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**ACTIVITIES OF PARASECURITY
STRUCTURES AND FOREIGN
FACTORS IN KOSOVO AND METOHİJA
WITHIN THE HYBRID WAR AGAINST
THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA*****

(Translation in *Extenso*)

Abstract

This paper examines a broader context of the expressed interests of certain foreign factors in contemporary security circumstances, characterised by the presence of hybrid threats, aiming to observe the position and relevance of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija (AP of Kosovo and Metohija) within the security agenda of these forces. The purpose of the analysis is the improvement of the methodological approach to a more objective perception and strategic comprehension of the activities and intentions, as well as

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the accentuation of the significance attributed by the great powers to that territory within the context of other areas and issues where their interests are confronted. The paper analyzes the interests of the United States (US) as the main foreign policy actor in KiM, as well as the interests of certain great and regional powers with a longer presence in the Balkan region, such as the Russian Federation (RF), the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK), and the Republic of Turkey. In order to pursue their own interests and project influence, foreign factors have been undertaking a whole array of diverse measures and activities that are in our contemporary analyses in the field of defence and security often called hybrid warfare, therefore this paper provides a brief review of the hybrid warfare concept through the evaluation of prominent questions and responses, graded as relevant to the decision-making authorities on the strategic level, along with the description of the specific hybrid activities performed by certain para-security structures¹ and foreign factors in the case of the AP of Kosovo and Metohia.

Keywords: hybrid warfare, para-security structures, foreign factor, NATO, Kosovo and Metohija.

INTRODUCTION

Contemplating the historical prism, the crisis in the Kosovo and Metohija part of Serbia has been determined by the geopolitical interests of regional and global powers, historic events and ethnographic changes, in which constantly and with varying intensity, the Albanian and Serbian nations are confronting and denying the other party the right to the territory. The 1999 NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and subsequent proclamation of the “Kosovo” independence in 2008, prompted and encouraged the Albanian political elites, in line with the “Prizren League” declaration from 1878, to undertake more intensified measures to establish “Great Albania”, in which, according to the

¹ The authors use this term to refer to: By para-security structures in Kosovo and Metohija, the authors primarily mean the police forces and security forces of the so-called “Republic of Kosovo”.

Albanian strategic culture, the dominant principle of fascist ideology would be “one state, one language, one nation, one religion”. That such an ideology is being implemented in Kosovo and Metohija is indicated by a number of facts, which are reflected in the daily undertaking of various forms of violence against the Serbian and other, non-Albanian population, as well as their property, cultural and religious objects, which leads to a change in the national structure and the systematic destruction of Serbian cultural heritage.

From the point of view of the current Kosovo and Metohija crisis, within the frame of the most prevailing demonstration of force aimed at reinforcing the Albanian and minimising the Serbian factor in that territory, at the moment the Republic of Turkey and Great Britain stand out. This synergy of the acting instruments of the “Kosovo” power and international powers, both internally and internationally, indicates that in the Province, just like towards the Republic of Serbia, hybrid activities are being conducted with the purpose of creating the conditions for setting up the full independence of the so-called Kosovo. The goal of this paper is to analyse the engagement of para-security structures and foreign factors in Kosovo and Metohija in the hybrid war against the Republic of Serbia.

The main hypothesis of this work is that para-security structures and foreign factors in Kosovo and Metohija tend to take avail of the current geopolitical momentum conditioned by the security situation in the Ukraine and by bearing out the hybrid activities in the Province, to coerce the Republic of Serbia to act against its own national interests. The relevance of this paper is reflected in the sublimation of the registered activities within the hybrid war, para-security structures and foreign factors in Kosovo and Metohija, on the basis of which their methodology of execution, aims and interests could be more precisely defined. This paper presents a kind of a theoretical research, data sources are the scientific-theoretical works of national and foreign experts, statistical data, legal regulations and other documents such as doctrines, programmes, official Internet presentations, current events etc.

INTERESTS OF FOREIGN FACTORS IN THE TERRITORY OF THE AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF KOSOVO AND METOHİJA

Kosovo and Metohija, not Tsargrad, is the strategic key to the Balkans and the one who succeeds in attaining the dominance over those territories has also secured the supremacy over the Balkans.

Austrian general Ludwig von Beck
(Konatar 2016, 418).

It is of vital significance for the understanding the current situation in the AP of Kosovo and Metohija and for possible further predicting the course of events to analyse geopolitical interests of the foreign factors that have shaped up the events in that region of the Republic of Serbia since 1999, when the NATO committed the aggression under the excuse of carrying out a humanitarian intervention. This period was marked not only by the change of the geopolitical landscape of the Balkans, but also by the introduction of the temporary institutions in Priština, which have become the proponents of a complicated system of hybrid activities directed against the Republic of Serbia and its national interests. It took time for the political elite to speak out in a credible manner about the numerous consequences of NATO aggression, the most devastating of which is the occupation of Kosovo and Metohija as a basic identity part of our state territory (Despotović 2017).

The COVID 19 epidemic, as well as the special military operation (SMO) in the Ukraine,² discontinued the energy supply from the RF for some European countries. They also awakened the “dormant” NATO members, warning them that, in terms of security, no country can rely only on its alliance membership, but it is vital to strengthen their own national capacities of power and to undertake those

² “The war in Ukraine caused a deterioration in Serbias geopolitical position, which was exploited in the process of aggravating relations and escalating the conflict between Belgrade and Priština, in order to establish firm political and security control over the territory and the local Serbian population by the so-called ‘Republic of Kosovo’ and gradually abolishing the remaining elements of Serbian institutions in northern Kosovo and Metohija. At the same time, the ‘stabilization’ of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija significantly reduces Russias ability to use the ‘Kosovo precedent’ to justify military intervention in Ukraine” (Beriša and Barišić 2025).

geopolitical moves primarily in congruence with their national interests. Related to this, a question is imposed about what those interests are, and consequently about the activities of the foreign factors in the AP of Kosovo and Metohija, regarding their constant tendencies to be present and impactful in that territory?

Due to its geopolitical position and potential, previously prepared numerous conflict zones³ by the factors from abroad, the Republic of Serbia is for the time being in the geopolitical knot, in which, apart from the American, the conflicting interests of the other foreign policy agents are interwoven. Numerous geopolitical constraints, an unfriendly and insufficiently reliable environment, the danger of further border rearrangements, transnational threats, as well as the absence of internal consensus are only part of the strategic challenges that exert very strong limiting effects on the process of revitalizing the territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia (Stojanović and Blagojević 2017).

