson 2026). So is the need to re-establish American hegemony in its own backyard the key reason for the intervention in Venezuela? Perhaps Caracas international partnerships, including the two great powers, China and Russia, posed a real threat to US strategic interests?

Since Maduro did not create Venezuela’s foreign policy approach but rather took over and continued that of his predecessor, Hugo Chávez, it is important to look back at that period of the “Bolivarian Revolution” and its consequences for Caracas’s relations with Moscow and Beijing. During his long reign, faced with the characteristic choice of Latin American states between aligning with Washington and seeking greater autonomy, Chávez adopted the latter approach (Mijares 2017, 207). His key foreign policy priorities were related to the preservation of national independence, both political and economic, but also to the promotion of a multicentric and multipolar international order. In this context, the US was identified as the main threat to Chávez’s project, while developing relations with Eurasian powers, Russia and China, was a necessary component of achieving greater autonomy (Mijares 2017, 213). Cooperation with Moscow developed in the economic and military spheres, and was accompanied by important political symbolism. For Chávez, Russia, especially since Putin’s speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, represented a great power that shared his view on the necessity of countering American dominance, an actor that could be presented to the public as a strong partner in building a different international order (Rouvinski 2019, 4). The Kremlin, on the other hand, in cooperation with Venezuela, received

symbolic confirmation of the return to the status of a global power, after the humiliation that accompanied the collapse of the USSR and the drastic loss of influence at the end of the last century (Rouvinski 2019, 12). However, modern Russia is not the Soviet Union; it was not ready to play the role of patron in relation to Venezuela that the communist colossus had towards Cuba during part of the Cold War (Rouvinski 2019, 12). The performative and symbolic importance of cooperation often exceeded its real, material scope, as shown by the fact that, of the over 200 agreements, contracts, and memoranda of understanding signed between Moscow and Caracas, many, in practice, remained mere words on paper (Rouvinski 2019, 15). Therefore, despite the significant development of relations between the two states since the beginning of the 21st century, the limitations were clear. Another major power with which Caracas has intensified its cooperation is China, which has primarily sought to position itself as an important economic partner for this Latin American country. Energy has played a central role in the development of these relations. Thus, oil exports from Venezuela to the Chinese market increased by 39% between 1999 and 2016 (Mijares 2017, 215). The continuity of this trend is also demonstrated by the fact that Beijing was by far the largest importer of Venezuelan oil in 2025 (Javaid 2026). However, in terms of total imports of this energy source into China, Venezuela participates with less than 5% (Javaid 2026). This suggests that Caracas has remained a minor energy partner for Beijing, despite the long-term trend of developing relations in this sector. In this context, Venezuela's strategic importance to China remained limited. Despite the obvious limitations, relations with these two great powers served for Chávez, and then for Maduro, primarily as a symbolic signal of the success of building greater autonomy from the traditional regional hegemon. Overall, Caracas based its foreign policy on an anti-imperialist and autonomous platform, which implied strengthening cooperation with Russia and China to balance the United States.

However, these relations did not pose a threat to Washington's security interests, either qualitatively or quantitatively. Venezuela was not close to becoming a military proxy for Russia or China in the Western Hemisphere, nor did the extent of their cooperation challenge US regional dominance. In addition, Caracas has been under

US sanctions for more than a decade, which have contributed to the country's overall economic crisis (Teixeira 2019). The country's gross domestic product (GDP) fell by approximately three-quarters between 2014 and 2021; debt is estimated at more than 150 billion dollars; hyperinflation reached 190% in 2023; and the budget is almost two-thirds financed by oil exports (Roy and Cheatham 2024). The Venezuelan military, despite acquiring Russian weapons, continued to face serious challenges in training personnel and maintaining equipment (Padinger 2025). The situation was also complicated by political instability, which intensified after the 2024 presidential elections, which were followed by accusations of ballot-box stuffing in favour of Maduro (CBS News 2024). The combination of these factors has made Venezuela an extremely fragile state. After all, the clearest demonstration of this is the operation of January 3, 2026, in which the president and his wife were captured in a few hours, without American casualties (Barnes, Pager and Schmitt 2026). That Venezuela could not count on any external support was clear from the reactions of Russia and China to Washington's intervention, which were limited to verbal condemnation of the use of force against a sovereign state (Lewis 2026). In this way, the limited scope of the relations that Caracas had built with Moscow and Beijing was once again confirmed. The United States undoubted military primacy in its neighbourhood was also confirmed. As Stephen Walt notes, no other great power has or is actively trying to establish a significant military role in the Western Hemisphere (Walt 2026). Overall, Venezuela and its international partnerships have not seriously undermined the United States regional position or threatened the Monroe Doctrine. Therefore, explanations that invoke the need for its reaffirmation as a key reason for the intervention, although they provide a partial picture of the new administration's strategic orientation, are not sufficient.

This chapter points out certain shortcomings in the frequently asked questions about what Trump wants in Venezuela. If the most commonly used arguments provide only a partial picture of American motivations, doubts remain. The aim of the next chapter is to offer a theoretical framework for interpreting the actions of the American president.

POLICY OF PRESTIGE

According to Kenneth Waltz's three Images of international politics, existing explanations locate the key causes of intervention at the level of the structure of the international system, namely the renewal of great power competition and the need to consolidate regional hegemony in the Western Hemisphere, or at the level of the state, where American interests are viewed through various prisms, from the fight against drug trafficking to the exploitation of Venezuelan natural resources and the practice of changing recalcitrant regimes (Waltz 2001). The perspective that has been neglected is the individual. The tendency of structural analyses to point to a small number of very important features of international relations can sometimes obscure the role of the personal factor in political decision-making. This, of course, means that the leaders themselves play an important role, a role often given very little space in neorealist theory, even though any study of history suggests that it is also the history of great men (Živojinović 2008, 370). As Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollak note, "explaining international relations without paying attention to people like Hitler, Bismarck, Napoleon, and other notable figures is like trying to understand art or music without studying Michelangelo and Mozart" (Byman and Pollak 2001, 145). In this case, it is necessary to show what President Trump's ambitions and goals are. One concept that can help in this, represented in the thinking of political philosophers and also of politicians, who can be defined as realists in a broader sense, is prestige.

In the context of ancient Greece and the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides cites "safety, honour, and self-interest" as powerful motives for action (Markey 1999, 135). Niccolò Machiavelli notes that the greatest harms are to "property, blood, or honour" (Markey 1999, 135). For Thomas Hobbes, fame, along with competition and distrust, is one of the fundamental causes of interpersonal conflict (Markey 1999, 135). Jean-Jacques Rousseau, making a distinction between self-love, which seeks exclusively to fulfil essential human needs, and envy, the basis of which is continuous comparison with others, emphasises that the latter, which develops in the context of social existence, causes mutual competition, thus making the pursuit of prestige an indispensable part

of human activity (Markey 1999, 138). Reinhold Niebuhr identifies prestige as an “indispensable source of power” (Kim 2004, 40). Honour and fame, that is, the pursuit of eminence, recognition by others, which is the essence of prestige, for these thinkers represent one of the central components of interpersonal relations. The same motif is present in the thinking of several statesmen, from Richelieu, Bismarck, Kennan, to Acheson, who considers prestige to be “the shadow cast by power” (Kim 2004, 40).

One of the founders of modern international relations, Raymond Aron, also considers prestige and glory to be important elements of politics (Aron 2001). He points out that the eternal goals that states strive for are security, power, and glory (Aron 2001, 106–107). Regarding their interaction, Aron notes that: “neither security nor power satisfies the aspirations of communities: each wants to defeat the others, to be recognised as superior by its rivals. Political units have their own self-love, just like individuals, perhaps even more sensitively. Therefore, they sometimes substitute the intoxication of victory for the advantages of a negotiated peace” (Aron 2001, 110). The embodiment of such a desire at the individual level is Louis XIV, who: “probably loved glory as much as power” (Aron 2001, 108). The wars he waged, due to their high material and human costs, even reduced France’s relative power, but they significantly contributed to shaping France’s image and, even more so, that of the “Sun King” himself. We find a similar motivation in Emperor Napoleon III in his efforts to be accepted as legitimate and equal to other European rulers, expecting fellow monarchs to address him as “brother”, in the same way they addressed each other (Kisindžer 2016, 102). These are two differentiated examples of the same need for recognition of status, for fame and respect.

Examples of similar actions are also evident in the history of other great powers. Andrei Tsygankov shows that national honour played an important role in relations between Russia and the West from Tsar Alexander I to Putin (Tsygankov 2012). Russia had possessed the material capabilities of a great power since the time of Peter the Great’s conquests, but it was only with the Peace of Teschen in 1779, which ended the War of the Bavarian Succession, that its status was recognised by other relevant actors in Europe. The Soviet Union was diplomatically isolated for much of the interwar period, until just before

the start of World War II, despite possessing the material resources of a great power. Prestige has a long tradition of being particularly important to the great powers in the system. Similarly, Sergey Radchenko explains the actions of Soviet political elites during the Cold War by their striving for legitimacy, or recognition, both within the international communist movement and by the other superpower (the USA) with which they were in a truly global competition (Radchenko 2024). From the Soviet perspective, according to Radchenko, this competition was a struggle for Hegelian recognition as the master not only of the current international order but also, in a philosophical sense, of history (Radchenko 2024). A similar motivation is often attributed to the current Russian leadership. Thus, Vladimir Trapara, in addition to the state-level prestige policy aimed at affirming Russia as a great power on the international stage, sees in the decision to launch the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, a personal search for prestige by President Putin, to secure his own place in the history of great Russian leaders (Trapara 2025, 23). Chinese foreign policy is also increasingly viewed through the logic of prestige-seeking and status competition in international relations (Pan and Mao 2025; Deng 2008). In addition, the competition between the USA and China is viewed through the prism of the struggle for the top of the international prestige hierarchy in which the challenger seeks to replace the previous hegemon, and the central stage of this competition is the Asian continent (Foong Khong 2019).

For this paper, the best definition of prestige as a policy was provided by Hans Morgenthau. For him, it is an essential element of relations between individuals and nations (Morgentau 2014, 75). As part of such an understanding, he also notes that, in domestic, but also in international politics, “the desire for social recognition is a powerful dynamic force that determines social relations and creates social institutions” (Morgentau 2014, 75). In this process, the individual “tends to receive from his environment confirmation of the values he attributes to himself” and through this recognition “that others show for his goodness, intelligence and power, he becomes fully aware of what he considers his superior qualities; only in this way can he fully enjoy them” (Morgentau 2014, 75). Based on this: “in the struggle for existence and power – which, as we know, is the basic material of the social world – what others think of us is as important as what we

actually are” (Morgentau 2014, 75). In this context, the primary goal of prestige policy is to leave an impression on other nations and project an image of one’s own power and superiority. Its two main instruments are diplomatic ceremonial, which, in the broadest sense, encompasses all forms of symbolic and status representation of a country, and the demonstration of military power to impress other actors (Morgentau 2014, 76–81).

Morgenthau also lists two ultimate goals of this policy: prestige as an end in itself or as support for the policy of imperialism or the preservation of the existing status quo (Morgentau 2014, 81). He considers the second goal to be more frequent, emphasising that it is then a necessary element of a rational foreign policy, whereas in analysing the first, he implicitly draws an important distinction between the prestige of the states themselves and that of the individuals who lead them (Morgentau 2014, 83). Thus, he emphasises that “it is no coincidence that only conceited egocentrists tend to apply the policy of prestige for its own sake” (Morgentau 2014, 82). As blatant examples of such actions in the 20th century, he cites Wilhelm II and Benito Mussolini, who: “Intoxicated by their newly acquired power in their country... viewed international politics as a kind of personal sport in which exaltation for their own nation and humiliation of others were considered their personal superiority” (Morgentau 2014, 82). Narcissists in leadership positions frequently combine their own fanaticism with collective narcissism and nationalist radicalism (Subotić 2025, 30). As one of the key weaknesses of such a policy of prestige, especially in authoritarian or highly personalised regimes, he emphasises the tendency to confuse personal glory with a country’s national interests (Morgentau 2014, 82). In such situations, Morgenthau’s distinction between rational and irrational pursuit of prestige is relativised “because it depends on whether rationality is assessed from the perspective of the state or its ruler” (Trapara 2025, 23).

TRUMP’S QUEST FOR PRESTIGE

The above definition of policy of prestige can also shed light on Trump’s personal ambitions and actions. For a leader who, during the 2024 election campaign, described himself as the greatest president in

American history, above Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, prestige is clearly significant (Walt 2025). Moreover, a few leaders are so obsessed with their own image and desire to project a picture of power and personal superiority. This is clearly demonstrated both domestically and internationally. First, some of the obvious examples of the need to leave a personal mark everywhere are the renaming of the “Kennedy Center” to the “Trump-Kennedy Center” or the Institute for Peace to the “Donald J. Trump Institute of Peace”, the demolition of part of the East Wing of the White House to build a grandiose ballroom, and the proposal to build an American version of the Arc de Triomphe, which the US President already predicts will be “the largest and most beautiful in the world” (Asiedu and Debusmann Jr 2025; Gabbatt 2026; Politika 2026). Similar manifestations of the search for symbolic recognition of one’s own importance, but in the international arena, are evident in Trump’s repeatedly stated desire to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 2025 or his insistence on the renewal of global respect for the US under his leadership (Pager 2025; Benen 2026). The significance of this has been noted by other world leaders who regularly use appeasement tactics in their interactions with him in the hope of curbing the American president’s impulses (Psaropoulos 2025).

Beyond symbolic gestures, how has Trump’s quest for fame influenced US foreign policy? Already during his first term, a number of the administration’s foreign policy decisions were driven by prestige motives (Glaser 2018, 183). However, this moment, and especially its personal dimension, is qualitatively more pronounced after Trump’s return to the White House. The second term is generally when American presidents reflect most on their legacy. An important insight into how the current American president is beginning to consider his place in history is provided by Ashley Parker and Michael Scherer’s text, based on interviews with Trump associates (Parker and Scherer 2026). They note that Trump is not overly interested in legacy in the classical sense. He is a man of the moment, someone who cares much more about his historical significance being recognised while he is alive than about being celebrated *post mortem*. Thus, during the 2024 campaign, when one of his trustees pointed out to him that he should choose someone who could continue the political movement in the long term, Trump reportedly replied that he did not care because he would be dead (Parker

and Scherer 2026). This suggests that the traditional legacy, that is, the way his terms will be discussed in a hundred or more years, is not a priority for the American president. However, empowered by a major political comeback and relieved of the worry of reelection, he is increasingly beginning to see himself in the context of one of the most powerful men who ever lived, one who did things that others could not, primarily thanks to his brute force and unwavering will (Parker and Scherer 2026). Trump has almost certainly never read Hegel, but having heard of his concept of “world-historical figures”, actors of the *zeitgeist* who changed the course of human history, he no longer limits himself to the counterpart of Washington and Lincoln, but sees himself as the successor of Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Napoleon (Parker and Scherer 2026). Hegel’s immortal trio consists of “practical, political men” who, in their eras, broke norms and were accused of behaviour “subject to moral condemnation”, which the current US president is often accused of (Parker and Scherer 2026). Megalomaniac tendencies have been further strengthened by assassination attempts that Trump believes are directed only against significant figures (Parker and Scherer 2026). They have created an additional halo of untouchability, the belief that he is a man of destiny, preordained for great deeds. It goes without saying that this self-perception is a blatant example of Morgenthau’s claim about leaders intoxicated by newfound power and provides fertile ground for foreign policy adventurism.

How did this view of the American president’s own importance affect the intervention in Venezuela? Let us return to two specific instruments of prestige policy for Morgenthau. The operation in Caracas is clearly not a diplomatic ceremonial, but a demonstration of American military power. Did it serve prestige as an end in itself, or did it seek to support the policy of imperialism? As shown, Venezuela did not represent a serious stronghold for other great powers in the Western Hemisphere, nor did it threaten the regional dominance of the US, or require the reaffirmation of the Monroe Doctrine. Its natural resources or role in the illegal drug trade are also of secondary importance. After all, there are indications that Maduro himself was ready to hand over existing and future oil and gold projects to American companies, redirect oil exports from China to the US, and cancel his country’s energy and mining contracts with Russian, Chinese, and

Iranian firms (Kurmanaev, Barnes and Turkewitz 2025). This means that even these limited and largely symbolic American interests could have been achieved without intervention. All of this suggests that this is primarily an armed action for prestige's sake. Not the prestige of the US as a state, but the prestige of a president who often sees international politics as a "personal sport", a struggle for individual superiority and recognition of one's own power and value. In this context, it is possible to conceptualise American intervention in Venezuela as a form of policy of prestige, guided by the impulses of a "conceited egocentric", which is an end in itself.

CONCLUSION

Asked after the operation in Venezuela about possible limitations on his global power, Trump, bypassing not only international law but also American interests, emphasised that only his personal morality could stop him (Sanger et al. 2026). This is a picture of a highly personalised foreign policy and a leader who sees the state, among other things, as an instrument for achieving personal glory. This paper shows the importance of this component in the US president's decision to intervene in Venezuela in early 2026.

Beyond the Caracas operation, the relevance of the policy of prestige as a broader framework for interpreting US strategy in Donald Trump's second term is questionable. In this regard, several preliminary guidelines can be noted. On the one hand, at the highest level of grand strategy, structural influences retain their primacy in an international system transitioning from unquestioned unipolarity to unbalanced multipolarity. Here, traditional great power competition, especially geoeconomic competition with China, continues to dominate. On the other hand, at the level of individual foreign policy decisions or rhetoric towards allies and rivals, the prestige policy framework can provide important insights into the actions of the US president. Aren't Trump's announcements about the potential annexation of Greenland motivated, at least partially, by the desire to be the first US president in the 21st century to territorially expand the US, rather than by any real security threat? Additionally, in discussing his decision to go to war, together with Israel, against Iran, Trump stated that he did "what

no other president has had the courage to do”, presenting the attack as a demonstration of unprecedented decisive leadership (Hari 2026). The examples cited suggest that the quest for prestige is a constant feature of the US president’s foreign policy. During 2025, it was primarily focused on building an image as a peacemaker destined to be immortalised by the Nobel Peace Prize. When that failed, he sought recognition of his own greatness through a series of high-handed actions from the beginning of 2026. From the intervention in Venezuela to threats of annexation of Greenland and the war against Iran, Trump has largely subordinated US foreign policy to personal prestige, convinced of his own historic mission.

