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THOUGHT
POLITICAL
SERBIAN

SERBIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

ON CERTAIN ASPECTS OF IDENTITY
AND NATIONAL INTERESTS

Aleksandra Kolaković, Nikola Perišić, Aleksandar Pavić, Hatidža Beriša,
Vladimir Mikić, Slobodan M. Radojević, Vukojica M. Živanović, Dušan Ilić

ESSAYS

Marko Nedeljković, Aleksandra Krstić, Suzana Mihajlović,
Tamara Stojanović, Marija Dokić

REVIEWS

Dajana Lazarević, Ivana Vlašković



ISSN 0354-5989 UDC 32 year XXXII vol. 92 No. 4/2025.

СРПСКА ПОЛИТИЧКА МИСАО SERBIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

ISSN 0354-5989

UDC 32

No. 4/2025.



СРПСКА ПОЛИТИЧКА МИСАО

SERBIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Publisher: Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade. Tel: +381 11 3349-204

E-mail: ips@ips.ac.rs; spm@ips.ac.rs

<https://www.ips.ac.rs> www.ips.ac.rs/rs/magazines/srpska-politicka-misao

ISSN 0354-5989 UDC 32 No 4/2025. XXXII vol. 92

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JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED SIX TIMES A YEAR.

Articles SPT are available in electronic databases: SCIndeks, C.E.E.O.L.

(Central and Eastern European Online Library),

ERIH PLUS (European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences),
and Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI).

Printing:

Donat Graf, Belgrade

Circulation: 50

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**ON CERTAIN ASPECTS OF IDENTITY
AND NATIONAL INTERESTS**

UDC 323:342.2(497.11)"1889"
DOI: 10.5937/spm92-60579
Original research article

Српска политичка мисао
(Serbian Political Thought)
No 4/2025.
Vol. 92
pp. 1-22

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PUBLIC HISTORY AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY: THE 500th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF KOSOVO (1889) AND THE PUBLIC SHAPING OF SERBIAN NATIONHOOD***

Abstract

The Battle of Kosovo stands as one of the most powerful national symbols within Serbian historical consciousness and is frequently invoked in various public history practices. Considering Serbia's current position regarding the Kosovo issue and the ongoing negotiations between Belgrade and Priština, research into the origins of the institutionalization of commemorative practices related to Kosovo and the Battle of Kosovo within modern Serbian statehood constitutes an essential component for understanding the complexity of these issues. In this context, the 1889 marking of the 500th Anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo holds particular historical and symbolic significance, as it provides valuable insight into how national narratives were constructed, instrumentalized, and embedded into political

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*** The paper is part of the authors' research projects conducted at the Institute for Political Studies (Belgrade) in 2025, funded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, based on the Agreement on the Implementation and Financing of Scientific Research Activities of the Scientific Research Organization (SRO) in 2025, registration numbers: 451-03-136/2025-03/200044 and 1053/1.

culture. The paper explores the 1889 commemoration, focusing on the forms of public historical engagement that emerged during the final phase of the Obrenović dynasty. The aim is to identify patterns in the development of national historical narratives and their role in state-building processes in the late 19th century. It examines how key historical narratives centered on Kosovo and Serbian medieval history were constructed and mobilized for public and political purposes. The paper employs methodologies from memory studies and the politics of memory, with particular emphasis on the early development of public history in Serbia. Special attention is given to the roles of political and intellectual actors – including Kings Milan and Aleksandar Obrenović, regents, ecclesiastical circles, historians, and intellectuals – in the organization of commemorative practices and the shaping of Serbian nationhood.

Keywords: Public History, Memory Politics, 500th Anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, Historical Narratives, Serbian Nationhood, Identity, Nation-Building, Obrenović Dynasty, 1889

INTRODUCTION

The Battle of Kosovo (1389) occupies a central place in Serbian national identity, symbolizing sacrifice, resistance, and the belief in survival, often interpreted as a metaphysical struggle between good and evil (Mihaljčić 1989). During the period of Ottoman rule, knowledge and representations of the battle and the medieval Serbian state served as a foundation of collective memory. These narratives enabled the preservation of national consciousness and fostered aspirations for freedom and the restoration of statehood. Oral tradition and epic poetry embedded the heroes of the Kosovo Battle deeply into the national imagination, with the Serbian Orthodox Church playing a pivotal role in maintaining and transmitting this historical and spiritual legacy. In the 19th century, amid the process of national revival and state-building, the Kosovo narrative and the memory of the medieval Nemanjić dynasty gained renewed political function as instruments in shaping national identity. Commemorative practices such as the marking of the 500th Anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo in 1889 were instrumental in the institutionalization of collective memory. These practices strengthened

national identity and contributed to the formulation of a state ideology rooted in historical continuity.

Throughout the 20th century, especially in its final decades, the issue of Kosovo re-emerged at the center of Serbian political, social, and international discourse. During the 1989 commemoration of the battle's 600th Anniversary, Slobodan Milošević leveraged commemorative ceremonies and his speech at Gazimestan to consolidate political leadership and reaffirm the Kosovo myth within frameworks of memory politics and nationalism, which became central to his regime's ideological narrative. Amid the wars in the former Yugoslavia, the 1999 NATO bombing, and the unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo in 2008, historical narratives surrounding Kosovo and the Battle of Kosovo assumed heightened symbolic and identity-related significance (Dragnich and Todorovich 1984; Đilas 1998). These events intensified scholarly and public interest in Serbian history and how historical narratives on Kosovo shaped perceptions of Serbia and the Serbian people both domestically and internationally (Bataković 1998; Bieber 2002; Gatalović 2016; Čolović 2016; Gatalović 2018; Slavković Mirić 2018; Đokić 2019; Ejodus 2020; Vukadinović 2021; Radojković 2024). Given the importance of Kosovo* for both Serbia's internal and foreign policy, as well as the difficult living conditions for Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija due to displacement, life in enclaves, and the destruction of Serbian cultural and historical heritage (notably during the March 2004 pogrom and afterward), it is critical to re-evaluate and reconsider the role of historical narratives in the institutionalization of memory, identity formation, and memory politics. For most Serbs today, even amid ongoing negotiations between Belgrade and Priština, and Kosovo's* repeated attempts to join UNESCO and other international organizations, Kosovo remains a symbol of historical continuity, spiritual heritage, and national suffering.

Therefore, it is essential to examine the early stages of commemoration and memory politics to better understand the long-term processes that have shaped the place of the Battle of Kosovo in Serbian national identity. This paper explores the 1889 commemoration of the Battle of Kosovo, focusing on forms of public historical engagement

* Contemporary references to Kosovo should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

that emerged during the state-building processes of the Obrenović dynasty's final phase. The goal is to identify patterns in the development of national historical narratives centered on the Kosovo myth and their role in shaping identity in the late 19th century. The research also analyzes key narratives rooted in medieval Serbian history, particularly the legacy of the Nemanjić dynasty, as foundational components of national identity. Accordingly, the methodological framework of this study is grounded in memory studies, politics of memory, and the field of public history.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Memory politics, understood as a constellation of institutional, cultural, and symbolic practices through which states, elites, and other social actors shape the collective memory of a given community, are not solely concerned with the preservation of historical knowledge. Rather, they frequently function as mechanisms for constructing narratives that legitimize contemporary political or social objectives, shape collective identities, and ensure social cohesion. In this sense, memory is not a neutral reflection of the past but a selective and strategic process, structured around decisions about what is to be remembered and what is to be forgotten (Assmann 2011). This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of memory politics, drawing on insights from history, cultural studies, political science, and memory studies. This allows for a comprehensive examination of historical narratives, commemorative practices, official ceremonies, the erection of monuments, and the roles of institutions such as schools, archives, and museums (Assmann 2012). Particular attention will be given to the historical development of memory politics across different political systems and time periods, with an emphasis on their instrumentalization in the service of identity construction and political legitimization. The Kosovo case holds particular relevance within this framework. The Kosovo myth – centering on the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 – has been deeply inscribed in the Serbian collective imaginary as a foundational narrative of sacrifice, heroism, and national identity. From the nineteenth century onward, Kosovo has evolved into a *lieu de mémoire* in the sense formulated by Pierre Nora: a symbolic site where history, myth, trauma, and identity converge (Nora 1989). Accordingly, the study of the emergence and evolution of memory politics related to

Kosovo – especially in their early phases – offers critical insight into the formation of modern Serbian identity, the mechanisms of national cohesion, and the contemporary role of historical knowledge in shaping political agendas. By focusing on commemorative practices and narratives in specific historical contexts, this research aims to reveal how memory has been used not only to interpret the past but also to project political visions into the present and the future.

Public history refers to the practice of history by and for the public, often outside traditional academic settings. It encompasses a wide range of activities through which historical knowledge is interpreted and shared with broader audiences. Public historians work in museums, archives, historic sites, government agencies, media, and other community spaces, aiming to make history accessible and relevant to contemporary society (Cauvin 2016, 3–5). Unlike academic history, which typically addresses scholarly audiences, public history prioritizes engagement, collaboration, and communication with diverse publics (Kellley 1978, 16–28). It often involves community participation, oral histories, digital platforms, and exhibitions that present multiple perspectives (Meringolo 2012, 44–47). This field emphasizes ethical responsibility, inclusive narratives, and the democratization of historical knowledge (Conard 2002, 88–90). Public history thus serves both educational and civic functions, contributing to cultural memory, identity, and public discourse about the past in ways that inform present and future generations (Glassberg 2001, 7–9).

The practices of public history have a long tradition, although the term itself became widely used only in the second half of the twentieth century. As early as the nineteenth century, through the work of local historical societies, monuments, museums, and commemorative events, communities actively participated in shaping collective memory (Jordanova 2006, 141–145). In the twentieth century – especially after the 1970s – public history emerged as a distinct field aimed at connecting academic knowledge with the needs of broader publics (Gardner and LaPaglia 2004, 9–12). Studying these practices is important because it helps us understand how societies remember, interpret, and instrumentalize the past. The goal is not only to analyze historical narratives but also to develop a critical awareness of how history is used in contemporary social and political contexts. In this way, public history becomes a tool for fostering democratic dialogue, cultural inclusivity, and a responsible relationship with the past (Samuel 1994, 3–5).

Thomas Cauvin's reflections further deepen this understanding. Cauvin likens public history to a dynamic "Public His'Tree," where the roots represent source creation and preservation, the trunk denotes interpretation, and the branches and leaves symbolize dissemination and public engagement. As he observes, "the multiple links between monuments and the Public His'Tree demonstrate that trained historians should not limit their work to studying monuments; they can also contribute to broadening public understanding of the past" (Cauvin 2022, 13). Therefore, it is important to examine how, during the process of constructing modern Serbian statehood in the 19th century, the institutionalization of collective memory surrounding the Battle of Kosovo became a key instrument of nation-building.

HISTORY, SERBIAN NATION-BUILDING, AND THE OBRENOVIĆ

Throughout the 19th century, Western European understandings of Serbia were shaped by Romanticism and Orientalist tropes. Serbia was frequently depicted as a peripheral, semi-Oriental society on the margins of European civilization (Kolaković 2016a). The political landscape was primarily characterized by the rivalry between two royal houses – the Karađorđević dynasty, descendants of Karađorđe Petrović, leader of the First Serbian Uprising against Ottoman rule, and the Obrenović dynasty, descendants of Prince Miloš, leader of the Second Uprising. This dynastic competition unfolded against the broader backdrop of national consolidation and state-building. At the same time, a significant segment of the Serbian political and intellectual elite in the mid-19th century received their education abroad, particularly in France (Bataković 1997; Trgovčević 2003). Influenced by the ideals of the French Revolution, they championed liberal reforms, constitutional governance, and the limitation of monarchical authority. Upon returning to Serbia, they established institutions modeled on European examples, contributed to state-building, became university professors, and entered the political arena by founding political parties in the 1880s, each with its own political platform and national objectives. Among these emerging political forces, some advocated not only for an alliance with Russia – traditionally viewed as a natural ally and protector of Serbian national interests – but also pursued and successfully cultivated ties with various European states. France, in

particular, served as a model for state and societal organization. By the late 19th century, the Serbian elite was already well-acquainted with the processes of patrimonialization and memorialization of historical events in France, such as the erection of the Monument to the Republic (1881) and the centennial commemoration of the French Revolution during the Exposition Universelle (1889). In their efforts to distance Serbia from the Ottoman legacy and promote national emancipation, many believed that by constructing a modern state and nation along European lines, Serbia could fulfill its broader geopolitical and national ambitions (Kolaković 2016b). This context fostered a favorable climate for the increasing significance of historical narratives, which became key instruments in shaping national identity and promoting social cohesion.

By the end of the 19th century, the Obrenović dynasty was actively consolidating its authority, modernizing state institutions, and promoting economic and infrastructural development in Serbia. Following the Congress of Berlin in 1878, which recognized Serbia's independence, and the proclamation of the Kingdom of Serbia in 1882, European perceptions of the country remained limited and often distorted (Živanović 1924a). Despite the establishment of embassies and formal diplomatic relations, Serbia was still regarded, particularly in Western Europe, as a *terra incognita*. Nevertheless, King Milan Obrenović endeavored to strengthen both his own authority and the dynastic position of the Obrenović line, presenting himself as the first modern Serbian king since the fall of the medieval Serbian state (Rajić 2009, 43–58). A central national concern during this period was the preservation of independence amid persistent Austro-Hungarian pressure, along with the aspiration to liberate and unify the Serbs living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Srem, Banat, and Bačka (then under Habsburg rule), as well as in the Ottoman-controlled regions referred to as “Old Serbia” (Kosovo and Metohija, Macedonia) – territories considered the historical heartland of the medieval Serbian state. Within this context, the historical narrative of the Battle of Kosovo and medieval Serbian statehood became a foundational element: initially, in the struggle for national independence; subsequently, as a tool for legitimizing and consolidating the Obrenović dynasty's authority; and ultimately, as an ideological framework for promoting the liberation and unification of all Serbs, as well as a projection of Serbian foreign policy ambitions.

Despite their dynastic legitimacy, King Milan Obrenović and his son, King Aleksandar, struggled to secure broad public support, largely due to a series of personal scandals and contentious political decisions. In this context, historical narratives became a crucial tool for consolidating dynastic authority. King Milan ruled in an absolutist manner and aligned Serbian foreign policy closely with Austria-Hungary – an orientation that provoked strong opposition from the Radical Party, which advocated for deeper ties with Russia and, by the end of the 19th century, increasingly with France (Kolaković 2014a). Although French cultural and political influence had been present in Serbia since the mid-19th century a more decisive reorientation of Serbian foreign policy towards France began during the government of Stojan Novaković in 1895 (Vojvodić 1988). In the lead-up to the 500th Anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, 1889, King Milan's rule was seriously undermined by both military and personal failures. Serbia's defeat in the Serbo-Bulgarian War (1885), combined with his extravagant lifestyle, gambling debts, and high-profile romantic scandals, including a public and acrimonious divorce from Queen Natalia, significantly damaged the public image of the monarchy.