Considering that the USA still is the main geopolitical global agent, with the tendency to stay that way, one may conclude that the Atlantistic (Anglosaxon) geopolitical theories, promoted by Alfred Mahan, Halford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman, still maintain to be relevant and that the American hegemony will not stop until the RF is suppressed to the inland of the Euro-Asian continent and its reaching the “warm”, Mediterranean sea is prevented. On the other hand, the activities of the USA demonstrate that they are at any cost inclined to weaken and disunite Europe, for they are afraid of its possible alliance with the RF (the union of “the mightiest – French diplomacy, German economy, Russian energy supplies and natural wealth”) (Despotović and Glišin 2023, 15–35).

The Federal Republic of Germany views the AP of Kosovo and Metohija as part of a mosaic in the pursuit of its ambition, which, in accordance with Karl Haushofer’s geopolitical theory of “Central European continentalism” (Despotović and Glišin 2023, 35–56), seeks to establish control and access to the Baltic, the Danube and the Black Sea. Control of the AP of Kosovo and Metohija would provide a connection with the Middle East and the Caucasus and open up alternative sources of supply of energy and mineral resources,

³ Apart from the AP of Kosovo and Metohija, the recognised potential crisis hotspots are: the south of Serbia, eastern parts of the Republic of Serbia inhabited by the Bulgarian national minority, Raška region and the AP of Vojvodina.

which are currently limited due to sanctions imposed by the Russian Federation. It is precisely for the above reasons that the traditional allies of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Western Balkans are the Albanian and Bosniak nationalist elites, with the Islamic factor in that area being developed through two projects, Greater Albania and the “Green Transversal”.

On the other hand, in accordance with the theories of their geopoliticians (Nikolić 2019), the RF is thought to crave to rely on the Orthodox Church and traditional friendly relations with the Balkanic states to secure its access to the “warm” seas (Adriatic, Ionian and Black Sea) as one of the chief prerequisites to spread and solidify the clout and influence in Europe and other continents. By controlling the Balkan Peninsula, the RF creates the conditions for exerting influence on individual European countries, placing them in a position of dependence on its energy resources, which positively affects the development of its economy and foreign policy position in international relations. The secondary goal, yet not less substantial is the emphasis on being the guardian of the Orthodox religion and protector of their traditional allies, which ultimately bears the importance in foreign policy and indirect role in its reputation worldwide.

In line with the statements by Ahmet Davutoglu (*Ahmet Davutoğlu*) and Rejep Tajip Erdogan (*Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*), issued containing the proclaimed aims of neo-Ottomanism (Davutoglu 2014) and islamisation, even Pan-Islamism of the Balkans, the desire of the Republic of Turkey has been expressed in the attempt to reestablish the borderlines of the Ottoman Empire in that territory, by which they would attain the epithet of the influential regional power and the protector of the Islamic believers globally, especially in Europe. The expansion of the Turkish influence in the Balkans, thus in the AP of Kosovo and Metohija too, unambiguously points out that the Republic of Turkey, for its favours of being the “loyal” NATO member and the welcome defender (ally) of the American interests. More specifically, by strengthening the Islamic factor, Turkey is trying to prevent the expansion of German and Russian influence in the Balkans.

Similar to the Republic of Turkey, Great Britain, the USA’s most faithful ally, got its role, as always prior to great world crises and wars, to activate its presence in the territory of the Western Balkans, especially in the Republic of Serbia, aiming there to sustain the strategy

of “balance of powers”.⁴ Under those circumstances, the British long to reinforce the Albanian factor via the project of the Great Albania, i.e. independent “Kosovo”, so as to shut down the realisation of not only the Serbian national interests, for example the possible uniting of the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Montenegro and Republika Srpska, but also the interests of the FR Germany and the RF. In connection with that, we are neither to forget the aspirations of Great Britain to hinder the alliance of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia with the German Reich immediately before the Second World War nor the later initiative to form the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, whose background was to suppress the Russian influence and to prevent the expansion of the USSR into that region.

Observed from the aspect of interestedness of the foreign political agents in the territory of the AP KiM, aiming to accomplish directly or indirectly their national interests, the Republic of Turkey and Great Britain stand out as the two traditional allies in the Western Balkans. The specificity of their role in the current crisis in AP KiM, in addition to compatible geopolitical interests, is reflected in their active engagement in terms of rounding off the sovereignty of the so-called “Republic of Kosovo”, which was not the case with the European Union, which at least formally, at the beginning of the negotiations between Belgrade and Priština, opted for a neutral position regarding the future status of the southern Serbian province. In more detail, the mentioned countries, in addition to participating in the NATO international mission in AP of Kosovo and Metohija, as part of the KFOR forces, actively participated in the development of the capabilities of the para-security structures of the so-called “Republic of Kosovo” and the implementation of hybrid activities, designed and directed towards achieving the full independence and sovereignty of this entity.⁵

⁴ Strategy employed by the USSR and the USA during the Cold War period.

⁵ NATO has been leading a peace-support operation in Kosovo – the Kosovo Force (KFOR) – since June 1999, in support of broader international efforts to build peace and stability in the area. What does it do and more in the text (NATO 2026).

CONCEPTUAL DETERMINATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HYBRID WARFARE

Hybrid warfare⁶ is relatively a new term coined to encompass and cast stress on all the characteristics and particularities of modern warfare. Owing to its complexity and polysemic character, experts and scientists have not yet agreed on a single definition of this term. Initially, hybrid warfare referred to the combined implementation of conventional military capabilities and special forces, “irregular activities”, acts of terrorism and criminal activities. In the combined implementation of such diverse forms, a synergetic effect was expected, both in physical and psychological conflict domains. Later on, the perception of hybrid warfare was extended to all the other forms, means and ways of endangering security.⁷ A large part of the existing literature cites state bodies, primarily from the security and military sectors, but also foreign affairs, as the main carriers of hybrid warfare, while individual non-state actors may be engaged, most often in the role of “proxy” actors (Nikolić 2019, 291).