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УЛОГА ЛИЧНОГ ПРЕСТИЖА У СПОЉНОПОЛИТИЧКОМ ОДЛУЧИВАЊУ ДОНАЛДА ТРАМПА НА ПРИМЕРУ ВЕНЕЦУЕЛЕ

Резиме

Овај рад пружа критичку анализу војне интервенције Сједињених Америчких Држава у Венецуели 3. јануара 2026. године, познате као операција „Апсолутна одлучност”. Основни циљ истраживања је да покаже да су традиционална објашњења усмерена на националну безбедност, економске интересе и промоцију демократских вредности недовољна да би се у потпуности објаснили обим, тајминг и симболичка природа одлуке Трампове администрације да зароби председника Николаса Мадуре. Уместо тога, студија предлаже теоријску интерпретацију засновану на класичном реализму, конкретно на концепту политике престижа Ханса Моргентхауа. Рад почиње деконструкцијом званичних оправдања која је понудила вашингтонска администрација. Прво од њих, борба против „нарко-тероризма”, оспорава се анализом података о глобалној трговини дрогом. Показује се да је улога Венецуеле у производњи и транзиту кокаина и фентанила мала у поређењу са Колумбијом или Мексиком, те да је „Картел де лос Солес” (*Cartel de los Soles*) углавном реторички конструкт који се користи за оправдање интервенције. Надаље, преиспитује се стратешки циљ обезбеђивања огромних резерви нафте у Венецуели. Студија открива да огромни трошкови модернизације руиниране венецуеланске инфраструктуре и тешка природа њене сирове нафте чине непосредну економску добит за америчке нафтне компаније илузорном. Што се тиче мотива „промене режима” и демократизације, рад истиче значајну противречност:

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интервенција није довела до демократске транзиције нити до јачања венецуеланске опозиције. Уместо тога, Мадуро је замењен послушнијом фигуром из оквира постојећег режима, потпредседником Делси Родригез, што сугерише да је примарна брига била лојалност Вашингтону, а не институционалне реформе. Коначно, рад се бави „Трамповом допуном” Монроове доктрини. Закључује се да је, иако је администрација настојала да се супротстави руском и кинеском утицају, присуство ових сила у Венецуели било првенствено симболично и није представљало стварну војну претњу америчкој регионалној хегемонији. Основна теза рада је да се интервенција најбоље разуме као демонстрација моћи намењена афирмацији личног политичког престижа Доналда Трампа. Ослањајући се на Волцову „прву слику” међународних односа, индивидуални ниво, указује се да Трамп доживљава међународну арену као позорницу за личну валидацију и доказивање супериорности. Операција „Апсолутна одлучност” служила је као политика престижа, где војна сила није коришћена за опипљиве стратешке добитке, већ као симболички инструмент за учвршћивање Трамповог историјског наслеђа и слике одлучног глобалног лидера. У закључку, рад тврди да психолошки фактори на индивидуалном нивоу и потреба за признањем остају моћни покретачи спољне политике. Случај Венецуеле показује да у савременој ери тежња за престижом може надмашити материјалне националне интересе, водећи ка драматичним војним акцијама осмишљеним више због њиховог симболичког утицаја него због геополитичке неопходности.

Кључне речи: Доналд Трамп, САД, Венецуела, политика престижа, интервенција.

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GREENLAND'S SECURITY
AND ENERGY POLICY

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SECONDARY NATIONAL SECURITY: A CASE STUDY OF GREENLAND**

(Translation in *Extenso*)

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between sovereignty and national security by questioning the assumption that they depend on one another. This paper aims to conceptualize secondary national security within the broader theoretical framework of Security Studies associated with the Copenhagen School and Stephen Krasner's understanding of sovereignty, and to apply this concept as an analytical framework in a qualitative case study of Greenland. The analysis demonstrates that national security can exist in the absence of full sovereignty through a configuration in which security provision is externalized, while security perception and the political articulation of security remain internalized. Greenland illustrates how political entities lacking independent military capabilities nevertheless develop autonomous security perceptions and security priorities. The findings indicate that security perception and provision can be institutionally separated yet politically interconnected. The paper concludes that national security is not a fixed, inherent

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attribute of a sovereign state, but rather a variable, context-dependent phenomenon. For this reason, the concept of secondary national security provides a useful analytical framework for studying security practices under conditions of limited statehood.

Keywords: secondary national security, sovereignty, limited statehood, security governance, Greenland, security perceptions, externalization of security.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of national security has long been viewed as inseparable from the sovereign state. Certain classical and contemporary approaches within Security Studies assume that the state, as a political entity exercising supreme authority over a defined territory and population, serves as the primary referent object and the principal provider of security (Buzan 1991, 65; Walt 1991, 212). Within this framework, sovereignty is not merely a legal attribute, but also a practical precondition for the formulation and implementation of national security policy, primarily because of its connection with the monopoly over the legitimate use of force.

However, the development of contemporary security studies, particularly following the broadening and deepening of the concept of security and the emergence of critical approaches, has expanded the range of referent objects of security, which, in addition to the state, may also include individuals, social groups, nations, regional communities, economic systems, and even the biosphere (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). In this context, the paper proceeds from the assumption that certain non-sovereign or partially sovereign political entities may also constitute significant referent objects of security under conditions of geopolitical competition and strategic dependence. The concept of secondary national security is introduced as an analytical framework for understanding these configurations.

Yet, developments in contemporary international relations increasingly call this assumption into question. The expansion of global governance structures, the proliferation of politically autonomous territories, and the growing complexity of security interdependence

have produced entities that do not fully correspond to the traditional model of sovereign statehood (Lake 2009, 18). Although such entities frequently lack independent military capabilities and do not exercise full control over their external security, they nonetheless articulate distinct security perceptions, priorities, and policy preferences.

This apparent mismatch between political authority and security capabilities raises a key analytical question: can national security exist in the absence of full sovereignty? This paper proceeds from the assumption that national security is not necessarily a function of full sovereignty, but rather the result of specific institutional and political configurations.

In response, this paper introduces the concept of secondary national security. The term refers to a form of security that emerges within political entities lacking full sovereign authority, especially in the domain of defense, but which still retain the ability to define and pursue their own security interests. In such configurations, security is at least partially externalized, typically guaranteed by a sovereign state, while the perception and articulation of security remain, to a significant extent, internal.

The paper analyzes Greenland, an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark, as an illustrative example. Greenland represents a particularly instructive case due to its combination of extensive internal self-government, the absence of independent military capacity, and its growing relevance within the Arctic region (Rahbek-Clemmensen 2017, 55). While Denmark formally retains responsibility for defense and foreign policy, Greenland has increasingly developed its own perspectives on issues such as resource security, climate change, and geopolitical positioning.

The paper is structured in several parts. It first examines the theoretical relationship between sovereignty and national security, highlighting its core assumptions and limitations. It then develops the concept of secondary national security as a distinct analytical category. This framework is subsequently applied to the case of Greenland to demonstrate how security can be conceptualized and practiced under conditions of incomplete sovereignty. The final section considers the broader implications of this concept for security policy, particularly in the context of small political entities, autonomous regions, and

other forms of dependent security arrangements. By reassessing the traditional equation of national security with the sovereign state, the paper introduces the concept of secondary national security as a new analytical category, aiming to contribute to a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of security in contemporary international relations.

NATIONAL SECURITY AND SOVEREIGNTY: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The concept of national security has historically been closely connected with the notion of sovereignty, as the state has been regarded in a significant part of the Security Studies and International Relations literature as the primary provider and guarantor of security (Waltz 1979; Buzan 1991; Krasner 1999). Within the classical Westphalian framework, the state is understood as the supreme political authority within a defined territory, possessing both the right and the capacity to ensure its own security (Krasner 1999, 20). Sovereignty implies not only formal independence but also effective control over internal and external security functions, including the organization and deployment of military force.

Within traditional security studies, this relationship has rarely been questioned. As Barry Buzan argues, the state functions simultaneously as the referent object of security and as its primary provider, thereby reinforcing an analytical framework in which national security is both defined by and dependent upon state sovereignty (Buzan 1991, 65). Similarly, Stephen Walt emphasizes that the core of security studies lies in the examination of threats to the state, particularly in the military domain, further consolidating the centrality of sovereignty (Walt 1991, 212). Under conditions of an anarchic structure of international relations, security perceptions and interpretations of threats remain, to a significant extent, shaped by the positions and interests of actors, further underscoring the relativity and contextuality of security (Proroković i Parezanović 2023, 13–14). However, this perspective remains limited because it assumes the institutional completeness of the state, which does not apply to many contemporary political entities.

However, this conventional linkage rests on a set of implicit assumptions that have increasingly come under scrutiny. It presumes that the state maintains a monopoly over the legitimate use of force within its territory, that the state possesses the institutional capacity to translate security perceptions into policy and action, and that sovereignty is indivisible and functionally comprehensive. While these assumptions may hold for fully consolidated states, they are less applicable to a growing number of political entities characterized by partial sovereignty, limited capacity, or external dependence.

In response, contemporary international relations scholarship has emphasized the variability and fragmentation of sovereignty. Stephen Krasner's distinction between different dimensions of sovereignty (domestic, interdependence, international legal...) demonstrates that states often lack full control across these domains (Krasner 1999, 9). This conceptual distinction enables the analysis of political entities that exercise authority in certain domains but lack it in others.

In this context, David A. Lake introduces the concept of hierarchy in international relations, arguing that interactions among political units are not always characterized by complete anarchy. Instead, relations of authority and dependence can emerge between states and subordinate entities, particularly in the domain of security (Lake 2009, 18). In such arrangements, weaker actors often delegate or relinquish certain aspects of their security to stronger actors in exchange for protection, resulting in structural asymmetries. This perspective is particularly important for understanding autonomous territories and non-sovereign political entities. Although such entities typically lack their own military capabilities and rely on external actors for defense, they retain varying degrees of political autonomy and internal governance. As a result, they occupy a hybrid position in the international system, between full sovereignty and complete dependence.

The expansion of the security agenda beyond the military domain has further complicated the relationship between sovereignty and security. The "widening" of security studies, associated with the Copenhagen School, has introduced additional sectors such as economic, environmental, and societal security (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 7). This broader understanding shifts attention away from an exclusive focus on territorial defense toward a more complex set of

vulnerabilities and threats, many of which do not require traditional military capabilities to be articulated or managed. This trend is also confirmed by domestic research indicating that contemporary threats are increasingly moving beyond the military sphere and require an expanded understanding of security that encompasses political, economic, and social factors (Milenković i Subotić 2022, 52).

Within this expanded framework, political entities lacking full sovereignty may nonetheless develop distinct security perceptions and policy preferences. Issues such as environmental change, resource governance, and economic resilience can be framed as security concerns even in the absence of sovereign control over defense. This suggests that the capacity to perceive, define, and prioritize security issues may be analytically separable from the ability to provide security in the traditional sense.

The resulting gap between security perception and security provision challenges the conventional equation of national security with sovereign statehood. This gap is further reinforced at the regional level, where security dynamics are shaped through patterns of interdependence rather than purely national capabilities (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 44). This interdependence is further deepened by technological development and global power dynamics, which influence the redistribution of military and security capacities and alter the traditional structure of security in the international system (Miloradović 2023, 30; Vuletić 2025, 84–85). If security is understood as a multidimensional, socially constructed phenomenon rather than exclusively as a function of military power and state sovereignty, it becomes possible to identify different referent objects of security that transcend the traditional state-centric framework. The development of contemporary Security Studies, particularly through the broadening and deepening of the concept of security, has made it possible to regard not only states, but also individuals, social groups, nations, economic systems, regional communities, and the biosphere as referent objects of security (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998). In this context, the present paper proceeds from the assumption that certain non-sovereign or partially sovereign political entities, insofar as they possess a significant degree of autonomy and a specific geopolitical relevance,

may constitute a distinct category of referent objects of security, despite lacking full sovereignty in the classical state sense.

Beyond the state-centric perspective, regional governance frameworks further complicate the relationship between sovereignty and security. In the Arctic context, governance has evolved into a multilayered system characterized by cooperation, overlapping jurisdictions, and functional interdependence rather than strict sovereignty-based control (Young 2017, 14). This environment enables non-sovereign actors to participate in shaping security-relevant agendas, particularly in environmental protection and resource management. Consequently, security becomes embedded in governance structures that transcend traditional state boundaries (Keil and Knecht 2017, 6). Contemporary technological transformations further complicate this relationship, as they change how information is collected, processed, and used in security processes, which is clearly observable in modern armed conflicts (Vuletić 2011; Vuletić 2012). In particular, the application of artificial intelligence in military systems affects the acceleration of decision-making, increases dependence on complex technological infrastructures, and introduces new risks, including issues of reliability, accountability, and cyber vulnerability (Đorić i Glišin 2023, 61–65; Vuletić 2025, 94–95; Vuletić 2026, 63–66).

This relationship provides the foundation for the concept developed in this paper. By questioning the necessity of sovereignty as a precondition for national security, it becomes possible to explore alternative configurations in which security is partially externalized but internally articulated. Such configurations are not anomalies, but increasingly common features of the contemporary international system, particularly in regions characterized by asymmetrical power relations and complex governance arrangements.

Therefore, the relationship between sovereignty and national security should not be understood as fixed or absolute, but rather as contingent and variable. Recognizing this variability is a necessary step toward developing conceptual tools that capture the diversity of security practices beyond the traditional state-centric framework.

CONCEPTUALIZING SECONDARY NATIONAL SECURITY

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that the traditional linkage between national security and sovereignty is neither as stable nor as universal as often assumed. The fragmentation of sovereignty, the emergence of hierarchical security arrangements, and the widening of the security agenda collectively indicate that security can be conceptualized beyond the confines of fully sovereign statehood (Krasner 1999, 9; Lake 2009, 18; Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998, 7). This perspective is further reinforced by arguments that modern statehood represents an ideal type, as many political entities operate under conditions of limited sovereignty and capacity (Risse 2013). Building on the above, this section introduces the concept of secondary national security.

At its core, secondary national security refers to a form of security that emerges in political entities that do not possess full sovereign control over the means of coercion, particularly in the domain of external defence, but nevertheless retain the institutional capacity to articulate their own security perceptions, interests, and priorities. In such contexts, security is partially or predominantly externalized, while its interpretation and political articulation remain, at least in part, internalized. Formally, secondary national security can be defined as a configuration in which a political entity lacking full sovereignty maintains autonomous security perceptions and policy preferences while simultaneously relying on an external actor to provide key security functions, above all defense (Wendt 1999, 92; Lake 2009, 35). Unlike the concept of societal security, in which the primary referent object is the collective identity of a social group or nation, the concept of secondary national security developed in this paper refers to institutionalized political entities that possess a certain degree of autonomy, but lack full sovereignty.

This definition rests on three constitutive elements. The absence of full sovereignty, particularly in the domain of external security, implies that political entities operating under conditions of secondary national security lack independent control over the use of military force in the international arena. Responsibility for defence usually rests with

a sovereign state or an international organization acting as a security guarantor. This reflects broader patterns of authority delegation and hierarchical ordering in international relations, where weaker actors accept asymmetric arrangements in exchange for protection (Lake 2009, 18).

The presence of autonomous security perception indicates that these political entities, despite their dependence on external actors for security provision, are not passive recipients of protection. They develop their own understandings of threats, vulnerabilities, and priorities, which may or may not align with those of the security guarantor. This reflects the broader insight that security is not an objective condition but a product of political articulation, whereby actors define what constitutes a threat (Wæver 1995, 55). This dimension draws on the Copenhagen School's emphasis on the discursive and political construction of security, where security issues are framed and prioritized through political processes (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 21). The importance of local actors is further emphasized by critiques of state-centric approaches to security governance, which show that domestic actors can shape security outcomes even under conditions of external dependence (Schroeder and Chappuis 2014, 134–135). This further reinforces the analytical distinction between the perception of security and its provision.

The partial internalization of security policy reflects broader patterns of governance in areas of limited statehood, where authority is not monopolized by a single actor but distributed across multiple levels and includes both state and non-state participants (Risse 2013). While key aspects of security provision remain externalized, political entities may exercise varying degrees of influence over how security issues are framed and addressed domestically. Such arrangements are not exceptional, but rather represent a widespread feature of the contemporary international system (Risse 2011, 6).

Taken together, these elements produce a hybrid configuration in which security perceptions and control over key security instruments are distributed between internal and external actors. This separation constitutes the defining feature of secondary national security and distinguishes it from both classical national security and other forms of dependent security arrangements. It is also characteristic of governance

in areas of limited statehood, where the provision of collective goods, including security, is carried out through complex interactions between domestic and external actors (Risse 2013). Such arrangements reflect broader patterns of interaction between these actors, through which security governance emerges via processes of negotiation, contestation, and adaptation rather than unilateral control (Schroeder and Chappuis 2014, 136–137).

The relevance of this concept is particularly evident in contexts where authority is distributed across multiple levels and among different actors. In the Arctic region, for example, institutional frameworks enable significant participation of non-sovereign entities in policymaking, including in areas with clear security implications (Young 2017, 52). This demonstrates that perceptions and articulations of security can persist even in the absence of full sovereign control over military capabilities. In such conditions, secondary national security should not be seen as an exception but rather as a common, structurally embedded feature of contemporary systems of governance (Keil and Knecht 2017, 11).

To more precisely determine its analytical position, secondary national security needs to be distinguished from related concepts. Unlike classical national security, in which the state defines threats, formulates policy, and possesses the means to implement it (Buzan 1991, 65), secondary national security implies a separation of these functions. Simultaneously, it differs from protectorate or colonial security arrangements, in which the role of domestic actors is minimal or highly constrained, and security is both defined and implemented by an external actor, leaving very limited space for autonomous perception and policy formation. By contrast, secondary national security presupposes the existence of a politically relevant entity capable of expressing its own security interests. This concept complements, rather than replicates, notions such as security dependence or reliance on alliances. While alliances imply cooperation between sovereign actors, secondary national security describes a more asymmetrical and institutionalized form of dependence. In this sense, it is closer to hierarchical security relationships, but with an emphasis on the role of internal actors (Lake 2009, 35).

Secondary national security is not an exception, but a phenomenon observable in various political contexts (Risse 2011, 10). This conceptualization has important implications for public policy analysis: it highlights the possibility of divergence between the security priorities of a political entity and those of an external guarantor, raises questions of accountability in multi-level security arrangements, and highlights the importance of security issues articulated within the competences of non-sovereign political entities. By introducing secondary national security as an analytical category, this paper expands the conceptual framework of security studies and offers an approach for analyzing security practices under conditions of shared or limited sovereignty. In the next chapter, this framework is applied to the case of Greenland.

GREENLAND AS A MODEL OF SECONDARY NATIONAL SECURITY

The case of Greenland provides a particularly suitable model for illustrating the concept of secondary national security. In this sense, Greenland is not only an empirical example but also a test of the analytical applicability of the proposed concept. As an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark, Greenland occupies a hybrid political position characterized by a high degree of internal self-government combined with structural dependence on an external actor for core security functions. This configuration closely corresponds to the defining elements outlined in the previous section.

Greenland exemplifies the absence of full sovereignty in the domain of external security. Under the constitutional arrangements of the Danish Realm, Denmark retains authority over defense and foreign policy, including the protection of Greenland's territory (Government of Denmark [GoD] 2009). Greenland lacks independent military capabilities and is not a sovereign actor in international security affairs. Instead, its external security is guaranteed through Denmark's defense policy and, indirectly, through Denmark's participation in broader security frameworks. This institutional arrangement reflects a clear case of externalized security provision, in which the means of coercion are controlled by a sovereign guarantor rather than by the political entity

itself. This externalization has deep historical roots. During the Cold War, Greenland constituted a critical component of the United States' polar strategy, particularly through the establishment of Thule Air Base, which served as a key forward operating and staging site for strategic air operations (Petersen 2011, 90–91), thereby reinforcing the long-standing external structuring of its security.