The political climax of this crisis was the adoption of the 1888/89 Constitution. Although it marked a personal setback for King Milan, it represented a significant advancement for the state. Modeled on contemporary European – particularly French – constitutional frameworks, the new constitution laid the foundation for Serbia's democratic development. Following his abdication, King Milan transferred the crown to his underage son, Aleksandar, and appointed a regency to govern until the young king came of age (Živanović 1924b; Jakšić 1953, 226; Rajić 2014, 27). In this altered political environment, historical narratives – particularly those centered on medieval statehood and the Battle of Kosovo – played an essential role in legitimizing the authority of the Obrenović dynasty and bolstering the position of the new monarch. In 1889, under the influence of the regency, King Aleksandar Obrenović formally established Vidovdan (June 28th) as a national holiday to honor the fallen Serbian warriors of Kosovo (Durković-Jakšić 1989, 365–388). This move was politically strategic, reinforcing national identity through historical remembrance and ritualized state ceremony. These historical narratives also served broader functions in reinforcing national unity and the project of nation-building. Later, as King Aleksandar Obrenović assumed full

power, his suspension of the constitution, orchestrated coups, and his controversial marriage to Queen Draga, a widowed court lady significantly older than himself, further alienated conservative and patriarchal segments of Serbian society (Stolić 2019). Consequently, the strategic use of historical memory persisted beyond 1889, serving as a means of sustaining dynastic authority amidst growing political and social unrest.

In light of the foregoing, it is crucial to highlight the practices that can be categorized as public history in late 19th-century Serbia. Commemorative practices and historical examples were deliberately employed to promote the dynasty, the Serbian state, and Serbian national interests – particularly the unification with Serbs living under Ottoman and Habsburg rule, i.e., beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Serbia. Preparations for the 500th Anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo were carried out peacefully, with the memory of the event, but without a bellicose narrative and with a high level of care not to provoke Austria-Hungary in the first place (Vojvodić 1999, 47–50). When examining the motivations and methods underlying the deployment and manifestation of historical narratives – in this case, Serbian medieval history and the remembrance of the first Serbian state and the Nemanjić dynasty during the reign of the last Obrenović – it is essential first to consider the national and dynastic contexts. Subsequently, through illustrative examples, one can observe the broader range of factors that unconsciously shape public historical consciousness.

In order to understand the place of history in Serbia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it is important to add that the triumph of critical historiography over myth and legend-based historical narratives was achieved in Serbia. Within this intellectual context, scholarly books and articles shed light on the conflict between two prominent Serbian historians. The first, Panta Srećković (1834–1903), a professor at the Great School, author of history textbooks, and representative of romantic historiography, relied heavily on the erroneous belief that folk creativity – such as songs and legends – constituted reliable historical sources (Srećković 1889; Srećković 1900). The second, Ilarion Ruvarac (1832–1905), who initially studied law in Vienna before becoming a monk and eventually archimandrite of the Grgeteg Monastery (from 1874), employed the principles of critical historiography to systematically challenge and refute Srećković's interpretations, particularly those found in *History of the Serbian People* (Radojičić

1956). At the time of these debates, both Srećković and Ruvarac were members of the Serbian Learned Society (later the Serbian Royal Academy of Sciences), exerting significant but contrasting influence on the shaping of historical consciousness (Suvajdžić 1997, 212–215). Moreover, in the period between these developments, the State Archives was established by order of King Aleksandar Obrenović, with Mihailo Gavrilović, educated at the Sorbonne, appointed as its first director (Kolaković, Stojkovski 2014b). These developments marked a decisive shift: academic historiography emerged as a leading force, underscoring the critical role it played in shaping historical discourse and national identity.

THE 500th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF KOSOVO

The central commemorative events took place in the city of Kruševac, the medieval capital of Prince Lazar (Vojvodić 1999, 45). The reception accorded to the young monarch was grand and carefully choreographed. Although only thirteen years old at the time, King Aleksandar Obrenović arrived accompanied by high-ranking officials, including General Kosta S. Protić, General Jovan Beli-Marković, Prime Minister Sava Grujić, and other members of the government. Upon entering the city, the king was greeted with enthusiastic cries of “Long live!”, and the crowd showered him with flowers. He proceeded through the city’s main square, where he inspected the site designated for a future monument to the heroes of Kosovo. Later, he visited the Lazarica Church, where he was received by Metropolitan Mihailo, an influential figure and known political opponent of his father King Milan Obrenović. Throughout the day, Kruševac was adorned with Serbian tricolors, creating an atmosphere of national pride. However, by early evening, black flags were hoisted to signal mourning for “the tragic yet glorious Kosovo” (Šešum 2023, 285–308). At six o’clock in the evening, a solemn vigil was held in the Church of Lazarus, marking the spiritual beginning of the commemoration.

On the following day, June 28, 1889, after the Divine Liturgy in the Lazarica Church, a memorial service was held in honor of the Kosovo martyrs. The king, members of the regency, high-ranking government officials, military commanders, and prominent ecclesiastical dignitaries attended the ceremony. That afternoon, at

five o'clock, King Aleksandar ceremoniously laid the foundation stone for the Monument to the Heroes of Kosovo. Into its foundations were placed symbolic objects: a parchment inscription, contemporary coins, a book of Kosovo epic poetry, and a specially prepared Vidovdan Memorial. This act of foundational ritualism served to sacralize the site and materialize national memory in public space. Approximately 5.000 people gathered outside the Church, where a commemorative service was conducted in a purpose-built, black-draped ceremonial pavilion. Following the memorial, a new and elaborately decorated flag for the Obilić Choral Society, donated by the king, was consecrated. The ceremonies concluded with a military parade in which all present army branches marched in battle formation before the monarch, symbolizing the continuity of Serbian martial tradition from the medieval battlefield of Kosovo to the modern Serbian state (Đorđević 1996, 167–179).

The king Aleksandar Obrenović and his retinue, in the presence of a large crowd, proceeded to the site designated for the Monument's construction. There, the prime minister delivered a brief speech and read aloud the memorial document that was to be embedded within the Monument's foundation. Following this, the king struck the foundation stone three times with a golden hammer, amidst thunderous and enthusiastic exclamations of "Long live!" (Pajević 1889). Subsequently, Colonel Jovan Dragašević, the king's instructor in Serbian language and geography, addressed the assembly, followed by Stojan Bošković, a state adviser. The king then recorded a donation of 2.500 dinars toward the Monument's construction. Two young girls sold flowers harvested from Kosovo fields, each bouquet tied with a black ribbon inscribed with "Spomen sa Kosova" (Souvenir from Kosovo). Various delegations laid wreaths at the Monument, with particular attention drawn to the wreath presented by Czech youth, which garnered special notice.

The following day featured the ceremonial laying of the foundation stone for a new state powder mill, located on the property of Đ. Simić, near the Rasina River, approximately one hour from Kruševac. This facility was acquired by the state and symbolized the foundation of the country's military strength and preparedness. During his stay in Kruševac, the king Aleksandar also visited the Ljubostinja Monastery, where a special commemoration was held at the grave of Princess Milica. After the events in Kruševac, the king and his entourage traveled to Kraljevo and then to the Žiča Monastery, where he was anointed in an exceptionally solemn ceremony by Metropolitan

Mihailo, like all Serbian kings of the Middle Ages, starting with Stefan the First-Crowned from the Nemanjić line (Pajević 1889).

The commemoration of the Battle of Kosovo was predominantly a local affair, observed in multiple Serbian cities beyond Belgrade. In this context, the local population attended the event and took part in it, and King Aleksandar's circular journey through central Serbia conveyed historical narratives about the Battle of Kosovo and represented an important basis for creating a policy of liberating compatriots in areas under foreign rule, whether Habsburg or Ottoman. The royal procession's journey deeper into the interior – visiting sites such as the Žiča and Ravanica Monasteries, historically significant as the coronation site of Serbia's first king – reflected an intention to engage rural and largely uneducated populations in the national memory project. The Church was an important cohesive factor, and the whole event of commemorating the Battle of Kosovo included high church dignitaries as well as lower clergy. They were transmitters of memory for centuries before this act, and through this commemoration, their narratives about the Battle of Kosovo merged with the state's need to strengthen the identity and reputation of the dynasty. Queen Natalija contributed to the celebrations by presenting a white silk curtain, hand-embroidered by herself, to the Kruševac church for the Epiphany celebration. King Aleksandar Obrenović gifted a golden cross to the Ljubostinja Monastery, an endowment originally associated with Princess Milica. Furthermore, King Aleksandar commissioned two additional gold crosses from a Belgrade. One of these crosses was presented to the Church in Žiča during the king's anointment, while the other was sent to the Church in Ravanica in Srem, where the relics of Saint Prince Lazar rest and where, despite governmental prohibitions, a celebration of the 500th Anniversary had been held. The Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy observed "Vidovdan as a day of all-Serbian hope and faith in the resurrection of Serbian unity and freedom," as well as "the hope that we will once again be free and united as a people", in the words of Dr. Stevan Dobričić, President of the Organizing Committee (Spomenica 1919, 1).

Notably, Serbs residing in Vojvodina were prohibited from traveling to Serbia to participate in the central celebrations, nor were they allowed to organize commemorative events on the territory of the Habsburg Monarchy (Pejin 1991, 141–165; Rakić 1989, 7–24). The Hungarian Minister of Internal Affairs and local authorities deemed

such activities as “anti-state agitation” with prohibitions particularly targeting Serbian students and teachers. The Serbs living in the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy – specifically in what is today Vojvodina – organized themselves in larger urban centers and established committees to prepare for the commemoration of the Battle of Kosovo. Preparations began six months prior to Vidovdan, and the committees were composed of members of the wealthier classes, as well as respected and educated Serbs. These groups worked on developing a program aligned with the central celebration taking place in Serbia. Accordingly, they maintained contact with Serbian authorities but coordinated their activities primarily in cooperation with the parishes of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Austro-Hungarian authorities viewed the organization of the commemoration – both in Serbia and among the Serbs within their own borders – with suspicion and a lack of sympathy (*Zastava* 1889). Regarding the Serbs living in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the so-called Kalaj’s regime, the cultural and educational community in Mostar played a significant role in commemorating the 500th Anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo (Aleksić 2024, 37–54).¹ News circulated throughout Serbia and among Serbs in Srem, Bačka, and Banat that banning this event would constitute a violation of Serbian religious rights, as the commemoration was intrinsically linked to ecclesiastical rites. This connection was likely emphasized to discourage authorities from prohibiting the celebrations. Importantly, it was asserted that “such a ban would be an insult to civilization, for our ancestors perished at Kosovo for their homeland, their freedom, and emancipation, which simultaneously represented the freedom and advancement of all Europe” (*Zastava* 1889, 1).

Significantly, Vidovdan was established as a national holiday for the first time. King Aleksandar Obrenović laid the foundation stone for the Monument to the heroes of Kosovo in Kruševac, the city that served as the central seat of Prince Lazar’s rule, thereby linking historical tradition with modern statehood. Foreign agents were also

¹ Milan Petronijević – generalu Savi Grujiću, predsedniku Ministarskog saveta i ministru inostranih dela Kraljevine Srbije, Beč 5 juna 1889; *Istorija srpske diplomatiјe*, 5/II, Diplomatsko predstavništvo Srbije u Beču 1878–1891, 524–525; Milan Petronijević – generalu Savi Grujiću, predsedniku Ministarskog saveta i ministru inostranih dela Kraljevine Srbije, Beč 15 juna 1889; *Istorija srpske diplomatiјe*, 5/II, Diplomatsko predstavništvo Srbije u Beču 1878–1891, 529–531 (Perišić, Reljić, i Rajak 2019).

present during the Kosovo anniversary commemorations, notably those affiliated with the Austro-Hungarian Empire and others loyal to the Karađorđević dynasty, reflecting the geopolitical tensions surrounding Serbian national identity at the time. This commemoration was intended to demonstrate to Western countries that Serbia possessed statehood prior to Ottoman domination. The Battle of Kosovo commemoration thus served as a performative assertion that the modern Serbian state was a direct continuation of the medieval polity and that Serbia shared a historical legacy comparable to that of other major European states. Furthermore, it framed the Serbs as defenders of Christian civilization against Turkish incursions, emphasizing that not only had they reclaimed their independence after centuries of subjugation, but they were also prepared to reintegrate into the European community.

The agenda for marking the 500th Anniversary testifies to deep consideration of how to fit the history of one of the most significant events in Serbian history into the representation and presentation of the ruling house of Obrenović, the national building, and the empowerment of Serbia. It is important to highlight that among the Serbian organizers of the event there were differing opinions regarding the terminology: some preferred the phrase “commemoration of the Battle of Kosovo,” while others advocated for “celebration of the Battle of Kosovo.” Additionally, certain bishops opposed celebrating the event at all, arguing that there was nothing to celebrate given the tragic nature of the historical defeat. An examination of Serbia’s historical practices in the late 19th century reveals the early use of what can be described as *public history*. One of the most prominent examples is the commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo in 1889. This historical event, deeply embedded in the Serbian national consciousness, was mobilized by the state as a tool for national cohesion and as a means to bolster the diminishing legitimacy of the Obrenović dynasty, which was at the time facing a crisis of public confidence due to a series of personal scandals and its alignment with Austrophilic policies.

CONCLUSION

The Battle of Kosovo occupies a foundational place in the construction of Serbian national identity, serving as a symbol of historical continuity. Over the centuries – especially during the period of Ottoman rule – the Kosovo myth preserved national consciousness

through oral tradition, religious practice, and literary forms. The Serbian Orthodox Church played a pivotal role in transmitting Kosovo memory and maintaining its central position in both cultural and political life. Accordingly, the role of the Church and its high-ranking clergy was both present and significant during the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. The Obrenović dynasty made particular use of Kosovo symbolism to link its rule to the legacy of the medieval Serbian state. In parallel, within the broader project of rebuilding and constructing a modern Serbian state, commemorative practices, such as the 1889 marking of the 500th anniversary, served as instruments for shaping modern national identity. These commemorations linked collective memory with processes of state institutionalization, thereby lending legitimacy to historical narratives. They were also directed toward the Serbs living within the Habsburg Monarchy, who, despite official bans on attending the central event in Kruševac, managed to commemorate the occasion within ecclesiastical circles, fostering a sense of unity and a perceived need for the unification of all Serbs within a single state. The 500th Anniversary commemoration, including the erection of the Monument to the Kosovo Heroes in Kruševac, contributed to the beginnings of the institutionalization of memory regarding this historical event, shaping subsequent narratives and perceptions well into the 20th century – and, in part, even today. Public historical practices related to the Battle of Kosovo reveal a dynamic relationship between rulers, elites, and the Church, between political power and institutionalized memory, as well as between narratives constructed in earlier periods and transmitted orally among the populace.

The interpretation of history gradually shifted from the domain of political and ruling elites to broader segments of the population. During the commemoration of the Battle of Kosovo, King Aleksandar was only thirteen years old; he did not actively shape the event but instead served as a symbolic figure within public discourse. While his father, King Milan, exerted a degree of influence, primary authority rested with the regency, ecclesiastical circles, and the political elite. An examination of contemporary memoirs and published documents pertaining to the Obrenović dynasty reveals that the roles of participants in the commemorative ceremonies were fluid and multifaceted. Given that these events often extended beyond several hours, individuals frequently alternated between passive spectators and

active contributors – as speakers, organizers, or facilitators. Notably, women were largely excluded from the conceptual leadership of these commemorations, appearing predominantly in performative roles. Exceptions to this trend include Queen Natalija. Analysis of the 500th Anniversary commemoration of the Battle of Kosovo demonstrates that employing the methodological frameworks of public history and the politics of memory offers a critical foundation for developing new research trajectories. These approaches enable a deeper understanding of the political and cultural dynamics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as they relate to the enduring legacy of this foundational historical event.

