

Armed Conflict as a Tool of Politics: Terrorism, Guerilla or Partisan Warfare

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Abstract: The research problem of this paper is related to the determination of similarities and differences between terrorism, guerrilla and partisan warfare, on specific examples that are processed through case studies. The main goal is to determine the correlation between political victory and armed victory in armed political conflicts. The main result is a scientific explanation of the often-confusing relation between combat casualties on the one hand, and the political outcomes of armed conflict on the other. The conclusion drawn from the research results tells us how decision-makers should assemble teams to combat threats to national security.

Keywords: guerrilla, partisan warfare, terrorism, Sutjeska, Drenica.

INTRODUCTION

We will tackle the connection between tactical and operational military-police logic on the one hand, and the political logic of the use of violence on the other. Since the issue of political violence within a state is a matter of national security, the operational and tactical management of the fight against various forms of political violence often falls into the hands of police officers, lawyers, prosecutors, security managers and, less frequently, military officers. We do not intend to challenge this logic nor the justification of such protocols. However, except the USA, the Russian Federation and the like countries, participation of social science experts specialising in political violence is rare.

Namely, the fight against lone terrorists³, terrorist organisations, rebel groups, or insurgent formations is not only an operational-tactical fight in the kinetic sense. It is at the same time a political struggle at the level of ideas, ideologies, political doctrines, political propaganda, political agitation and political marketing. In other words, each of the groups that threaten national security, in addition to its kinetic (Jovanović, 2021) capacity of force that can turn into violence, has the capacity of political capital (Simeunović, 2002) that is

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3 The term “Lone Wolf” has been increasingly avoided in contemporary terrorism scholarship because it contributes to the verbal glorification of terrorists.



also used for the purpose of fighting⁴ against state authority. It implies that any fight of the security system against the enemy must have two components: 1) Tactical-operational application of force, being the state monopoly, through the use of police, gendarmerie and other special forces; but also 2) socio-political, we shall name it commissar component, through the application of knowledge about social constructs that influence emotions and irrational parts of human personality, and especially in social groups that function according to special rules of collective irrationality (Simeunović, 2002: 119–120).

Thus, we have decided to research the phenomena of terrorism, guerrilla warfare, partisan warfare, rebellion and uprising within the field of political violence theory. Moreover, with an intention to contribute to a *public policy document* that will be useful to decision-makers in Serbia, we will limit the subject of the research to the Western Balkans. Our temporal subject of research will be the intermittent period from 1943 to 1998. Moreover, we will focus our scientific explanation on the two events: the first, the Battle of Sutjeska in 1943; the second, the attack on the fortified stronghold of the leader of the so-called “KLA” Adem Jashari in the village of Donje Prekaze, in the Drenica region of Kosovo and Metohija in March 1998.

The goal of our research is to show that there is a dual component to the fight against threats to national security. Moreover, the goal is to show that a successful action related to both components is required for the fight to be effective.

The following research question stems from the research goal: how come that a military defeat can be a political victory, and a military victory a political defeat?

The general hypothesis in our paper arises from the following research question: political victory can be achieved through the intentional or unintentional armed defeat of a rebel or insurgent formation, while armed victory can be achieved with negative political consequences that can lead to the final political defeat of the national security defenders.

Our hypothetical framework must rely, as we previously suggested, on at least two case studies (Milašinović & Andrić, 2016: 431) to form our general proposition (Simeunović, 2009a). This political theory connects two segments of political reality and determines the conditions needed for a consistent analytical explanation of the past and present events, but also for the prediction of the future ones. In other words, by confirming our hypothesis, we will make a scholarly contribution to the political theory of political violence in the segment of scientific explanation and scientific classification concerning the relationship between the success of armed struggle and the success of the political goals of guerrilla and partisan warfare.

TERRORISM

Terrorism is difficult to define. According to Simeunović (2009b), terrorism is a developing phenomenon, and a complex phenomenon, too. Terrorism has many manifestations. Given that in time, and due to the change of social relations and the development of technology, terrorism, being a political phenomenon, is constantly changing, it is even more difficult to be defined. Moreover, even states that should in principle be interested in cre-

⁴ There is no difference between war and political struggle except in military tactics – Simeunović (1989: 170) on Clausewitz.



ating a single definition, are only supposedly interested to do so. A defined and codified definition does not serve the foreign policy interests of the great powers, which primarily determines whether an organisation will be labelled as a terrorist one or not. This brings us to another problem, that terrorism is currently considered a bad word in all languages. The word is also used to disqualify, as it essentially denotes criminal activity that targets civilians and the innocent. Hence, states prefer that there is no single definition of terrorism, as any activity may be labelled as terrorism, even if it is not terrorist (Simeunović, 2009b: 17–22).