Despite this structural dependence, Greenland demonstrates a distinct and increasingly articulated security perception. Local political actors actively participate in debates on resource governance, climate change, and the geopolitical implications of Arctic development. This focus is closely linked to the economic and political importance of natural resources, which are widely perceived as a key basis for reducing dependence on external actors and achieving greater autonomy (Mortensen 2014, 94–95). These issues are increasingly viewed not only as economic or environmental challenges, but also as matters of long-term security in the context of autonomy, sustainability, and external influence. This is particularly evident in light of the growing importance of critical minerals and the vulnerability of supply chains, which increasingly connect resource governance with questions of national security in the Arctic context (Schwartz and Baskaran 2026, 1). The exploitation of mineral resources is especially regarded as a pathway toward economic self-sufficiency and a reduction of dependence on Danish financial support (Mortensen 2014, 96–97). This perspective is further reinforced by the strategic importance of rare earth elements and critical minerals, which are playing an increasingly important role in the development of advanced technologies, the energy transition, and supply chain resilience, thereby elevating resource exploitation from the level of economic activity to the level of strategic security (Schwartz and Baskaran 2026, 1–2). Greenland's growing participation in paradiplomatic activities further demonstrates its capacity to act within international relations, although Denmark formally retains authority over foreign and security policy. Paradiplomacy, understood as the participation of sub-state actors in international relations, represents a mechanism through which Greenland articulates its security and political interests, particularly in areas such as resource governance, environmental protection, and regional cooperation (Ackrén 2014, 42–43).

Greenland demonstrates a partial internalization of security policy in areas falling within its autonomous competencies. While Denmark retains formal authority over defense, Greenland exercises significant control over areas such as natural resource management, environmental policy, and aspects of economic development, each of which carries important security implications (Rahbek-Clemmensen 2017, 55). In this sense, security governance is functionally divided: military security remains externalized, while broader security dimensions are domestically managed (Gad et al. 2024, 229–230). The interaction between these elements produces a configuration in which security is neither fully external nor fully internal, but rather distributed across different levels of authority. This distribution generates both opportunities and constraints. It is also reflected in Greenland's increasing awareness of its international role and its political aspiration toward greater autonomy, including the long-term possibility of statehood (Ackrén 2014, 43). On the one hand, reliance on an external security guarantor reduces the burden of maintaining independent military capabilities, which may be economically and politically unsustainable for small or non-sovereign entities. On the other hand, it limits the political entity's ability to respond independently to external threats, particularly when its security priorities diverge from those of the guarantor.

Greenland's position within the broader Arctic governance framework further reinforces its role as a case of secondary national security. As Arctic governance increasingly operates through cooperative and multi-level mechanisms rather than strict territorial control, Greenland participates in shaping agendas related to climate change, resource extraction, and regional development (Young 2017, 89). In addition, the opening of new Arctic shipping routes and access to previously inaccessible resources further enhance Greenland's strategic relevance, linking environmental change to evolving security dynamics (Schwartz and Baskaran 2026, 2–3), and reinforcing the role of non-sovereign actors in shaping security outcomes within multi-level governance frameworks.

This potential divergence is a central feature of secondary national security. In the case of Greenland, such differences are most likely to emerge in areas such as resource exploitation, environmental

protection, or the presence of external actors. While Denmark's security policy is shaped by broader strategic considerations, including alliance commitments and international obligations, Greenland's security concerns are more closely tied to local conditions and long-term autonomy. This creates a layered security environment in which multiple security logics coexist and occasionally compete. Such divergence is rooted in competing understandings of political entity and identity, which remain internally contested and continuously negotiated within Greenlandic society (Gad 2017, 106), thereby reinforcing the structural separation between security perception and security provision. Moreover, it is reinforced by a broader political strategy that intentionally downplays security issues to preserve room for maneuver in economic and foreign policy domains (Gad et al. 2024, 231–232).

Importantly, the Greenland case also demonstrates that secondary national security is dynamic rather than static. As political autonomy evolves and external conditions change, the balance between internal perception and external provision may shift. Increased autonomy may lead to stronger articulation of independent security preferences, while changes in the strategic environment may alter the nature of dependence on the security guarantor. In this sense, secondary national security should be understood as a relational and evolving configuration rather than a fixed institutional arrangement. This perspective enables a more nuanced understanding of security practices beyond the traditional state-centric model and sets the stage for examining the broader implications of such arrangements for security policy.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SECURITY POLICY

The concept of secondary national security carries several important implications for both analysis and the practice of security policy. By identifying configurations in which political entities articulate their own security priorities despite lacking full control over the means to implement them, this concept challenges state-centric assumptions and underscores the need for more nuanced approaches under conditions of partial sovereignty and structural dependence.

Secondary national security underscores the potential divergence between a political entity's security priorities and those of its external

security guarantor. In traditional models, national security policy is assumed to reflect a unified set of interests defined and implemented by a sovereign state. However, in contexts such as Greenland, security preferences are shaped by local conditions, economic priorities, and societal concerns that may differ significantly from those of the guarantor state. This reflects a broader pattern observed among small political entities, which often rely on external security guarantees while maintaining distinct policy preferences shaped by their specific vulnerabilities and structural constraints (Thorhallsson 2018, 21). Such divergence can generate tensions in areas such as resource governance, environmental protection, and engagement with external actors, requiring policymakers to account for multiple layers of security interests within a single political framework.

The concept highlights the issue of accountability in multi-layered security arrangements. When security outcomes result from interactions between internal and external actors, it becomes less clear who is responsible for both successes and failures. External guarantors may retain formal authority over defense, while local authorities manage key aspects of non-military security. This division can produce accountability gaps, particularly in crises where rapid decision-making is required. The diffusion of authority across multiple levels complicates traditional mechanisms of democratic control and responsibility (Risse 2011, 12).

Secondary national security highlights the possibility that political entities lacking full sovereignty may nevertheless serve as relevant referent objects and actors in security. Under conditions in which security is partially or predominantly externalized, such entities still retain the capacity to articulate their own security perceptions, define priorities, and participate in shaping security policies. In this way, the concept of secondary national security points to the possibility of an institutional separation between the perception of security and control over the means of its provision. These domains become central to local understandings of security and may shape long-term strategic behavior more significantly than traditional defense considerations. This aspect is consistent with the broader trend of expanding the security agenda, in which non-military threats are increasingly recognized

as central to stability and well-being (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998, 7).

The concept has implications for the design of security partnerships and governance arrangements. External guarantors must balance the provision of effective security with respect for the political entity's autonomy. Over-centralization of decision-making risks undermining local legitimacy, while excessive decentralization may weaken strategic coherence. Effective policy, therefore, requires institutionalized mechanisms for consultation, coordination, and the incorporation of local security perspectives into broader strategic frameworks.

Secondary national security raises questions about the evolution of political status and strategic autonomy. As political entities gain greater autonomy, their security preferences may become more distinct and assertive, potentially leading to the renegotiation of existing arrangements. Conversely, changes in the external security environment may reinforce dependence on the guarantor. Security arrangements should therefore be understood as dynamic rather than fixed, requiring continuous adaptation to shifting political and strategic conditions.

This concept suggests that secondary national security is not limited to a single case, but can be applied to a wider range of political entities, including autonomous territories (e.g., Greenland, Faroe Islands), states in free association (e.g., Palau), and other forms of non-sovereign governance (e.g., Hong Kong). Recognizing this broader applicability enables comparative analysis and supports the development of more generalizable policy frameworks. Taken together, these implications indicate that security policy in contexts of incomplete sovereignty cannot be adequately understood or managed through traditional state-centric models alone. Instead, it requires an approach that acknowledges the coexistence of multiple actors, levels of authority, and security dimensions.

The case of Greenland also reflects broader transformations in Arctic governance, in which security is increasingly shaped by cooperative frameworks rather than unilateral state action. This suggests that security policy must account not only for state actors but also for non-sovereign entities participating in governance processes (Young 2017, 102). In such environments, secondary national security provides

a useful analytical lens for understanding how security is negotiated, distributed, and implemented across different levels of authority (Keil and Knecht 2017, 17).

CONCLUSION

The paper examines the relationship between sovereignty and national security by questioning the assumption that one necessarily depends on the other. Drawing on insights from security studies and international relations theory, it shows that contemporary political realities increasingly challenge the traditional state-centric framework. In response to this challenge, the paper introduces the concept of secondary national security, defined as a configuration in which a political entity lacking full sovereignty retains autonomous security perceptions and policy preferences while simultaneously relying on an external actor to provide key security functions. This concept encompasses a hybrid form of security in which security perceptions and control over key security capacities are institutionally separated, yet politically interconnected.

The case of Greenland illustrates how this configuration operates in practice. Greenland demonstrates that even in the absence of full sovereignty, political entities may develop autonomous security perceptions and priorities while remaining structurally dependent on an external guarantor for the provision of defence. This example highlights the analytical value of distinguishing between different dimensions of security, as well as the need to recognize the variability of sovereignty.

The broader implications of the concept extend beyond the specific case examined in this paper. Secondary national security provides a framework for analyzing a range of political entities that do not neatly fit into traditional categories of sovereign states or dependent territories. It also offers insights into the challenges of governance, accountability, and policy coordination in multi-layered security arrangements, where authority is dispersed, and outcomes are shaped through interaction rather than centralized control.

From a theoretical perspective, the concept contributes to the ongoing effort to expand the analytical boundaries of security studies. By decoupling national security from full sovereignty, it opens

space for the study of security practices in contexts that have been relatively neglected in the literature, including autonomous territories, associated states, and other forms of limited statehood. At the same time, it emphasizes the importance of integrating constructivist and institutionalist approaches to adequately capture the complex relationship among authority, actors, and security.

From a public policy perspective, the research findings point to the need for more flexible and context-sensitive approaches to security governance. Decision-makers must take into account the coexistence of multiple actors and levels of authority, as well as potential divergences between local security perceptions and security arrangements provided by an external guarantor. This underscores the importance of developing consultation mechanisms, adaptable institutional arrangements, and the inclusion of non-sovereign actors in security-related decision-making.

The concept points to the dynamic nature of such arrangements. Secondary national security is not a static condition but evolves in response to changes in political autonomy, strategic environment, and governance structures. As a result, security relationships between political entities and external guarantors are likely to remain fluid, requiring continuous adjustment and renegotiation.

In conclusion, national security should not be understood as a fixed attribute of sovereign statehood, but as a variable and context-dependent phenomenon. Recognizing the existence of secondary forms of national security is a necessary step toward developing a more comprehensive and empirically grounded understanding of security in the contemporary international system. Simultaneously, this concept provides a foundation for future research focused on analyzing how different configurations of authority and dependence shape security practices across various political contexts.

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СЕКУНДАРНА НАЦИОНАЛНА БЕЗБЕДНОСТ: СТУДИЈА СЛУЧАЈА ГРЕНЛАНДА**

Резиме

У овом раду се испитује однос између суверености и националне безбедности доводећи у питање претпоставку да једно нужно зависи од другог. Ослањајући се на увиде из студија безбедности и теорије међународних односа, посебно конструктивистичке и институционалистичке приступе, рад развија концепт секундарне националне безбедности као аналитички оквир за разумевање безбедности у контекстима ограничене суверености и спољне зависности. Овај концепт се односи на конфигурацију у којој политички ентитет нема пуну суверену контролу над средствима принуде, посебно у домену спољне одбране, али ипак задржава способност да артикулише сопствене безбедносне перцепције, приоритете и политичке преференције. У таквим аранжманима, обезбеђивање безбедности је екстернализовано ка сувереном гаранту, док интерпретација и политичка артикулација безбедности остају бар делимично интернализоване. Ово доводи до хибридне структуре у којој су перцепција и обезбеђивање безбедности институционално раздвојени, али политички међусобно повезани. Методолошки, истраживање комбинује концептуалну анализу са квалитативном студијом случаја Гренланда као аутономне територије у оквиру Краљевине Данске. Овај случај показује на који начин се безбедност може концептуализовати и практиковати у одсуству пуне суверености. Иако Данска задржава формалну

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надлежност над одбраном и спољном политиком, Гренланд све више развија сопствене безбедносне перцепције и политичке приоритете у областима као што су управљање ресурсима, заштита животне средине и климатске промене. Ове области се све више посматрају као кључне за дугорочну безбедност, посебно у контексту економске аутономије и стратешког позиционирања у Арктику. Резултати истраживања показују да политички ентитети без независних војних капацитета нису само пасивни примаоци безбедности, већ активни актери у обликовању безбедносних агенди. Случај Гренланда илуструје да национална безбедност може настати кроз вишеслојне управљачке аранжмане у којима је ауторитет расподељен између домаћих и спољних актера. Истовремено, такви аранжмани стварају потенцијалне тензије између локалних безбедносних приоритета и приоритета спољног гаранта, нарочито у областима као што су експлоатација ресурса, еколошка политика и односи са спољним актерима. У раду се закључује да националну безбедност не треба разумети као фиксно својство суверене државности, већ као варијабилан и контекстуално условљен феномен. Раздвајањем безбедности од пуне суверености, концепт секундарне националне безбедности проширује аналитички домет студија безбедности и пружа користан оквир за анализу безбедносних пракси у условима ограничене државности. Шире посматрано, он указује на потребу за флексибилним и контекстуално осетљивим приступима управљању безбедношћу који узимају у обзир коегзистенцију више актера, нивоа власти и димензија безбедности.

Кључне речи: секундарна национална безбедност, сувереност, ограничена државност, управљање безбедношћу, Гренланд, безбедносне перцепције, екстернализација безбедности.

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ESSAYS AND STUDIES

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PROTECTION OF FAMILY IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY SECURITY CHALLENGES

(Translation in *Extenso*)

Abstract

The protection of family identity is a complex legal issue that encompasses a set of values, relationships and characteristics through which the continuity of family life, the personal and collective identity of its members, as well as their legal and social security are achieved. In the context of contemporary security challenges, which are characterized by increased institutional intervention, technological development and the transformation of the concept of security, the protection of family identity gains special importance. The paper starts from the standpoint that security is not exclusively an instrument of state control, but also a legal value whose essence is to ensure the conditions for the preservation of the basic elements of personal and family identity. Special attention is paid to contemporary security challenges, including terrorism, as a phenomenon that, through identity narratives and institutional responses, directly affects societal

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and internal security, as well as the protection of family identity. The aim of the paper is to point out the importance of legal certainty as a prerequisite for the protection of family identity and to contribute to the theoretical and normative debate on the relationship between security and family rights in the contemporary legal order. The analysis demonstrates that disproportionate security measures and excessive securitization may lead to the weakening of family cohesion and the erosion of identity structures, while legal certainty, respect for human rights, and the consistent application of the principle of proportionality represent key prerequisites for preserving family identity in the contemporary security environment.

Keywords: identity, security, human rights, family, legal certainty, terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary security challenges are increasingly questioning the traditional boundaries between the public and private spheres, leading to a redefinition of the relationship between the state, the individual and the family. The long-dominant understanding of security, centered on the state as the primary and almost exclusive referent object of protection, is gradually giving way to a more complex concept in which the individual occupies an increasingly significant position. This transformation does not represent a mere change of focus, but rather implies a fundamental reexamination of the content and meaning of key concepts of security theory. The shift in focus towards the individual necessitates a different understanding of security needs, threats and protection mechanisms, which are no longer exclusively related to the survival of the state, but also to the preservation of basic human values and identities. In this context, the concept of security culture also appears which in contemporary analyses is often presented as a new element of the security paradigm. However, this phrase does not represent a completely new concept, but gains its full meaning only when security is viewed through the prism of the individual and their role in society. Security culture, thus understood, encompasses a system of values, attitudes and patterns of behaviour that contribute

to the understanding of security as a shared responsibility, and not exclusively as the domain of state institutions. By placing the individual at the centre of security considerations, security culture becomes an instrument for linking institutional protection mechanisms with the everyday life and identity framework of citizens. In this way, it represents an important link between normative solutions and their practical implementation, contributing to strengthening trust in institutions and the overall stability of the security system (Kekić 2004, 2). In this process, security can no longer be viewed solely as a matter of protecting the state and its institutions, but as a complex socio-legal concept that also encompasses the conditions for preserving personal and family identity. It is precisely in this broader understanding of security that space opens up for the analysis of the protection of family identity as a legally relevant value.

Family identity, although not explicitly defined as an independent legal category in positive law, is an analytical concept that unites elements of personal identity, family life, cultural and social continuity, as well as the stability of family relations. For the purposes of this paper, family identity may be defined as a set of values, family relationships, behavioural patterns, a sense of belonging, and legally protected elements of family life that ensure the continuity of the family community and enable its members to preserve their personal, social, and cultural identity. Ideologically simplified formulations, especially about the family as a supposedly unchanging basic unit of society and the exclusive refuge of the individual in conditions of contemporary crises, show exceptional resilience in normative and political narratives. Such determinants are often used as an argumentative framework in the formulation of public policies, whereby the complexity of family relations and their real role in contemporary societies are reduced to ideologically acceptable, but analytically insufficiently grounded. From the point of view of political science and security analysis, the family cannot be viewed exclusively as a private or moral category, but as an institutional actor that interacts with the state, legal order and security system. In this sense, the family functions as a specific mechanism of social regulation and transmission of values, but also as a space in which the effects of public policies are reflected, especially those related to security and social stability (Tomanović i Stanojević

2024). In this sense, the protection of family identity relies on existing constitutional and international legal mechanisms, but at the same time requires their systematic interpretation. The right to respect for private and family life is guaranteed by constitutional norms, as well as Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights – ECHR, and represents the basic normative framework within which family identity is protected.

Security problems of the modern era, including terrorism, organized crime, mass migration, states of emergency and digital threats, have led to the expansion of state powers and the intensification of its intervention in an area that has traditionally been considered private. The contemporary security environment is marked by the fact that states can no longer clearly separate the sources of threat into exclusively internal or external, since most security threats occur in hybrid and interconnected forms. The actions of non-state actors, terrorist groups, as well as the consequences of mass migrations, pandemic crises, etc., require the state to organize its national security system as a single, functional system, with clearly defined segments of external and internal security (Stajić, Radivojević, and Mirković 2017, 1334–1335). From a normative perspective, the key challenge in the functioning of the internal security system is to strike a balance between the effectiveness of security measures and the preservation of constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedoms. Any intervention by the state in the private sphere, including measures that may have an indirect or direct impact on family life and family identity, must be based on law, directed towards a legitimate aim and limited by the principle of proportionality. Such a state narrative on internal security plays a significant role in shaping public discourse and perceptions of security threats, not only at the national but also at the broader international level, with its formulation often linked to the need for strategic priorities and measures envisaged within national security strategies (Brady 2024, 765). It is particularly important to emphasize that security in the legal sense cannot be understood exclusively as a basis for restricting rights, but also as a positive obligation of the state to ensure the conditions for their effective exercise. The protection of family identity implies not only the state's refraining from unjustified interference, but also taking active measures to prevent the threat to

family relations in conditions of security instability. In this context, the principle of proportionality is a key instrument for assessing the justification of security measures that affect family identity.

The subject of this paper is the analysis of the relationship between contemporary security policies and the protection of family identity as a legally and socially relevant value. The aim of the paper is to examine the ways in which contemporary security challenges, particularly terrorism, securitization processes, and digital surveillance, affect the preservation of family identity, as well as to highlight the importance of legal certainty and the principle of proportionality in establishing a balance between security interests and the protection of family life.

This paper is based on a qualitative theoretical-analytical methodology, characteristic of contemporary political science research in the field of security studies. The analysis relies on the concepts of critical security studies and securitization theory, with the aim of examining the way in which contemporary security policies, especially in the context of the fight against terrorism, influence the transformation of social institutions and identity patterns. The normative legal framework is used as an analytical tool for understanding the political consequences of security interventions, and not as the primary subject of research. The focus of the paper is directed at the interpretation of discursive and institutional practices that position the family and family life as a relevant security referent, thus opening up space for an interdisciplinary consideration of the relationship between security, identity and social cohesion.