These historical narratives have also been subject to instrumentalization throughout Serbian history, particularly since the marking of the 600th Anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. Slobodan Milošević’s 1989 speech at Gazimestan stands as a paradigmatic example of the instrumentalization of historical memory for the purposes of nationalist mobilization and political consolidation. Accordingly, further research into this topic, especially through comparison with the 500th Anniversary commemoration analyzed here, would not only contribute to the field of identity studies but also to two additional areas. First are memory politics, which are crucial for understanding national interests and identifying mechanisms through which the past is employed to shape the future. Second are the contemporary political uses and abuses of history and of Kosovo, both the battle and its associated legends, in parliamentary and non-parliamentary political life and public discourse. Kosovo remains deeply embedded in Serbia’s domestic and foreign policy. Serbia’s opposition to Kosovo*’s membership in UNESCO and other international institutions is rooted in the symbolic significance of Kosovo within Serbian historical consciousness. For this reason, understanding early commemorative practices, especially those of the 19th century, is essential for grasping today’s memory politics. By illuminating the commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, we open space for a more responsible and constructive engagement with memory politics in contemporary Serbia, as well as with the legacy of history in geopolitical and international contexts, particularly in relation to the ongoing Belgrade–Priština dialogue.

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ЈАВНА ИСТОРИЈА И ПОЛИТИКА СЕЋАЊА: ПЕТСТОТА ГОДИШЊИЦА КОСОВСКЕ БИТКЕ (1889) И ОБЛИКОВАЊЕ СРПСКЕ НАЦИОНАЛНОСТИ***

Резиме

Битка на Косову представља један од најмоћнијих националних симбола у оквиру српске историјске свести и често се помиње у различитим формама јавне историје. С обзиром на то каква је тренутна позиција Србије по питању Косова и смера у којем се одвијају преговори између Београда и Приштине, истраживање порекла институционализације комеморативних пракси у вези са Косовом и Косовском битком у оквиру модерне српске државности представља кључну компоненту за разумевање сложености ових питања. У том контексту, обележавање петстоте годишњице Косовске битке 1889. године има посебан историјски и симболички значај, јер пружа драгоцен увид у то како су се национални наративи конструисали, инструментализовали и уграђивали у политичку културу. У овом раду се истражује обележавање из 1889. године, са фокусом на облике јавног историјског ангажмана који су се појавили током завршне фазе владавине династије Обреновић. Циљ је идентификација образца у развоју националних историјских наратива и њихове улоге у процесима

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*** Рад је део истраживачких пројеката аутора на Институту за политичке студије (Београд) 2025. године, финансиран од стране Министарства науке, иновација и технолошког развоја Републике Србије, на основу Уговора о спровођењу и финансирању научноистраживачког рада научноистраживачке организације (НИО) у 2025. години, број у евиденцији: 451-03-136/2025-03/200044 и 1053/1.

изградње државе крајем XIX века. Анализира се како су кључни историјски наративи усмерени на Косово и српску средњовековну историју били конструисани и мобилисани у јавне и политичке сврхе. Рад се ослања на методологију студија сећања и политике сећања, са посебним нагласком на рани развој јавне историје у Србији. Кроз компаративни приступ, посебна пажња посвећена је улогама политичких и интелектуалних актера у обликовању српског националног идентитета – укључујући краљеве Милана и Александра Обреновића, намеснике, црквене кругове, историчаре и интелектуалце.

Кључне речи: јавна историја, политика сећања, петстота годишњица Косовске битке, историјски наративи, српска националност, идентитет, изградња нације, династија Обреновић, 1889

* This manuscript was submitted on August 1, 2025, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on August 20, 2025.

UDC 323.15(=163.41)
DOI: 10.5937/spm92-59186
Review article

Српска политичка мисао
(Serbian Political Thought)
No 4/2025.
Vol. 92
pp. 25-49

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STRATEGIC PRAGMATICITY AS A FACTOR IN ACHIEVING SERBIA’S NATIONAL INTERESTS

Abstract

This paper analyzes the concept of strategic pragmatism as a potential framework for achieving Serbia’s national interests. Through a geopolitical, historical, and institutional approach, it is shown that, although Serbia does not have a formally defined grand strategy in the form of a single document, it implements a functional and long-term sustainable strategy that satisfies all the key elements of that concept. Continuity in the formulation of national interests, as well as the application of strategies of containment and risk mitigation, delay, and realpolitik maneuvering, demonstrates a deeply rooted political culture of adaptation to circumstances. The paper particularly emphasizes the importance of a multi-vector foreign policy and the “four-pillar” strategy as instruments for preserving geopolitical neutrality and increasing international flexibility. Strategic pragmatism, viewed through the prism of the *hedging* concept, is a key mechanism by which Serbia seeks to avoid hard choices between opposing global centers of power, while protecting vital interests such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, and stability in the region. The paper shows that this approach is not only a product of historical consequences but also a rational

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response of a small state to contemporary challenges in international relations. The paper confirms the hypothesis that strategic pragmatism is not a temporary solution, but a long-term doctrine appropriate to the geopolitical reality of Serbia and a sustainable pattern of action in the global system of unequal power.

Keywords: strategic pragmatism, grand strategy, Serbia, national interests, geopolitics, realpolitik, hedging

INTRODUCTION

“Territory is the foundation of the life of the state, not only in a physical, but also in a political and economic sense.”

The State as a Lifeform, Rudolf Kjellén (Kjelen 1923)

Over more than eight centuries of existence, the Serbian people have developed a relationship towards statehood in which territory represents not only the spatial, but also the spiritual and political basis of existence, which is still present today in the 21st century. The idea of the state as a “form of life” (Kjelen 1923), formulated by Johan Rudolf Kjellén, is deeply rooted in the historical experience of the Serbian people, for whom the state was and remains the highest form of collective existence. Guided by this ideal, Serbs have fought for liberation for centuries, preserved their religious and cultural heritage as the foundation of their national identity, and sought to shape political decisions in accordance with real geopolitical challenges.

Serbia’s position at the crossroads of the Balkans, Europe, and global spheres of interest makes it particularly sensitive to geopolitical pressures. In such a context, the Serbian approach to decision-making has developed as pragmatic, flexible, and based on realpolitik. In international relations, Serbia has applied a strategy that has sought to balance the power of the great powers, in order to preserve sovereignty, sustain economic development, and ensure energy and security stability, i.e., national interests.

The central concept discussed in this paper is strategic pragmatism. Strategic pragmatism can be defined as a flexible, adaptable, and rational approach to long-term political and geopolitical decision-making that rejects ideological dogmatism and seeks to

maximize national interests in the face of limited resources and a changing strategic environment. In the literature on small-state international relations, strategic pragmatism often appears as a necessary response to limited resources, pressure from larger powers, and complex geopolitical conditions. Although the concept is not explicitly defined, its essence is close to concepts such as “realpolitik” (Kissinger 1994) and strategic culture (Snyder 1977; Gray 1999), which emphasize the importance of adaptability and rational decision-making in accordance with national interests. For small states, such as Serbia, pragmatism in strategic planning implies a balance between value orientation and geopolitical reality, as confirmed by analyses of foreign policy of countries in the post-Cold War period (Thorhallsson and Wivel 2006). Such an approach does not mean the absence of vision, but rather the flexible application of strategy in accordance with changing circumstances, which is increasingly recognized as a sustainable model for states in sensitive regions (Cooper and Shaw 2009).

The contemporary challenges facing Serbia, such as the unresolved status of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, migration flows and pressures from multilateral structures, require Serbia not only diplomatic skills, but also the renewal of institutional capacities and the strengthening of mechanisms for the protection of national interests. Pragmatism in this context is not treated as a temporary measure, but as an element of the state’s long-term strategy, while not neglecting the need for partnerships in regional and global frameworks.

The authors hypothesized that strategic pragmatism is a key element in the realization of Serbia’s national interests in the 21st century, in the face of numerous geopolitical challenges and changing international circumstances. Throughout the centuries, Serbia has had to direct its actions towards imposed conditions, while at the same time preserving its national interests, cultural heritage, and independence, a fact that has not changed to this day.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate with arguments that, since the emergence of statehood, the Serbs have had a certain type of strategy for achieving national interests. Although a strategy, grand strategy, or state strategy is not defined as a document, the Serbian people have known in every era, and even today, how to use the available resources, regardless of the various challenges they faced, to shape and achieve national interests. The methodological approach in this paper

is based on a geopolitical and historical approach in the application of the data analysis method. The geopolitical approach allows for an understanding of the strategic pragmatism of Serbia as an adaptive national strategy, conditioned by the state's position in space, historical experience, and the dynamics of global power relations. In contrast, the historical approach is based on the analysis of historical content from documents, where the sources that shaped Serbian statehood and national identity are listed within secondary interpretations. Through a hypothetical-deductive cycle, the most important conclusions related to national interests and strategic approaches were drawn.

The paper is divided into four chapters, in addition to the introduction and conclusion. The first chapter presents the framework for defining a grand strategy in relation to the most prominent theoretical positions that are acceptable today. The second chapter explains the possibilities of the Republic of Serbia in the context of the geopolitical pivot in the region. The third chapter provides an overview of what the Serbian ethnic community has gone through, observed through the stages of development during the consolidation of the people, nation, and state in the modern sense. The last chapter analyzes national interests and strategic approaches in the post-Yugoslav period and modern Serbia.

APPROACHES TO DEFINING GRAND STRATEGY

Although in international relations theory, grand strategies are most often associated with great powers with global ambitions, research shows that small states can also possess a grand strategy, if they have the capacity for long-term planning, maintaining a stable foreign policy, and directing resources towards defined national goals (Wivel 2021; Arad, Strum, and Tadmor 2017; Shamir 2023). Serbia, a state with limited material resources but with a pronounced strategic culture, historical experience of surviving under pressure from great powers, and clearly articulated national interests, is an example of a small state with elements of a grand strategy. Through a multi-vector foreign policy, military neutrality, institutional ties with the diaspora, and investments in critical infrastructure, it demonstrates the ability to formulate and implement a deeply thought-out strategy tailored to its position and capabilities. This strategy is not formalized in a single document, but is visible through consistency in behavior and

priorities of domestic and foreign policy, which is in line with the modern understanding of grand strategy (Brands 2014). The Serbian example shows that a small state, if it has a mature political culture and pragmatic decision-making, can have a grand strategy aimed not at domination, but at preserving, stabilizing, and achieving national interests.

Although there is no complete academic agreement on its foundation, this has not prevented a large number of strategists and other thinkers from defining grand strategy (Silove 2017). The concept of grand strategy has been defined mainly through theories of political science, strategic studies, and history. The most famous definitions of grand strategy emphasize different aspects of this concept. The theory of strategy, as well as grand strategy, has been mostly concerned with the nations that have embodied and applied this concept over the centuries. There are definitions that emphasize different elements in the creation of grand strategy, for example, in relation to circumstances, instruments of national power, international relations, resources, and historical approach.¹

The first approach is characteristic of the period after World War II and can be attributed to the tendency to maintain global peace and improve the general state of the nation. The first grand strategist who stands out from the others is Basil Henry Liddell Hart. This British military historian defines grand strategy as a concept that goes beyond military victory and focuses on achieving long-term peace (Hart 1952). He emphasizes that grand strategy should encompass “the economic, political, and psychological resources of a nation” in order to ensure lasting peace and avoid unnecessary losses. Hart, as a theorist of the indirect approach strategy, views grand strategy primarily through the realization of interests with minimal losses (Potter 2018).

The second approach is based on the use of instruments of national power. Edward Mead Earle is considered one of the pioneers of grand strategy studies in the United States of America (USA). Earle emphasizes that grand strategy is the synthesis of all national resources: political, economic, diplomatic, and military, in order to achieve national goals both in war and in peace. It directly implies the use of the instrument of national power in achieving goals. This approach is

¹ The analyzed approaches to defining a grand strategy were selected among others in terms of purposefulness, relevance and practical applicability within the framework of research for the purposes of this paper.

characteristic of the school of strategic thinking in the USA (Preston 2021). In relation to Hart, peace is not the ultimate goal but exclusively the realization of interests.

The third approach to defining grand strategy can be seen through the theory of Barry R. Posen. This American theorist of international relations defines grand strategy as a theory that governs relations between the state and the rest of the world. His focus is on how grand strategy manages and balances national security priorities (Posen and Ross 1996). Posen's focus is on international relations, that is, it is the place where vital state interests are protected.

John Lewis Gaddis points us to a fourth approach to defining grand strategy in relation to resources. Gaddis, a prominent American historian and Cold War expert, defines grand strategy as planning that links military, economic, and diplomatic resources with long-term political goals (Gaddis 2018). He emphasizes flexibility and the adaptation of strategy to changing circumstances. Richard K. Betts similarly emphasizes that grand strategy is the basis for comprehensive national policy and involves the combination of resources to achieve the most important interests of the state (Betts 2019). Colin S. Gray, a British expert on strategic studies, believes that grand strategy is the integration of all national resources in the service of achieving basic political goals, whether they are peacetime or wartime. This simple definition focuses on the relationship between resources and goals of strategy, which implies that, in addition to the means of achieving strategy, it is not possible if the goals are not aligned with the available resources (Milevski 2021).

The historical approach as a fifth way of defining grand strategy can be attributed to the historian Paul Kennedy, who studied the rise and fall of great powers, who defines grand strategy as an effort to align a nation's resources with its goals over the long term. Kennedy emphasizes the importance of a balance between national goals and available resources (Kennedy 1991). Similarly, Lawrence M. Friedman, an expert in the history of strategy, believes that grand strategy includes not only planning and resource allocation but also the ability to adapt strategy to new challenges (Freedman 2013).

The above definitions are only part of the thinking of the academic and professional community; however, it can be concluded that all approaches to definition contain several common elements. Grand strategy is related to long-term goals and requires the integration

of all available resources, flexibility, and adaptation to the various challenges, risks, and threats that will be faced during its existence. These definitions show that grand strategy is not just a military, economic, or political activity, but a comprehensive approach that states use to ensure their position and security in the world, while at the same time striving to achieve lasting stability and prosperity.

In accordance with the above approaches to defining grand strategy, as well as the large number of different definitions, the authors of this paper have defined the grand strategy of nations and states such as Serbia as follows: *A state's grand strategy represents a long-term, comprehensive plan aimed at achieving its national interests, such as: preserving sovereignty and territorial integrity, internal political and institutional stability, economic development, regional security, cultural and identity stability, and international influence.* This definition promotes longevity, national interests, and, above all, an international position that must be recognized and acknowledged, both at the regional and global levels.

The previously mentioned definition in the context of Serbia implies that grand strategy also includes active neutrality in international relations, protection of the rights of the Serbian people wherever they live, integration into the economic and political trends of Europe and the world, while preserving strategic independence and a value system based on statehood, freedom, and historical continuity.