Simeunović (2009b) points out that terrorism is neither terrorising nor a terror. While terrorising is reduced to arbitrary violent behaviour from a position of temporary or permanent superiority, and can be so without a political context, terror refers to random and large-scale violence carried out by a government against those it has power over. In this sense, terrorism has a connection with terror, because terrorism is violence by those who do not have power against those who do (Simeunović, 2009b: 22–27). Simeunović's definition of terrorism, which we take as the theoretical basis for our research, in its most important parts defines the phenomenon of terrorism as a political phenomenon primarily. Terrorism may be violence by an organised group or by an individual. The violence is directed against a government, and the terrorist struggle is by its nature asymmetrical in relation to that government. It acts against it in various ways, including political assassination, blackmail, kidnapping, sabotage, etc. Violence has a communicative role and generates intimidation as the main means of political struggle. Terrorist violence is, as a rule, illegal and illegitimate and often targets representatives of political enemies or innocent people (Simeunović, 2009b: 78).

GUERRILLA

According to Simeunović (1989: 150), *guerrilla warfare* is a political activity of a small, highly mobile, combat group armed with infantry weapons. This group carries out armed actions against a ruling or occupying power, relying primarily on the support of the population of their own origin (Simeunović, 1989: 150).

The guerrilla warfare method avoids frontal conflict with the enemy and involves unconventional armed action. The focus of armed battle is the surprise factor, high mobility and familiarity with the battlefield terrain (Simeunović, 1989: 153).

As Simeunović (2009b: 30) points out, which is also a very important fact for our hypothetical framework, a guerrilla organisation differs from a terrorist organisation primarily by three criteria: 1) the guerrillas control a part of the territory; 2) the guerrillas carry weapons publicly; 3) the guerrillas enjoy the public, voluntary support of a significant part of the local population in the territory they control.

According to Kleut (1983: 13–14), it should be emphasised that the strategic goal of guerrilla warfare is not the liberation or preservation of territory, but the demoralisation, disorganisation and destruction of enemy manpower and equipment through many small but powerful actions. According to Simeunović (1989: 151), the tactical goal of guerrilla warfare is to develop into a partisan warfare.



Members of guerrilla formations are above-average fighters and must be better than the average soldiers of the regular army. This quality is achieved through rapid training and improved through combat experience (Simeunović, 1989: 150–159). Guerrillas can be rural or urban, so it may happen that terrorists in a rural environment grow to the level of a guerrilla group if they meet the three key criteria listed above (Simeunović, 2009b: 31–32). The guerrilla draws all its strength from the population, which supports it in various ways. The main cause of an unsuccessful guerrilla is small numbers, and an unsuccessful guerrilla cannot develop into a partisan formation and consequently the guerrilla cannot meet its basic goal – to grow into a partisan warfare (Simeunović, 1989: 150–159).

Hence, we may conclude that various governments throughout history have fought against guerrilla groups by resorting to reprisals and instigating terror in the occupied territory. The most common effect of such counter-guerrilla warfare is that it leads to even greater mobilisation of the population and a greater influx of volunteers into the guerrillas (Simeunović, 1989: 158).

PARTISAN WARFARE

According to Simeunović (1989: 150–159), there are two key criteria of partisans' capacity as compared to the guerrillas: 1) the capacity to control free territory; 2) the capacity to conquer and hold larger urban centres.

Partisan warfare can only be successfully waged on national territory, when it is partially or completely occupied. Only under these circumstances does partisan warfare yield positive results because it relies on the recruitment of its own population (Kleut, 1983: 11).

As we mentioned earlier about the guerrilla, the partisan is an above-average fighter, too. In the absence of heavy equipment, the partisan formation relies primarily on the human factor, on the infantry. It follows that the ratio of losses between partisan and regular formations must not be the same or close to it. Losses in the ratio of 1:1 represent an extremely unfavourable battle outcome for the partisans (Kleut, 1983: 59).

It should be considered, however, that partisan warfare has a clearly offensive nature. Its main characteristic is the constant initiative-taking. Such conduct of many different units creates continuity of combat with an effect of turning the tactical level into the operational level of a constant initiative. This is the main advantage of partisan warfare (Kleut, 1983: 52).