SECURITY AND IDENTITY

The concept of security in contemporary legal and political discourse goes beyond the narrow understanding of the protection of the state from external military threats and is increasingly defined as a comprehensive system of measures aimed at protecting the individual, social groups and the basic values of the legal order. In the broadest sense, security can be defined as a state of protection of the individual and the community from risks and threats that threaten life, physical and psychological integrity, as well as the basic conditions of social

functioning (Kostić 2016, 68). In this context, identity appears as one of the key values whose preservation is directly related to security issues, especially in the context of complex and multi-layered contemporary risks. In legal theory, security is traditionally associated with the concept of legal certainty. Gustav Radbruch, who dedicated his life to finding a solution to the conflict between legal certainty and justice, identified legal certainty as one of the fundamental elements of the idea of law, emphasizing that law must be stable, predictable and accessible in order to fulfill its protective function (Ćorić 2011, 643). Similarly, Hans Kelsen saw the security of the legal order in its normative coherence and efficiency, that is, in the ability of the state to ensure respect for legal norms. In his theoretical approach, Kelsen particularly insisted on the importance of legal norms and their hierarchical order, since without a clear understanding of the hierarchy of norms it is impossible to even theoretically analyze, let alone consistently implement and use, positive law (Trajković 2004, 267). From this understanding, we can conclude that security is not exclusively a question of force, but primarily a question of institutional stability, which arises from order and the consistent application of positive law.

Identity, on the other hand, is a complex concept that encompasses personal, family, cultural and legal dimensions. In the legal sense, identity implies a set of characteristics that allow an individual and a group to be recognized and protected within the legal order. Certain dimensions of identity, especially those marked by a sense of permanent vulnerability, can be a powerful source of social conflicts. Identities are shaped through concrete experiences and interactions, that is, groups that are exposed to coercion or violence develop a tendency to normalize harsh forms of behavior within their own ranks, while other groups are experienced exclusively as violent and hostile (Subotić 2025, 28). The connection between security and identity becomes particularly pronounced in contemporary conditions, characterized by mass migrations, low-intensity armed conflicts, terrorism, as well as internal security crises. According to UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), the number of forcibly displaced persons in the world has exceeded 110 million in the last decade, which has directly affected the disintegration of family and collective identities. In such circumstances, state security

policies often entail measures that can have far-reaching consequences for the preservation of identity, including restrictions on movement, surveillance, and interventions in the private sphere. Family is recognized in modern societies as one of the fundamental social values, but its functioning is not isolated, but is permanently conditioned by the dominant cultural and value patterns within which it is shaped. It is within the family that a specific system of values is formed that enables its internal cohesion, continuity and stability, but also the transmission of socially relevant norms to individuals (Košarac 2023, 84). Based on this, legal theory increasingly emphasizes that identity cannot be reduced exclusively to a sociological or cultural category, but rather that it represents a legally relevant value of particular importance for the preservation of social order. Alexis de Tocqueville also pointed out that the stability of society depends to a significant extent on the preservation of “natural forms of community”, among which the family occupies a central place. In the modern legal framework, this idea gains additional normative force through constitutional and international legal standards that protect family and personal identity as integral elements of human dignity. From a national security perspective, identity is increasingly recognized as a factor in the resilience of a society. The formation of social, national and cultural identity is a complex and long-term process that involves the gradual shaping of values, norms and a sense of belonging through historical experience, institutional development and intergroup relations. Issues of national identity are of crucial importance for the overall security of a society, as it represents a key component of societal security. Societal security implies the capacity of a society to maintain its basic values, structures and patterns of collective life in conditions of potential or real threats (Bjelajac i Filipović 2020, 177–182). A preserved and legally protected identity contributes to social cohesion, trust in institutions and the stability of the legal order, which are key prerequisites for an effective security policy. Conversely, the threat to identity, whether through institutional discrimination or the consequences of security crises, can lead to the deepening of social conflicts and the weakening of internal security. Consequently, the relationship between security and identity must be based on legal balance, where it represents one of the key challenges of modern legal systems and the foundation for further analysis of

the protection of family identity in the conditions of modern security challenges. In such a normative and security context, identity appears in law in two ways, as a value that requires protection, but also as a category that can be affected by state security interventions. This is precisely why the relationship between security and identity has become one of the central issues of contemporary legal theory and practice, because every measure aimed at protecting public and national security simultaneously has consequences for the personal, family and collective identity of the individual. In this sense, the task of law is not to absolutize security, but to ensure, through the principles of legality, proportionality and legal certainty, that the preservation of security does not lead to the erosion of the basic identity structures of society.

Illustratively, the case law of European and national courts shows how the modern legal order balances the requirements of security and the protection of identity rights within the framework of family life. In the case of *Oliari and Others v. Italy*, the Court found that the state has a positive obligation to legally recognize same-sex relationships, because such a gap in the legal framework prevents legal certainty and continuity of family relationships and directly violates Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the right to respect for private and family life) (European Convention on Human Rights [ECHR] 1950). This judgment shows that, in the contemporary legal order, the identity of the family as the basic social community is not just a sociological phenomenon, but a legal value whose preservation and institutional protection are expected from the member states of the Council of Europe (Evropski sud za ljudska prava [ESLJP] 2015).

In the case U-I-68/16, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia found that a legal provision that treats different categories of families (based on marital status or sexual orientation) unequally in asylum procedures constitutes discrimination and directly affects the right to family life within the meaning of Article 8 of the ECHR. The Court, in accordance with international standards, emphasised that family relations are protected regardless of the formal marital status of family members (European Database of Asylum Law [EDAL] 2016). In this way, the demand for equal treatment of different forms of family communities goes beyond the framework of individual protection of rights and gains broader significance in the context of legal certainty

and predictability of state action. From the perspective of security analysis, inclusive legal frameworks that reduce the risk of institutional marginalization of certain social groups contribute to the preservation of social cohesion, which is one of the indirect prerequisites for long-term social stability. In the case AP 1031/04 of 26 April 2005, paragraph 22, published in the Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 48/05, which concerned the use of intercepted private communications (telephone conversations and other records), the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina found that such measures did not violate the right to private and family life, as they were in accordance with the law and necessary in a democratic society for the sake of common security. In this case, the court found that the interference with the right to private and family life was justified, since it was based on a legitimate security objective and implemented in accordance with the principle of proportionality (Ustavni sud Bosne i Hercegovine n.d.). Such a model of balancing between the requirements of state security and the protection of identity rights indicates the complexity of assessing proportionality in the application of security measures that affect the sphere of family life.

FAMILY IDENTITY AS AN OBJECT OF SECURITIZATION

In line with the theoretical approach of securitization, developed within the Copenhagen School, security is considered in this paper as a discursive and political process in which a certain referent object is presented as existentially threatened. Referent objects do not have to be limited to the territorial state, but can also include social groups, institutions or value systems, with threats being constructed through political and institutional discourse (Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde 1998). In contemporary security studies, the process of securitization no longer refers exclusively to the state, territory, or political institutions, but also encompasses social spheres that have traditionally been viewed as private and depoliticized. In this expanded understanding of security, the family and family identity increasingly become implicit objects of security policies, especially in the context of the intensified fight against terrorism and other transnational threats.

This process involves a shift in the boundaries between the public and the private, with family relations, patterns of socialization, and identity practices being subjected to security rationality. A concrete expression of this expansion of the security discourse is represented by cases of radicalization, which show that a new, previously non-existent intertwining of family law mechanisms and counter-terrorism policies is occurring, whereby the family is transformed into a space for preventive security action by the state (Ahdash 2018, 391). Within the framework of securitization theory, key components of the process that enable a particular phenomenon or social process to be constructed as a security threat can be analytically distinguished. The acceptance of such a narrative by the relevant audience is a prerequisite for legitimizing the application of exceptional measures that go beyond the scope of ordinary political action (Lipovac, Đurić, i Paraušić 2022, 107). In the domain of family life, these measures can manifest themselves through increased supervision of guardians, the obligation of educational and social institutions to report indicators of potential radicalization in children, and even through legal precedents for the temporary removal of children from a family environment that is categorized as risky for security reasons. It is in this context that the securitization of family identity does not necessarily take place through the explicit norming of the family as a security problem, but rather through a range of indirect mechanisms, including communication surveillance, preventive profiling, and institutional mapping of social networks. In this way, the family ceases to be exclusively a space of privacy and autonomy, and becomes part of a broader security discourse in which individual and collective identities are assessed through the prism of potential risk. Within this broader theoretical framework, although historically it has been primarily linked to the state and its security apparatus, the contemporary understanding of security also encompasses broader social dimensions, including political, social and identity aspects. It is precisely within the framework of the fight against terrorism that this expanded approach gains additional momentum, as preventive security measures, justified by the need to protect society as a whole, are increasingly reflected in everyday life and the stability of social relations (Sretović, Talić, i Berić 2016, 85). In this context, family identity, understood as a set of enduring relationships, norms and

practices that ensure the continuity and security of the individual, is exposed to reinterpretation in accordance with the security priorities of the state, thereby gradually including family communities in the broader security discourse.

The securitization of family identity indicates the way in which the security discourse in contemporary societies is extended to the micro-level of social relations, with family communities positioned as indirect but significant security referents within counterterrorism policies.

TERRORISM AS A SECURITY CHALLENGE TO PRESERVING IDENTITY AND SOCIAL SECURITY

In contemporary security theory, terrorism is not viewed solely as a physical act of violence, but as a strategically designed political and communication act aimed at a wider social audience. As Bruce Hoffman points out, terrorism is designed to produce far-reaching psychological consequences beyond the immediate victim or target (Hoffman 2017), which indicates that its primary effect is directed at perception, fear and collective consciousness, and not just at material destruction. Terrorist violence is a deliberately designed form of action whose purpose is to provoke a sense of insecurity and distrust in the ability of the state to guarantee security among the targeted population, while at the same time functioning as a means of symbolic communication aimed at shaping political perceptions, deepening social polarization and influencing the formation of collective identities (Stevanović i Đurđević 2020, 130). Relying on mechanisms of social categorization and group identification, within the framework of social identity¹ theory, terrorist organizations seek to reinforce the “us-them” dichotomy, appropriating religious, ethnic, or ideological narratives and presenting themselves as their authentic representatives. This strategy aims to alter the perception of boundaries between groups and create a sense of existential threat.² In this way, radical actions are justified as a

¹ On the mechanisms of social categorization and group identity formation (see Tajfel and Turner 1979).

² On the construction of existential threat and the process of securitization (see Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998).

defense of collective identity. Identity in this process becomes a means of mobilization and an instrument for justifying extreme actions.

Terrorism can be understood as one of the violent forms of extremism (Jugović i Živaljević 2021, 438). Although extremism does not necessarily lead to terrorist acts, it represents an ideological basis in which pluralism and institutional mechanisms for conflict resolution are rejected. According to program-goal orientation, extremism can be classified into ideological (extreme left and right), ethno-separatist and religious extremism (Đorić 2021, 60), whereby terrorism appears as a radicalized and violent strategy of action within these frameworks.

However, it is scientifically more accurate to speak of an attempt to impose an interpretive framework, rather than a complete redefinition of the identity of entire communities. The effects of terrorist activity depend on the domain of societal security, i.e. the ability of society to preserve its essential character under the threat of change. In conditions of successful securitization of certain groups, there is an institutional and media reinforcement of the threat narrative, which often results in the stigmatization of communities that have nothing to do with violence. At the same time, in some cases there is a counter-effect, i.e. the consolidation of internal cohesion and the strengthening of resistance to extremist interpretations of identity, which can be explained through the psychology of radicalization and the modeled “stairway to terrorism” (Moghaddam 2005, 161–169).³ This shows that extremist narratives do not operate universally, but rather their effects are conditioned by the prior identity, social and cognitive characteristics of individuals and groups. At the family level, this dynamic produces a double risk, illustrating how radicalization and extremist narratives penetrate beyond the individual to the closest social unit. First, the process of radicalization of an individual can lead to the disruption of primary social ties and the reconfiguration of loyalties, with the

³ Moghaddam uses the “staircase to terrorism” model, which is a metaphor for a building with multiple levels/floors, to illustrate the gradual psychological process of radicalization of an individual. The individual progresses through levels/floors from the ground floor – dominated by perceptions of injustice and a sense of relative deprivation, through the search for solutions and directing aggression at the “enemy” (first–second level/floor), to accepting the moral justification of terrorist organizations and mobilizing into them (third–fourth level/floor), all the way to training and committing terrorist acts (fifth level/floor) (see Moghaddam 2005).

extremist organization taking on the role of an alternative reference group. This can cause psychological consequences such as increased anxiety, fear and feelings of insecurity among family members. Second, in conditions of moral panic and security hypersensitivity, individual families may be collectively labeled as “at risk”, leading to the erosion of their social identity, increased social distance, and exposure to discrimination. Such collective stigmatization further intensifies social polarization and creates conditions that increase vulnerability to extremist influences.

Terrorism is a very complex concept, and at the same time subjective, extremely burdened, emotionally and politically charged, the meaning of which depends primarily on the political ideology, program and even the culture to which the person belongs (Bursać 2023, 8). It is precisely this complexity that allows terrorism to be seen as an instrument of destabilization of collective identity, which requires an interdisciplinary approach that integrates security, sociological and psychological perspectives. This framework points to a key feedback loop, that state security strategies are not neutral, but rather influence individual and group responses. In this way, research is directed towards the complex dynamics between the need for physical protection and the preservation of social identity, indicating that excessive or inappropriate securitization can have counter-effects on the stability of society. The securitization of identity and the “preventive state” represent concrete applications of this principle in practice. One of the significant challenges to preserving family identity is the process of securitization, by which state institutions declare certain identity features such as clothing style, religious beliefs or ethnic origin as a potential security threat. In the fight against terrorism, states often apply measures that directly intrude on the “core” of family privacy. In this context, the principle of proportionality is key, which requires that state measures be adequate and necessary in relation to the real threat they seek to prevent. The application of this principle implies that interventions must not unnecessarily restrict the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals and communities, nor jeopardize privacy, family relations and social identity. In this way, a balance is sought between ensuring security and preserving legitimate freedoms. Going beyond this principle can produce paradoxical security effects: instead of greater

protection, it leads to the erosion of legal certainty, a deepening of the gap between the state and citizens, and the disintegration of social cohesion (Zedner 2009, 116–143).

In this way, the securitization of identity and the application of preventive measures are not just a legal or political challenge, but represent a complex social-structural phenomenon. They profoundly affect perceptions of justice, shape the way individuals and communities respond to state policies, and can reinforce feelings of stigmatization. Such interventions, if not carefully targeted and proportionate to the actual threat, risk undermining internal community cohesion, weakening social ties, and leading to unintended security counter-effects.

IMPACT ON SOCIAL SECURITY AND FAMILY COHESION

Social security, as we have already mentioned, implies the capacity of society to maintain its basic values, structures and patterns of collective life in conditions of potential or real threats (Bjelajac i Filipović 2020, 177–182). Social security, as we have already mentioned, implies the capacity of society to maintain its basic values, structures and patterns of collective life in conditions of potential or real threats.

Radical social changes can encourage the family to withdraw into a protective sphere, thereby weakening its role in social and political socialization, while at the same time strengthening parallel identities between the family and the state, which reduces social integration and indirectly threatens societal security (Čičkarić 2005, 300). At the heart of this dynamic is the fact that the preservation of family identity is a key prerequisite for the success of any counterterrorism strategy. As the primary social unit, a stable family acts as a crucial factor in social resilience, as it builds a specific identity shield, especially when state counterterrorism strategies threaten its cohesion (Slavković i Slavković 2023, 32). Rather than being merely a passive object of state protection, the family functions as an active mechanism of early prevention, the first social filter that can recognize and neutralize the initial stages of cognitive radicalization. Investing in the strength of family ties and

strengthening family social capital, as well as preserving mutual trust between the private sphere and state institutions, directly contributes to security, acting as a natural barrier that prevents an individual from replacing emotional emptiness or a sense of injustice with destructive extremist narratives.

At the same time, carelessly targeted or disproportionate preventive measures can have the opposite effect. Instead of increasing the level of protection, they often lead to the erosion of legal certainty and the weakening of internal social ties. When the state apparatus begins to view the community exclusively through the prism of risk, the family loses its protective function and itself becomes a space of anxiety. Such paradoxical security effects not only make social integration more difficult, but also reinforce the feeling of isolation that extremist groups skillfully use for recruitment. In this way, the violation of societal security directly results from the weakening of family values; a family that feels persecuted can no longer be a guarantor of stability, but rather becomes a vulnerable point of the social order, and the family is the basic unit of society that plays a key role in its stable functioning (Joksić i Rajaković 2020, 44). Therefore, the securitization of identity and the implementation of preventive measures must be strictly proportionate, carefully targeted and based on respect for human dignity. Only by preserving social cohesion and protecting the family environment can a state ensure long-term resilience to terrorism. Security, in its full sense, is not achieved only through repression, but by strengthening those social structures that provide the individual with a sense of belonging and protection, and the family is an irreplaceable factor in this process.

DIGITAL DIMENSION: SURVEILLANCE AND THE RISK OF EROSION OF FAMILY PRIVACY

The fight against terrorism in the 21st century is inextricably linked to technological progress, with the focus of security apparatuses significantly shifting towards the digital sphere. The introduction of mass data collection (Big Data) and the use of algorithms for recognizing behavioral patterns are introducing new dynamics into the relationship between the state and the family. In modern society,

marked by the rapid development and comprehensive application of digital technologies in the family, professional and public spheres, the issues of personal data protection and data flow management are gaining special importance and a new normative and security dimension, since the same technologies simultaneously enable early recognition of potential risks and serve as an important mechanism of preventive security (Čović 2020, 674). However, the problem arises in situations where algorithmic analysis, due to a high degree of abstraction and reliance on predefined patterns, isolates individual digital activities from their actual social and family context and interprets them as potential security risks, although they may not have such a meaning in themselves. In this way, algorithms shape new forms of political authority, because they determine which information and which actors become visible in the security assessment process, while the mechanisms of such filtering themselves are inaccessible to direct verification and understanding by analysts (Kaufmann, Egbert, and Leese 2019, 687). At the same time, awareness of the existence of digital surveillance can influence the behavior of individuals and family communities, encouraging self-restraint and adaptation of digital practices in order to avoid potential institutional attention. As Lyon points out, contemporary surveillance becomes routine and embedded in everyday life, thereby gradually shaping behavior and perceptions of privacy (Lyon 2018). In this context, the erosion of privacy occurs not only through direct legal prohibitions, but also through technological determinism that forces the individual to voluntarily give up parts of his or her own identity for the sake of apparent security. In such conditions, individuals can develop subtle forms of self-restraint, namely, avoiding certain topics, Internet searches, or expressing opinions, not because there is a specific repression, but due to the awareness that the digital trace may be the subject of analysis. However, technology itself does not necessarily lead to the erosion of family privacy. The key issue lies in the way it is implemented. If digital surveillance measures are clearly legally defined, transparent and proportionate to the real security threat, modern digital tools can act as a protection without violating fundamental rights. Conversely, when surveillance becomes imprecise, overbroad or insufficiently controlled, it undermines the trust between citizens and institutions and justifies criticism from privacy advocates,

who point to the risks of abuse (Mihaila and Mihaila 2023, 220), discriminatory effects and structural biases of certain technological solutions. At the family level, the digital dimension of security can influence the way identity is built and internal communication. The family, by its social function, should remain a space for the free exchange of opinions and the formation of value attitudes. If the digital context produces a sense of constant assessment or potential suspicion, there is a risk that this spontaneous communication will be reduced. This raises the question of the balance between preventive security and the preservation of the private sphere as a prerequisite for societal cohesion.