SERBIA: A GEOPOLITICAL PIVOT IN THE BALKANS

Certain opinions in the literature point to the importance of perceptions and the role of decision-makers in the process of shaping a grand strategy, especially given the limited information and its subjective interpretation. This paper starts from the point of view that material factors, such as instruments of national power and the geopolitical position of the state, play a key role in creating a grand strategy. The international position of a small or medium-sized state, which is not based on territorial power, economic capacities or strong alliances, but is based on value identity, internal cohesion and the pursuit of international legitimacy, is exposed to numerous challenges due to its limited ability to influence international trends and protect its own interests in a dynamic foreign policy environment. However, the size of the state does not have to be decisive in the context of its

strategic position and geopolitical potential. Trygve Mathisen said that the strategic functions of small states arise from various factors: political, geographical, economic, and military, which are not always easy to identify or separate. However, a change in the constellation of power can fundamentally change the position of a small state (Mathisen 1971). On the other hand, we have large states that have significant prerogatives of power, which manifest themselves through global and regional political influence, the possibility of intervention beyond their borders, and instances of hard, soft, and smart power. In the context of international relations, Zbigniew Brzezinski distinguishes two significant categories of states, namely geopolitical players and geopolitical pivots. He states that geostrategic players are those states that have the ability and strength to actively act beyond their borders and thus expand their political influence in order to achieve their own interests. Geopolitical pivots are states that have a “sensitive position,” through which it is possible to access important areas or to preserve the position of the power under whose control the pivot state is. However, pivots can also be used in the context of generating instability and conflict in areas close to other great powers designated as enemies (Bżežinski 2001, 42–43).

Various factors, as well as circumstances, significantly influence the international position of a nation, but Serbia's position can be analyzed through two factors. The first factor is that the geopolitical position of the state influences regional developments, that is, it allows for superiority in certain vital areas in the region, but also that it is a factor of interest for great powers (Mearsheimer 2001; Evera 1984). The second significant factor is that the state has specific vital resources that surpass the environment (Koch and Perreault 2019). This may imply that through the position and instruments of national power, it can be a bearer of regional influence. The fact is that most states cannot be bearers of regional or strategic importance, but some states, in relation to their environment and geographical position, can be an important strategic pivot. The Republic of Serbia can be just such a state, which will be explained in more detail below.

Serbia plays an important role in the geopolitical structure of the Balkans and Southeast Europe, as can be seen from the statements of a large number of geopoliticians. Geopolitical theorists in their works have always perceived the Balkan Peninsula as an important geopolitical hub. Halford John Mackinder called the Balkans one of the

“bridges” connecting the Heartland with the peripheral parts of Europe (Mackinder 1904). Nicholas John Spykman identified the Balkans as a critical region of the Rimland, where Serbia plays a role in controlling traffic flows between the East and the West (Spykman 1944, 55–57). Among others, Zbigniew Brzezinski emphasizes the importance of the Balkans as a geopolitical turning point in Eurasia, especially mentioning Serbia as the center of conflicts and stability in the region (Brzezinski 2001, 124–125). Its geographical position, historical influences, and economic and political ties with the East and the West make it a key player in this region. Its geographical position positions Serbia at the crossroads of the main transport corridors between Europe and Asia. The Pan-European Corridor “X,” the Danube River, a major air hub, passes through Serbia, making it a strategic point for transport and communication in the region. The unique geography of the Balkan Peninsula positions Serbia as a point at the center of communications in this region. On the other hand, its historical connection with great powers is something that gives it a special feature in international relations. Throughout history, Serbia has been under the influence of great powers, including the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Monarchy, and Russia. Today, this connection is reflected in close relations with Russia and China, as well as in its aspirations for integration into the European Union. This connection with great powers makes it a specific bridge between East and West.

Political stability as a basic condition for the overall progress of the region is one of the most important features. Given that Serbia borders eight sovereign states, this significantly complicates but also inherently increases its influence in the region. The soft power with which it can influence less developed neighbors, as well as neighbors with a large Serbian minority, significantly contributes to its importance (Pavić, Beriša, i Mihajlović 2024). The policy of stability and cooperation it pursues is of central importance, because possible instability in Serbia also affects other countries in the region. Serbia has a relatively stable political position compared to some other Balkan countries, which makes it an important factor in regional politics. As the most influential country of the former Yugoslavia, especially in terms of population and economy, Serbia has a significant role in relations with its neighbors and issues such as migration, regional security, and trade.

The relationships with the European Union (EU), the People’s Republic of China, the USA, and the Russian Federation are central

to Serbia's international position. From a strategic perspective, Serbia applies the concept of *hedging* strategy (Kuik 2008, 159). This concept can be presented as a strategy of hedging and mitigating risks in international relations. In security studies, it refers to the approach used by states to reduce risks and increase flexibility in an uncertain foreign policy environment, especially when they have to balance between major powers (Goh 2008, 10). Serbia is a candidate for membership in the European Union, but at the same time maintains close relations with the Russian Federation, especially in the energy sector. Russia, for example, supplies Serbia with natural gas and uses its veto power in the UN Security Council to support Serbia's positions regarding the status of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija. This approach allows Serbia to maintain a certain flexibility and independence in decision-making, while geopolitical maneuvers between major powers can increase its strategic value in the regional and broader context.

On the other hand, economic cooperation and investments from the PRC position Serbia as a key partner of the PRC within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative and in the 17+1 regional platform for cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Energy issues, including gas and electricity supply, also make Serbia a key point in regional strategies. Serbia is a country through which a very important branch of the South Stream gas pipeline passes, connecting Hungary, i.e., Central Europe, with gas from Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation, as well as other energy corridors, which gives it a certain strength in negotiations with the EU and Russia, especially in the context of the energy crisis in Europe.

Serbia, as a geopolitical pivot in the Balkans, is also characterized by its geopolitical identity. Professor Stepić states that an important starting point for understanding geopolitical identity is the "identification of geopolitical self-awareness and continuity in time and space" (Stepić 2019, 8). Similarly, Professor Despotović states that geopolitical identity represents an objective identity-geographical property of a national or religious group, and is related to its specific spatial, cultural-civilizational, religious-confessional, and political-state form of existence (Despotović 2019, 301).

A major challenge for Serbia is the fact that it has no access to the sea, which it lost in 2006, with the collapse of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. After that, Serbia became a territorially locked country,

or “landlocked country”. In this context, Professor Stepić concluded that the Serbian people and countries have access to the sea in their historical and geographical spread, but due to territorial contraction and de-Serbization, they are being pushed towards the central part of the Balkan Peninsula (Stepić 2019, 10–11). The aforementioned resulted in Serbia becoming part of a tellurocratic geopolitical identity. Despotović and Glišin further emphasized Serbia’s island position by the fact that it is almost completely surrounded by NATO members, which can contribute to isolation and make it difficult to realize its interests (Despotović and Glišin 2023, 139). It is known that other states, such as Austria and Switzerland, have a similar position to island states surrounded by NATO in Europe. However, it is certain that they do not have even a close number of challenges that Serbia faces in its long struggle for existence and statehood.

Serbia, with its *hedging* strategy in international relations, skillfully uses its role as a geopolitical pivot through a multi-vector policy that allows it to cooperate with various actors, while at the same time maintaining its independence. With the pragmatic use of the resources it possesses in geography, a long history of successful international relations, a recognizable geopolitical identity, and military superiority compared to most of its neighbors, Serbia could become an even more significant factor of stability in the region.

SERBIA – SERBS: SURVIVAL OF THE STATE AND NATION THROUGH THE CENTURIES

The almost millennial history of a nation, its existence and preservation to this day has undoubtedly been exposed to various challenges over the centuries that have shaped the state that we today call the Republic of Serbia. The Serbian nation, through its existence, has in some way become a hallmark of the central, tellurocratic part of the Balkan Peninsula and Southeast Europe. The dominant nation of the continental Balkans, with its culture, religion, language, history, and geography, has marked the space in which it is positioned and today, perhaps more than ever, testifies to the fact that nations that are not large can survive; that is, it has declared its geopolitical identity. The fact is that this space has always been geopolitically sensitive, which requires active monitoring and analysis of international trends, in order to act on the spot in a timely and systematic manner. According to

Despotović and Glišin, the geopolitical position of Serbia should be viewed in the broader Balkan environment, especially considering the position of the Serbian people throughout the Serbian lands (Despotović and Glišin 2023, 143). What is it that allows the Serbs to survive in a space where different civilizations, religions, and interests meet? What kind of strategy is used by a nation that does not officially recognize a grand strategy in documents, but manages to preserve its vital national interests?

Serbia, according to its quantitative indicators, belongs to the medium-sized states, which have managed to maintain their existence on the same territory for more than 800 years. Despotović and Glišin stated in their work that the main geopolitical features of the position of Serbia and the Serbian people are: contact, border, node, and fragmentation (Despotović and Glišin 2023, 140). In addition to the above, its longevity, which can be compared to the largest European nations, gives it the right to be an important regional factor and a recognized element of statehood and positive European traditions. However, despite this, the specific environment and foreign policy with which we secure our international position pose great challenges to the state administration. How and in what way to achieve vital national interests and balance the influence of great powers is one of the issues that is directly related to the survival of the Serbian people, but also to the strategy that they will resort to on that path. Examples of strategic pragmatism and delay in negotiations as a factor in achieving national interests that the Serbs have applied can be observed in almost every era of the existence of statehood. During negotiations with the Austrian monarchy in 1810, Prince Metternich (*Klemens von Metternich*) advised the Serbs to delay negotiations with the Turks as much as possible (Jakšić 1937, 99). Also, in the same period, in order to achieve their interests, the Serbs simultaneously sought help from Austria, France, and Russia. They conducted negotiations in principle by sending deputies secretly and did not inform the other parties in the negotiations, all with the aim of securing support in the fight for liberation from Turkey (Jakšić 1937, 99–100). The same principles were used during the Cold War, when Yugoslavia skillfully balanced between East and West, i.e., the USA and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and was the main initiator of the idea of the “Non-Aligned Movement” (Jakovina 2021). Serbia still bases its foreign policy on four pillars today. This concept was first applied in August 2009 when Serbian President Boris Tadić,

after a visit to Beijing, stated that Serbia had “four pillars” of foreign policy, namely the People’s Republic of China, the EU, Russia and the USA, and that this would be its basic foreign policy doctrine in the long term (Gajić i Janković 2012, 176–177).

The Serbian ethnic community has gone through a series of stages of development in the course of consolidating the people, nation, and state in the modern sense. In this process of development, a territory, a common life, a historical past, an anthropological appearance, a language, a script, literature in the vernacular, religion, a specific lifestyle, an awareness of belonging to the Serbian people, and, on the basis of all this, a national state were created. This entire complex process gave birth to a people and a nation, as well as a modern state with all the features of the modern era (Mitrović *et al.* 1979, 111). The previous analysis of historical facts in the context of searching for sources that define a long-term strategy can also be viewed through the terms of grand and state strategy (Hoffman 2014, 472). Both terms, grand strategy and state strategy, can be useful, but their application depends on the context and the emphasis you want to place on different aspects of state planning and action. Grand strategy emphasizes the integration of all national efforts to act on a global or regional level, while state strategy has a more internally oriented approach. The previously analyzed contexts and interests imply that Serbia, as a medium-sized state, has more arguments to have a state strategy.

The survival of the Serbian nation is not only a national story but a universal message about the strength of identity, spirit, and unity in facing challenges. Serbia has proven throughout history that even small nations can leave a big mark, provided that they preserve their roots while looking to the future.

DEFINING SERBIA’S NATIONAL INTEREST IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The analysis of the national interests of a nation is possible through several factors; however, what is most important and what should be at the core of a grand strategy is their constancy. The fact is that every nation has its own national interests that are specific and, as a rule, adapted to its capabilities. Every state has general and special national interests. General or universal goals are the same for every

state in the international system; however, the means to achieve them are different.

The Serbian national interest, as defined by Prvulović, represents, by consensus or majority acceptance, a set of views on the goals of the development of Serbia and the Serbian people in the near and distant future, on the means by which these goals would be achieved and on the benefits that each individual and Serbian society as a whole would have (Prvulović 2020, 349). The topic of defining Serbian national interests is very sensitive, firstly because Serbia has always been a multinational country, and secondly because a large number of Serbs live outside Serbia. The national interests of Serbia, viewed in the context of contemporary politics, are a complex and sensitive issue that requires a high degree of consensus among key political actors. Although the will of the people is often invoked, in practice, national interests are most often formulated by holders of political office and the institutions that represent them.

Considering the national interests of the Serbian people, including those living outside the territory of the home state is not illegitimate, but rather a common practice in international relations. In this context, national interests are often formulated by political and institutional actors in the home state, and are then reflected in communities in the diaspora. Such a practice is also noticeable in the case of the Serbian people. In accordance with the above, we could define Serbian national interests in the 21st century according to the following: *Serbian national interests in the broadest context include physical security, territorial integrity, and political sovereignty. Economic interests include stable development, energy security, and access to markets. Identity interests relate to the preservation of cultural and spiritual identity, as well as the protection of the rights of members of the Serbian people outside the borders of the Republic of Serbia.* Interests categorized in this way represent the foundation on which a specific state policy and strategy can be articulated.

National interests in the context of this research can be divided into two categories, namely general and special national interests that occasionally appear on the strategic agenda. General national interests are usually linked to the most important national goals and are of crucial importance for the survival of the nation; that is, they should be the subject of consideration in a grand strategy. On the other hand, special national interests arise as a need and response of the state to

monitor global and regional trends. For the purposes of this research, the analysis of national interests was carried out according to the eras that had a decisive influence on the formation of statehood, as well as on different approaches to strategic thinking.

The historical consequences of the transition of Serbian statehood to the modern state in the 21st century shaped Serbian national interests in different ways. However, these events in the creation of national interests in the 21st century have only symbolic power. The definition of Serbian national interests in this paper is based on realist theory, which places more emphasis on the material factors of strategy creation. The strategic pragmatism discussed in this paper is also adapted to the interests defined in this way.

SERBIA'S STRATEGIC PRAGMATICITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Serbia's strategic thinking in the 21st century has been shaped equally by the influences of the international community, but also by the internal intertwining of a multinational state and pluralistic political thinking. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dačić stated in 2023 that "There are two strategic goals: one is vital national state interests, in terms of territorial integrity, and the second issue is the future of Serbia, i.e. avoiding harmful consequences for the economic development of Serbia in the event of restrictive measures" (Đorđević 2023). This statement clearly declares the strategic foundation in the realization of national interests and strategic pragmatism as a principle that is realized through the concept of *hedging*. This is precisely the basis of the hypothesis and goals that need to be proven in this paper.

During the post-Yugoslav period, Serbia went through profound political, economic, and social transformations, which shaped its strategic thinking and approach to formulating national interests. This period is marked by conflicts, the transition from socialism to a market economy, separatist ambitions in the AP of Kosovo and Metohija, European integration, and geopolitical challenges. Territories inhabited by ethnic Serbs, especially in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, became the scene of civil wars. The wars of the 1990s were directly related to the desire to preserve the Serbian people in the newly formed states of the former Yugoslavia. Serbia tried to protect Serbs in the

Republic of Srpska and the Republic of Serbian Krajina, which is often interpreted as an attempt to create a “Greater Serbia.” In this way, it also tried to protect its national interests. Due to the inability to defend Serbian national uprisings in Croatia, a large part of the Serbs were forced to leave the area.

On the other hand, Serbia managed to achieve some of its interests through the creation of the Republic of Srpska by signing the Dayton Agreement in 1995, which became a strategically important factor for Serbia in preserving Serbian identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Not long after the end of the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, separatist aspirations opened a new focus. The decision to self-declare independence of the so-called Kosovo in 2008 forced Serbia to define a new approach. The policy of a “frozen conflict” and the continuous diplomatic struggle to withdraw recognition of “Kosovo” dominate Serbian foreign policy to this day (Stošić and Živojinović 2022, 42).