It is important to underline that partisan units should avoid at any cost operational encirclements where anti-partisan regular forces may lure them. If a partisan formation nevertheless reaches the operational encirclement, then it must inevitably break through the encirclement, preferably at the weakest points of the enemy positions. In such a case, it must ensure that upon the breakthrough, it can immediately continue offensive operations against the enemy forces that have closed the encirclement. That is the measure of a successful breakthrough by a large partisan group (Kleut, 1983: 138).

Smaller partisan units, up to a brigade level, break through by forming a wedge, led by the strongest units. The wedge strikes a weak spot in the encirclement and opens it before dusk. The open passage must have lateral protection and the exit from the encirclement must be carried out in one night. The main goal is to preserve manpower, and the capac-



ity for further offensive actions is secondary. This kind of breakthrough is possible if the proportion of non-combatants is minimal, with as few wounded as possible. When a large unit breaks through from an encirclement, with a large proportion of non-combatants, and when there are many wounded, the breakthrough is started at noon to be completed by dusk, so that the units use the nighttime to slip through the opening of the encirclement. There must be at least two parallel strike wedges, closely coordinated and about two kilometres apart. Only in this way an opening in the encirclement is wide enough for division-sized units to pass through. If the breakthrough and extraction of units is not carried out in one night, the action must be completed the following night. The non-combat part of the units and hospitals with the wounded must have protection at the end of the column when leaving the zone (Kleut, 1983: 138–140).

UPRISING AND/OR REBELLION

Unlike riots and unrests, an uprising has greater mass participation, to the extent that it represents the violent opposition of an entire class or nation. Armed resistance is always against someone else's or one's own authority. An uprising is more organised with a profiled political leadership and in this sense, in addition to its size, it is a broader concept than a rebellion (Simeunović, 1989: 159).

“The offensive is precisely what gives the uprising not only its instrumentation, but also what expresses the power of its ideas, revolutionises the masses, sets them in motion, and creates revolutionary enthusiasm accompanied by the expansion of the uprising's base” (Simeunović, 1989: 160–161).

An uprising can arise from a few different rebellions, so it is necessary to explain rebellion more precisely. Political rebellion can be a group or individual activity aimed at opposing a leadership or ruling structure, with the organised use of violence. An important feature of political rebellion is the ability to kinetically strike at one specific object (Simeunović, 1989: 126–128).

Given the presented so far, we may assume that the rebellion can be an act of guerrilla warfare, which does not exclude guerrilla attempts to start an uprising. However, the partisan warfare actually carries out the uprising, through its offensives and reliance on a popular recruitment base.

BATTLE OF SUTJESKA IN 1943

After the Battle of Neretva, the main Partisan Operative Division Group, led by the Supreme Headquarters and with a significant proportion of non-combatants of the Partisan movement, including the Central Hospital, penetrated Montenegro with the intention of recuperating, replenishing and preparing the brigades for the move to Sandžak and Kosovo. Colić (1988: 115) states that the Partisan Operative Group⁵ had “a total of around 19,700 fighters, including 3,700 of the wounded and sick”.

5 “The 1st Proletarian Division (the 1st Proletarian Brigade, the 3rd Krajina Brigade and the 3rd Sandžak Brigade) led by Koča Popović and Filip Kljajić; the 2nd Proletarian Division (the 2nd Dalmatian Brigade, the



In Miljanić's book we find similar information that the army component of the Operative Division Group⁶ numbered 15,700 fighters, including 4,000 wounded ones (Miljanić, 1987: 148–149).

The orders of the German command show similar estimates of the numerical strength of the partisan army, but also the approximate numerical strength of the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland (JVuO)⁷ units in that operational zone: "Following the Operation 'Weiss 2', the enemy was pushed back to the southeast across the Neretva. Communist groups (about 15,000 people) are in Herzegovina and Montenegro fighting against the numerically superior Chetnik⁸ groups" (Dokument br. 60, 1978).

It remains unclear whether the German assessment of the numerical strength of the Partisan army referred to the combatant component of the units or to the total numerical strength including the Central Hospital. We assume that the estimates of the numerical situation refer to the combatant part of the Partisan army, and that thus the estimates match the numbers offered by Colić and Miljanić. What is clear is that the German enemy's units of the JVuO⁹ in the operation zone had more fighters than the partisans.