In this regard, digital securitization does not necessarily pose a threat, but it does require particular normative sensitivity. Only if it is based on the principle of proportionality, institutional oversight and respect for human dignity can it contribute to strengthening security without weakening family cohesion. Otherwise, even unintended effects can lead to gradual alienation, which could in the long term affect the societal resilience that the state seeks to protect.

CONCLUSION

The conducted research confirmed the basic thesis of the paper: the protection of family identity in the contemporary security context is not only a matter of individual privacy, but a fundamental prerequisite for preserving societal security and the stability of the legal order. The shift in the security paradigm from a focus on the state to the individual and their identity structures requires a sophisticated approach from state institutions in which security and human rights are not opposing interests, but complementary elements of public order.

The analysis of terrorism as a strategy of symbolic communication and mechanisms of securitization has shown that radical narratives often try to fill the social and emotional gaps created by the weakening of primary communities. In this context, a stable and legally protected family represents an identity shield and a natural mechanism for early prevention of radicalization. Any state action, especially in the field of preventive surveillance and counterterrorism measures, must be strictly guided by the principle of proportionality. Carelessly calibrated

measures can lead to stigmatization, erosion of trust and the formation of parallel identities, thereby fundamentally weakening social cohesion. In the digital era, the challenges of surveillance and algorithmic profiling require a high level of normative sensitivity. The results of the analysis indicate that the application of modern technological solutions in the field of security must be accompanied by clear mechanisms of legal control and transparency, in order to avoid negative consequences for the family environment and identity stability.

The protection of family identity is a strategic element of a security culture in which the state and citizens jointly participate in preserving the stability of society. Strengthening legal certainty, respecting family integrity and accumulating social capital within the private sphere are not an obstacle to the effectiveness of the security system, but rather its strongest support. States that affirm the individual and protect the integrity of their primary community within their security strategies show greater potential for building long-term resilience to the complex challenges of the modern era.

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ЗАШТИТА ПОРОДИЧНОГ ИДЕНТИТЕТА У УСЛОВИМА САВРЕМЕНИХ БЕЗБЕДНОСНИХ ИЗАЗОВА

Резиме

Заштита породичног идентитета представља сложено правно питање које обухвата скуп вредности, односа и обележја кроз које се остварује континуитет породичног живота, лични и колективни идентитет њених чланова, као и њихова правна и социјална сигурност. У условима савремених безбедносних изазова, који се одликују повећаном институционалном интервенцијом, технолошким развојем и трансформацијом појма безбедности, заштита породичног идентитета добија посебан значај. Рад полази од становишта да безбедност не представља искључиво инструмент државне контроле, већ и правну вредност чија је суштина у обезбеђивању услова за очување основних елемената личног и породичног идентитета. Посебна пажња посвећена је савременим безбедносним изазовима, укључујући и тероризам, као феномену који кроз идентитетске наративе и институционалне одговоре директно утиче на социјеталну и унутрашњу безбедност, као и на заштиту породичног идентитета. Циљ рада је да укаже на значај правне сигурности као предуслова за заштиту породичног идентитета и да допринесе теоријској и нормативној расправи о односу између безбедности и породичних права у савременом правном поретку. Анализа показује да непропорционалне

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безбедносне мере и прекомерна секјуритизација могу довести до слабљења породичне кохезије и нарушавања идентитетских структура, док правна сигурност, поштовање људских права и доследна примена принципа пропорционалности представљају кључне предуслове за очување породичног идентитета у савременом безбедносном окружењу.

Кључне речи: идентитет, безбедност, људска права, породица, правна сигурност, тероризам.

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**CONTEMPORARY LEGAL MODERNIZATION
IN ITALY: BETWEEN CIVIL JUSTICE
REFORM, STATE EFFICIENCY,
FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND SECURITY
(Translation in *Extenso*)**

Abstract

The contemporary reforms of Italian legislation represent one of the most comprehensive attempts to adapt the legal system to the complex social, technological, and institutional challenges of the modern era. Instead of partial normative interventions, these reforms reflect the development of an integrated legal framework that encompasses criminal law, civil justice, and the institutional organization of the judicial system. The paper analyzes the Italian model through the lens of the relationship between civil justice reform, state efficiency, security, and the protection of fundamental human rights. The research is based on the normative and comparative law method, applying

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an analytical approach to the consideration of contemporary reform tendencies in the broader European context. The analysis includes reforms related to the introduction of the criminal offense of femicide, improving the protection of victims, the development of security-oriented criminal policy and legislative responses to digital forms of crime, as well as reforms aimed at increasing procedural efficiency, strengthening the managerial role of the court, the development of alternative dispute resolution methods and the regulation of artificial intelligence and civil liability in the digital environment. The research results indicate that the Italian model represents a form of functional legal modernization in which normative reforms are closely linked to institutional changes and an effort to establish a balance between efficiency, security, and protection of rights. The analysis points to the limitations of this approach, which are reflected in regulatory fragmentation, implementation challenges, and tensions between the requirements for security, effective management of social risks, and the preservation of procedural guarantees and fundamental rights.

Keywords: legal modernization, Italy, civil justice reform, procedural efficiency, fundamental rights, security.

INTRODUCTION

Intensive social and technological changes in the contemporary period make it increasingly difficult for traditional legal frameworks to respond to the complex challenges of modern society. In such circumstances, legislative reforms no longer represent sporadic interventions in the legal system, but a continuous process of its adaptation, aimed at preserving legal certainty, improving the efficiency of the judiciary, protecting fundamental rights, and responding to new security challenges. It is also observed that modern legal systems increasingly tend to reforms that include simultaneous changes in substantive and procedural law, as well as in the institutional organization of the judiciary, making law one of the key instruments for managing complex social processes and risks.

The Italian legal system is an illustrative example of this approach, since in recent years comprehensive reforms have been

implemented that cover criminal and civil law, as well as the area of regulation of new technologies. These reforms include legislative responses to gender-based violence, changes in penal policy, and strengthened protection of victims, as well as measures aimed at improving the efficiency of judicial proceedings, developing alternative dispute resolution methods, and normatively regulating the impact of digital technologies and artificial intelligence on legal relations. Part of the reform interventions is motivated by the need to strengthen the state's capacity to respond to new forms of crime, cyber threats, and other security challenges characteristic of the digital society. Such a breadth and diversity of reform interventions indicate the legislator's effort to adapt the legal system not only to existing, but also to future social and security challenges.

The main thesis of the paper is that contemporary reforms of Italian legislation represent a specific model of European legal modernization, within which, through a combination of national and supranational normative solutions, a new regulatory framework adapted to the digital society is being formed, but which points to the limitations of existing legal categories and the need for their further theoretical and normative improvement. The aim of the paper is to analyze key reforms in criminal and civil law, examine their role in the modernization of the legal system, and assess their significance within contemporary European legal trends.

Methodologically, the research is based on a normative-legal analysis of relevant legislative solutions in the Italian legal system, with the application of the comparative law method that allows them to be viewed in a broader European context. In addition, an analytical approach is used to examine the goals and effects of individual reforms, as well as their impact on the functioning of the modern legal system. Starting from the above, the paper seeks to answer the question of the extent to which Italian legislative reforms can represent a relevant framework for modern legal modernization, viewed through the relationship between state efficiency, civil justice reform, security, and the protection of fundamental rights. In this sense, it is specifically examined whether improving procedural efficiency and strengthening the managerial role of the court contribute to the realization of the right to a fair trial and effective legal protection, and to what extent security-

oriented tendencies in criminal law affect human rights protection standards. It is analyzed how the development of the legal framework for artificial intelligence and digital relations affects the formation of new models of civil liability and the balance between technological development, security, and the protection of individual rights. In this way, the paper does not view Italian reforms solely as a normative phenomenon, but rather as an expression of a broader transformation in the relationship between the state, law, security, and the protection of fundamental rights in modern society.

REFORMS OF ITALIAN CRIMINAL LAW: BETWEEN SECURITY IMPERATIVES, THE EXPANSION OF STATE POWER, AND THE LIMITS OF RIGHTS PROTECTION

Contemporary reforms of Italian criminal law are characterized by intensive attempts to adapt the legal system to contemporary social and technological challenges through changes in substantive, procedural, and institutional criminal law. Their main objectives include strengthening protection for victims of violence, combating new forms of crime, and improving the efficiency of the criminal justice system (Fabri 2008, 3). These reforms go beyond the framework of technical legislative improvement and indicate a growing tendency to instrumentalize criminal law to manage social risks and preserve public safety. Contemporary reforms of Italian criminal law can be observed through three interrelated directions: strengthening the protection of fundamental rights, especially in the area of gender-based violence, expanding repressive mechanisms to preserve security, and developing new normative models aimed at regulating digital crime and artificial intelligence. In this way, the reform process simultaneously confirms the protective function of criminal law and indicates the growing role of the state in the area of control and security.

Femicide is normatively distinguished in Italian law as a specific criminal offense motivated by gender hatred, domination, or control over women (Guatieri 2026), which confirms the broader development of legislation from formal equality towards the recognition of gender-

based violence as a structural social problem conditioned by power relations (Spadazzi et al. 2026). The Italian approach goes beyond criminalization itself and includes preventive mechanisms, victim protection, and coordinated action by institutions, starting from the understanding that femicide represents the final stage of continuous violence preceded by so-called “sentinel” crimes, which is why the importance of early institutional intervention is emphasized. Research confirms that an effective fight against gender-based violence requires coordinated action by the judicial, health, and social systems, while criminalization alone without adequate preventive policies has a limited scope (Spadazzi et al. 2026), which is also confirmed by empirical data according to which femicide most often represents the final stage of previous violence (Spadazzi et al. 2026). However, judicial practice often individualizes this phenomenon through emotional or psychiatric explanations of the perpetrators’ behavior, thereby relativizing its structural dimension and making it difficult to develop a consistent criminal law policy (Lalli and Virgilio 2025, 54–60). Contemporary theoretical approaches therefore increasingly view femicide as a manifestation of systemic violence that requires an integrated normative and institutional response (Spadazzi et al. 2026), especially considering that gender-based violence can reach the threshold of torture in terms of international human rights law if the state does not take adequate protective and preventive measures, and its responsibility can therefore also be based on failures in action (Argentero et al. 2024).

The Italian approach to femicide is both an example of a contemporary criminal law response to complex social challenges and a space in which the tension between the protection of fundamental rights, security imperatives, and the expansion of the repressive power of the state is clearly manifested. The normative isolation of femicide contributes to the visibility and social recognition of violence against women as a structural problem, with the state taking a more active role in its sanctioning, prevention, and protection of potential victims. In this sense, protection from gender-based violence is not only seen as a matter of individual rights, but also as a matter of human security and the ability of institutions to timely recognize and prevent risks that can lead to the most serious consequences. In this way, criminal

law does not function exclusively as a repressive mechanism, but also as an instrument of social transformation that connects repressive, preventive, and social mechanisms into a relatively coherent system. However, this approach simultaneously raises questions about the limits of criminal law intervention and the broader tendency to strengthen the state's control function. The risk is that criminal law, under the guise of protecting vulnerable groups and improving security, could become the dominant instrument for regulating social conflicts, crowding out more effective preventive, educational, and social mechanisms in the long term. This is precisely why the question remains open to what extent security is increased through the expansion of the state's repressive powers, and to what extent through the development of institutional capacities for the prevention of violence. Challenges in judicial practice and the limitations of preventive policies confirm that normative innovation alone is insufficient without the consistent application of the law, real institutional coordination, and a system that protects rights, promotes security, and upholds the basic principles of the rule of law. In this context, it is rightly pointed out that it is necessary to recognize the global nature of femicide and develop coordinated mechanisms of action at all levels, since its suppression requires a comprehensive approach that combines legislative measures, education, support for victims, promotion of gender equality, and change of social and cultural patterns that encourage violence against women (Topalović i Kolarski 2024, 137). Since this is a phenomenon that transcends national borders, international cooperation, the exchange of good practices, and consistent application of the law are key prerequisites for building an effective prevention system and ensuring a safer and more just environment for all women.

In the area of sexual offences, Italian criminal law shows a tendency to introduce stricter and more innovative measures, including initiatives for the application of chemical castration as a medical-therapeutic measure aimed at reducing recidivism and protecting potential victims. The proposed model is based on voluntary and reversible hormonal treatment with the possibility of mitigating the sentence, but linking consent to benefits in criminal proceedings calls into question its actual voluntariness, a key controversial issue in theory (Maharani and Pangestu 2024). Comparative legal solutions show

different approaches – from mandatory implementation, which provokes criticism due to the risk of violating fundamental rights, to voluntary models combined with psychotherapeutic support (Perrotta et al. 2025; Bakhurynska 2025). International standards, therefore, insist that such measures must be based on free and informed consent and must not constitute inhuman or degrading treatment (Nour 2020). The Italian debate on chemical castration thus reflects the broader dilemmas of contemporary criminal law regarding the limits of state intervention and the use of medical instruments for the purpose of criminal repression. This approach demonstrates the legislator's willingness to address the high risk of recidivism and improve the protection of potential victims, but also raises the question of whether medical measures can be instrumentalized for the state's repressive policy. The development of Italian criminal legislation is also characterized by the so-called securitarian turn, i.e., the strengthening of the repressive function of criminal law through the expansion of the protection of public order and security and the introduction of new repressive mechanisms to suppress socially dangerous behavior (Venturi 2026). Such an approach represents the state's response to contemporary security challenges, but it also raises questions about the limits of criminal law repression and the preservation of fundamental civil liberties. Criminal law is thus increasingly used as an instrument for managing social risks, which leads to a change in its traditional protective function.

The modern reforms of Italian criminal legislation represent a significant, but still incomplete, process of modernizing the legal system. Their value is reflected in the legislator's efforts to address new forms of crime, enhance victim protection, and adapt the criminal justice system to contemporary social circumstances. However, the Italian experience shows that the success of reforms does not depend solely on normative expansion and tightening of penal policy, but primarily on the development of preventive mechanisms, institutional coordination, and consistent application of the law. In this context, the reforms indicate that the modern concept of security cannot be reduced solely to the state's repressive response, but rather implies the ability of institutions to act preventively, recognize risks in a timely manner, and ensure the effective protection of citizens' rights. This confirms that security, the rule of law, and the protection of

fundamental rights are interconnected elements of a modern democratic order. The literature additionally points to the problems of casuistic norming and insufficiently precise terminology, which can make the implementation of new solutions difficult (Kudriasova 2024). Therefore, the Italian model can be seen both as a significant reform step forward and a warning about the need to establish a sustainable balance between effective criminal law protection, state security policy, and the preservation of the basic principles of the rule of law. In this sense, the modern reforms of Italian criminal legislation represent a significant, but still incomplete process of legal modernization, the real achievements of which will depend on the ability of the legislator and judicial institutions to ensure effective protection of society, respond to modern security challenges, and preserve the fundamental values of a democratic legal order.

CONTEMPORARY REFORMS OF ITALIAN CIVIL LAW

The transformations of civil law in European countries cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader process of judicial modernization and the adaptation of legal systems to contemporary social and technological circumstances. The last decades have been marked by intensive reforms aimed at improving the efficiency of judicial protection, developing alternative dispute resolution methods, and adapting the legal framework to the digital environment. The Italian legal system is an illustrative example of such reform tendencies, as in recent years, numerous legislative interventions have significantly influenced the functioning of civil justice and the development of civil legislation (Cavallini and Cirillo 2024, 7). Modern reforms of Italian civil law can be systematized through several key directions: improving procedural efficiency through the reform of civil procedure, developing alternative dispute resolution methods, strengthening the institutional independence and integrity of the judiciary, and establishing a normative framework for the regulation of digital technologies and artificial intelligence.

The Cartabbia reform represents one of the most comprehensive attempts to restructure Italian civil procedure with the aim of increasing

efficiency and shortening the duration of litigation (Manowska 2024). The reform is based on changing the traditional model of proceedings, in which the court played a predominantly passive role, to a model of more active court management of the proceedings and the evidentiary process. Such an orientation is aimed at rationalizing the proceedings and preventing procedural abuses that contribute to the delay of disputes, while fitting into a broader strategy of modernizing the judiciary and strengthening procedural efficiency (Cavallini and Cirillo 2024, 9). One of the key instruments of the reform is the concentration of procedural material in the early stages of the proceedings, whereby the parties are expected to present decisive facts and evidentiary proposals before the first hearing. In this way, the traditional fragmentation of procedural stages is abandoned, and a more structured, time-compressed procedural model is established, enabling faster decision-making and more efficient dispute management (Matteucci 2023, 234–235). Such solutions fit into the contemporary European tendencies of accelerating court proceedings and rationalizing procedural activities, but they can lead to an increase in initial costs and an additional burden on the parties, especially those with limited resources, which raises the question of real equality of access to justice and procedural balance.

A particularly significant change relates to the evidentiary procedure and strengthening the managerial role of the court in organizing the presentation of evidence. Contemporary tendencies indicate the need to strengthen procedural discipline and prevent the abuse of procedural rights through the concentration of evidentiary material and a more precise definition of procedural phases (Manowska 2024). In this way, the court is no longer exclusively a passive arbitrator who reacts to the initiative of the parties, but an active subject who manages the course of the proceedings. However, the limits of such an approach require particularly careful interpretation. We believe that the submission of evidence and the burden of proof should still remain on the side of the parties, in accordance with the principles of dispositive and contradictory nature, while the court should be allowed a more active role in assessing the relevance of the proposed evidence in order to prevent abuses and unjustified delays in the proceedings. In this way, a balance is achieved between the procedural autonomy of the

parties and the requirements of efficiency, without abandoning the basic procedural guarantees of a fair trial.

In parallel with the procedural innovations, the reform strongly affirms alternative methods of dispute resolution, primarily mediation, which in a significant number of disputes becomes an almost mandatory procedural step. The range of cases in which an attempt to peacefully resolve a dispute is a procedural requirement has been expanded, and fiscal incentives and sanctions for unjustified absence of parties have been introduced, including the possibility of drawing negative procedural conclusions from such behavior (Matteucci 2024, 6–7). Mediation thus ceases to be merely an alternative to court proceedings and becomes an integral part of them, contributing to the courts' relief and more efficient dispute resolution, especially in economic relations, where lengthy procedures can cause significant financial consequences. However, despite the reform's normative ambitions, practice reveals certain ambivalences. Although the number of mediations has increased, the overall success rate remains relatively low, whereas significantly better results are achieved when the parties actively participate (Matteucci 2024, 1–5). This confirms that mediation, although strongly normatively affirmed, can achieve its full functionality only with an appropriate level of legal culture and trust of the parties in these mechanisms, which is why its efficiency largely depends on extra-legal factors. In addition to procedural reforms, contemporary trends include issues of professional ethics and the judiciary's institutional independence. Research shows that regulating potential conflicts of interest can directly affect the quality of judicial decision-making, while empirical data confirm that prohibiting judges from participating in private arbitrations reduces the risk of conflicts of interest and contributes to greater impartiality of judicial practice (Dalla Pellegrina, Garoupa, and Grajzl 2024). Such findings confirm that the efficiency of the legal system does not depend solely on normative solutions, but also on the institutional environment and professional behavior of judicial actors.

The Kartabiya reform, therefore, represents a transition to a modern hybrid model of civil procedure in which the traditional principles of dispositive and contradictory are harmonized with the requirements of efficiency and active management of the procedure.