Potential objects of hybrid action can be international organizations, states, individual state bodies and institutions, critical infrastructure, significant for the security and smooth functioning of the state and society. In addition, the object of hybrid war can also be certain religious, ethnic, national and political groups within a state, as well as terrorist and rebel forces. Also, the targets of hybrid threats can be important national, social and cultural values of the state and society that can be the subject of alienation, malicious and false interpretations. The choice of target depends on the ultimate desired state that is wanted to be achieved, existing limitations, available forces, means and methods, as well as the characteristics and current state of the state or interest group that is the object of hybrid war (Nikolić 2019, 291).

⁶ Hybrid warfare presents a military strategy theory that was first proposed by Frank Hoffman (Hoffman 2007).

⁷ “The hybrid war concept includes diverse meanings, starting with cyber war, war of information, various scripts of asymmetrical conflicts of low intensity, covering global terrorism, piracy, illegal immigration, corruption, ethnic and religious confrontations, transnational organised crime and systemic economic state break-down with the intention to produce demographic changes and implement weapons of mass destruction” (Rančić and Beriša 2018, 258).

Within the wide range of methods in hybrid warfare, the most applicable methods are: “[...] disruption, prevention, obstruction, causing damage, conditioning, slowing down, deception and the like”, whereby various diplomatic, political, military, economic, energy, financial, technological, and informational instruments of power are applied. To apply the corresponding instruments, the carriers of hybrid activities engage specialists with various professional and expert skills, from scientists, experts, artists to members of terrorist groups and criminal organizations, while trying to conceal their involvement in order to avoid a direct reaction and open conflict with the enemy” (Nikolić 2019, 292–293).

In the context of all aforementioned hybrid warfare characteristics, their possible close connection to the vast diversity of military operations becomes prominent, which is through NATO doctrines mostly discerned in the operations of stabilisation and broad range of “enabling operations”⁸, so that they are often used in peace operations. Judging by the existing doctrines of the armed forces of the USA and Great Britain⁹, the operations of stabilisation imply developmental and cooperative activities during the periods of peace, or the activities of coercion as a response to some crisis, intending to promote and protect national or alliance interests. Essentially, they include various military missions, tasks and activities performed out of their own country in coordination with other instruments of national power for the sake of maintenance or reestablishment of safe and secure environment, providing vital government services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction and providing humanitarian help. Anyway, the enabling operations belong to the kind of operations from the range of NATO operations, basically of formative and sustaining character, given substantial support, services and other necessary

⁸ Intelligence operations, security operations, information operations, psychological operations, operations of the units for electronic warfare, ABC operations, engineering operations, operations of logistic support, civil-military cooperating operations etc.

⁹ Kosovo Defence Minister Armend Mehaj announced that he has left for an official three-day visit to the UK, where he will sign a memorandum of defense bilateral cooperation with Defense Minister Baroness Annabella Goldie. The visit to the UK is very important in the process of building the military and operational capacities of the KSF and strongly demonstrates the partnership with the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces, which will be further intensified, Mehaj said in a Facebook post (Kosovo Online 2021).

resources by the specialised forces, in order to enable the successful execution of offensive, defensive and stabilisation operations (Land Warfare Development Centre 2017).

The operations of stabilisation contain a broad selection of activities, and due to their complex nature, they primarily depend on the results of formative operations, in which the most recognisable are intelligence, psychological and information operations, whose bearers can both be international and host country forces. Their synergetic performance, with the integration of diverse other activities, occurring via more spheres of power in the host country, provide respectable possibilities of hybrid activities towards the interest group of certain social collectivity or state (Beriša, Sedlar, i Pavić 2025).

The indirectness in the hybrid activities of information, psychological and intelligence operations, whose main focus of acting is the psychological dislocation of the enemy, especially when they are carried out under the legitimacy of the stabilisation operations, cannot be depicted as the open conflict and impairing the state sovereignty or the directed attack on certain interest group within the state, but definitely it can systematically weaken them and secure that the “enemy” might use armed forces at no point in time as the only remaining solution.

A typical example of such hybrid action and covert abuse (violation) of international law, aimed at threatening the territorial sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia, is currently being carried out in the territory of the AP of Kosovo and Metohija, by the international forces of KFOR (Kosovo Force) (especially the British and Turkish members of the contingent of these international forces), EULEX (European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo) and para-security structures in that area (see Scheme 1). In the redistribution of hybrid activities, the foreign factor officially carries out a stabilization operation, through which and under whose pretext it helps the para-security structures to simultaneously carry out an intelligence, information and psychological operation, with the aim of preventing the influence and instrumentalization of the local population of the Serbian community in northern Kosovo by the Republic of Serbia (The so-called Assembly “Republic of Kosovo” 2022, 7).

Scheme 1. Hybrid warfare in AP Kosovo and Metohija



Source: Authors

FOREIGN FACTOR ACTIVITIES IN THE AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF KOSOVO AND METOHİJA FROM 2019 TO 2023

Foreign factors in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, for the time being are mostly present in the form of international KFOR forces and numerous diplomatic and economic representatives, which recognise and try to fulfil their own interests. The scope of this paper allows us only to examine the foreign factor context solely through the international KFOR forces, which are just like NATO, merely the instrument of power of the key, previously delineated alliance member states.

According to the official information available on the NATO Internet pages dedicated to KFOR, this North Atlantic organisation is guiding the peace-supporting operation in Kosovo and Metohija, within the international KFOR¹⁰ mission since June 1999, when “the

¹⁰ KFOR obligations are defined by the Military-Technical Agreement with the Governments of the FR Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia signed on June 9, 1999 and NATO operative plan. The SC UN Resolution 1244 from June 10, 1999 (Act 5) declared “on the assignment of civilian and security presence in Kosovo and Metohija,

78 days NATO air campaign against the Milošević regime, aimed to cease the violence in Kosovo”. The original KFOR aims were allegedly “to divert upcoming hostilities, to establish the safe environment and provide public security and order, to demilitarise ‘Kosovo Liberation Army’, to support international humanitarian efforts and to coordinate with international civilian presence”. Today, KFOR “continues to contribute to the maintenance of the safe environment in Kosovo and freedom of movement for all the citizens”. Furthermore, “NATO firmly supports the Agreement on Normalisation, signed in 2013 with the mediation of Belgrade and Priština, while KFOR is ready to support the implementation” (NATO 2026).