As Colić (1988: 114–115) states, the German forces consisted of the 118th Jäger Division¹⁰, the 1st Mountain Division¹¹, the SS Division "Prinz Eugen"¹² and the 369th (Šuvaković,

4th Montenegrin Brigade and the 7th Krajina Brigade) led by Peko Dapčević and Mitar Bakić; the 3rd Assault Division (the 1st Dalmatian Brigade, the 5th Montenegrin Brigade and the 10th Herzegovinian Brigade) led by Radovan Vukanović and Radomir Babić; the 7th Banija Assault Division (the 7th, 8th and 16th Banija Brigade and later also the 3rd Dalmatian Brigade), led by Pavle Jakšić and Đuro Kladarina; the 6th East Bosnian and Majevica Brigade, which comprise together with the 2nd Proletarian Brigade, the Drina Operative Group; the Supreme Headquarters, the Escort Battalion, the Armoured Division and the Central Hospital" (Colić, 1988: 115).

6 It is important to note that the direction of the entire Operative Group was towards southeast, led by the First and Second Proletarian Divisions, oriented towards the Lim River and towards the towns of Kolašin and Mojkovac, with the aim of advancing across the Lim to the Ibar and Kosovo. The 3rd Assault Division, the 7th Banija Division, and the Drina Group were in charge of securing the Central Hospital and the free territory (Miljanić, 1987: 148–149).

7 The goal of Operation "Schwarz" was, apart from destroying the Partisan Operative Division Group with the SHQ, to destroy also the formations of the JVuO in Montenegro (Miljanić, 1987: 147).

8 The intentions of the German command were repeated in orders during the fighting, and one of the goals of the operation was the disarmament of the members of the JVuO (Dokument br. 68, 1978).

9 General Lütters' explicit order before the start of Operation "Schwarz" was to "capture and destroy Mihailović's headquarters with all his assistants and liaison officers" (Dokument br. 60, 1978).

10 The 118th Jäger Division was formed in April 1943, just before Operation "Schwarz" (118.Jäger-Division, n.d.).

11 The 1st Mountain Division was among the most elite infantry divisions of the German Army in the World War II. Composed of the most able conscripts, it participated in all the German Army's major campaigns: 1) Poland in 1939, 2) Western Europe in 1940, 3) the Balkans in 1941, 4) Eastern Front in 1941 – 1943, again 5) the Balkans, Hungary, Austria from 1943 to 1945. Before joining Operation Schwarz, the 1st Mountain Division participated in operations in the Caucasus. It was the first unit in the history of German warfare to engage in combat at an altitude of 4,300 m on Mount Elbrus in battles against the Soviet Red Army. We may say that it was the most elite German division sent to the Sutjeska, Piva and Tara area to participate in the anti-partisan operation (1.Gebirgs-Division, n.d.).

12 The full name of the SS Division "Prinz Eugen" was the 7th SS Volunteer Mountain Division "Prinz Eugen". It was an SS division composed of ethnic Germans from the territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, who were volunteers at first, and later they were conscripted to grow to over 20,000 members. It was formed in March 1942 as a specialised unit for anti-partisan warfare and during the entire war it participated in such battles on Yugoslav soil. It may be considered an elite formation, intended to play a significant role in Operation "Schwarz" (7.SS-Freiwilligen-Gebirgs-Division "Prinz Eugen", n.d.).



2024: 952–984) Legionary Division¹³. In addition to these divisions, the 724th Regiment of the 104th Jäger Division and the “Brandenburg” Regiment also took part in the operation. Colić (1988: 115) also mentions the Italian divisions “Taurinese”, “Venezia” and “Ferrara”, however, we believe that they should not be given much importance, considering that the Italian command was not even informed about the Operation “Schwarz”, although Italian divisions certainly supported the German attack and provided rearguard support from the moment the Italians learned that the Germans had launched the operation. German divisions bore the main burden of forming an encirclement and attacking the Partisan Main Operative Group.

It is worth mentioning that before the operation, the German command reformed four 700 category infantry divisions into the 100 category, so the rear, infantry divisions, usually filled with second-class soldiers, were transferred to elite Jäger status, in order to provide them with additional training and additional armament and equipment for fighting in the wilderness. Thus, the 704th, 714th, 717th and 718th Infantry Divisions were transformed into the 104th, 114th, 117th and 118th Jäger Divisions (Miljanić, 1987:147).

According to a report of the commander of the 118th Jäger Division, the Division started the operation with only 60% manpower. It had a serious shortage of equipment and combat resources and lacked the harness kits necessary for fighting in mountainous areas. When the Division was formed, it was filled with around 6,000 new recruits from Germany without any combat experience. Employed people got drafted. Their training for a Jäger division was not completed (Dokument br. 92, 1978).