The above-mentioned examples of the complex political legacy of the post-Yugoslav period until the beginning of the 21st century also reflect the complexity of achieving national interests today. In this period, two documents are of particular importance for the national interests of Serbia, namely United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 from 1999 (UNSC, S/RES/1244) and the aforementioned Dayton Agreement from 1995 (UNSC, S/1995/999). Both of these documents are the international basis for the territorial integrity of Serbia, as well as the legal foundation of the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e., the Republic of Srpska. These documents also provide a legal basis and legality for the national interests of the Serbian people. They are a striking example of a clear perception of national interests, but also of strategic pragmatism. Strategic thinking in that period recognized the great pressure of the international community and the potential loss of territory and displacement of Serbs from the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as was the case in the Republic of Croatia. This led to the initiation of negotiations with the international community and the achievement of the aforementioned agreement.

Modern Serbia, as an independent state, was established in 2006 after the independence of Montenegro. After centuries of different state systems, the Serbian people gained an independent state. However, a large number of Serbs still remained in other countries. The modern national interests listed in the current National Security Strategy are defined as follows: preserving sovereignty, independence

and territorial integrity; preserving internal stability and security; preserving the existence and protection of the Serbian people wherever they live, as well as national minorities and their cultural, religious and historical identity; preserving peace and stability in the region and the world; European integration and membership in the European Union; economic development and overall prosperity and preservation of the environment and resources of the Republic of Serbia (National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, Art. 3). The previously defined national interests comprehensively formulate a broad agenda; perceive the permanence, continuity and foundation of Serbian strategic thought.

A special contribution to strategic pragmatism and a clear definition of the international position is made by the Resolution on the Protection of the Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity and Constitutional Order of the Republic of Serbia, which proclaimed military neutrality in 2007. With this Resolution, Serbia legalizes its neutral position in relation to military alliances (Resolution of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia on the Protection of Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity and Constitutional Order of the Republic of Serbia, Art. 6). However, this approach is also an example of the application of the *hedging* concept within the framework of strategic pragmatism, as it leaves the possibility of cooperation with all international actors, and provides sufficient space for the realization of national interests.

In order to realize its national interests, Serbia has continued the aforementioned “four pillars” policy. A multi-vector foreign policy course would, in principle, produce positive effects on Serbia’s geopolitical position if consistently implemented. This approach is also an example of the application of the *hedging* concept within the framework of strategic pragmatism. However, due to the deeply opposing positions of Euro-Atlanticism and Neo-Eurasianism, such an approach is becoming increasingly complex and ultimately does not produce desired results. This, in some way, confirms the character of geopolitical hubris and the current features of Serbia in the international context. Geopolitical hubris is particularly manifested in periods when Serbia makes a greater deviation towards one of the pillars of foreign policy. This has been particularly pronounced in the last decade. Although one of the four pillars, the European Union is declaratively stated within the framework of Serbia’s national interests, and every act of rapprochement with the East, i.e., the Russian Federation, is

viewed with disapproval by the West. The West also exerts intense pressure on Serbia to make a decision and deviate from Russia, through harmonization with the foreign policy of the European Union (Glišin 2024, 295–299). On the other hand, such a move would directly prevent the realization of the national interest in preserving Kosovo and Metohija as part of Serbia.

A review of the formulation and possibility of realizing the national interests of small states such as Serbia is also given by the academician of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Časlav Ocić. In his text *Global context and geo-economic foundations of national integration – The Serbian question at the “end of history”*, he warns of serious manipulations by world power centers in relation to the interests of small states (Ocić 2020). It implies that the world's power centers ignore everything related to the nation and instead state that the time of universalization, or the more widely accepted term of globalization, is coming, and Huntington's clash of civilizations is denied. Prvulović emphasizes that the international community opposes putting the topic of resolving the Serbian issue on the agenda, which is finding a solution that would finally resolve this issue (Prvulović 2020, 110–111).

The previously mentioned examples of foreign policy engagement of the state administration, as well as the agreements reached and resolutions adopted, represent the fact that the Serbian people have a grand strategy that is not defined in documents, but is implemented in accordance with the circumstances and opportunities in the international environment. Serbia's contemporary strategy is hybrid, combining national interests such as preserving sovereignty and territorial integrity with the need for integration into global trends. The focus is on geopolitical neutrality and the promotion of national interests through pragmatic policies. Strategic documents and policies of recent decades indicate that Serbia is aware of its historical and geographical position, but also of global challenges that are increasingly reflected in the Balkans. The factor of contradiction in foreign policy based on a neutral position in relation to directly opposing geopolitical positions, primarily of the USA, the European Union, and, on the other hand, the Russian Federation, is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain every day. The assumption is that this will directly affect the redefinition of national interests and the need for global positioning on one of the two opposing sides.

CONCLUSION

The research conducted in this paper confirms the initial hypothesis that strategic pragmatism is a significant factor in the articulation and realization of Serbia's national interests in the 21st century. Instead of a firm ideological orientation or fixed geopolitical alliances, Serbia has adopted a flexible and adaptive approach to international relations in the post-Yugoslav period, which is in the 21st century, guided by the priority of preserving state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national identity.

The historical perspective shows that Serbian statehood, despite numerous geopolitical challenges, has deep roots in political culture, decision-making based on realpolitik and the skill of hedging and mitigating risks in international relations in relation to great powers. The modern foreign policy doctrine of multi-vector action and the "four-pillar" strategy, with which Serbia demonstrates continuity in its efforts to formulate a strategy in accordance with real capacities and international circumstances. Although there is no formally articulated grand strategy in the institutional sense, what this paper shows is that the elements of the grand strategy are recognizable in foreign policy practice, institutional priorities, and historical experience.

The geopolitical position of Serbia as a nodal point in the Balkans, landlocked, surrounded by NATO members, and exposed to pressure from many sides, has conditioned a specific security and foreign policy approach. Strategic pragmatism, in this sense, is shown as an instrument of survival, and a rational method of improving Serbia's position on the regional and global stage. By combining the principles of *hedging* in international relations and relying on historically established ties, Serbia seeks to avoid sharp confrontation and preserve maximum room for maneuver in situations of deep divisions among the great powers.

The research also showed that Serbia's national interests, despite partial political fragmentation within the state and a complex ethnic and regional context, remain relatively stable and consistent over time. There is a broad degree of institutional and social consensus around the preservation of territorial integrity, the protection of the Serbian people abroad, stability in the region, and economic development. In this context, strategic pragmatism is not a short-term policy, but the basis of a long-term state approach, based on respect for internal capacities and external constraints. Although Serbia is subject to increasing pressure to define

itself more clearly geopolitically, especially in the context of relations with the EU and Russia, this paper points to the importance of preserving strategic independence. Despite the pressures, Serbia manages to use its specific position as a potential factor of stability in the region and as a bridge between East and West. In this sense, the current foreign policy and national strategy reflect a mature awareness of the geopolitical reality and historical constants that have shaped Serbian statehood.

Perhaps Sir James Beethom Whitehead, who was the British ambassador to Serbia, gave the best advice for the realization of the national interests and state strategy of the Serbs back in 1910. He always advised that the key to Serbia's security was its self-restraint in the future. While Dr. Živojin Perić, building on Whitehead, advised us to follow England's example and stop pursuing sentimental politics and start pursuing realpolitik, that is, the politics of interests (Đorgović 2022, 370).

Finally, Serbia, as a small state, shows that it is possible to have a grand strategy, not in terms of dominance or expansion, but in terms of sustainability, adaptability, and consistent preservation of vital national interests. Serbia's grand strategy, although informal, exists in practice; it is deeply rooted in collective historical experience, in institutional efforts, and in pragmatic, but value-based politics. The confirmed hypothesis of the work indicates that this model, although specific, can serve as an example for other small states that strive to preserve their sovereignty in a global system of unequal power.

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СТРАТЕГИЈСКА ПРАГМАТИЧНОСТ КАО ФАКТОР ОСТВАРЕЊА НАЦИОНАЛНИХ ИНТЕРЕСА СРБИЈЕ

Резиме

Овај рад се бави анализом концепта стратеџиске прагматичности као кључног елемента у остваривању националних интереса Србије. Аутори полазе од претпоставке да Србија, иако не поседује формално дефинисану велику стратегију, у пракси спроводи свеобухватан, адаптиван и дугорочан приступ који је у складу са основним постулатима савремене велике стратегије. Централна теза рада је да стратеџиска прагматичност није привремено решење, већ одустојан, рационалан и дугорочно одржив приступ који је у складу са геополитичком реалношћу Србије као мале државе на раскршћу глобалних интереса. Методолошки, рад комбинује геополитички и историјски приступ, ослањајући се на анализу кључних теоријских извора и примере из историје српске државности. Кроз анализу дефиниција велике стратегије различитих аутора (Лидел Харт, Едвард Ерл, Бери Посен, Џон Гадис и др.), аутори показују да и мала држава, попут Србије, може имати сопствени стратешки концепт, уколико тај концепт омогућава очување суверенитета, стабилности и развоја. Србија се приказује као геополитички пивот Балкана, који користи свој положај, историјско искуство и стратешку културу у функцији избегавања неповољних дилема и маневрисања између супротстављених глобалних центара

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моћи. Кроз стратегију „четири стуба” (ЕУ, САД, Русија, Кина) и примену концепта *hedging*, Србија настоји да сачува геополитичку неутралност, задржи простор за дипломатско деловање и очува виталне интересе као што су статус Косова и Метохије, однос према Србима ван матице, регионална стабилност и економски развој. Историјска перспектива анализира српску државност као континуитет стратегијске културе, у којој су и у прошлости примењиване технике одувлачења, вишеструке дипломатије и реалполитике, од Првог српског устанка, преко несврстане политике Југославије, до савремене мултивекторске оријентације. У раду се такође указује на значај српске политичке стабилности, геополитичке „чворности”, улоге дијаспоре и историјске свести о територији као идентитетском елементу. У посебном делу анализирани су савремени национални интереси Србије, како у формално-правним документима (нпр. Стратегија националне безбедности, Резолуција о војној неутралности), тако и у реалној политици. Иако постоји висок степен консензуса око неких питања (суверенитет, интегритет, економски развој), Србија је изложена све већим притисцима да се геополитички определи, што доводи у питање одрживост тренутне стратегијске позиције. Рад закључује да Србија има „велику стратегију без документа”, дубоко укорењену у политичкој култури и институционалном деловању. Та стратегија је дефинисана прагматизмом, флексибилношћу и оријентацијом ка интересима, што је чини примером мале државе која успешно балансира у свету неједнаке моћи.

Кључне речи: стратегијска прагматичност, велика стратегија, Србија, национални интереси, геополитика, реалполитика, *hedging*

* This manuscript was submitted on May 30, 2025, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on August 20, 2025.

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ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA**

Abstract

This paper is dedicated to determining which components make up the constitutional identity of the Republika Srpska (hereinafter: the RS). The basic theoretical and methodological approach is based on the study of the text of the 1992 Constitution of the RS (hereinafter: the CRS), which has had an unusually long life, but whose total revision has recently been officially announced. The draft Constitution was published on May 25, 2025, on the website of the National Assembly of the RS (hereinafter: NARS). The aim of the research is to attempt to identify the elements of the constitutional identity of the Republic of Srpska, in accordance with the instructions of scholars regarding what the notion of constitutional identity represents. The paper identifies certain comparative deficiencies in the authenticity of structure and content from which the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: the Dayton Constitution) and the Constitution of the RS suffer. Based on the analysis of the CRS, the texts of relevant constitutional documents of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: BH) and its formal and informal quasi-state predecessors, and the 1990 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (the 1990 Constitution of Serbia), it is concluded that there are two key elements of the constitutional

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** This paper is a result of research within the project "Adapting the Legal Framework to Social and Technological Changes with a Special Focus on Artificial Intelligence," carried out in 2025 by the Institute of Comparative Law with financial support from the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation (contract number 451-03-136/2025-03/200049).

identity of the RS. These are the Serb national foundation of the RS and of its constitutional order, as well as the highly positioned autonomous status of the RS as one of the two constitutional entities of BH. The paper establishes that less important, but obviously present, additional components of the constitutional identity of RS are its unitary order and the extinguished institutional role of its President of the Republic within the constitutional framework of the RS.

Keywords: Republic of Srpska, Constitutional Identity, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Constitution of the Republic of Srpska, the Dayton Constitution

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The year 2025 marks the “round” 30th anniversary of the conclusion of the peace, which ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Annex IV of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, concluded on November 21, 1995, at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, in the United States of America (hereinafter: the US), is actually the Constitution of BH. At the time of the conclusion of this Agreement, the constitutional act of RS, an internationally unrecognized state, chronologically “elder” than the war conflicts in BH, had already been in force for almost four years and, later, according to the newly created BH constitutional arrangement, became one of the two entities within BH.

The CRS was adopted on February 28, 1992, originally as the “Constitution of the Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina” and was amended “continuously and drastically” (Savanović 2021, 64), as many as 15 times. These amendments most often reflected the need to adapt the content of the CRS to the Dayton Constitution, but also due to various pressures resulting from (political) interventions of the High Representative for BH (hereinafter: the High Representative), the country’s Constitutional court (Išerić 2020, 64–66; Kuzmanović 2012, 32–33; Marković 2011, 339; Nikolić 2025) and legislative practice at the level of BH (Marković 2011, 339). As early as 1995, the CRS was modified by as many as 65 amendments. In relation to the fact that the original text of the CRS had 145 articles, this meant that the number of amendments was “almost equal to half of the original number of

its articles" (Lukić 1997, 20). As it is known, in accordance with the principles of constitutional theory, amendments should not change the basic constitutional text, but only supplement it (which was not the case here). The Dayton Constitution itself has, over the years, undergone numerous changes *via facti* (Simović 2020, 203), probably because it "proved to be unchangeable in practice" (Stanković 2020, 41) and because it created "an inefficient system that is easily and quickly blocked" (Simović 2020, 201).

Despite the numerous amendments it has undergone, the CRS has remained in force for more than three decades. The same is true of the Dayton Constitution, which "owes" its longevity to the original text and the unsuccessful implementation of the "April Project," its extensive revision (from 2006), which aimed at the partial centralization of a unitary state. The revision project "failed" in the bicameral Parliamentary Assembly of BH (hereinafter: PABH) because it lacked only two votes for its adoption (Aljević 2011, 434; Bonifati 2023, 239), thus not fulfilling the procedural threshold of Article X, Paragraph 1 of the Dayton Constitution, which requires the consent of at least a two-thirds majority in this body for its amendments.

It is time to end the multiple (and most often forced) partial revisions of the CRS. Namely, in early 2025, the NARS, at a session held on March 12, determined that there was a need to proceed with the adoption of a new constitution (*Politika* 2025). This would open up space for the realization of the "idea of a 'second republic'" (Savanović 2021, 54), promoted nearly three decades ago, with the author's commentary conveying the "voices that it is necessary to adopt a new constitution [...], in order to remove any doubt about the content of the current constitutional norms" (Lukić 1997, 20). It seems that the CRS is indeed "overwhelmed by time and space, and incompatible with the requirements of the current RS" (Savanović 2021, 62). In this sense, it appears that the adoption of a draft of the new Constitution in 2025 is an expected move.