Nevertheless, if we analyse exclusively the period from 2021 through 2023, the time of Aljbin Kurti’s second mandate¹¹, we can find out that in Kosovo and Metohija there were 448 ethnically motivated incidents caused by the Albanians, out of which 170 incidents were in 2023. In those incidents several dozens of people were injured, wounded from the firearms or unreasonably arrested, and the Serbian properties were looted or destroyed (Kancelarija za Kosovo i Metohiju Vlada Republike Srbije n.d.). Keeping that in mind, the question arises whether it is possible to prevent such events when there are the international community representatives in the Province, having the mission and within whose functional duties the legitimacy and

under the UN supervision, with appropriate equipment and personnel, as required, approving of the FR Yugoslavia agreement with that”. Besides, the same resolution, (Act 7) “authorises the member states and respective international organisations to establish the security presence in Kosovo and Metohija”. Following the KFOR forces arrival in the AP of Kosovo and Metohija, they took hold of major Yugoslav Armed Forces and Ministry of Interior facilities and other state institutions or they set up the new bases in the vicinity of the main communication routes. The KFOR mission currently consists of 27 participating members with the total number of 4,600 troops (NATO 2026).

¹¹ Kurti is considered the ideological successor of Adem Demaći, the Albanian politician supporting the abuse of violence as the means to unite “Kosovo” with Albania, which is proudly claimed by Kurti in public and not to be disregarded when taking into account the analysis of the supposed “statesman” to carry out the hybrid war. The analysis suggests the existence of similarities of character traits and ideology propagated by Aljbin Kurti and Volodomir Zelenski, the president of the Republic of Ukraine. Furthermore, Kurti’s arrival from the Albanian political scene is very indicative as well as his marriage to Rita Augestad Knudsen, the subject of the Kingdom of Norway, who was educated in London and worked for a few British institutes researching anti-terrorism (Maksimović 2019).

capabilities to avert beforehand and provide the safe environment for all the citizens are?

It can be concluded that the frequency and intensity of the aforementioned incidents, as well as the failure to take adequate measures to prevent the constant repression of the “security” structures of Priština in Serbian areas, undoubtedly indicate that KFOR, through its deliberate inaction, indirectly contributes to the achievement of Kosovo’s independence and the exodus of the Serbian population from that area. The previous statement is supported by NATO’s relatively “lukewarm” and declarative stance that it is not time for changes in the status of the “Kosovo Security Forces” (KSF), which, in essence, has done nothing to prevent the interim institutions in Pristina from adopting a set of laws (December 14, 2018), which *de facto* enable the creation of military formations, i.e. the transition of the KSF into the “Kosovo Army”.

The tendency of the more intensified KFOR engagement in the training and schooling of KSF members, along with the tacit approval to arm that para-security formation with modern weapons, which is in disagreement with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and with the Military-Technical Agreement from Kumanovo, unequivocally confirm the stance that the international forces put themselves into the function of political and military power of Priština (Pavić, Beriša, i Mihajlović 2024). In the context of all those “partial” (in)activities of KFOR and EULEX, one ought to slightly distance oneself from and claim that this, purposefully or accidentally, is the expression of intention of primarily some individual international organisation members in Kosovo and Metohija, out of which the most conspicuous roles belong to the Republic of Turkey and Great Britain, which probably have the tendency to fulfil their strategic national interests in the Province.¹²

The analysis of KFOR and para-security structure activities in Kosovo and Metohija, it can be inferred that in the period from the end of 2021 until now their intensive common activities have been conducted, their character and scope mostly suiting the hybrid warfare profile against the Republic of Serbia. It is evident that the moment

¹² It is important to point out that the USA is the key factor of stability in the Balkans, while the important contributions to the development of the “Kosovo” “security” structures were made by the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Croatia, but their roles are not the subject of this paper.

of increased activities was purposefully chosen at that time, with the special military operation being conducted in the Ukraine by the RF, and the international community in a hurry to resolve the issue of Kosovo independence because the status of the “occupied” Ukrainian territories depended on that solution model.

Nonetheless, all the activities of international forces¹³ show that their intention to speed up the reformation of KSF and their transformation into “Kosovo Army”, possibly even before 2026, due to fulfilling the conditions to join NATO, which would by far harden the negotiation position of Belgrade concerning the final status of the Province. The exact indicators of hybrid activities performed by the international forces in Kosovo and Metohija are in the function of accomplishing the aforementioned aims and here we will present them only through the activities of the British and Turkish KFOR contingents, which currently belong to the two most numerous contingents and have specific and most prominent roles in the accomplishment of the Great Albania aims.

Using the public excuse of acting in the interest of the European security, in 2023 Turkey increased its military presence in Europe, through the KFOR mission from around 780 to over 1,000 members of this national contingent. At the same time, it was allowed for the very first time that the head of this NATO mission be a member of the Turkish forces. To prove the Turkish neo-Ottoman aspirations and demonstrations of force in Kosovo and Metohija, in the context of conveying the message to Serbia not to even make an attempt to intervene with the military in the Province, there is the Turkish KFOR contingent intentionally positioned in Prizren, the old Serbian capital, in the barracks symbolically called “Sultan Murat” (Al Jazeera 2023).

In recent years, the so-called “Kosovo” has been being supplied with military equipment and weaponry as a part of the traditional practice between “Kosovo” and the Republic of Turkey¹⁴,

¹³ “Support for the attempt to gain ‘statehood’ of the southern Serbian province is continuously implemented under the mentorship of individual great powers (independently or within the framework of the largest military-political alliance) by using various means (armed, diplomatic, economic, media)” (Tomić 2020).

¹⁴ During 2018, the Republic of Turkey donated to “Kosovo” 20 armoured “Cobra” transportation vehicles. Three years later, in 2021, “Kosovo” allegedly bought four armoured “Vuran” and “Kirpi” vehicles from Turkey. In 2023, “Kosovo” completed the purchase of five unmanned aircraft TB2 “Baryaktar” systems from Turkey, as well

and the conclusion can be reached that the culmination of that sort of cooperation was achieved in the second half of 2023, when Turkey, against all international agreements, delivered to “Kosovo” five unmanned aircraft Baryaktar TB2 systems, which is a stark example of the Turkish demonstration of power towards Serbia, and the region of the Western Balkans, too (Danas 2023). In that context, the practice was continued last year by the Turkish donation of million dollars to the KSF for the purpose of providing “individual equipment” (Beriša, Sedlar, i Pavić 2025).