The requirements of procedural efficiency must, however, be interpreted in light of basic procedural guarantees, so that the acceleration of the procedure does not result in a violation of the parties' rights to a fair and adversarial trial (Bećirović-Alić 2019). It is precisely in striking a balance between efficiency and fairness, as well as between the active role of the court and the protection of the procedural rights of the parties, that lies the key challenge and the measure of the long-term sustainability of this reform. In this context, significant changes are also evident in the area of digitalization of the judiciary, including the introduction of electronic communication between courts and parties, digital case management, and electronic submission of submissions. Digitalization thus represents not only a technical improvement but also a transformation of the way the judiciary functions, with potential impacts on access to justice, transparency, and the efficiency of judicial protection.

A special place among modern reforms is occupied by Italy's adoption of the Law on Artificial Intelligence, which establishes a comprehensive national regulatory framework in this area for the first time. The law introduces a multi-layered regulatory model that includes institutional oversight of the development and application of AI systems, special rules in sensitive sectors, and significant changes in copyright and criminal law. Artificial intelligence is thus no longer seen as a phenomenon that can be integrated into existing legal frameworks, but as an independent regulatory subject that requires special rules, including the development of new models of civil liability. The advantage of the Italian approach is reflected in its compliance with the European AI Act and the effort to concretize general European principles at the national level, which is why the Italian model can represent a relevant role model for other European countries, especially in connecting different legal areas into a single regulatory framework and introducing institutional oversight of AI technologies. A significant part of the key issues has been left for future normative elaboration, which shows that the regulatory framework is not yet fully completed (Bonsignore et al. 2025).

An additional challenge is information asymmetry and the difficulty of proving in disputes arising from the application of AI systems. The existence of the so-called chain of responsibility, which

includes multiple entities involved in the development and application of AI systems, makes it difficult to establish a causal link and identify the responsible person. The fragmentation of the legal framework, arising from the parallel application of different legal regimes, further complicates the exercise of legal protection and underscores the limitations of existing liability models in the digital environment (Balboni et al. 2025, 2). In this way, the regulation of artificial intelligence goes beyond the boundaries of traditional civil law and becomes one of the central issues of contemporary legal development.

Civil law reforms aim to adapt civil law relations to new social circumstances and the requirements of the modern legal system. Their value is reflected in improving the efficiency of the judiciary, developing alternative dispute resolution methods, and adapting the legal framework to the digital society. However, the Italian experience shows that the success of reforms depends not only on normative changes but also on their consistent implementation in practice. If the institutional and organizational capacities of the judicial system are not aligned with new solutions, the reforms' effects may remain limited. Efficient and predictable civil justice is an important element of legal certainty and institutional stability, since the trust of citizens and business entities in the legal system largely depends on the ability to obtain effective and timely legal protection. In this sense, improving civil justice contributes not only to the protection of subjective rights but also to strengthening broader social and institutional security, grounded in the rule of law and the security of legal relations. Therefore, further development of civil law must aim to strengthen institutional capacities, improve procedural mechanisms, and foster a legal culture that promotes efficient and fair dispute resolution. In this sense, the Italian model of civil law reforms can be seen both as an example of functional modernization of law and a warning that normative innovations without appropriate institutional support, legal certainty, and a developed legal culture cannot achieve their full effects.

COMPARATIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF ITALIAN REFORMS

The significance of Italian legislative reforms extends beyond national frameworks and takes on broader European significance, especially in the areas of judicial efficiency, human rights protection, and the regulation of new technologies. These reforms show that the efficiency of the judiciary is today seen less as a purely procedural issue and more as an important element of institutional security. The ability of citizens and businesses to rely on effective and timely legal protection directly affects legal certainty, social stability, and trust in public institutions. From a judicial organization perspective, Italian reforms confirm that improving procedural efficiency is a central issue in contemporary European legal systems.

The Cartabbia reform shows that procedural efficiency can be achieved by combining procedural instruments, strengthening the managerial role of the court, and developing alternative dispute resolution methods (Cavallini and Cirillo 2024, 9). However, European legal systems achieve these goals through different political-legal models. The German model favors stronger institutional control through strict procedural discipline and an active role for the court, reflecting the understanding of the state as a guarantor of legal certainty and institutional stability. In contrast, the French model is characterized by greater procedural flexibility and more pronounced party autonomy, with a more limited managerial role of the court. Although both systems encourage alternative dispute resolution and procedural pragmatism (Ranjard 2011, 12–13), the differences between them show that judicial reforms are not politically neutral but directly reflect the relationship among institutional control, efficiency, and the protection of individual rights.

The Italian approach stands out for its attempt to unify procedural, institutional, and organizational changes into a single reform framework, thus giving the reforms a pronounced systemic character. The Italian experience confirms that the efficiency of the judiciary depends not only on procedural norms, but also on institutional capacities, the organization of courts, and the professional competence of judicial actors, which is also confirmed by German

and French practice (Ranjard 2011, 19–21). In this way, the issue of procedural efficiency grows into an issue of the political philosophy of the state and the limits of institutional rationalization of the modern judiciary.

In the field of criminal law, Italian reforms are of particular importance in the context of the normative recognition of femicide as a special form of gender-based violence (Guatieri 2026). Different European approaches to this issue show that criminal law reflects broader political and social understandings of equality, the role of the state, and the limits of criminal law intervention. While French and German law maintain a formally neutral approach through the application of general crimes against life, with the possibility of evaluating gender motivation as an aggravating circumstance, the Italian model starts from the point of view that formal equality is not enough in conditions of structural gender-based violence. Similarly, Spanish law continues to treat femicide through qualified forms of murder within the framework of domestic violence, while Malta shows a tendency to approach the Italian model through a special normative emphasis on the gender dimension of violence (Aybars 2023, 10). Viewed from this perspective, different European judicial models also reflect different understandings of institutional security. While some systems emphasize a stronger role for the court and more intensive institutional control to preserve legal certainty and stability, others place greater value on procedural autonomy of the parties and procedural flexibility.

Such differences confirm the absence of a single European approach to femicide and point to deeper differences in the understanding of the role of the state in the protection of vulnerable groups. The Italian model goes beyond the limits of classical criminal law policy and poses femicide as a question of the political legitimacy of the state and its ability to ensure the real protection of women's human rights. Critically oriented literature warns that the expansion of specific criminal offenses can lead to the fragmentation of the criminal justice system and excessive symbolic criminalization, with stricter penal policies sometimes presented as a substitute for long-term institutional and social measures to protect women. An additional problem is the fact that judicial practice does not always follow legislative goals, but sometimes relativizes the broader social significance of femicide

by reducing it to the individual or psychological circumstances of a specific case (Lalli and Virgilio 2025, 60), while similar problems can be observed in other European countries despite developed normative frameworks (Aybars 2023, 11). In this sense, the issue of femicide is increasingly going beyond the framework of a classic criminal law response and is becoming part of a broader discussion about human security, which implies the state's obligation not to react only after violence has occurred, but to prevent risks that threaten the life, dignity, and safety of women through preventive and protective mechanisms.

Of particular comparative and political importance are reforms in the field of artificial intelligence regulation. Modern AI systems are no longer viewed solely as technical tools, but as complex socio-technological structures that influence the distribution of power, decision-making, and the exercise of rights, which is why regulation encompasses the entire life cycle of AI systems through the concept of so-called model governance and model risk management (Lazzaroli 2025). Different regulatory approaches simultaneously reflect broader political and ideological differences between the state, the market, and the individual (Hidayati, Surono, and Pamungkas 2025). While the American model favors market autonomy and the dominant role of the private technology sector, the Chinese approach is characterized by strong centralized state control and the use of digital technologies as instruments of social governance. The European Union is trying to establish an intermediate model based on the concept of "trustworthy artificial intelligence", insisting on transparency, accountability, and the protection of fundamental rights through the AI Act and related European instruments. This also gives the European model a geopolitical dimension through the so-called *Brussels effect*, i.e., the global normative influence of European standards (Siegmann and Anderljung 2022, 2–3).

These reforms are an example of the implementation of European regulatory trends at the national level. Italy was relatively early to engage in the development of a regulatory framework aligned with the European Artificial Intelligence Act (Balboni et al. 2025, 2), with the combination of European and national norms allowing for the adaptation of general principles to the specificities of the domestic system, but also raising issues of legal certainty and uniformity of

application. At the same time, the literature indicates that the ability of European states to effectively shape regulatory policies in the field of artificial intelligence is not determined solely by the quality of regulatory solutions, but also by their technological, economic and geopolitical capacities (Bonelli 2026). In the context of intense global competition, European states face limited opportunities to independently monitor the dynamics of the development of the most advanced AI systems, which further emphasizes the importance of a coordinated European approach and the strategic strengthening of their own innovation potential (Vacarelu 2023, 113). An additional challenge is the development of special liability regimes for damage caused by AI systems, where the European approach does not introduce a single substantive liability regime, but rather relies on mechanisms of facilitated proof and the presumption of fault and causation (Hacker 2023, 1–2). Such normative uncertainty is particularly expressed in situations of distributed liability between developers, manufacturers, users, and algorithmic systems, which can lead to a weakening of legal certainty and difficulty in exercising the right to effective legal protection. The growing dependence of modern societies on algorithmic systems also raises questions about digital security, institutional resilience, and the ability of the legal system to respond to technological risks that increasingly transcend national borders. This is precisely why modern regulatory models are increasingly based on preventive risk management, strengthening institutional oversight and establishing accountability mechanisms, in order to preserve the security of the digital environment without jeopardizing fundamental rights and technological development. However, the question remains open to what extent increasingly complex regulatory frameworks actually contribute to more efficient management of digital risks, and to what extent they create additional challenges in the application of law, legal certainty, and the effective protection of individual rights.

The Italian reforms represent a significant example of contemporary European legal modernization, but they also point to its limitations. The Italian experience shows that contemporary legal modernization is not a linear process of institutional progress, but a complex relationship between regulatory expansion, political priorities,

security requirements, and the protection of fundamental rights. Therefore, the success of contemporary reforms cannot be measured solely by the scope of normative interventions, but by their ability to establish a sustainable balance between efficiency, security, legal certainty, institutional sustainability, and the protection of fundamental rights in conditions of accelerated technological and social change.

CONCLUSION

The transformations of the Italian legal system show that law in modern conditions no longer develops exclusively through partial changes to individual norms, but through an attempt to simultaneously adapt institutions, procedures, and regulatory mechanisms to new social and technological circumstances. The analysis of reforms in the field of civil and criminal law, as well as the regulation of artificial intelligence, confirms the basic thesis of the paper that the Italian model is characterized by an effort to link the efficiency of the judiciary, the protection of human rights, and institutional adaptation into a single reform framework.

The research confirms that legal modernization is not a politically neutral process. Different European approaches to judicial reform, victim protection, and the regulation of new technologies reflect deeper differences in how they understand the relationship between the state, the individual, and the limits of institutional intervention. While some systems prioritize procedural autonomy and a limited role for the state, others insist on stronger institutional control in order to preserve efficiency, security, and legal certainty. In this way, reforms go beyond the framework of classical legislative policy and become an instrument for redefining the state's role in managing social risks and protecting fundamental rights.

The special value of the Italian approach stems from its integrative structure. Unlike partial reform models, Italian legislation attempts to unify procedural reforms, institutional reorganization, victim protection, and digital space regulation into a single concept of legal transformation. However, it is precisely this breadth of the reform effort that reveals its fundamental weaknesses. The continuous

expansion of the regulatory framework, intensive normative production, and the increasing complexity of legal regimes create the risk of legal system fragmentation, difficulties in law application, and a weakening of legal certainty.

The research results further confirm that the efficiency of the judiciary and the tightening of regulatory mechanisms do not in themselves guarantee effective protection of human rights. The Italian experience shows that the real achievements of reforms primarily depend on institutional capacities, professional standards, uniformity of case law, and the legal system's ability to ensure consistent application of the law. This is particularly evident in the areas of gender-based violence and the regulation of artificial intelligence, where normatively ambitious solutions often encounter serious problems of practical implementation, different interpretations, and limited institutional efficiency.

The analysis of artificial intelligence regulation also shows that contemporary law is becoming a space of intense geopolitical and economic competition. The European regulatory model, based on the concept of "trusted artificial intelligence", represents the European Union's attempt to preserve normative sovereignty and establish control over the digital space through law. However, it is shown that an extremely complex regulatory framework can have the opposite effect, increasing normative overload, slowing innovation, and increasing the dependence of European systems on technologically dominant global actors. Thus, the regulation of new technologies goes beyond the boundaries of classical legal policy and becomes a question of political power, institutional autonomy, and democratic control in the digital society.

Finally, the Italian experience shows that the success of contemporary legal modernization cannot be measured solely by the speed of court proceedings, the number of reforms adopted, or the scope of normative interventions. Its real value lies in legal institutions' ability to simultaneously ensure effective protection of rights, respond to contemporary security challenges, and preserve democratic legitimacy amid accelerated technological and social change. In this sense, the Italian model simultaneously demonstrates the potential and limitations

of contemporary legal modernization. While reform processes offer significant solutions to improve the efficiency of the judiciary, protect victims, and regulate new technologies, they also point to risks of excessive regulatory expansion, institutional burden, and increasing tension between security requirements and the protection of individual freedoms. Precisely because of these internal contradictions, the Italian experience represents a particularly important comparative framework for understanding the future directions of development of European legal systems in conditions of digital transformation and growing social and security challenges.

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САВРЕМЕНА ПРАВНА МОДЕРНИЗАЦИЈА У ИТАЛИЈИ: ИЗМЕЋУ РЕФОРМЕ ГРАЋАНСКОГ ПРАВОСУЋА, ДРЖАВНЕ ЕФИКАСНОСТИ, ЗАШТИТЕ ОСНОВНИХ ПРАВА И БЕЗБЕДНОСТИ

Резиме

Савремене реформе италијанског правног система представљају један од најзначајнијих примера правне модернизације у условима убрзаних друштвених, технолошких и институционалних промена. Уместо парцијалних измена појединих правних области, италијански законодавац настоји да кроз реформе кривичног права, грађанског правосуђа и регулације дигиталног простора обликује интегрисани модел правне трансформације. Рад полази од става да се савремене реформе у Италији не могу посматрати искључиво као техничко унапређење законодавства, већ као израз шире трансформације односа између државе, права, безбедности и заштите основних права. Истраживање се заснива на нормативноправном и упоредноправном методу, уз примену аналитичког и критичког приступа. Анализа обухвата реформе у области кривичног права, грађанског поступка, алтернативних метода решавања спорова и регулације вештачке интелигенције, при чему су италијанска решења сагледана у ширем европском контексту. Резултати истраживања показују да савремене реформе италијанског кривичног права карактерише истовремено јачање

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заштите жртава и ширење безбедносно оријентисане функције државе. Посебан значај има нормативно издвајање фемицида као посебног кривичног дела, чиме се родно засновано насиље препознаје као структурни друштвени проблем и питање људске безбедности. Истовремено, анализа показује да ширење посебних кривичних дела, пооштравање казнене политике и јачање контролне улоге државе отварају питања граница кривичноправне репресије, ризика од симболичке криминализације и очувања равнотеже између безбедности и заштите основних права. У области грађанског права анализа показује да Картабија реформа представља један од најзначајнијих покушаја модернизације грађанског поступка у савременом европском праву. Основни циљ реформе јесте повећање процесне ефикасности кроз јачање управљачке улоге суда, концентрацију процесних активности и развој алтернативних метода решавања спорова. Истраживање указује да се италијански модел налази између различитих европских приступа који настоје да успоставе равнотежу између процесне ефикасности, институционалне контроле, правне сигурности и права на правично суђење. Резултати истовремено показују да захтеви ефикасности могу угрозити процесну равнотежу и стварну једнакост приступа правди уколико нису праћени одговарајућим институционалним гаранцијама. Посебан сегмент рада посвећен је регулацији вештачке интелигенције и трансформацији грађанскоправне одговорности у дигиталном окружењу. Истраживање показује да савремени АИ системи више не представљају искључиво техничка средства, већ комплексне социотехнолошке структуре које утичу на расподелу моћи, доношење одлука и остваривање права. Италијански приступ у великој мери је усклађен са европским АИ актом, али анализа истовремено указује на бројне изазове који се односе на правну сигурност, институционалну одговорност, дигиталну безбедност и делотворну судску заштиту у условима расподељене одговорности између више субјеката укључених у развој и примену система вештачке интелигенције. Основни закључак рада јесте да италијанске реформе представљају значајан, али истовремено и амбивалентан модел савремене правне модернизације. Њихова вредност огледа се у настојању да се институционалне, процесне

и нормативне промене повежу у јединствен реформски оквир усмерен ка повећању ефикасности државе, јачању безбедности и унапређењу заштите права. Истовремено, истраживање показује да интензивна нормативна продукција, сложеност регулаторних режима и растућа улога државне контроле могу довести до фрагментације правног система, правне несигурности и слабљења институционалне одрживости. Италијанско искуство стога потврђује да савремена правна модернизација представља сложен процес успостављања равнотеже између државне ефикасности, безбедности, регулаторне експанзије и заштите основних права у условима убрзаних друштвених и технолошких промена.

Кључне речи: правна модернизација, Италија, реформа грађанског правосуђа, процесна ефикасност, основна права, безбедност.

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SECURITY ASPECTS OF DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION: THE CASE OF AP KOSOVO AND METOHIJA

(Translation in *Extenso*)

Abstract

The paper analyzes the process of demographic transition in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, with a special focus on the security and military aspects of the attempt to albanization this part of the Republic of Serbia, which has been actively implemented since the end of the NATO aggression in 1999. Special attention is paid to identifying the role of demographic factors in the escalation of ethnic conflicts, the articulation of separatist aspirations, and the generation of asymmetric security threats, including armed rebellions, institutional violence, and terrorist activities. The paper's theoretical framework assumes that demographic structure, its spatial distribution, and dynamics are long-term security variables of strategic importance, especially in politically unstable and ethnically heterogeneous regions. The paper's methodological approach relies on the application of several complementary scientific methods. The content analysis method was applied in the processing of relevant strategic documents, normative and legal acts, reports of international organizations, and selected scientific literature in the field of security sciences. The

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historical-comparative method was used to examine the continuity and discontinuity of demographic processes over a defined period. The statistical method enabled analysis of available demographic and migration indicators, while the night lights method was applied as a relevant indicator of the spatial concentration of population, economic activity, and infrastructure development in this part of the Republic of Serbia. The research results indicate that the process of demographic transition, in synergy with intensive mechanical population movements, primarily migration, has a decisive influence on the transformation of the ethnic structure of Kosovo and Metohija. Although there is a general trend of demographic decline, the analysis shows that the relative decrease in the number of Kosovo Albanians is increasingly pronounced compared to the Serbian population, further indicating complex, multidimensional, and long-term, unstable demographic dynamics. The research results confirm the importance of demographic processes as a strategic security factor and indicate the necessity of their systematic inclusion in assessments of national and regional security, as well as in the formulation of state strategies.

Keywords: Albanization, demographic transition, ethnic structure, national and regional security.