The intention to move towards the adoption of a new constitution of the RS was also expressed in the form of the adoption of a special act (Zakon o neprimjenjivanju zakona i zabrani djelovanja vanustavnih institucija BiH [ZNZ]), adopted on February 27, 2025. It expressly prohibits the application of the legal framework on the work of the Constitutional Court, the Public Procurator, of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of BH on the territory of the RS (ZNZ, Art. 2–5), with, it should be added, a somewhat "legally pleonastic"

provision according to which the “competent institutions and bodies of the [RS]” are obliged to take “measures and actions within their jurisdiction to ensure the implementation of this law” (ZNZ, Art. 6). The act also stipulated that the exemption from criminal liability of persons who implement this law, as well as the obligation of the institutions and bodies of the RS to ensure and provide these persons with “all necessary protection” during its implementation (ZNZ, Art. 7). It is worth recalling that the LNA, adopted for the purpose of strengthening the independence of the institutions of the RS, was repealed by the Decision of the Constitutional Court of BH adopted on May 29, 2025.

In order to methodologically correctly determine what constitutes the constitutional identity of the RS, it is necessary to present a brief overview of the definition of the *concept* of constitutional identity, as a category that has increasingly, albeit recently, under that name, been researched in legal science. There are different, sometimes completely contradictory, interpretations of the concept of constitutional identity, from the view that it represents the core of the Constitution to the view that its content reflects the constitutional past of a state. It is “an expression of the democratic legitimacy and sovereignty of a nation,” for it “encompasses the key values, principles and norms that determine the constitutional order,” reflecting “the unique historical, cultural and social context of the nation,” as well as its “self-determination” (Muharemović i Nurkić 2024, 133). Constitutional identity is the product of “the process of establishing the collective constitutional Self” (Belov 2023, 92). Although constitutional identity is “a relatively mysterious concept” (Dubout 2010, 453), it helps constitution-makers in their effort “to search for elements that serve to establish their common identity” (Van den Berg 2023, 36). Given that its function is to determine the “self-determination” of a political community (Belov 2023, 83), in addition to more former legal aspects, constitutional identity also encompasses philosophical, sociological, and psychological aspects (Allezard 2022, 59), as well as elements of constitutional history (Kruzslicz 2018, 119). *The text of a constitution* necessarily appears as the “most authentic source” of constitutional identity (Szente 2022, 7). Therefore, the author of this paper based his conclusions primarily on research into the text of the CRS, especially in its original form (before numerous revisions changed its content).

The introductory part of the paper explores the validity of the thesis in accordance with which the Dayton Constitution was completely imposed “from the outside,” without connection with any legitimate, authentic need for establishing a constitutional framework for post-war life in BH. Since the aforementioned circumstance significantly complicates the possibility of determining the elements of the constitutional identity of BH, the paper examines in what way a similar problem, in terms of the constitutional identity of the RS, brings a very low level of originality to the solutions contained in the CRS, based on a comparison of its structure and provisions with the text of the 1990 Constitution of Serbia. The topic to which the second part of the paper is dedicated, and to which the reader is introduced by briefly being acquainted with the chronological basis for the construction of an independent constitutional framework for the RS, consists of establishing that the central constitutional-identity component of the establishment and existence of the RS is contained in the need to achieve a national state of the Serb people in BH. The concluding considerations of the paper are preceded by a part which presents the second element of the constitutional identity of the RS: its identification with the object of the aspirations of the Serb people in Dayton BH for the existence and protection of *political autonomy* in relation to the central government, followed by the thesis about the essentially *consensual* nature of the Dayton BH. To this end, the subject of the unitary structure of the RS and the existence of the institution of a strong president within the distribution of powers of the constitutional bodies of the RS were also investigated.

DEFICIT OF LEGITIMACY IN THE CONSTITUTION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND OF THE ORIGINALITY IN THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA

In comparative law, it is possible to find examples of national constitutions that represent no more than a product of exogenous influences. There are countries whose (current) constitutions were written by the “hand of a foreigner,” the victor in the armed conflict that preceded the adoption of a constitution. This is the case with the constitutions of Japan (1946), Germany (1949), Afghanistan (2003), and Iraq (2005), but also with the constitutions of North Macedonia, as amended in 2001, and with the constitutions of East Timor (2002)

and Namibia (2010). Similar is the origin of the Dayton Constitution. Written as an integral part of an *international* peace agreement, it was never ratified by the RS and the then Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (RBH), nor by BH (established in 1995), nor by citizens in a referendum.

Scholars unanimously share impressions about the *imposed* nature of the constitutional order of BH. The Dayton Constitution was “imposed [...] without prior public debate and without final adoption or approval in the constitutional body,” which means that it is “deprived of democratic legitimacy” (Simović 2020, 210). It “did not grow as a result of the will of citizens and with the application of procedures that would give it democratic legitimacy, but as a product of the will of the international community” (Alijević 2011, 421), or “by the will of the great powers” (Kuzmanović 2012, 26), which is evidenced by the very – quite original – fact that it was adopted in the form of an international treaty (Stanković 2020, 40). The Dayton Agreement (meaning, actually, the Dayton Constitution) is merely a “synthesis of the arbitration process of the international community” (Nešković 2013, 412–413), which leads to the conclusion that BH is also a “paradigm of a multinational state community whose existence was imposed” (Stanković 2020, 51). This reflects the “crucial constitutional deficit” (Simović 2020, 190) of the constitutional order of BH.

The absence of constitutional sovereignty of BH is also reflected in the fact that the Dayton Constitution is “clearly based on the Anglo-Saxon legal and constitutional tradition,” and that it was written in accordance with the model of the US Constitution of 1787, which is “clearly seen from the very form of the constitution: it is a short constitution with a small number of articles – merely twelve” (Savanović 2021, 62). The Dayton Constitution is also “a text with a lot of clumsy Anglo-Saxon diction” (Orlović 2020, 217). One author even explicitly points out that “the American lawyer Roberts B. Owen and his numerous associates” were “writers” of the Dayton Constitution (Lukić 1997, 16). It is obvious that the authenticity of the constitutional order of BH is “hindered” by the fact that the institution of the High Representative exists (Ustav BiH, Annex II, Art. 1, item c), and that *one third* of the members of the Constitutional Court of BH are elected by the President of the European Court of Human Rights (Art. VI, Paragraph 1, a). Truth be told, the Dayton Constitution has not been amended according to the procedure provided for the revision of international treaties, but, in

accordance with the provision of its Article X, Paragraph 1, by the way of a decision of the PABH (Marković 2011, 340).

In addition to the imposed nature of the Dayton Constitution, another characteristic reflects the fact that it did not represent and does not provide opportunities for the creation of an *authentic constitutional identity* of BH. Namely, if *constitutional history* is also considered an element of constitutional identity, then it is worth pointing out that the implementation of the Dayton Constitution has also greatly complicated the formation of the constitutional identity of BH, because the country's "constitutional law is not internationalized only in terms of the adoption process, but also in terms of the subsequent functioning of the constitutional system" (Simović 2020, 194). This is also evident from the fact that in the process of constituting post-war BH, "no one waited for a common state to be a freely perceived need, and then a voluntary and desired community," but rather the new competencies of BH and its institutions were created "artificially, which did not lead to the convergence of the interests of its constituent peoples" (Orlović 2024, 218). The constitutional order of BH, instead, reflects its "incomplete and truncated sovereignty," which is reliably indicated by the fact that "international bodies have retained a strong influence on the constitutional system of the country" (Simović 2020, 199).

The much narrowed possibility of discovering the constitutional identity of BH does not necessarily represent an obstacle to determining the elements of the constitutional identity of the RS as its integral part. Although it has been amended many times, the CRS remains a product of the authentic political will of the Serb people in the former Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SRBH) and offers sufficient textual material for establishing the constitutional identity of the RS. Before that, it is worth recalling that the CRS has very limited originality.

The solutions contained in the CRS are indeed "not original," because "they have their models in foreign solutions," with "certain specificities that are the result of the manner [of its formation and position], but also the limitations of the effective constitutional capacity" of the RS (Golić 2021, 232). This act was adopted "with the pretense of being the constitution of a territory, which at that time was still neither clearly defined, nor precisely delimited" (Lukić 1997, 18). At the same time, the conditions in which the CRS was adopted speak of its short-term preparation, which conditioned its authors' reliance on "certain

models,” among which the “basic” one was the 1990 Constitution of Serbia, since a comparison of these two documents “shows a very high degree of similarity” (Lukić 1997, 20).

With the exception of the Preamble (which the 1990 Constitution of Serbia did not contain, but the CRS does), the structure of the two documents is almost identical. The introductory part of both the CRS and the 1990 Constitution of Serbia consists of provisions dedicated to the fundamental issues of state organization. In the CRS, after the Preamble, come the “Basic Provisions” (URS, Art. 1–9), a unit whose object is the definition of the *state* (later – the RS as an *entity* within BH), the basic principles of the state organization, its official language and symbols. The same applies to the 1990 Constitution of Serbia (Ustav Srbije iz 1990, Art. 1–10). The next section regulates basic rights and freedoms (URS, Art. 10–49; Ustav Srbije iz 1990, Art. 11–54), followed by a section that in both acts contains the same *title* – “Economic and social organization” (URS, Art. 50–65; Ustav Srbije iz 1990, Art. 55–69), followed by “Rights and duties of the Republic” (URS, Art. 66–68), or “Rights and duties of the Republic of Serbia” (Ustav Srbije iz 1990, Art. 70–72).

The model of the almost identical structure of the two constitutions is also reflected in the section entitled “Organization of the Republic” (URS, Art. 69–99), or “Organs of the Republic” (Ustav Srbije iz 1990, Art. 73–107). The structural arrangement of institutions is very similar: the chapter dedicated to the legislative body (URS, Art. 70–79; Ustav Srbije iz 1990, Art. 73–82) “leans back” on those dedicated to the President of the Republic (URS, Art. 80–89; Ustav Srbije iz 1990, Art. 83–89), the Government (URS, Art. 90–97; Ustav Srbije iz 1990, Art. 90–94), and “territorial organization” (URS, Art. 100–103; Ustav Srbije iz 1990, Art. 108–118). The differences in the structure of the two documents are indeed minimal (there is no space in this paper to point out the deeper *details* according to which the authors of the CRS followed the example of the 1990 Constitution of Serbia). Although the CRS “does not differ dramatically nor crucially from other written constitutions that were adopted as part of overcoming socialist constitutionalism in former socialist states” (Lukić 1997, 33), it was written according to the model of the 1990 Constitution of Serbia. These reasons were probably more symbolic than technical, due to the nature of the political processes at the time of the adoption of the CRS, although its authors were inspired by

a constitution marked by a higher quality. One should add that the CRS was written in a very short period of time, in anticipation of the referendum on the independence of BH, and that its authors probably received expert assistance from colleagues from the Serbia, taking into account the compliance of the solution with the Serbia's constitutional document, since the issue of the dissolution of the common (Yugoslav) state had not yet been resolved at that time.

ETHNIC FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA

The RS was created as a state of the Serb people in BH. The main purpose of its establishment was to send a message to both the political representatives of the other two constituent peoples in the SRBH, as well as to the Serb people in it, that Serbs have the right to create their own state, in the event of the secession of the SRBH from Yugoslavia. That the foundations of the RS contain a *national* urge for independence is confirmed, among other things, by the very *name* of the RS and by its state symbols – the traditional Serbian tricolor and the anthem “God of Justice” (‘Bože pravde’), later replaced by the anthem “My Republic” (‘Moja Republika’).

The fact that the RS reflected the aspirations of the Serb people to establish a state in BH is also evidenced by the history of the adoption of the CRS, which was the *fourth* (and the last) in a series of its founding acts. This document was preceded by two *decisions* and a *declaration*, the acts by which the legitimate and democratically elected representatives of the Serb people expressed their desire for the continuity of the political representation of Serbs in the SRBH, for Serbs to remain in the Yugoslav state and, finally, for the establishment of the RS (Kuzmanović 2012, 26; Nešković 2013, 140–145). Since before the adoption of the CRS there were no other formal possibilities for protecting the legitimate interests of Serbs in the SRBH, a “own state-forming unit, the Republic of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina,” was formed, the roots of which were “the need to preserve the identity” (Kuzmanović 2012, 25) and the “statehood” of Serbs in BH (Pilipović 2020, 249). The name of the Republic, which was created “through the process of territorialization of the constitutive nature of the Serb nation” (Nešković 2013, 208), was changed to its current name on August 12, 1992 (Nešković 2013, 211, 323).

In Paragraph 1 of the Preamble of the original text of the CRS, the existence of the “inalienable and non-transferable natural right of the Serb people to self-determination, self-organization and association” is confirmed, while the state is defined in the normative part of the text as “the state of the Serb people and the citizens who live in it” (URS, Art. 1). This provision represented a clear “expression of objective historical circumstances and the ‘purpose’ of the [CRS]: to ensure the political community of the Serb people in the territory with a Serb majority in the conditions of a state of emergency” (Savanović 2021, 58).¹

Departing from the rule present in comparative constitutional law, the introductory article of the CRS does not contain references to the sovereignty and independence of the state, its democratic nature, nor to the rule of law (these components, among others, appear not before than in Article 5). At the time of its establishment, the self-identification of the RS was reduced to emphasizing the *attitude* of the constitution-maker on the *national* (ethnic) nature of its origins. The Serb people are also mentioned in Article 2 of the original CRS, in which it was emphasized that the state territory of the RS *also* includes the areas in which “the crime of genocide was committed against [the Serbs] during the Second World War” (URS, Art. 2). According to Article 7 of the same act, the official language in the RS is *Serbian*, and in Articles 100–101, the basic units of the “political-territorial community” are the *regions*, which represent “a single ethnic [...] space.” Finally, in addition to the explicit mention of the Serbian Orthodox Church as the religious community of the “Serb people” (URS, Art. 28, Para. 3), the provision of Article 112 is also instructive, because in accordance to it a member of the armed forces of the RS, in addition to *regular* military units, can also be “every citizen who participates in the defense” of the RS by arms or in another way. This indicates that the CRS truly was a “war constitution” (Savanović 2021, 58), adopted for the purposes of constituting a Serb state in conditions in which the help of the unorganized force of the people (“citizens”), not framed by the

¹ The founding (one could say ‘quasi-constitutional’) acts of the RBH from 1992 also include a Memorandum, declaratively confirming the sovereignty of that state. This document *recognized* the “right of the parliamentary minority” – that is, members of the Serb ethnic corps in the RBH “to demand their cultural, social and economic interests,” which made the Serbs, as a *constituent* people, “a national minority that could not influence any decision on the structure” of BH (Kuzmanović 2012, 25; Pilipović 2020, 238).

traditional state monopoly on physical force, was obviously welcome for its defense.

The amendments to the CRS changed most of the aforementioned provisions in order to bring them into line with the Dayton Constitution. As they created a “stew,” today the document “does not resemble itself as it was originally drafted” (Savanović 2021, 61), within the framework of the pre-Dayton RS. The concepts of the bearer of sovereignty,² “self-proclaimed statehood,” territory, military formations (Šarčević 2023, 29), and other important *identity* elements of the RS have been changed. By means of the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court of BH, all three “ethnic nations” have become “constitutive in both entities” throughout the entire territory of BH (Nešković 2013, 401), creating “tri-ethnic sovereignty” in the RS (323).