Besides, the KSF members are being educated for years at the Turkish military academies, and they are present at many professional development courses and trainings for piloting helicopters T-129 “ATAK”, as well as the unmanned aircraft systems of Turkish production. Immediately following the delivery of the unmanned aircraft systems to “Kosovo”, Sabri Tunch Angili, the “ambassador” of the Republic Turkey in Priština, stated that these “Baryaktar TB2” systems are not the donation to KSF and that Turkey, in line with the possible demands of the “Kosovo Government”, is willing to provide, i.e. sell, the other equipment, such as drones. Moreover, he also claimed that Turkey is the strategic partner of “Kosovo” and that it will participate in the development of all the areas, defence included (Kosovo Online 2023a). Thus, Turkey as a mediator, yet in the context of the diverting strategy of “Kosovo”, sent an even more menacing message to the Republic of Serbia, so that Serbia is not to engage any military forces in the Province or it would enter an armed conflict with Turkey. Soon afterwards, the KFOR commandant, whose primary duty is the control over the Kosovo and Metohija air space, agreed that KSF multiple times could be active in the region of Djakovica and use Baryaktar TB2s, which is against the UN SC 1244 Resolution and against the Military-Technical Agreement (KoSSev 2024).

From another point of view, following a similar model, since 2021 Great Britain has increased the number of their KFOR soldiers, starting with 35, then increasing to 400, under the excuse of the last conflict of the local Serbs with the “Kosovo Police” in the north of Kosovo and Metohija, only to raise the number to 600 on

as several dozens of anti-armour systems “OMTAS” 160 mm systems of 4.5 km range, “Boran” 105 mm howitzers of 17 km range and “ALKAR” 120 mm mortar launchers of 8 km range, characterised by high mobility (Kosovo online 2024).

September 24, 2023, therefore becoming one of the most numerous national contingents within KFOR. The thing that portrays the British armed forces within KFOR is that they are engaged within intelligence-reconnaissance units and the forces of “operative reserve”, while, mainly after the special plan and most often not following the requirements of the KFOR mission, they are executing intelligence-reconnaissance activities in the Serbian settlements, near the administrative line, using tactical unmanned aircraft systems and civilian vehicles without the identification marks of KFOR or their home country. By such activities, as well as by the involvement in the formation and direct training of the KSF company members for the “civilian operations”, whose tasks are of strategic significance and refer to the conducting of psychological operations and special warfare, the British show their indirect support to Priština in the activities regarding the takeover of the full control in the north of AP of Kosovo and Metohija (Beriša, Sedlar, i Pavić 2025).

For the purpose of raising the level of capacities, in the late 2019 and early 2020, some members of the company for “civilian operations” were studying the Serbian language in the Priština Centre for Foreign Languages of the Training and Doctrine Command KSF General Staff Headquarters in Uroševac, financed by the British “Embassy” in Priština. Having considered the time span of this unit’s formation and training, starting in 2019, we comprehend the period necessary for the enabling was sufficient. Hence, one must conclude that they are planned and well organised operations of para-security structures in the Province north, initiated in 2021 and most likely guided by the engagement of that unit and their British “advisors”. Their undercover engagement in civilian clothing and without visible armament of the KSF unit members in the north of Kosovo and Metohija, made it possible for them to formally avoid the breaching of the existing agreements on the KSF involvement in the territory (Beriša, Sedlar, i Pavić 2025).

However, regarding the hybrid character and specificity of conducting the operations concerning intelligence, psychology and information, actually their constant and direct presence is not required as the role of the direct executor of hybrid activities on the ground. Gradually it is being handed down to the other para-security structures and bearers of the instruments of Priština power, which mainly have no

legal nor procedural engagement restrictions in any part of the AP of Kosovo and Metohija.

Besides, previous experiences indicate that during the execution of the high-risk operations in the north of Kosovo and Metohija by “Kosovo Police”, the members of the British KFOR contingent, in most cases, deployed several of their members to the police operative centres, with the task to plan, prepare and coordinate such actions. Additionally, there were more cases of the completed training of many KSF staff members in the military centres in Great Britain. Judging by the statement by Macedonci Ejup, the “minister of Kosovo Defence”, issued on November 15, 2023, his “Ministry” is currently negotiating with the Ministry of Defence of Great Britain concerning the joint engagement in two peace missions and the preparations of the Ukrainian armed forces (Kosovo Online 2023b).

In early June 2023, the British Member of Parliament and Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee Alicia Kearns, accused the Republic of Serbia of using emergency ambulance vehicles to smuggle weapons to “Kosovo” and store them in the buildings belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church (Vreme 2023). Not much afterwards, the intensified presence of the British KFOR contingent intelligence structures was registered near the administrative line in the north of Kosovo and Metohija, and on September 24, 2023 in that precise region some clashes occurred between local Serbs and “Kosovo Police” members, which served as an excuse for KFOR to increase the number of their troops and to fortify their engagement along the administrative line in the north of the Province.

Finally, bearing in mind the hybrid character of the conducted activities, we may deduce that KFOR forces, under the excuse of carrying out the stabilisation operation, assisted those Priština para-security structures to cover up and legalise the execution of their formative operations.

Within that assistance, the support of international forces has been recognised through the following activities: intelligence collection; developing the abilities of specific military-police structures (unit formation, training personnel and equipping with modern weapon systems); planning, organisation and coordination of the activities during the execution of high-risk actions of para-security structures; demonstrative activities in the function of diverting factor from

the possible military-police intervention of the Republic of Serbia; information-propaganda activities (e.g. terrifying the local population with the aim of diverting possible armed reactions against para-security structures, criminalisation of the local inhabitants in the settlements with dominant Serbian population, promotion of Priština interests both internally and externally with the immediate warfare protection of the “Kosovo Police” units during the execution of certain actions), and deceiving the state leadership of the Republic of Serbia, aiming to mislead Belgrade and to gradually make them accept some proposals, under the excuse of the compromise with Priština.¹⁵

ACTIVITIES OF TEMPORARY PRIŠTINA INSTITUTIONS AIMING TO FULFIL ALBANIAN NATIONAL INTERESTS

Only one week after the beginning of the Ukrainian conflict, “following the consultations with international partners”, initiated by Aljbin Kurti, the “war fund” or the “fund for security and defence” was established (Ćurčić 2023). That was the first time “Kosovo” got the budget of 100 million euros¹⁶ and started to invest more seriously in its “security”. Viewed from today’s perspective, it is obviously one more indicator of the Priština intention to commence the activities, modelled after the Ukrainian conflict, so as to motivate additionally international community to exert pressure on the Republic of Serbia and further be engaged in accomplishing the full “Kosovo” independence. Regarding the plan of realising the desired state, para-security forces and their foreign mentors, modelled after the Ukrainian hybrid war, they defined the aims, forces and methods, that afterwards proved to match the character of intelligence, psychological and information operation, simultaneously directed towards the local Serbian population and state organs of the Republic of Serbia.