INTRODUCTION

Periodic trends of growth and decline in birth and death rates result from societal development and the adoption of new patterns of behavior. In the social sciences, the phenomenon of demographic transition is often studied to gain precise insights into the phases of population growth that occur in tandem with a country or region's economic state. Empirically, demographic transition is characteristic of all parts of the world, with a unique common pattern that actually describes a decline in mortality and the beginning of a population boom, followed by a decline in fertility, which causes a decline in the population growth rate (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division [UNDESA] 2022). On the other hand, the experiences of developed nations differ significantly from those of underdeveloped and underdeveloped countries in terms of

time frame, economy, and security (Sarkar 2025; Rai and Garg 2024; Botev 2024; Srdelić and Dávila-Fernández 2025; Imideeva et al. 2022). Sarah Haddock and other in in a scientific article titled “Population Growth” published in the International Encyclopedia of Public Health, note that during the last three decades of the 20th century, the demographic transition was correlated with a continuous decline in the vulnerability of countries to civil conflict, including ethnic wars, insurgencies, and terrorism (Haddock, Leahy, and Engelman 2008). Progress through the demographic transition gives countries a more mature and less volatile age structure, slower labor force growth, and a slower-growing school-age population. Countries in the early and middle stages of demographic transition were cumulatively significantly more vulnerable to civil conflict than countries in the late transition. The probability of civil conflict has steadily declined for high-risk countries as they have experienced general declines in fertility and mortality (Haddock, Leahy, and Engelman 2008). From the 1970s to the 1990s, a decline in a country’s annual fertility rate of ten births per 1,000 people corresponds to a reduction of approximately 10% in the probability of civil conflict (Haddock, Leahy, and Engelman 2008). The demographic factors most closely associated with the likelihood of new civil conflict outbreaks during the 1990s were a high proportion of young adults aged 15–29 and rapid urban population growth. Combined with a large youth population, very low arable land availability and/or renewable fresh water, and rapid urban population growth rates, countries had approximately a 40% probability of experiencing civil conflict in the 1990s. Finally, the authors conclude that migration and different population growth rates among ethnic groups competing for political and economic power also played an important role in political destabilization.

The intended goal of this paper is to provide a systematic description of the demographic transition in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, with a special focus on security and military aspects. For the purposes of the paper, several data collection techniques will be applied that should complement each other in achieving the intended goal. Namely, in the first phase, scientific papers from various fields (demography, political science, geopolitics, military science) were identified and grouped by research subject, including temporal and

spatial coverage, after which the content analysis technique was applied. Additionally, the technique of secondary data analysis of a certain number of databases generated by the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat was used. The paper uses the night lights method, i.e., the analysis of satellite data from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, to show the level of illumination in the area of Kosovo and Metohija.

APPLICATION OF NIGHTLIGHT METHODS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

The night lights method has been widely applied since the 1980s to assess population density in a defined geopolitical area. A systematic review of the social science literature shows that researchers primarily focus on a few key topics, such as economic activity, demographic transitions, and rapid urbanization.

The relationship between economic activity and light emission is the subject of numerous scientific studies, whose results confirm the assumption that changes in light levels are directly influenced by economic development (Chen et al. 2024). For example, one of the first works in this field, entitled *The relationship between satellite-observed visible-near infrared emissions, population, economic activity and electricity consumption*, describes the strength of the connection between night-light emission and economic activity, i.e. of gross national income (GNI) over a year in the United States, South America, Madagascar, and island states of the Caribbean and Indian Ocean (Elvidge et al. 1997). Applying linear regression for the period 1994–1995, the authors conclude that GNI shows a strong linear relationship with the illuminated area ($P=0.97$) across all analyzed studies. Significantly more precise results of the application of the night lights method in the context of economic development were presented by Chen and Nordhaus through several time series. The goal of their work is to identify the light intensity that can contribute to estimating a nation-state's real GNI (Chen and Nordhaus 2011). The authors calculated light-intensity weights to reduce the mean-squared error of the difference between actual and estimated GNI values for all

countries worldwide for the period 1992–2008 (Chen and Nordhaus 2011). They found that light intensity has significant potential to add value to GNI estimates in data-poor countries, at both the national and sub-national levels. In data-rich countries, light intensity data add less value because their measurement error is generally larger than that of available economic data (Chen and Nordhaus 2011). Thus, the literature clearly shows that it is possible to identify a strong relationship between nighttime light (NTL) emissions and economic activities, as measured by surface area and illuminance, which can further help estimate real GNI. As noted, linear regression is most often used as an additional technique for establishing and analyzing relationships within this topic.

Unlike monitoring conditions related to economic activity, the illuminated area is a significant indicator of changes in empirical work on the population. Namely, the night lights method is often used in research related to monitoring demographic flows, i.e., population density and geographic distribution at the local, national, and global levels. Christopher Doll, in his paper “DMSP-OLS Population Detection Profiles for Nighttime Images by Regions of the World”, examines the probability that a pixel will appear illuminated at a given population density in order to describe the detection of light that varies with population density (Doll 2010). The author tested two population datasets against a steady-state light dataset for 2000 and 2008 for developed and developing regions. The results of the study show that developed regions have fewer unlit cells at all population densities and that they increase illuminance rapidly with relatively small increases in population density, while less developed regions show a more gradual increase. Finally, he found that globally, at 2,000 people/km², about 15 percent of the population is undetectable by light emissions (Doll 2010). In addition, Francesca Pozzi and others are developing a population distribution dataset to improve the Gridded Population of the World (GPW) database as part of the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) (Pozzi, Small, and Yetman 2003). They first examined the relationship between population and percentage light frequency in the northeastern United States, France, Spain, and Portugal. They then developed a transfer function to map light frequency to population density and an algorithm to move population from areas with population density below a threshold to illuminated

areas. They found that in countries with large populations and poor spatial detail, their model improved on the Gridded Population of the World dataset (Pozzi, Small, and Yetman 2003).

It should be noted that, in a number of studies, results show a strong relationship between nighttime light and population density. However, studies on economic activity and demographic transition have mostly focused on one-year analyses, which limit further projections. In demographic studies, the authors focus more on the relationship with the illuminated area than with illumination intensity, using linear regression as a complementary research method.

The latest application of the nighttime light method appears in works in the field of urbanization, i.e., monitoring the extent of urban areas as an indicator of the socio-economic state of countries or regions. In many parts of the planet, characteristic features of human activity, such as construction and other infrastructure, can be associated with nighttime light emissions. According to some authors, the aforementioned light enables mapping the extent of urban areas, studying emission patterns, identifying light corridors, measuring the coverage of illuminated streets, monitoring the energy transition of lighting types, and estimating the logistical aspects of population access to electricity (Abascal et al. 2023). However, one of the shortcomings of this methodological approach is that a significant number of underdeveloped and low and middle-income countries (Low and Middle-Income Countries – LMIC) lack adequate electricity coverage within their territories. For example, according to the World Bank, more than 50% of Sub-Saharan Africa's population (about 600 million people) lacks access to electricity (World Bank 2019). From a security perspective, the poor electrification of the country can cause a number of other problems, as the population decides to use alternative solutions such as paraffin lamps (frequent fires), then coal burning, which increases the emission of pollutants, high crime rates, low safety culture, and inadequate education, etc. Despite the aforementioned shortcomings, satellite images (photographs) created using highly sophisticated computer programs are often used to determine the extent of urban areas (Zhou et al. 2015).

DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION IN KOSOVO AND METOHIA SINCE 2008

The illegal, unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo and Metohija in 2008 by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government can be interpreted as a precedent in international politics that, to this day, continues to spark controversy regarding the manner in which the principle of sovereignty is realized at the global level. Namely, the temporary suspension of the Republic of Serbia's jurisdiction in this part of the territory and the establishment of an international protectorate cumulatively contribute to the emergence of a political vacuum that Albanian secessionists are gradually filling through their manipulative activities (Tomić 2020; Gaćinović 2017; Milosavljević 2023). The main goal of the representatives of the Provisional Institutions of Priština is to completely eliminate the presence and then the participation of the local Serbian population in all aspects of social life. In this regard, the population censuses in Kosovo and Metohija conducted in 2011 and 2024 are just one indicator of the institutional pressure on Albanians, given how they were organized and conducted in the northern part of this southern Serbian province. International organizations, primarily UNMIK (United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo), KFOR (Kosovo Force), and EULEX (European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo), with their active actions, further facilitate the creation of a completely ethnically pure region by Albanian secessionists by creating an unfavorable environment for the normal life of the remaining Serbian population.

The first population census conducted in Kosovo and Metohija in 2011 was very different from all previous ones in which Albanians did not participate, thus expressing a boycott of the Serbian state and its institutions. Namely, the population census in Kosovo and Metohija was conducted from 1 to 15 April 2011 in 34 municipalities, excluding the northern parts of Kosovska Mitrovica, Zvečan, and Zubin Potok, where the majority of residents are of Serbian nationality. The results of the census of the provisional Kosovo institutions show that at that time, 1,733,872 residents were registered, of whom 198,214 lived in Priština (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE] 2014). Of this number, 1,6 million people declared themselves Albanians,

followed by 27,533 Bosniaks, 18,738 Turks, 15,436 Ashkali, 11,524 Egyptians, 10,265 Gorani, 8,824 Roma, and 5,104 undeclared (OSCE 2014). The average age is estimated at 29.97 years, making the Kosovo Albanian population one of the youngest in Europe (OSCE 2014).

However, the report of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission “Assessment of Local-Level Mechanisms for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Interests of Communities in Kosovo”, published in 2014, notes a number of shortcomings (and recommendations for overcoming them) in the local administration that affected the reliability of the data (OSCE 2014). One of the key shortcomings concerns the insufficient participation of Serbs in local government mechanisms. It should be noted that the UNMIK did not participate in the population registration process, in contradiction of Security Council Resolution 1244, which guarantees certain rights of the Republic of Serbia and its citizens. The majority of Serbs and other communities were not informed about the census, as evidenced by the fact that in the village of Žitkovac, not far from Priština, there were no residents, while the real situation is completely different, given the active presence of several dozen Serb families. The next problem identified by OSCE representatives is the shortage of enumerators and the lack of adequate census forms in the languages of minority communities (e.g., Roma, Ashkali).

The next census was conducted in 2024, with Serbs, as before, boycotting the entire process precisely because of their distrust in the work of the provisional Kosovo institutions. According to the census results, 1,586,659 people live in Kosovo and Metohija, of which 93.49 percent belong to the Islamic religion, 2.31 percent to the Orthodox Church, 1.75 percent to the Catholic Church, while 1.5 percent did not declare their religious affiliation, 0.5 percent did not belong to any religion, and 0.45 percent opted for other religions (Agjencia e Statistikave të Kosovës 2024). It is interesting that, as an addition to the survey questionnaire, a statement on war damage was also included, stating that 11,417 people were killed during the war, 1,047 of them are listed as missing, 6,682 were wounded, and 3,312 were imprisoned (Agjencia e Statistikave të Kosovës 2024). In contrast to the 2011 census, the average age of the population has increased to 34.84 years, or 35.66 for women and 34.03 for men (Agjencia e Statistikave të

Kosovës 2024). In addition, the population growth rate in rural areas decreased from 62 percent in 2011 to 49.8 percent in 2024 (Agjencia e Statistikave të Kosovës 2024). Looking at the development category, the urban population accounts for 50.2 percent, compared to the rural population at 49.8 percent, suggesting increased migration to urban areas (Agjencia e Statistikave të Kosovës 2024). The number of family households increased by 69,505 or 23.4 percent, while the number of apartment buildings and houses increased by 21.5 percent (Agjencia e Statistikave të Kosovës 2024). In 11 municipalities, the number of Albanians increased by 66,897, while in 27 municipalities it decreased by 228,803 (Zdravković 2024). A larger number of residents compared to 2011 was registered in Pristina (+28,446), Kosovo Polje (+28,126) and Gračanica (+6,149), while the number of residents decreased by more than 10,000 in as many as 12 Kosovo-Metohija municipalities, namely in Prizren (-31,234), Podujevo (-17,452), Đakovica (-15,576), Orahovac (-14,675), Suva Reka (-13,888), Peja (-12,496), Dečani (-12,136), Vitina (-11,346), Mališevo (-10,684), Glogovac (-10,409) and Srbica (-10,296) (Zdravković 2024). An interesting piece of information is the result of the 1981 census, which registered 1,585,566 inhabitants, an increase of 228,227 Albanians (Table 1). Generally speaking, in 2024, a drop in the birth rate was recorded: 140,000 fewer Albanians were registered than in 2011, continuing the depopulation trend that has been present since 2000 (Đorđević 2014).

Table 1. Census results by age groups according to the results of the 1981 and 2024

Age	1981	2024	Difference
0–4	235,912	107,710	-128,202
5–9	221,376	117,272	-104,104
10–14	198,699	123,022	-75,677
15–19	172,284	122,613	-49,671
20–24	140,052	134,270	-5,782
25–29	111,499	113,474	1,975
30–34	92,034	109,335	17,301
35–39	76,214	103,883	27,669
40–44	73,758	103,224	29,466
45–49	64,328	105,345	41,017
50–54	55,533	100,167	44,634
55–59	35,975	91,084	55,109
60–64	29,302	80,292	50,990
65+	68,701	173,875	105,174
Unknown	8,773		
Total	1,584,440	1,585,566	1,126

Source: Zdravković 2024.

Data on the age structure of the population of Kosovo and Metohija from 1981 and 2024 show long-term demographic trends, with the caveat that 1981 reflects the period of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), with a different political and administrative structure, while 2024 covers the current demographic and political circumstances. The number of young people (0–14 years) has decreased significantly, indicating a decrease in the birth rate and a phase of “delayed demographic transition”, while the age groups above 35 have increased dramatically, with the largest growth in the 65+ group, which confirms the process of population aging (Zdravković 2024). These data show that demographic trends are not uniform and that the age structure and migration flows must be taken into account when assessing demographic and security risks.

It is interesting that, according to some estimates, unlike the number of Kosovo Albanians, the number of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija is increasing slightly, especially among younger residents.¹ The Provisional Institution of Self-Government, the Agency for Statistics, published data on December 19, 2024 that around 20,000 Serbs live in the territory of four municipalities in the north of Kosovo and Metohija, while the other six municipalities south of the Ibar River have 27,000 residents of Serbian nationality. The number of registered Serbs increased by 11,120, or 43.6%, with Štrpce recording the largest individual increase of 4,932 residents, followed by Leposavić (+2,677), Parteš (+1,436), Gračanica (+1,351), and Obilić (+1,324), and the largest decrease was in Ranilug (-1,343) and Novo Brdo (-2,516) (Zdravković 2024; Kosovo Agency of Statistics [ASK] 2024). For comparison, reports by the OSCE and the European Centre for Minority Issues in Kosovo and Metohija recorded a number of 146,128 Serbs in 2013, with that number having decreased drastically by 2017 to around 95,000, according to the highest state officials of the Republic of Serbia (European Centre for Minority Issues [ECMI] 2013; Predsednik Republike Srbije 2019).

Milosavljević and his associates in the work *Changes in the ethnic structure of the population of settlements in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija 1948–2022*, explain that numerous demographic indicators indicate that the Albanian community

¹ An additional argument for a slight increase in the number of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija in recent years can be supported by data on migration movements and local return initiatives. In addition to the northern municipalities and central Serbian enclaves where population growth has been recorded, reports from local municipalities indicate that part of the return is related to economic and infrastructure projects, as well as support from the Serbian state for the preservation and improvement of Serbian communities in Kosovo and Metohija (Zdravković 2024). For example, the increase in the number of young families in Štrpce, Leposavić and Parteš, as well as new housing and economic projects, contribute to the stabilization and slight expansion of the Serbian population in these localities. These trends show that, although in the long term, the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija decreased from 2013 to 2017, there are segments where relative growth has been recorded in recent years, especially in young age categories, which is important for assessing the demographic and security potential for the survival of Serbian communities.

currently dominates the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, which is a direct consequence of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) aggression, violent expulsions, murders, threats and pressures of various kinds to which Serbs and other non-Albanians are exposed (Milosavljević, Medojević, i Valjarević 2023, 238). 23,000 Serbs, 6,000 Roma, 1,000 Muslims, and 1,000 Turks fled the city of Priština alone (Milosavljević, Medojević, and Valjarević 2023, 238). The large urban centers of Kosovo and Metohija, such as Priština, Prizren, Peć, Djakovica, Uroševac, Gnjilane, Podujevo, Vučitrn, and Southern Mitrovica, are inhabited exclusively by Albanians. The Serbian and other non-Albanian populations have remained in rural areas, where they still constitute the majority, and for which the term “enclaves” has become established (Milosavljević and Medojević 2020).

It should be noted that the changes in the ethnic structure of the population of Kosovo and Metohija cannot be viewed solely as a consequence of the events after 1999, but rather represent a long-term process with deeper historical roots. During the second half of the 20th century, the province underwent a gradual demographic transformation, reflected in the growth of the Albanian population and the simultaneous decrease in the share of the Serbian population. These processes were conditioned by a combination of factors, including different rates of natural increase, migration movements, and specific political and institutional circumstances within the then SFRY (Vukadinović 2022). Periodic political crises and ethnic tensions in the province also significantly affected demographic trends. Demonstrations by Albanian students in 1968, accompanied by demands for greater autonomy for the province, intensified the exodus of the Serbian population from certain urban and rural areas (Vukadinović 2022). A similar trend continued after the 1981 crisis, when mass protests and rising political tensions led to a further deterioration of interethnic relations and increased migration movements (Todorović Lazić 2024). At the same time, after the adoption of the 1974 Constitution of the SFRY, which granted Kosovo and Metohija a high degree of political autonomy, demographic processes continued, leading to a gradual decrease in the share of the Serbian population in the province's total population (Ristanović 2019). The synergistic effect of the aforementioned political, economic, and security factors led to the ongoing emigration of Serbs, resulting in

significant changes in the ethnic composition of the population of Kosovo and Metohija.

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the largest wave of international migration occurred in 2012, when more than 50,000 people left the Kosovo and Metohija region in just two months (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division [UNDESA] 2024). One of the highest rates of population migration in Europe is also indicated by periodic reports of the World Bank, which state, among other things, that 245,000 people emigrated in the period 2012–2020 (World Bank 2024). The most common final destinations are Germany (37%), Switzerland (23%), Italy (8%), Sweden (6%), and Slovenia (5%), while the reasons for migration are economic (low living standards) and security (armed conflicts) (World Bank 2024). Moreover, the inflow of funds from the diaspora, amounting to over 600 million euros annually, testifies to the significant number of migrants from Kosovo and Metohija (according to some estimates, around 700,000 people).

In the context of the application of night-light methods, it is worth noting that, according to data from the International Energy Agency (IEA), electricity consumption per capita during the observed period amounted to 3 MWh/capita (International Energy Agency [IEA] 2025). At the same time, total consumption by sector was highest in households, with a share of more than 50%, or 2,296 TJ (IEA 2025).

On the other hand, data from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (National Aeronautics and Space Administration [NASA] 2025) 2025 from February 2025 show significantly higher night-time light emissions, which can be interpreted as one of the indicators of accelerated economic activities. Namely, according to data from the International Atomic Energy Agency, per capita electricity consumption in 2022 was 3,789 MWh/capita, which is 143% more than in 2000 (IEA 2025). In addition, citizens are identified as the largest consumers of electricity, accounting for 59% of total consumption in Kosovo and Metohija (IEA 2025). Moreover, publicly available satellite images² show that the road infrastructure connecting larger urban areas has been further built and well-lit. However, if we compare the level of

² For example using VIIRS/NPP.

development (based on night light emissions) of municipalities with a majority Serbian population with the scope and intensity of progress of other Albanian local governments, it can be concluded that the northern part of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija is largely lagging behind.