This is important to note, because the 118th Division would be the main actor in the fights near Tjentiste. We must also note that this practice of reforming divisions in the German army indicates that already by mid-1943, German military power was in decline.

The 118th Division covered the northwestern part of the encirclement, on the line from Foča to Gacko. It was actually the weakest German division in this operation, and at the same time it covered a very wide zone of the front. In addition, the 7th SS Division “Prinz Eugen” was still in position west of Mostar on May 15, and would only reach the Gacko-Nikšić line on May 20 to form a continuation of the encirclement. The “Ludwiger” battle group, consisting of two regiments, advanced from the Lim Valley towards Đurđevića Tara with a delay (Miljanić, 1987: 148). These facts would significantly affect the course and outcome of the battle.

13 The full name of the 369th Division was the 369th Croatian Infantry Division. The formation of this volunteer division began in August 1942 as a legionary formation within the German army, intended to fight on the Eastern Front. The basis for the formation of the Division was the training battalion of the 369th Reinforced Croatian Regiment, the so-called Croatian Legion, as well as the wounded who were returned from the Eastern Front for treatment in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). Around 1,000 men formed the basis, to which new volunteers from the NDH would join and form the 369th Croatian Infantry Division. The Division renewed the 369th Regiment in its composition to pay tribute to the Ustasas who died at Stalingrad. Although completely staffed by Croats, the 369th Division was part of the German army, with German uniforms, German army ranks, and a command staff composed mainly of German officers. The main difference was that they wore an emblem with the Croatian coat of arms on their right sleeve, and they were known among the Germans as the “Checkerboard” division. The members of the 369th Division, nevertheless, called themselves the “Devil’s Division” after the eponymous 42nd Division of the Austro-Hungarian Army from the World War I, as they wished to carry on their military tradition. The first combatant activity of this division was in Operation “Weiss”, after which it was involved in forming an encirclement around the Partisan army in Operation “Schwarz” (Croatian volunteers in the Wehrmacht in WWII, n.d.).



Despite the initial failures, since the German command kept Operation Schwarz in the utmost secrecy, and due to the lack of intelligence preparation by the Supreme Headquarters of the Partisan Army, the Germans achieved full operational surprise. Hence, the Partisan army got encircled and was forced to fight in a stretched position with its divisions oriented to move southeast. Only after the first combat contacts did the Partisan army change the divisions' deployment aiming to break through the encirclement (Miljanić, 1987: 150).

The Operative Division Group would later, on June 3, when Operation "Schwarz" was well underway, get divided into two groups by decision of the Supreme Headquarters: 1) The First and Second Proletarian Divisions, with the SHQ, and 2) the Third Assault Division and the Seventh Banija Division with the Central Hospital (Colić, 1988: 119). This was decided because the two groups found themselves on different banks of the Piva River, so the first group, together with the SHQ, was tasked with breaking through the encirclement across Sutjeska, while the second group was to try a breakthrough into Sandžak. So, the command of the first group was taken over directly by the SHQ, while the second group got a new Operative Headquarters. Sava Kovačević was promoted to the position of commander of the 3rd Division (Colić, 1988: 119).

Considering that the stronger group was tasked with breaking through to the West, having successfully seized the important strategic point of Vučevo, it remains unclear why the weaker group, accompanied by the Central Hospital with thousands of seriously wounded and sick, would be sent in the opposite direction, out of the protective reach of the stronger divisions with the SHQ. Colić's comment supports the thesis that the attempted breakthrough in several different directions was a justified attempt to deconcentrate forces for the purpose of easier extraction from the encirclement (Colić, 1988: 119).

After breaking through the weak points in the lines formed by the 369th Legionary Division between Foča and Kalinovik on June 13th, the SHQ, with what remains of the Main Operative Group, broke through over Jahorina into eastern Bosnia. There, it created a new free territory in the battles against the Domobrans and the Ustashas by taking over Han Pijesak, Olovo, Kladanj, Srebrenica, Rogatica and Vlasenica. There, after heavy losses, the Partisan army entered a period of recovery, recruitment, and replenishment of units (Miljanić, 1987: 170–171).

The most interesting partisan success in this operation was the double breakthrough of the lines held by the 369th¹⁴ Division, first on the Zelengora, and then on the Foča-Kalinovik road.