As one of common aims of the aforementioned operations, we identify the realisation of full control in the north of Kosovo and Metohija, the only remaining territory in the Province exclusively

¹⁵ Overview of activities summarized based on data obtained from media reports from Kosovo and Metohija during 2022.

¹⁶ The budget for the “army” for 2023 is 123 million euros, while the total budget of the so-called Kosovo for this year is 3.2 billion euros (Jakupi 2022).

inhabited by the Serbian population. When it comes to the fulfilment of that goal and creation of the conditions for the acting of all instruments of Priština power in full capacity, primarily it was necessary to provide the legitimacy for the intensified engagement of the para-security structures in the north of Kosovo and Metohija, which was accomplished pretending to fight against crime and preventing the aggression of the Republic of Serbia. The same excuse served to the KFOR forces to execute simultaneous stability operations, which is in the international community narrative more and more focused on the crisis, but basically had the role of an auxiliary operation dominated by the activities of shaping up the operative environment.

Under the given excuse and continual engagement of the strong police forces in the north of Kosovo and Metohija, Priština started the implementation of a wide range of provocative activities towards the Serbian population, which step by step resulted in their displacement, delay of fulfilling the duties involving the Association of Serbian Municipalities (ASM) and drawing the attention of local public away from the extremely poor economic situation and corruption in the “country” (Avramović 2024).

In order to resume full control in the municipalities in the north of the Province, on the illegally estranged private properties of the Serbs, they erected the bases for “Border Kosovo Police”, near the administrative crossings “Brnjak” and “Jarinje”, the bases for special units in the villages of Gornji Jasenovik (Zubin Potok municipality) and Košutovo (Leposavić municipality), permanent check point with bunkers near the Bistrica bridge for controlling the road communication Kosovska Mitrovica–Raška, and the check point near the bridge in the village of Gazivode (Zubin Potok municipality) for controlling the road communications Kosovska Mitrovica–Ribariće (Čolić and Đorđević 2024). Since March 2022, within the BKP units, they formed an Intervention Unit, which included the most extreme members of the special KP forces, thus generating the conditions for the uninterrupted engagement of the trained and extremely well armed troops in the vicinity of the administrative line.

By grouping and employing the robust forces in the north of the Province, Priština continued to justify that to international community as the alleged fight against crime, and to place misinformation on the organised and armed “Serbian para-military troops” and alleged plans of the Serbian Armed Forces and Ministry of Interior of the

Republic of Serbia for the land operation in the north of Kosovo and Metohija, as it happened in the Ukrainian conflict. In the placement of misinformation, they had operative and technical support by the intelligence components and international forces, from the aspect of planning and organising actions, as well as concerning the very work coordination on the ground and training the members of certain police and “military” specialities (Avramović 2024). The largest number of those trainings were related to the training of the members of “Kosovo Police Special Intervention Units”¹⁷, comprised of sniper training, counter-terrorist training and the training for planning and execution of the “high-risk” actions.¹⁸

Parallel to the reinforcement of the capacities for the activities of special police units in the north from the Ibar, repressive measures were intensified towards the Serbian population in terms of confiscation of consumer goods and medicines, person and vehicle search, arrests, detaining for interrogations so as to identify the bearers of the self-organisation and members of Civil Defence, marked as a terrorist organisation. These actions featured the employment of extremely robust forces, unnecessary in proportion to the potential risks, by which Priština purposefully demonstrated force, often followed by excessive brutality due to the fervent engagement of their personnel. In order to further humiliate and terrify the local Serbian population, the members of special units raided schools, kindergartens and hospitals on several occasions (Beriša, Sedlar, i Pavić 2025).

Closing the alternative roads leading from Central Serbia to Kosovo and Metohija artificially caused the lack of essential food items in general stores in the Serbian communities, thus exerting deliberate pressure on the Serbs to trade with the merchandise produced in the south from the Ibar and consequently legalising the greater Albanian presence in that territory. Simultaneously, every attempt of the Serbian population to resolve the lack of indispensable products of the Serbian origin, even medicines, Priština abused for the further criminalisation of the Serbian population and health care institutions of the Republic of Serbia functioning in Kosovo and Metohija. Eventually, it turned out that the background of such propaganda activities by Priština was

¹⁷ In the media mostly appearing as “FIT” – “First Incident Team”.

¹⁸ Data obtained from non-Albanian residents of Kosovo and Metohija during conversations with the authors during 2022.

to have the second phase, planned for January 1, 2024, to integrate the health care institutions in the Serbian settlements into the “Kosovo” system.

With the formation of “Institute for War Crimes”, increase in staff numbers of the “Kosovo Police” Directorate in charge of investigating war crimes (from 19 to 41 persons), and enabling the court trials in absence, the pressures towards the Serbs grew and the arrests for the alleged war crimes, in the majority of cases turned out to be linked with the procedures that the arrested had previously initiated solely because of the demands to return the expropriated assets and possessions.¹⁹

These activities perfidiously conveyed the notification to all those who had participated on any grounds in the 1999 war events in Kosovo and Metohija, and to the professional employees of the Serbian Armed Forces and Ministry of Interior to move out and not to enter the Province territory. Because of all those repressive Priština measures, as a sign of drawing the attention of the international community and responsible international organisations, during the November of 2022, the Serbs from the north of Kosovo and Metohija were forced to abandon all their municipality functions, in particular their mayor positions in the north, along with the positions and duties related to other Priština institutions, such as “Kosovo Police”, “Kosovo Customs”, their court duties and others, all of which brought about the institutional vacuum.