The estimation of the total population of Kosovo and Metohija based on official census data is limited by a number of different factors related to natural growth, population response, diaspora participation, boycotts, undefined administrative regulations at the local level (e.g. municipal borders), immigration and migration of the population, and inadequate participation of international organizations (OSCE, EULEX and UNMIK) that should ensure the legitimacy of the entire process and ultimately the validity of the results. Moreover, the 2025 elections revealed irregularities in the number of citizens with active voting rights. According to data from the interim institution of the Central Election Commission, 1,970,944 citizens have the right to vote, of whom 104,924 are registered to vote outside the territory of Kosovo and Metohija (Komisioni Qendror i Zgjedhjeve [KQZ] 2025). An analysis of these results leads to the conclusion that there are about half a million more voters than officially registered residents of Kosovo and Metohija, which opens the door to further political malpractice.

FORMATION OF PARASECURITY AND PARAMILITARY FORMATIONS IN KOSOVO AND METOHIJA – DEMOGRAPHIC CAPACITY

The security situation in Kosovo and Metohija has been burdened by a number of problems at both the internal and external levels for a long time. Since the illegal declaration of independence of Kosovo in February 2008, representatives of Kosovo Albanians, with the help and support of a part of the international community, have been actively implementing a policy of the so-called sovereignization of this part of the Republic of Serbia (Bjelajac 2019). Namely, contrary to UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which, among other things, regulates the presence of NATO armed forces, and as the only military and security formation (KFOR), representatives of the provisional institutions of self-government have established the so-called Kosovo

Security Forces and the so-called Kosovo Police. In this way, the continuity of the presence of the terrorist organization UCK (*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës – UÇK*) is established, especially if we consider the fact of the reintegration of its leading members accused (but not prosecuted) of the most serious crimes against Serbs and other minority communities.

The United States, as the main promoter of Kosovo's "independence", established the Defense Institute Reform Initiative with the task of gradually transforming the "Kosovo Security Forces" into the "Kosovo Armed Forces". Moreover, since 2010, NATO has been gradually reducing the number of members through the implementation of a new concept of "deterrence presence", which is based on the engagement of smaller dispersive local teams (liaison monitoring teams) to monitor the social, political, and economic situation in the municipalities for which they are responsible. However, one of the obstacles to the transformation of the aforementioned paramilitary organizations is the normative legal documents adopted by the representatives of the Kosovo Albanians after 2008, which limit membership to 2,500 people tasked with carrying out "activities of providing support to civil authorities in emergency situations". The aforementioned members do not possess heavy weapons, artillery, tanks, and helicopters, which is the main complaint of the leading extreme secessionist Albanian political parties. Overcoming such legal restrictions is possible through political consensus within the provincial parliament, which would also include representatives of the Serbs. On the other hand, it can be stated that this strategy is simply impossible, bearing in mind that paramilitary and parasecurity organizations in Kosovo are used exclusively for the expulsion of the remaining Serbian population. Therefore, the primary mission of KFOR, according to international law and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, is the demilitarization of the UCK terrorist organization without the possibility of transferring its security powers to other illegal formations such as the "Kosovo Security Force".

An attempt to control the security situation and calm tensions surrounding the transformation of the "Kosovo Security Forces" into the "Kosovo Armed Forces" was achieved in 2016 by forming a NATO Liaison and Advisory Team (NLAT) with the task of respecting

the entrusted status of the KFOR mission (North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] 2026). Although some NATO members advocate compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, the United States provides the greatest support for the transformation of the “Kosovo Security Forces” through various cooperation mechanisms, such as the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) and specialist training at Bondsteel. In addition, in 2021, the US donated 55 M1117 armored fighting vehicles with 40mm rocket launchers, 12.7mm machine guns, 246 Javelin anti-tank missiles, and 150 Hammer vehicles to the representatives of the Provisional Institutions of Kosovo (Defense Security Cooperation Agency 2024). Increasingly frequent exercises by the American contingent of KFOR and by the armies of other countries that have recognized the so-called independence of Kosovo and Metohija (Turkey, Great Britain, Albania) are taking place in Pomazatin, near Kosovo Polje, where the Search and Rescue Center is located. According to publicly available data, more than 3,000 people, mostly from other countries, have completed the training so far.

According to official NATO figures, the number of KFOR troops was gradually reduced from around 50,000 in 1999 to around 39,000 by 2002, and then further reduced in the following years as the security situation improved and local security forces developed (NATO 2026). However, numerous incidents involving members of para-security forces, such as the so-called Regional Operational Support Unit (ROSU), clearly indicate that the process of ethnic cleansing of Serbs from the area of Kosovo and Metohija is still being carried out despite the presence of international armed forces.³ On the other hand, an increase in the number of members of the “Kosovo Security Forces” from the original 2,500 people, including 800 reservists, as envisaged in the Ahtisaari plan, to as many as 5,000 if the transformation into the so-called “Kosovo Army” is implemented (Radio Televizija Srbije [RTS] 2018). Namely, in 2018, representatives of the provisional Kosovo institutions adopted three “laws” enabling the aforementioned transformation of the “Kosovo Security Forces” and changing their

³ According to data from the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, 128 ethnically motivated incidents were recorded in Kosovo and Metohija in the period 2021–2025 (KiM n.d.).

purpose, further complicating the already deteriorated security situation. In addition, the introduction of mandatory military service for all residents of Kosovo and Metohija who have reached the age of 18 has been announced. Therefore, in this way, UN Security Council Resolution 1244 is directly violated and calls into question the security of the Republic of Serbia and the entire surrounding area (Kancelarija za Kosovo i Metohiju, Vlada Republike Srbije [KiM] n.d.).

According to some estimates from 2018, the “Kosovo Security Forces” has 103 members of Serbian nationality, with their number constantly decreasing. After the call of Serbian political officials “that joining illegal foreign armed formations is illegal and punishable by up to ten years in prison”, a large number of Serbs left the “Kosovo Security Forces”, while a smaller number (45) of them are still engaged (Cvetković 2020). A similar situation occurred in November 2022, when more than 550 members from municipalities with a majority Serb population in Kosovo and Metohija left the so-called “Kosovo Police”. Accordingly, the reduced demographic capacity recorded in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija in recent years is reflected in the staffing of the aforementioned para-security and paramilitary formations. It is for this reason that representatives of the provisional institutions of self-government based in Priština are trying to attract, i.e., recruit, the younger population through various manipulative activities (increasing salaries, reducing workload, granting broader powers, rapid advancement, etc.). However, as the results of the 2024 census showed, the age group from 19 to 29 has decreased by as much as 55,000 people compared to 1981, with the current economic, political, and security (in)conditions further accelerating the migration of the remaining younger part of the population. For example, during 2021, over 50 members left the “Kosovo Security Forces”, mostly those who had undergone various types of special training in many NATO member states such as Croatia, Turkey, and the USA. Therefore, the presence of KFOR as the only legitimate military organization in Kosovo and Metohija should enable the achievement of a stable security situation through respect for the basic human rights of all ethnic groups in Kosovo and Metohija; a security vacuum may be created that is filled by the aforementioned paramilitary and paramilitary organizations, in violation of all applicable international agreements. In this way, the

national security of the Republic of Serbia and the further survival of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija are directly called into question.

It is inevitable to note that the Republic of Serbia is taking certain but insufficient measures aimed at protecting the rights and survival of the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija. Diplomatic activities within international institutions point to violations of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and to the illegal activities of the provisional Kosovo institutions. Serbia also supports local Serbian communities through infrastructure, educational, and religious projects, as well as coordination with international security forces (for example, cooperation with KFOR in the land security zone), with the aim of preventing incidents targeting remaining Serbs. Therefore, the preservation of vital national interests requires a multidimensional strategy that manifests itself through: strengthening diplomatic engagement, continuous support to local Serbian communities, cooperation with international security structures, and ensuring legal protection of Serbs. It is also important to encourage the younger population to stay or return to Kosovo through education, job opportunities, and the preservation of cultural and religious heritage. Only an integrated approach combining diplomacy, local support, and legal protection can ensure the long-term, sustainable survival of the Serbian population and, more broadly, the stability of the entire region.

CONCLUSION

Demographic transition brings with it a series of radical social changes in the development of modern society, especially in terms of economy and security. The paper describes the connection between demographic transition and the security or military capacity of the population in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. Namely, the results of the population censuses from 2011 and 2024, which were organized and conducted by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government with headquarters in Priština, clearly show a trend of decreasing numbers of people in all age categories, unlike previous censuses when ethnic Albanians from the territory of Kosovo and Metohija were considered the fastest growing population in Europe. On the other hand, by applying the night light method to the analysis of satellite images of

this part of the Republic of Serbia, one can observe an increased degree of urbanization in larger cities, accompanied by economic activity related to infrastructure construction. However, the aforementioned footage clearly shows a pronounced economic development gap between municipalities with a majority Serb population, such as North Mitrovica, Zubin Potok, Leposavić, and Zvečan, which is linked to decades-long problems with the survival of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija.

From a security perspective, the demographic transition of Kosovo Albanians at the beginning of the 21st century was used as the main instrument for carrying out separatist propaganda against the institutions of the Republic of Serbia. Since the demographic process of Albanization is in an increasing decline, representatives of the provisional institutions of self-government continue to form paramilitary formations, such as the so-called Kosovo Security Forces, which are to be further transformed into the so-called Kosovo Army, in violation of the applicable norms of international law (UN Security Council Resolution 1244). The problematic demographic capacity of the aforementioned illegal formations is compensated for by various economic mechanisms and logistical support from several NATO member states, the most notable of which is the USA. Despite significant assistance and support from parts of the international community, there is a constant outflow of members of para-security ("Kosovo Police") and paramilitary ("KSB") organizations, with their migration to European Union countries. Therefore, based on available data, a further trend of rapid decline in the birth rate of Kosovo Albanians and, conversely, a partial increase in the number of newborn Serbs can be predicted, which will affect the overall ethnic structure of the population in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija.

Based on the presented data, it can be concluded that the demographic transition numbers directly affect the security and demographic position of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. While the number of Albanians is decreasing, the number of Serbs is partially increasing, which in the long term may partially mitigate the security risks for the survival of Serbian communities. The stability of Serbian communities is still threatened by economic disproportion and migration, but this situation can be improved through continued support

for local Serbian institutions, investments in infrastructure, education, and economic activities, as well as through active protection of human and minority rights. These measures enable the preservation of the demographic potential of Serbs and the protection of the Republic of Serbia's vital national interests.

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БЕЗБЕДНОСНИ АСПЕКТИ ДЕМОГРАФСKE ТРАНЗИЦИЈЕ: СЛУЧАЈ АП КОСОВО И МЕТОХИЈА

Резиме

Рад пружа свеобухватну анализу демографске транзиције у Аутономној покрајини Косово и Метохија, са посебним фокусом на њене безбедносне, политичке и војне импликације у контексту текуће албанизације, која се активно спроводи од завршетка НАТО интервенције 1999. године. Примарни циљ студије је да систематски разграничи и делимично објасни међусобну везу између социо-структурне трансформације, демографске динамике и рањивости државе, посебно у сценаријима које карактеришу етничке тензије, сепаратистичка мобилизација и асиметричне претње. Ради постизања дефинисаног циља у истраживању је примењен мултидисциплинарни методолошки оквир који комбинује анализу садржаја, историјско-компаративне методе, статистичко-демографско моделирање и методу ноћних светала засновану на даљинском читавању, чиме се олакшава просторна и временска процена економске активности, урбанизације и разлика у регионалном развоју. Резултати истраживања наглашавају да демографска транзиција, заједно са миграционим обрасцима, прогресивно мења етнички састав територије: становништво косовских Албанаца доживљава континуирани пад, док српско становништво показује скроман, мада делимичан, пораст. Упркос овом демографском порасту међу Србима, стална економска неразвијеност, просторне неједнакости у инфраструктури и континуирана емиграција млађег становништва погоршавају рањивост српских заједница. Ова динамика директно утиче на друштвену отпорност, задржавање људског капитала и

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стратешки безбедносни положај српског становништва. У раду се даље тврди да стабилизација и дугорочна одрживост српских заједница захтевају спровођење интегративних политичких мера, укључујући јачање локалне самоуправе и институција заснованих на заједници, циљане програме социо-економског развоја, улагање у људски капитал кроз образовање и стручно оспособљавање и систематску заштиту мањинских и људских права у складу са међународним правним нормама. Истраживање закључује да су такве вишедимензионалне интервенције кључне не само за очување демографског потенцијала српског становништва, већ и за ублажавање безбедносних ризика, неговање друштвене кохезије и заштиту виталних националних интереса Републике Србије у сложенем постконфликтном окружењу.

Кључне речи: албанизација, демографска транзиција, етничка структура, национална и регионална безбедност.

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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 or in English.

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

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://aseestant.ceon.rs/index.php/pnb/login>.

Authors are obliged to submit a signed and scanned Statement 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>**.

If authors submit a manuscript in Serbian with a mandatory English translation, they must submit a signed and scanned Statement of Identity of the Serbian and English versions of the manuscript. The statement form can be downloaded from the journal's website: **<https://www.ips.ac.rs/uputstvo-za-autore.php?id=5>**.

All submitted manuscripts are checked for plagiarism or auto-plagiarism. Various forms of chat boxes and other artificial intelligence software cannot be (co)authors of the papers under consideration. These tools can only be used for stylistic language editing, not for writing sections of the paper, and authors who use them are obliged to specify the purpose of using such tools at the point where they are used.

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 with spaces, including 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 full 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 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, Cristobal 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)

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*

Legal and Public Documents

Sections, articles, or paragraphs can be cited in the 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)

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)

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)

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 of 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.

Pollitt, 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.

Special 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 parenthesis, and page numbers should be put in the 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 parenthesis.

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, whereas 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 the parenthesis.

(see: Ellwood 2018)

Using secondary source

When using a secondary source, the original source should be cited in parenthesis, 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 the parenthesis.

(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.

TEXT FORMATTING

General guidelines for writing the manuscript

The manuscript should be written in Word, in the following manner:

- Paper size: A4;
- Margins: Normal 2.54 cm;
- Use Times New Roman font (plain letters) to write the text, unless specified otherwise;

- Line spacing: 1.5;
- Footnote line spacing: 1;
- Title font size: 14 pt;
- Subtitles font size: 12 pt;
- Text font size: 12 pt;
- Footnote font size: 10 pt;
- Tables, charts and figures font size: 10 pt;
- Use Paragraph/Special/First line at 1.27 cm;
- Text alignment: Justify;
- Font color: Automatic;
- Page numbering: Arabian numerals in lower right corner;
- Do not break the words manually by inserting hyphens to continue the word in the next line;
- Save the manuscript in the .doc format.

Research article manuscript preparation

The manuscript should be prepared in the following manner:

Name and surname of the first author*

* Footnote: E-mail address: The institutional e-mail address is strongly recommended. ORCID:

Affiliation

Name and surname of the second author**

** Footnote: E-mail address: The institutional e-mail address is strongly recommended. ORCID:

Affiliation

TITLE OF THE PAPER***

*** Footnote: if necessary, specify one of the following (or similar) data: 1) the name and number of the project; 2) the proceeding where the manuscript was presented under the same or similar title; 3) statements of gratitude.

Abstract

Abstract, within 100–250 words range, contains the subject, aim, theoretical and methodological approach, results and conclusions of the paper.

Keywords: Below the abstract, five to ten **key words** should be written. Key words should be written in roman font and separated by commas.

The manuscript can have maximally three levels of subtitles. **Subtitles** should not be numbered. They should be used in the following manner:

FIRST LEVEL SUBTITLE

Second level subtitle

Third level subtitle

Tables, charts, and figures should be inserted in the following manner:

- Above the table/chart/figure, center the name of the Table, Chart or Figure, an Arabic numeral, and the title in Times New Roman font;
- Below the table/chart/figure, the source should be cited in the following manner: 1) if the table/chart/figure is taken from another source, write down *Source:* and include the parenthetical citation information of the source; or 2) if the table/chart/figure is not taken from another source, write down *Source: Author.*

Use in-text references according to *Citing and referencing*.

Use the footnotes solely to provide remarks or broader explanations.

REFERENCES

References should be listed after the text of the paper, before the Resume in the following manner:

- the first line of each reference should be left indented, and the remaining lines should be placed as hanging by 1.27 cm using the option Paragraph/Special/Hanging;
- all the references should be listed together, without separating legal acts of archives;
- the references should not be numbered;
- list only the references used in the text.

After the reference list, write the name and surname of the author, the title of the paper and resume in Serbian in the following manner:

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

Установа запослења

Име и презиме другог аутора**

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

Установа запослења

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Резиме

Resume (Резиме) up to 1/10 length of the paper contains the results and conclusions of the paper which are presented in greater scope than in the abstract.

Keywords (Кључне речи): Keywords should be written in Times New Roman font and separated by commas.

Review preparation

A review should be prepared in the same manner as the research article, but leaving out the abstract, keywords, resume, or book cover.

Book review preparation

When writing book reviews, split the text into **two columns**. Book reviews should be prepared in the following manner:

<i>Name and surname of the author*</i>	under the same or similar title; 3) statements of gratitude.
* In the footnote: E-mail address: The institutional e-mail address is strongly recommended. ORCID:	Below the title place the image of the front cover ;
<i>Affiliation</i>	Below the image of the front cover list the book details according to the following rule:
TITLE OF THE BOOK REVIEW***	Name and surname of the author. Year of publication. <i>Title of the book</i> . Place of publication: Publisher, total number of pages.
*** Footnote: if necessary, specify one of the following (or similar) data: 1) the name and number of the project; 2) the proceeding where the manuscript was presented	The text of the book review should be prepared following the guidelines of the research article preparation.

Detailed guidelines for referencing and formatting manuscripts are available at: <https://www.ips.ac.rs/uputstvo-za-autore.php?id=5>.

REVIEWERS' GUIDELINES

The role of reviewers is to contribute to maintaining the high quality of our journal. All submitted manuscripts undergo a double-blind peer review, ensuring anonymity in both the review process and the authorship.

Requests for peer review are submitted through the SCIndeks Assistant system. The deadline for accepting or declining the review request is seven days from receipt, while the review itself must be completed within two weeks of receiving the request. The content of the review is confidential and must not be disclosed to individuals outside the journal's Editorial board. If, at any point, a reviewer becomes aware of any conflict of interest related to the manuscript under review, they are required to inform the Editorial Board as soon as possible.

When reviewing a manuscript, the reviewer is required to complete the attached review form:

Title of the manuscript:

Relevance, social, and scientific significance of the topic under consideration:

To what extent has the author clearly outlined the theoretical and methodological approach in the manuscript?

Is the manuscript based on contemporary and relevant literature, particularly in terms of the author's use of the latest research published in scientific journals and conference proceedings (especially in political science journals and proceedings)?

Scientific and social contribution of the manuscript. General comments on the quality of the manuscript:

Suggestions for the author on how to improve the quality of the manuscript, if necessary:

Please select one of the recommendations for categorizing the manuscript:

1. Original research article
2. Review article
3. Scientific critique, polemic, or commentary

Please select one of the recommendations regarding the publication of this manuscript:

1. Publish without revision
2. Publish with minor revisions
3. After revision, submit for a new round of review
4. Reject

Additional comments for the editor regarding ethical concerns (e.g., plagiarism, fraud) or other aspects of the manuscript that may assist in making a final decision on its status.

Date of review:

Reviewer's name, surname, and academic title:

The use of chatbots and other artificial intelligence software is strictly prohibited in the preparation of reviews.

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