We also consider it indicative that on June 13th, General Lütters urgently came to the headquarters of the 369th Division to try to improve the situation, but to no avail (Miljanić, 1987: 171).

14 Although the historical sources available to us indicate heavy fighting and determined resistance, it is worth mentioning the final losses of the Division in relation to the losses of the 118th and the 7th SS. Namely, according to a report of the German command, at the end of the operation, the 118th had 262 dead soldiers, the 7th SS had 120, while the 369th had only 92 dead soldiers despite heavy fighting. There was a similar ratio of soldiers wounded in the battle: the 118th had as many as 676, and the 7th SS had 460 wounded, while the 369th had 263 wounded. On the other hand, completely asymmetrically, the 369th had the most missing soldiers – 233, the 118th – 130, and the 7th SS only 33 (Dokument br. 94, 1978). We may assume that 'missing' meant death for the German soldiers, although bodies were not found, because it would be difficult to imagine a German soldier deserting in the middle of Yugoslavia hoping not to be caught. While, on the other hand, the Croatian soldiers of the 369th could take shelter in the NDH. We do not intend to prove this hypothesis about weaker performance, or weaker combatant determination of the members of the 369th Division in this paper because it does not affect our hypothetical framework, but we leave room for the future research.



While the First, Second and Seventh Divisions broke through the defensive line of the 369th Legionary Division on the Zelengora Mountain, the Third Division remained surrounded by the enemy at Vučevo on June 10 (Miljanić, 1987: 171). The Third Assault Division had around 2,000 fighters on June 13 before attempting to break through the 118th Division's lines (Miljanić, 1987: 173). When the Third Division attempted a breakthrough across the Sutjeska on June 13, the units of the 118th Jäger Division and the SS Division "Prinz Eugen", in their final stage of tightening the encirclement, stroke the Partisan Third Division and destroyed it together with the Central Hospital. Then, the Division commander Sava Kovačević was also killed (Colić, 1988: 123).

After June 15, when the German command completed Operation "Schwarz", the outcome in terms of losses of the Partisan Operative Division Group was no less than "7,356 killed fighters and officers" (Colić, 1988: 123). "The Division commander was killed, two members of the SHQ, seven members of AVNOJ and about 300 officers were killed" (Miljanić, 1987: 174). It is unclear, based on the available sources, whether this death toll includes the seriously wounded and sick people killed in the Central Hospital as a non-combatant component of the Partisan army, so it is possible that the death toll is even higher.

For example, according to German documents, only the 118th Division, as the weakest of all German divisions, inflicted heavy losses on partisan units in its zone of operation. There were 1,711 dead partisans counted, and the estimation was that there were actually 2,000 to 3,000 killed. According to a report by the command of the 118th Division, the Germans captured 472 partisan fighters, and they shot 274 of them. This means that the 118th Division alone inflicted losses on the Partisan army of 2,000 dead fighters, with the number likely to be even higher (Dokument br. 92, 1978).

Since the exact number of the wounded who made it to the Jahorina with the Main Operative Group is not precisely stated in the available literature, except for sporadic, partial and approximate data such as the fact that on June 10, when the encirclement was broken through, the Seventh Banija Division took about "600 lightly wounded" into the battle, (Miljanić, 1987: 170) we may assume that the number¹⁵ of the wounded¹⁶ was big.

In addition, the question remains as to how many wounded fighters succumbed to their wounds in the breakthrough in the period after the end of the battle. This issue is particularly important considering that more than half of the total number of doctors in the Partisan army, which was 36 before Operation "Schwarz", were killed in the fighting, and in addition to them, more than 200 nurses were also killed (Miljanić, 1987: 174).

The report of the German commander for the NDH of June 20, 1943, gives us information that the Germans counted 7,489 dead¹⁷ partisans, and in addition, based on the statements of prisoners, it is estimated that there were another 3,000 dead who died in the battle and 1,000 to 2,000 more who died of disease and hunger. The total number of counted and es-

15 In military science, the ratio of killed to wounded soldiers is, on average, 1:3. This ratio always varies depending on many factors such as weapon and equipment technology, medical care, etc. For example, this ratio for the US Army in the Vietnam War was 1:3.6 (Holcomb et al., 2006).