Anyway, instead of taking some measures to overcome the institutional crisis in the northern Province municipalities, on April 23, 2023, Priština organised snap elections and placed their illegitimate representatives in the positions of power. Augmenting the police repression right before the elections, Priština consciously endeavoured to provoke reactions and incidents with the local Serbs, to accuse Serbia of destabilising the situation and discredit it to the international community, which at that moment had already started to criticise Kurti more prominently, but not loud enough, because of the worsening

¹⁹ The Provisional Institutions in Pristina have established the Institute for War Crimes Committed in Kosovo and Metohija from 1998 to 1999, RTK in Serbian reports. Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti said at a government session that this continues “the institutional commitment to addressing all damages and crimes committed during the war” (Tanjug 2023).

security situation in the north of Kosovo and Metohija. The engagement of virtually all intelligence resources had the same purpose, along with the inclusion of “Special Kosovo Police Intervention Units”, who were employed in the civilian clothes in the north of Kosovo and Metohija.

Also, they formed specialised “teams of intelligence-investigation police officers, who detained a greater number of persons for interrogation for the alleged committed crimes, trying to collect data on the Serbian political representatives from the north of Kosovo and Metohija, and on the others who were deemed to propagate the Serbian self-organisation in the territory.

After the snap elections held without the participation of the Serbian political parties, Priština took measures towards the forceful resuming of the municipality premises in the Province north. In the context of those activities, during May 26, 2023, “Kosovo Police” blocked access to the municipality buildings, while placing check points on all the roads leading to Zvečan, Zubin Potok and Leposavić, simultaneously trying to arrest some protestants who demonstratively defended municipality buildings in order to warn the international community about the necessity to be more agile when it comes to resolving the crisis.

For the ensuing measures of repression towards the citizens of the Province north, Priština took avail of the event from May 29, 2023, when in front of the Zvečan municipality building a conflict arose between the protestants and the KFOR members, when “Kosovo Police” shot from the back Dragiša Galjak, a local Serb. The clash happened because “Kosovo Police” members, in the presence of the KFOR forces, made an attempt to use force to arrest the persons peacefully protesting in front of the Zvečan municipality building. At that event, trying to trigger the confrontation between the citizens and KFOR, the “Kosovo Police” members from the municipality building began to throw pyrotechnic materials, which inflicted injuries to dozens of KFOR members. However, local Serbs were proclaimed guilty for the alleged injuries and wounding, and the entire event served to Priština to legalise the arrests of the previously marked, respected citizens of Serbian nationality.

After the political steps and pressure from the international community, the security situation seemingly calmed down, and during July 2023, some greater KFOR engagement and presence was

registered in the Province north, which was allegedly in an attempt to prevent the impairment of the security situation and outbreak of hostilities between the citizens and “Kosovo Police”. In that period, Priština insisted on the implementation of the measures so as to “resolve” the crisis tied to the possibility of the new local elections, so on August 1, 2023, the work group was named to produce the “administrative instruction on the procedure for the removal of mayors” (via a citizen initiative). Still, on December 7, 2023, Priština denied the request from a group of the citizens from the northern part of Kosovska Mitrovica to depose their municipality mayor, despite the fact that they fulfilled all the supposed procedures of the instruction issued by the “Ministry for Local Self-government of Kosovo”. In addition to this, Priština declaratively accepted the reduction in the presence and employment of the “special police forces” in the north of KiM by the alleged relocation from the municipality buildings, but the total “Kosovo Police” engagement in the territory remained approximately on the same level with constant repression towards the Serbs, mainly in the form of arrests, maltreatment, verbal insults and so on.

Such Priština activities were meant to delay the implementation of the reached, though suitable for them, agreements with Belgrade, they went on to criminalise the Serbian political factor to the international community and they introduced to the political scene some fitting new characters of the Serbian nationality so as to legalise their steps towards the Province north. In favour of the thesis on delaying the implementation of the agreement, there is the Albanian decree on the incorporation of Leposavić, Zubin Potok and Zvečan municipalities to the so-called “Association of Kosovo Municipalities” (AKM – according to the principle if SZO can, then AKM can too). All of that was just an introduction to the even more severe confrontation with the local Serbian population, culminating on September 24, 2023, when a group of local Serbs, under the unclarified circumstances, made an attempt to stand against the “Kosovo” para-security structures and in that utterly desperate manner try to prevent the intentions of Priština to wrap up the completion of their “statehood” in the Province north.²⁰

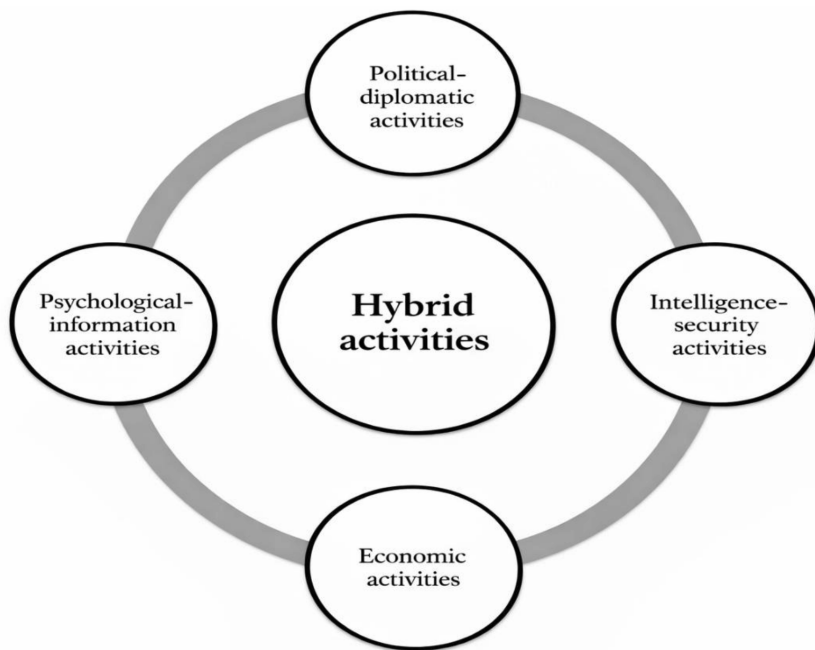
²⁰ It must be noted that at least one local Serb was murdered from point-blank range, in spite of previously being wounded and disarmed, with the so-called “counter-terrorist” operation by the “Kosovo Police” carried out without the evacuation of the