However, this does not change the fact that the RS was constituted as a *Serb* state-political community in BH. It emerged as a reaction to the events leading to the 1992 referendum on the independence of BH, which was largely boycotted by Serbs, was of “extremely dubious legality” and unconstitutional from the point of view of the constitutionality of the SRBH and the 1974 Constitution of the Yugoslavia (Pilipović 2020, 234–235; Kreća 2024, 29). This invalidates the thesis that the referendum (“plebiscite”) of the *Serb people*, organized the same year, was illegal (Balić 2020, 22). The *Serb national* origin of the RS is also evidenced by the fact that, unlike the original CRS, the Constitution of the RBH stipulates that the RBH is “the state of equal citizens, [...] Muslims, Serbs, Croats, and members of other peoples living in it” (Ustav Republike BiH 1993, Art. 1), with the provision in accordance to which the “holders of power” are citizens (Art. 47). Likewise, the founding act of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBH) stipulated that “Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs [...] are constituent peoples, together with the Others” (Ustav Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine 1994, Preamble, Para. 6, Art. 1, Sect. 2). Therefore, in relation to the constitutional order of the RBH and, later, of BH, the RS was constituted as an authentic *national* state of one of the three peoples in BH.

² “Serbs, Bosniaks, and Croats, as constitutive peoples, the others, and the citizens, equally and without discrimination take part in the exercise of power” in the RS (URS, Article 1, Paragraph 4).

A HIGH DEGREE OF AUTONOMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA AS PART OF ITS CONSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY

After the adoption of the Dayton Constitution and the integration of the RS into the new state creation, the next element of the constitutional identity of the RS emerged – a very high degree of its autonomy. By creating a two-entity state union, the authors of the Dayton Constitution used the method of full symmetry in terms of protecting the most important interests of both entities. However, due to the subject matter of the paper, the emphasis in this chapter will be on examining those elements of the BH system that point to the autonomy of the RS as its second defining element of its constitutional identity. This is particularly important to emphasize because the FBH is the historical product of forced political and legal cooperation between the *two* of its constituent peoples, and the RS is an entity that contributed, by its statehood based on national foundations, to the statehood of the BH. This is a consequence of the fact that the period immediately preceding the start of the war in BH was marked by the existence of “completely different visions of the three constituent peoples about the future of the state” (Simović 2020, 225) – therefore, also the *disparate* visions of Croats and Bosniaks, who, later, in 1994 created the FBH.

Although the end of hostilities created the state of BH, into which the RS joined as a *non-independent* state, the RS did not simply “drown” into the new state system. It preferred to join BH, while retaining important features of its own constitutional and political independence and distinctiveness, including the fact that, within the newly created *composite* structure of BH, it retained its own Constitution. Thus, “the definitive existence of the RS was ‘established’ by the Dayton Peace Agreement” (Pilipović 2020, 232), or by the Dayton Constitution, although, formally observed, by the provision of its Article I, Paragraph 1, the international legal state continuity between the RBH and BH is “clearly emphasized” and “unquestionable” (Balić 2020, 21–22). By incorporating the key goals of the establishment of the RS into the Dayton constitutional framework, the equal representation of the political interests of the Serb people in BH was enabled – a federal arrangement that was *not offered* to the Serb people in the period preceding the Constitution of the RS and the outbreak of war, but *was guaranteed* by the Dayton Constitution and the maintenance of the RS within BH.

By the fact of the adoption of the Dayton Constitution, the RS was accepted “by the international community as a state-forming unit” (Pilipović 2020, 245) and, like the FBH, it received “international recognition” (Stanković 2020, 42), that is, “constitutional recognition [...] with a broad degree of independence” (Simović 2020, 225). In accordance with the determination of the authors of the Dayton Constitution (Ustav BiH, Article III, Paragraph 3, Pt. a), the RS retained functions and competencies other than those explicitly transferred to the institutions of BH by the Dayton Constitution (URS, Art. 3), thus acquiring its “internal sovereignty” (Pilipović 2020, 249), narrower than the previous (but internationally unrecognized) full sovereignty. It should be noted that constitutional identity also serves as a “guardian of sovereignty” (Belov 2023, 83), regardless of the fact that the sovereignty of the RS could theoretically be defined as *internal*.

According to the Dayton Constitution, BH “shall consist of two entities” (Ustav BiH, Article I, Paragraph 3). Indeed, “the word ‘consists’ refers to the contractual, confederative nature of [BH], in which there are two ‘ingredients’ – entities – which have brought (but not lost) their statehood and sovereignty into the newly created legal entity” (Nikolić 2025). According to conclusions that follow a similar logical course, BH “is not a federation, but a specific form of federalism with elements of a federation and a confederation” (Stanković 2020, 41). It should be recalled that during the war “entities with almost all the attributes of statehood were created,” and that they “participated in the establishment of a new constitutional and legal order” and “preceded the Dayton constitutional creation as a new socio-political reality” in the form of “fully legally shaped entities” (Simović 2020, 195–196).

The high degree of autonomy of the RS is also evidenced by the parity composition of the highest bodies of BH, guaranteed by the Dayton Constitution: the houses of the PABH, the Presidency and the Constitutional Court (Ustav BiH, Article IV, Paragraph 1-2, Article V, and Article VI, Pt. a, respectively), in which representatives of the RS are represented in a ratio of one to two compared to representatives of the FBH (with the exception of the Constitutional Court, one third of whose members are determined by a completely external instance – the Council of Europe). Among other things, this form of representation of the RS in the institutions of BH leads to the conclusion that the position of the RS today is “at least equal to the position of federal units in looser federations” (Golić 2021, 232). It is also important to recall that the Serb and Croat political elites in BH have long opposed the tendency

to introduce a political regime based “on the principle of ‘one man—one vote,’” believing that it “cannot represent the basis for establishing a stable constitutional system” (Marković 2011, 339).

The constitutional position of the RS within BH also implies its (limited) competence in international relations, as the entities are authorized to establish “special parallel relations with neighboring states” (Ustav BiH, Article III, Paragraph 2, Pt. a). The RS took advantage of this opportunity by concluding a corresponding agreement with the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and then with the Republic of Serbia, the latter of which is still in force (Zakon o potvrđivanju Sporazuma o uspostavljanju specijalnih paralelnih odnosa između Republike Srbije i Republike Srpske).³ This circumstance is truly “the greatest curiosity” in the context of the entity’s “specific position” within the constitutional order of BH (Stanković 2020, 42).

In the context of the emphasized autonomy of the RS, it should be said that its identity is also based on respect for the Dayton Constitution. For many years, “strong disintegration forces, instigated from the office of the so-called High Representative, as well as arbitrary interpretations” of the Dayton Constitution, “have forced political officials in [RS] to defend the Dayton [BH], its Constitution, and thus [the RS]” (Nikolić 2025). Thus, the literal implementation of the Dayton Constitution has truly become a guarantee of the existence of both BH and RS (Pilipović 2020, 248). This should not be particularly emphasized in the context of the current serious political tensions in RS and BH, based, among other things, on the potential imprisonment of the current President of the RS based on the first-instance verdict of the Court of BH, issued on February 26, 2025. The relativization of the Dayton Constitution’s solution regarding autonomy of the entities, according to which their constitutional position arose as a consequence of “war-related territorial conquests,” cannot be disputed by the fact that the entities are guaranteed a “high degree of autonomy” (Balić 2020, 37), within a “minimal and segmented” BH (Simović 2020, 189). Consequently, the understanding that the Dayton Constitution recognized “state institutions that the entities seized for themselves during the war” (Ibrahimagić 2011, 251) is not correct, since *there were no entities in BH during the war*.

³ Article 9 provides for the termination of the validity of the “Agreement on the Establishment of Special Parallel Relations between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Srpska, signed on 5 March 2001.”

The autonomy of the RS within the constitutional order of BH also contains in its foundations the *contractual nature* of (Dayton) BH. In this sense, the specificity of the constitutional arrangement in BH is manifested “in the very concept of ‘entity’, which is unusual in constitutional theory and practice” (Pilipović 2020, 245). Along with other strong features of political diversity within the constitutional order of BH, “vital interest” appears to be a limit to protecting the autonomy of the entity (and therefore, the RS). This phrase represents the main point by which the Dayton Constitution limits the possibility of making any decision by the PABH, in the event of an assessment that it “may be declared destructive to the vital interest” of any of the constituent peoples of BH, and the same applies to decisions of the BH Presidency (Ustav BiH, Article IV, Paragraph 3, Pt. e; Article V, Paragraph 2, Pt. d). The “tacit” right of veto of either entity over decisions of central authorities fits into the understanding that BH is only nominally a federal state, because, undoubtedly, “obligatory consensus is a hallmark of a confederation” (Stanković 2020, 43). That this is not an institute which would be the product of a kind of political *blackmail* as a condition for the establishment of Dayton BH is evidenced by the fact that a similar procedure is also recognized by the constitutions of two member states of the European Union: Belgium (Constitution of the Kingdom of Belgium [1831] 1994, Article 54) and Cyprus (Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus 1960, Article 133, Paragraph 1).

Two narrower components of the constitutional identity of the RS appear within the framework of this unit of the paper. These are: the unitary nature of the constitutional order of the RS and the overriding role of the President of the Republic.

Unlike the fragmented FBH, the RS is characterized by a *unitary* system of organization. The political-territorial organization of the FBH is based on the existence of “federal units – cantons” (Ustav Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine 1994, Art. 2), which, *nota bene*, were not mentioned in the Constitution of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was a unitary state until 1994. The constitutional system of the FBH is burdened with a “complex architecture” (Bonifati 2023, 233), and therefore, at the level of BH, “the most complex political system in Europe” was created (Alijević 2011, 425), which resulted in “the establishment of an extremely complexly structured and inefficient state” (Simović 2020, 188).

On the other hand, the territorial organization and local self-government of the RS are based, according to the provisions of the CRS, on the *municipality* as its sole unit (URS, Art. 102, Para. 1–2), with the legislator being given the option of entrusting the performance of local self-government tasks to the *city* as well (URS, Art. 102, Para. 3). These solutions introduced a simpler structure of the RS than the one which was prescribed by the provision of Art. 2 of the original text of the RS, which stipulated that the territory of the RS “consists of areas of autonomous regions, municipalities and other Serbian ethnic entities” – that is, two, and potentially three or more special types of local self-government units. Thus, subsequent amendments to the CRS established a “highly centralized and unitary system” (Bonifati 2023, 233), the first step of which was reflected in the abolition of “regions” and “districts,” back in August 1992 (Nešković 2013, 211).

The entity constitutions have created “significant asymmetry” in their regulations (Bonifati 2023, 233), and a “highly asymmetric federal constitution” in BH (Sahadžić 2020, 284). The RS has a simpler and more *transparent* institutional structure than the FBH, which, in the opinion of the author of this paper, represents a less important, but present, component of the constitutional identity of the RS, such as the one reflected in the existence of a “strong” President of the Republic, who is the “central political institution” in the constitutional order of the RS (Golić 2021, 239), or the “center of state power” (Lukić 1997, 25).

As a monocratic body, directly democratically legitimized by election by citizens (URS, Article 83, Paragraph 2), the President of the RS has significant powers, probably modeled on the 1990 Constitution of Serbia (Golić 2021, 244), according to whose provision Article 86, Paragraph 1, the President of the Republic is also *directly elected*. According to the CRS, the President “represents” the RS and expresses “its state unity” (URS, Art. 69, Para. 3), but is also authorized to make a decision to dissolve the NARS, “after hearing the opinion” of the Prime Minister and of the President of the NARS (URS, Art. 72, Para. 7). In addition, during a state of war or emergency (which, admittedly, is declared by the institutions of BH), he can issue “decrees with the force of law and on issues within the competence” of the NARS and “appoint and dismiss officials” elected and dismissed by the NARS (URS, Art. 81, Para. 1). This is particularly important because, similarly to the usual comparative law solution, during irregular circumstances, the President’s mandate is extended for the duration of such a state

of affairs (URS, Art. 85, Para. 1), so, according to one understanding, during the duration of a state of war or emergency, he can temporarily “take over all power” in the RS (Golić 2021, 239).

Indeed, the “mechanism of complex interrelations” between the institutions of the RS has been dynamically changing since the adoption of the CRS, but the “common denominator of such dynamics” was reflected in the strengthening of the “constitutional role” of the President, in relation to the NARS and the Government (Lukić 1997, 25). The President appoints the members of the Senate of the RS (URS, Art. 89, Para. 4). Although this body is only an advisory body of the “supreme constitutional institutions” of the RS (URS, Art. 89, Para. 3), it includes “prominent figures from public, scientific and cultural life” (Para. 6), which means that the President has a position of high authority in terms of institutional authority over who are *prominent public figures*, and which individuals deserve to be included in the circle of *advisors* to the highest institutions of the RS. In Article 101 of the Draft Constitution, the solutions on presidential authority in relation to the Senate are retained (Narodna skupština RS 2025).

The concept of a dominant President was established in the CRS from 1992, but it has, “despite the numerous changes it has undergone, been retained to this day” (Golić 2021, 237), regardless of the fact that the constitutional revision reduced the duration of his term of office from five to four years (URS, Art. 83, Para. 2, in accordance with the Amendment XCII); moreover, the provision of Article 93 of the Draft Constitution provides for a five-year presidential term. The original solution was probably based on the example of Article 86, Paragraph 2 of the 1990 Constitution of Serbia. On the other hand, unlike the solution contained in Article 88 of the 1990 Constitution of Serbia (no matter how much it, due to the complex procedure, favored the President of the Republic), the CRS does not provide for the possibility of impeachment of the President at all, although this solution is poorly regulated from a technical point of view. This fact “has serious consequences for the functioning of the political system” of the RS (Savanović 2021, 56), so the issue of the political responsibility of the President should be regulated in more detail (Golić 2021, 245), especially if one takes into account the “undesirably broad powers” of the President in terms of dissolving the NARS (Lukić 1997, 25). Perhaps the right opportunity for this would be the process of adopting the Constitution of the Second Republic.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

If constitutional identity is a category that serves the self-recognition of a certain political community, in terms of determining its political and constitutional traditions, key values, and consensus on fundamental social issues, then it can be concluded that the constitutional identity of the RS has two main components. The first is the fact that the RS was founded as a state of the Serb people in BH. This component of the constitutional identity of the RS did not disappear with its incorporation into BH after the signing of the Dayton Agreement. Another significant component is precisely the fact that by joining BH, the RS achieved a valuable degree of political and institutional autonomy, retaining its own Constitution, as well as other bodies and institutions that have accompanied its functioning since its very creation. In the context of emphasizing the importance of the elements of the constitutional identity of the RS, and as a special reflection of its autonomy, its unitary organization appears, unencumbered by the complex structure that characterizes the institutional system of the FBH, but also by the institution of the President of the Republic that dominates the constitutional landscape of the RS.

Given that we are witnessing officially announced changes to the constitutional order of the RS, in terms of adopting a completely new constitution for this entity, it is time to eradicate certain shortcomings reflected in some solutions contained in the CRS. The process of adopting the new highest legal act of the RS creates a suitable opportunity for more original normative solutions, which would move further from those contained in the 1990 Constitution of Serbia. The possibility for the drafter of the new CRS to be freer in devising an appropriate constitutional arrangement is particularly due to the fact that the previous constitutional model for the RS, namely the Republic of Serbia, has not had a constitutional document since 2006, from which a lot of quality solutions could be “borrowed,” because the provisions according to which it does not coincide with the 1990 Constitution of Serbia are actually just a reflection of unprofessional editing and the penetration of numerous legislative matter into the Constitution. It is the sincere wish of this author that the future (next) constitutional act of the RS reverses the historical spiral of correlation of influence and prestige between the writers of the CRS and the Constitution of Serbia, so that, for a change, the *former* serves as a model for the *latter*.