16 While for the US Army in the World War II, the ratio was 1:3.57 (Lawrence, 2016).

17 Another interesting fact in the same German report is that the JVuO units in the battles against, primarily, the 118th Division and the 1st Mountain Division had only 17 dead and as many as 3,764 wounded. The command of the 118th reported that it had eliminated 549 Chetniks from the formation by wounding them, while the 1st Mountain Division reported that it had eliminated 3,200 members of the JVuO from the formation by wounding them in battle (Dokument br/ 94, 1978).



estimated dead and wounded according to this report was between 12,000 and 13,000, who were thus eliminated from the Partisan army ranks (Dokument br. 94, 1978).

POLICE OPERATION IN THE VILLAGE OF DONJE PREKAZE ON MARCH 5, 1998

Adem Jashari appeared as an Albanian terrorist back in 1991. The five-member Drenica group including Jashari and Kodra returned to the territory of Drenica after a military sabotage training in Albania with the intention of starting terrorist actions. Having been informed about that, the Serbian State Security Directorate attempted to prevent them from engaging in terrorist activities and tried to arrest them on December 30, 1991. The group, led by Adem Jashari, resisted, used firearms, and managed to escape from the security officers (Kako je počeo rat na KiM, 2017).

The same group, led by Adem Jashari, was sentenced *in absentia* to 20 years in prison in 1997 by the Priština District Court for their previous terrorist activities. The increase in the number of KLA terrorist activities was significant during November 1997. A carefully planned political decision in the strategic planning of the Albanian uprising in Drenica led to the events that occurred on November 28, 1997. Namely, on the Albanian Flag Day, in the village of Lauša, the funeral of the deceased member of the terrorist KLA, teacher Halit Geci took place (Jevtić, 2002). At the funeral, the uniformed KLA members were lined up with their unit's insignia on the sleeves of their uniforms, and next to the coffin three KLA members stood at attention with automatic rifles at their sides¹⁸. They took off their masks and were greeted with applause by thousands of Albanian civilians present.¹⁹

From that moment on, both the formal and factual conditions were met for the terrorist organisation KLA to grow into a guerrilla formation that raised a rebellion directed against the authorities of the Republic of Serbia in the Drenica area. From that moment on, the KLA had control over significant parts of Drenica, their uniformed members publicly carried weapons and enjoyed the public and voluntary support of most of the Albanian population living in that area. Theoretically, this did not prevent the KLA from continuing to engage in terrorism in various places, but in the Drenica area, it managed to rise to the level of guerrilla warfare.

After this event, Jashari and the KLA attempted to present themselves as the new supreme authority of Drenica by conducting regular patrols, establishing checkpoints on local roads, and searching civilian vehicles. Thus, one of many clashes between the police and the guerrilla group took place on the night of January 22–23, 1998, after which Adem Jashari's group retreated to Donje Prekaze. There, heavy fire started from fortified houses on the Jashari estate, which prevented the pursuing police to make the arrest. After that, the Jashari group retreated again to the shelter of nearby forests (Kako je počeo rat na KiM, 2017).

According to some estimates, the number of KLA members in the entire territory of Kosovo and Metohija at the beginning of 1998 was no more than 3,000 (Milikić et al., 2021: 335). The Serbian Ministry of the Interior was setting up police checkpoints and patrols attempting to unblock the Drenica region and ensure the freedom of movement of citizens.

¹⁸ The recording of the funeral can be found under the title “Si vendosi Adem Jashari ta prezentonte UÇK’ne ditën e varrimit të mesuesit – rrefehet Lulzim Geci”.

¹⁹ Simeunović Dragan in a lecture to students of the Faculty of Political Sciences.



Jashari and the KLA continued their armed actions and a new battle ensued with Serbian police patrols in the village of Likošane on February 28, 1998. Four police officers were killed, and 16 KLA guerrillas were eliminated. The Albanian side used another fight with the police as a propaganda opportunity (Parezanović & Proroković, 2024) to internationalise their cause in the world media (Kosovo killings, 1998).

After another attack by the KLA on a police patrol in the village of Lauša on March 5, 1998, there was a strong police response, and Jashari's group retreated to its fortified stronghold in the village of Donje Prekaze. Forces of the Special Police Units (PJP), the Special Operations Unit (JSO), and regular police surrounded Donje Prekaze. The insurgents were given a 2-hour deadline to surrender and release all civilians from their fortified stronghold where they had taken refuge. Jashari refused to surrender, expecting rapid reinforcements, while dozens of civilians left the houses occupied by the guerrillas. The remaining rebels responded with heavy machine gun and mortar fire. Adem Jashari's nephew, an armed member of the KLA, wanted to surrender, but Adem personally shot him as an example to the others. Since the Jashari houses were fortified, and a concrete bunker was built in a convenient place that served as a command post, it was very difficult to break through such a defence. The battle lasted 27 hours. At the end of the battle, Jashari was shot along with the other KLA members. Only after the end of the fight, it turned out that not all civilians had left the fortified area before the fighting started. Two police officers were killed and seven were seriously wounded (Kosovo killings, 1998).