It must be emphasised that each and every of these activities performed by the para-security structures was praised and glorified in the Albanian media, resulting in additional reactions by the Albanian population displayed in the form of extremist messages and threats sent via social networks and graffiti on Serbian compatriot buildings. That furthermore prompted the scaling up of the Albanian extremist groups in multiethnic communities and their employment as the armed “guardians”. Also, simultaneously with those activities, Priština conducted an array of procedures aimed at revising the image of Serbian history and devastation or expropriation of the Serbian cultural heritage. The last in a row of such instances took place on November 28, 2023, when a group led by the self-proclaimed priest Nikola Džufka, a citizen of the Republic of Albania, broke into the Church of Saint Archangel Michael in the village of Rakitnica, from the Podujevo municipality, so as to ostensibly perform a ritual in the edifice belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church. During the November of 2023, in several places in the north of Kosovo and Metohija, the Albanians were reported to have excavated Serbian graveyards under the pretense of doing some construction work, they were also illegally removing the Monument of the Serbian Soldiers Fallen in the Balkanic Wars and the First World War in the military cemetery in Priština.

The analysis and sublimation of the registered Priština activities, which by the character match hybrid activities, one may notice that they were conducted synchronously and multi-dimensionally, so we can categorise them as: political-diplomatic, intelligence-security, economic and psychological-information activities. Their analysis clearly reveals that through these hybrid activities all the instruments of the para-state of “Kosovo” were employed and that the ultimate goal of their action was in agreement with the activities of foreign forces in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as with certain official foreign political representatives abroad (Beriša i Sedlar 2026).

local population, which is against all police procedures. It resulted in the police officer wounding two local inhabitants from the village of Banjska, from Zvečan municipality, along with the resettlement of around 11% of the Serbian population after the incident (KoSSev 2023).

Scheme 2. Hybrid activities in Kosovo and Metohija



Source: Authors

CONCLUSION

Though the West, with the constant sponsorship of the Albanian secession movement, distributed their military power within the international forces in the AP of Kosovo and Metohija, they tended to rapidly establish a new factual state and from the Republic of Serbia to extort the recognition of its forcefully detached part of territory. Therefore, we may reach the conclusion that the process failed, but it did prompt the radicalisation of insisting to eventually fulfil such a goal. Numerous facts point out that the latest crisis in Kosovo and Metohija has been a part of coordinated hybrid warfare activity of para-security structures and certain foreign representatives that under the screen of their employment with KFOR and EULEX, they have been seeking to accomplish their national strategic aims, dominantly based on preventing the spread of the RF influence, meeting their economic

interests in terms of exploiting natural resources, providing transit traffic routes and crossroads and setting up military bases.

The examination of the presented Kosovo and Metohija crisis, as the main bearers of endangering the Serbian people in the territory, the Albanian para-security structures have been identified, while there is a range of facts indicating their main creators or “logistic support providers” were the Republic of Turkey and Great Britain with the approval or following the orders issued by the United States of America.

Besides, in favour of the “frozen conflict” the fact that the world order has approached “multipolar bipolarism” speaks volumes, dividing the world into the pro-American, which almost entirely recognised “Kosovo” and in which, apart from the USA and the EU, the others are relatively feeble, while the momentum-growing axis attracting the most spacious, rich in resources and most populated countries, the most prominent being the RF, People’s Republic of China, the Republic of India, the Republic of Indonesia and quite a few of other countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America and even Vatican, as one of the most influential countries globally.²¹

In that sense, it is essential that the expert state subjects nationally conduct research through case studies examining all the apparent forms of contemporary hybrid threats, their causes, development, distinct features, principles, goals, and to register weaknesses and failures of their executors and commanders. Thus, a national data base would be created as a quality base for re-examining the existing normative and legal doctrinal documents in order to contemplate the possibilities of developing the concepts of offensive hybrid operations in the AP of Kosovo and Metohija, through which the use and effects of all the instruments of power could be more notable, even in the military and security context.

Therefore, the possibilities of the aforementioned activities in the present circumstances ought to be taken into account, just like in the case of the formation of the Association of Serbian Municipalities in the AP of Kosovo and Metohija, implying that its statute is to be adjusted in the upcoming negotiations as well. The

²¹ So-called “Kosovo independence” is not recognised by the countries that in total count for 71.5% of global population and 65.4% of the world territory (Stepić 2020, 23).

third step in opposing the perceived hybrid threats, aiming to timely model all potential instruments of power in the territory, must include the selection of specific forces and take measures to evolve their capabilities. In that respect, attention should be paid to the legality of the means and tactics employed, as well as the possibilities of exploiting favorable international and regional opportunities.

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ДЕЛОВАЊЕ ПАРАБЕЗБЕДНОСНИХ СТРУКТУРА И СТРАНОГ ФАКТОРА НА КОСОВУ И МЕТОХИЈИ У ХИБРИДНОМ РАТУ ПРОТИВ РЕПУБЛИКЕ СРБИЈЕ***

Резиме

Рад анализира шири контекст интереса страних фактора у савременим безбедносним условима, карактерисаним хибридниим претњама, како би се испитало место и значај Аутономне Покрајине Косово и Метохија (АП КиМ) у безбедносној агенди ових сила. Циљ анализе је унапређење методолошког приступа за објективније перципирање и стратешко разумевање активности и намера, као и значаја који велике силе придају овом простору у контексту других области и питања у којима се њихови интереси сударају. Рад анализира интересе Сједињених Америчких Држава (САД) као главног спољнополитичког актера на КиМ, као и интересе одређених великих и регионалних сила са дужом присутношћу на Балкану, као што су Руска Федерација (РФ), Савезна Република Немачка, Уједињено Краљевство Велике Британије и Северне Ирске (УК), и Република Турска. Да би остварили сопствене интересе и пројектовали утицај, страни актери предузимају различите мере и активности, које се често у савременим анализама одбране и безбедности означавају као хибридни рат. Стога рад пружа кратак преглед концепта хибридног

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рата кроз евалуацију истакнутих питања и одговора, који се сматрају значајним за доносиоце одлука на стратешком нивоу, као и опис специфичних хибридних активности пара-безбедносних структура и страних фактора, користећи пример АП Косово и Метохија.

Кључне речи: хибридни рат, парабезбедносне структуре, страни фактор, НАТО, Косово и Метохија.

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