General Nebojša Pavković stated that a routine police action against a well-known criminal was carried out successfully (Behind the Kosovo crisis, 2000).

Antonić (2002: 17), explaining the relationship between unintended collateral losses during the actions of the Serbian police and the NATO aggression in 1999, states that in Jashari's stronghold, in addition to 26 armed KLA members, 12 women, 13 minors and five elderly men were killed.

KLA propagandists shared images of the Donje Prekaze battlefield to the world via the internet, presenting the Serbian police action as an excessive use of force against the civilian population. As the BBC pointed out, in the words of an Albanian journalist, "it was a cruel favour to the Kosovo Liberation Army" (Behind the Kosovo crisis, 2000).

After this action, the KLA guerrillas strived to grow into a partisan army attempting to form a wider free territory. From the spring of 1998, the rebellion began to develop, and Albanians were massively joining the KLA (Pavković, 2012: 12). The number of KLA members grew to 20,000 by the summer of 1998, and the territory they controlled included 40% of the total territory of Kosovo and Metohija (Milikić et al., 2021: 335).

CONCLUSION

Our goal has been to investigate whether there is a connection between our two case studies, and it is our estimate that we have been able to establish that there is. Namely, we have determined that according to theoretical framework in terms of losses and the outcome of the battle, the Partisan army at Sutjeska suffered an armed, tactical defeat. Given the loss of the entire Division, the loss of the entire Central Hospital, the losses in medical and command personnel, the total estimated losses exceeding 10,000 dead, while



at the same time the German losses were 10 times lower, there is no other conclusion than military defeat. However, the Battle of Sutjeska is not historically a defeat because the Partisan army won a political victory. Namely, the Partisans primarily preserved their political leadership, which was an actor in alliance with both the East and the West, and preserved a significant part of the two strongest divisions, the First and Second Proletarian Divisions, which immediately after the completion of Operation “Schwarz”, won a new free territory in Eastern Bosnia; they maintained the capacity to attack, which was sufficient against small garrisons of the Domobrans and Ustashas that they defeated in the battles for Eastern Bosnia, after which they rearmed. Additionally, the Partisans, based on their agitator-based offensive political struggle, which was only accompanied by an armed offensive, preserved the status of an insurgent army capable of waging a partisan war. All these factors made an impression among the population that the Partisans were also the armed victors of the battle. The impression decisively contributed to replenishment of the Partisan ranks and relatively quickly the manpower loss was substituted and exceeded. The conclusion follows that the Partisans did not need a military victory until the end of the war, they needed to avoid political defeat. The losses in manpower of a partisan army can always be compensated if there is a political victory as cruel as this may sound.

In the second case study, we have a similar situation again. The police action in Donje Prekaze on March 5, 1998, with the final elimination of Adem Jashari's group, was a clear victory in terms of armed struggle. However, it also turned out to be a complete political defeat. On the other hand, the KLA was practically beheaded at that moment, on the verge of being destroyed as guerrillas, including their terrorist component. However, due to the unintended collateral damage in civilian casualties resulting from the police actions, the future of the KLA would change drastically in the coming months. The collateral damage could hardly have been avoided considering that heavy weapons, including mortars, a helicopter gunship and armoured fighting vehicles, were used on that battlefield. Such fire cannot be selective in the sense that it can recognize and distinguish between a guerrilla and a civilian or better said: the difference between a terrorist and a hostage. Due to the lack of a good socio-political assessment of the situation, it was not recognised that within the framework of the fight against the guerrilla group, a hostage crisis was also taking place, directed by the terrorist group. The guerrillas who defended the stronghold were not only willing to lay down their lives fighting, but they were also willing to sacrifice the lives of their innocent family members by hiding behind their living bodies. The KLA guerrilla group in Drenica won a political victory on March 5, 1998, and ensured that in just a few months, due to an enormous increase in numbers, the rebellion grew into an uprising of an entire national minority in the FRY, and that the terrorist organisation KLA, in addition to its guerrilla capacity, also gained the capacity for partisan warfare, while remaining capable of terrorist activities.

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