One should hope that this exemplarity would be based on conciseness, positive authenticity, and bold steps forward in resolving issues worthy of constitutional regulation, without departing from the two essential components of the constitutional identity of the RS.

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О УСТАВНОМ ИДЕНТИТЕТУ РЕПУБЛИКЕ СРПСКЕ**

Сажетак

Рад је посвећен утврђивању елемената уставног идентитета Републике Српске (РС). Основни теоријско-методолошки приступ темељен је на проучавању текста Устава РС из 1992 (УРС), који, за српске историјскоправне прилике, има неуобичајено дугачак живот, али чија је тотална ревизија недавно службено најављена (Нацрт Устава објављен је 25. маја 2025. године, на Интернет адреси Народне скупштине Републике Српске). Циљ истраживања састоји се у препознавању елемената уставног идентитета РС, у складу са закључцима теоретичара поводом питања шта представља уставни идентитет. У тексту се утврђују и извесни упоредноправни недостаци аутентичности структуре и садржине од којих пате Устав Босне и Херцеговине (Дејтонски устав) и УРС. На основу анализе УРС и других релевантних уставних текстова са подручја БиХ из ратног периода, те Устава Републике Србије из 1990 (Устав Србије из 1990), закључује се да постоје два средишња елемента уставног идентитета РС. То су континуирано српско национално утемељење РС и њеног уставног уређења и висок аутономни статус РС као ентитета у саставу Босне и Херцеговине (БиХ). Мање важне додатне компоненте уставног идентитета РС чине њено унитарно уређење и истакнута уставна улога институције председника Републике.

Кључне речи: Република Српска, уставни идентитет, Босна и Херцеговина, Устав Републике Српске, Дејтонски устав

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** Овај рад је настао као резултат истраживања у оквиру пројекта „Прилагођавање правног оквира друштвеним и технолошким променама са посебним освртом на регулисање вештачке интелигенције“ који у 2025. години спроводи Институт за упоредно право уз финансијску подршку Министарства науке, технолошког развоја и иновација (евиденциони број: 451-03-136/2025-03/200049 од 4. 2. 2025).

* This manuscript was submitted on May 6, 2025, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on August 20, 2025.

UDC 327:355.357(=163.41)(497.11)
DOI: 10.5937/spm92-59376
Review article

Српска политичка мисао
(Serbian Political Thought)
No 4/2025.
Vol. 92
pp. 75-93

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THE SERBIAN ARMED FORCES IN THE SERVICE OF GLOBAL PEACE AND SECURITY: INTEREST AND MOTIVATION FOR MULTINATIONAL OPERATIONS***

Abstract

The paper shows how the Serbian Armed Forces, through their participation in multinational (peacekeeping) operations, contribute to the improvement and maintenance of global peace and security under the auspices of the United Nations and the European Union, as well as the motivation and interest in peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, the research conducted at the Military Academy seeks to find the motives of the participants in the operations, as well as the motives that direct future officers to participate in multinational operations. For the purposes of this paper, Battistelli's paradigm of premodern, modern, and postmodern motivational factors for participation in peacekeeping operations was applied. The author's starting assumption is that the motivational factors for the participation of our members are in the domain of premodern (traditional) and modern. The paper first analyzes past and current operations in which our Army has participated and is an active participant in order to present the way in which the Serbian Armed Forces act in

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*** The paper was created as a result of research on the project "Value orientations and attitude towards the tradition of Military Academy cadets" (VA/DH/1/24-26).

the service of global peace and security, and its role in that field. In the first part, the paper presents the rich historical experience of our Army's participation in multinational operations. Considering that multinational operations are an instrument for preventing and containing crisis hotspots in the world, as well as preventing armed conflicts, they also contribute to countries' international reputation. Furthermore, the paper presents and explains the understanding of the importance of multinational operations in our Army, through the importance of the role of the Serbian Armed Forces in preserving global peace and security, as well as emphasizing the impact of transferring experiences and knowledge gained in multinational operations. The significance of the research is that the authors confirm that the motivational factors for participation in multinational operations are strengthening the foreign policy reputation and international relations of our country, the general development of our Army and gaining valuable experience, as well as the financial position of the participants, which represents traditional and modern motivational factors.

Keywords: Republic of Serbia, Serbian Armed Forces, Military Academy, multinational operations, peacekeeping operations, motivational factors

INTRODUCTION

After World War II, the first peacekeeping operations emerged. The post-Cold War era brought about an expansion of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations in every sense. Namely, the number of peacekeeping operations in the world increased, the number and complexity of uniformed personnel involved increased, and the mandates entrusted to them expanded. Security challenges, risks and threats, conflicting national interests of different states, and often changing geopolitical relations between major powers created the need to provide new answers to pressing issues. The beginning of the 21st century was characterized by further transformations and the development of peacekeeping operations. International military presence in the territories of third countries is the main feature of multinational operations. Today, the term multinational operation is used in practice as the most general criterion confirming their international legal legitimacy (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 6).

Wars and conflicts are still a reality in the world. Crisis hotspots around the world have not disappeared despite the overall development and strengthening of the influence of various international organizations whose field of activity is peace. Multinational operations are a more complex concept than peacekeeping operations, because in addition to them they also include “conflict prevention operations, joint defense operations, operations to eliminate the consequences of international terrorism, as well as humanitarian operations” (Zakon o upotrebi Vojske Srbije i drugih sredstava odbrane u multinacionalnim operacijama van granica Republike Srbije 2018; Milošević 2010, 4).

International practice has led to the distinction of three generations of United Nations peacekeeping operations (Conforti 2005, 208). The first generation refers to the period from 1947 to 1956, when peacekeeping operations were undertaken with the aim of conducting observation missions and diplomatic mediation, as well as other forms of preventive diplomacy (Dimitrijević 2021, 312). The second generation of peacekeeping operations refers to the period from 1956 to 1988, in which peacekeeping operations were undertaken primarily for the purpose of preserving peace (Dimitrijević 2021, 312). And the third generation of peacekeeping operations refers to the period from 1988 to the present, in which multidimensional peacekeeping operations of a multipurpose nature were undertaken (or are still being undertaken) for the purpose of establishing peace, imposing peace, or post-conflict peacebuilding (Dimitrijević 2021, 312).

Namely, “since it considers the heritage of SFRY as its own, Serbia has had a long tradition of participation in the UN peacekeeping missions” (Milošević 2014, 167). The tradition of participation in multinational operations dates back to 1956 when the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) engaged in the United Nations multinational operation on the Sinai Peninsula. Until the outbreak of conflict in the former Yugoslavia, members of the JNA were engaged in multinational operations in Congo, Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Namibia, and Angola (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 10). Since 2002, after a decade-long hiatus, the first members of the Yugoslav Army, and then the Serbian and Montenegrin Armed Forces, have participated in multinational operations in East Timor, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Chad, and the Central African Republic (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 11). The first mission under the auspices of the European Union (EU) in which members of our military were

deployed was the naval operation “Atalanta” in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean (Radojević 2012, 80).

Since 2006, the Serbian Armed Forces have been constantly increasing their capacities in peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations. Today, the Serbian Armed Forces are engaged in missions in Lebanon, Cyprus, the Central African Republic, the Middle East, Somalia, Mozambique, and Egypt (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 8). The Republic of Serbia, through its constitutional and legislative framework, its strategic documents, and international agreements to which it is a signatory, has shown its commitment to engagement in multinational operations. In fact, the second mission of the Serbian Armed Forces, determined by the Defense Strategy, is to contribute to the preservation and building of peace in the region and the world through active engagement in multinational operations (Strategija odbrane Republike Srbije 2019, 13). By participating in multinational operations, our country and the Army actively contribute to global peace and security, thereby simultaneously strengthening their reputation on the international stage.

Starting from the tradition of participation in maintaining and building global peace and security, the authors conducted a study on the interest and motivation of participants and future participants in peacekeeping operations. The study is a continuation of previous analyses and research in this area and was conducted within the framework of the project “Value orientations and attitudes towards the tradition of Military Academy cadets” (Starčević, PI 2024).

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARTICIPATION OF THE SERBIAN ARMY IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

Peacekeeping operations are part of the overall global mechanism for maintaining international peace and security, and therefore, the Republic of Serbia has recognized the engagement of the Serbian Armed Forces and other defense forces in these tasks as an important element of foreign policy and its defense interest (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 6). The period after the end of World War II, and further after the Cold War, brought the first international peacekeeping missions under the auspices of the United Nations. United Nations peacekeeping operations experienced a special expansion with the end of the Cold War.

The Republic of Serbia and the Serbian Armed Forces have a decades-long tradition of participation in multinational operations. The beginning of our Army's participation in preserving and building peace in the world dates back to 1956 and the engagement of the Yugoslav People's Army in Sinai as part of a multinational United Nations operation (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 11). The mission in Sinai was the third United Nations mission to be established, and for our peacekeepers, it represents the largest engagement to date.

The Yugoslav People's Army participated in this multinational operation from 1956 to 1967 (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 11). Over 14,000 members of the Yugoslav People's Army participated in the mission in 22 rotations. During the 37 years of Yugoslavia's participation in multinational operations, members of the Yugoslav People's Army participated in a total of six United Nations peacekeeping missions (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 12).

In parallel with the Sinai operation, the JNA was also engaged in Yemen in 1963 and 1964 (Dragišić 2011, 157). From 1988 to 1991, Yugoslavia sent military personnel as observers to a peacekeeping operation in Iran (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 13). Yugoslav military observers were also present in Namibia in 1989 and 1990. The last operation in which Yugoslav observers participated was the operation in Angola (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 13). This operation took place both during the war in the former Yugoslavia and during its disintegration. Due to the war in the former Yugoslavia, in 1993, Yugoslav peacekeeping forces withdrew from Angola (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 14). For nine years, there was a pause in the engagement of our members in multinational operations. After that, in 2002, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia engaged members of the Yugoslav Army in a peacekeeping operation (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 14).

Since that year, the number of members of our Army engaged in United Nations peacekeeping operations has been constantly increasing, and a little later it was expanded to operations under the auspices of the European Union (Radojević and Blagojević 2024). Members of the Yugoslav Army, and then the Army of Serbia and Montenegro, were engaged in multinational operations under the auspices of the United Nations from 2002 to 2006 in East Timor, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Chad, and the Central African Republic (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 14).

Currently, the United Nations operations in Cyprus and Lebanon, where the participation of our members began in 1964 and 1978, respectively, are still ongoing (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 14). It should be noted that the first participation of members of the Yugoslav Army after the termination of the engagement of the Yugoslav People's Army, or SFRY, in multinational operations in 1992 was in the United Nations mission in East Timor (Šćepanović 2014, 218). In addition to multinational operations under the auspices of the United Nations, members of the Serbian Army participated in the European Union mission in Mali from 2014 to 2020 (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 15).

The legal framework for the engagement of members of the Serbian Armed Forces in multinational operations was established in 2009 with the adoption of a special law regulating this area (Zakon o upotrebi Vojske Srbije i drugih sredstava odbrane u multinacionalnim operacijama van granica Republike Srbije 2018). This law legally regulates all aspects of this military mission and represents a milestone because its adoption significantly increases the number of members engaged. The history of the participation of the Serbian Armed Forces in peacekeeping operations around the world has had diverse characters and roles. The Republic of Serbia has sent its representatives around the world as military observers, medical teams, and evacuation units, thereby demonstrating the readiness, training, and ability of the Serbian Armed Forces to adapt to the diverse demands, challenges, and tasks of international peacekeeping operations. In addition to multinational operations under the auspices of the United Nations, the Serbian Armed Forces also participate in multinational operations under the auspices of the European Union. The Republic of Serbia, with its capabilities, actively participates within the framework of the Common Security and Defense Policy of the European Union, based on the signed agreements with the European Union, which entered into force on August 1, 2012 (Prodanić 2023, 167).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ENGAGEMENT OF THE SERBIAN ARMY IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

By engaging its military personnel, the Republic of Serbia positions itself as a credible factor in international cooperation, contributing to resolving crises and conflicts and building and preserving peace, thereby strengthening its place in the international

community and creating a strong foundation for multilateral relations. By participating in peacekeeping operations, members of the Serbian Armed Forces upgrade their functional and operational capabilities in a multinational environment, improve interoperability, and apply the experience gained during their engagement in units and institutions of our Army (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 7).

The importance of the participation of the Serbian Armed Forces in peacekeeping operations is multifaceted, first of all, because by participating in operations around the world, our country demonstrates its commitment to preserving and building peace and security, as well as preventing the expansion of crises. By participating in peacekeeping operations, the Serbian Armed Forces contribute to building the image of the Republic of Serbia in the world as a state that respects international rules and standards and that can provide assistance in building mutual trust in the region and the world. For the Serbian Armed Forces itself and its members, participation in multinational operations around the world represents an opportunity to gain invaluable experience, thereby improving training, professionalism, readiness, and skills, which can further help develop the defense capacity of our armed forces.

Since the strategic commitment of the Republic of Serbia is membership in the European Union, the participation of the Serbian Armed Forces in missions under the auspices of this organization can be particularly important, considering the increasingly emphasized importance of strengthening defense ties between European countries. Harmonizing the procedures of the Serbian Armed Forces with European Union standards also has a positive impact on strengthening its own national security, thereby profiling the Republic of Serbia as a reliable partner.

By engaging in multinational operations, the Republic of Serbia contributes to building and preserving peace, maintaining the fundamental principles of international law, and improving mutual trust (Milenković i Ivković 2022, 6). Therefore, “understanding that global security is one and indivisible is the starting point for the Republic of Serbia’s contribution to the preservation of peace and stability in the region and the world and an active influence on the actors of international relations to resolve important international issues non-violently” (Radojević and Blagojević 2024, 160). In fact, the importance of the participation of the Serbian Armed Forces in multinational operations is also reflected in the fact that by sending

troops to peacekeeping operations abroad, the Republic of Serbia demonstrates its readiness and, above all, its ability to contribute to the preservation of international security and stability; projects a positive image of the country as a responsible nation ready to act in the interest of world peace; increases the country's influence not only in the UN and EU systems, but also in the host country and the region in which it is engaged – including the promotion of economic interests. In this way, peacekeeping operations become a reflection of the state's credibility and an element of the state's foreign policy in international relations (Radojević and Blagojević 2024, 160). Finally, our country, based on the UN Charter and all international treaties and agreements it has ratified, fulfills its international obligations that it has undertaken, thereby sending a message of a politically mature state and its institutions. Cooperation with the armies of foreign countries through joint participation in multinational operations improves the interoperability of our Army. It is also one of the key factors that further develop the capacities of our defense system. The goal of the participation of the Serbian Armed Forces in multinational operations, in addition to all of the above, is to monitor global trends and modern armed forces so that our country can successfully deal with security challenges, risks, and threats. However, "the next decade has the potential to bring new crises and pose new challenges to the UN and other international actors" (Stanić 2018, 36–37).

The participation of the Republic of Serbia, i.e., sending members of the Serbian Armed Forces in multinational operations, also implies the capacity for adequate education and training for these tasks. Of particular importance in this entire process is the quality of education and personnel training so that the participation of members of the Serbian Armed Forces is at the required level. It is generally known that in military education, the education and training of personnel of the Serbian Armed Forces for participation in multinational operations occupies a special place.

The Military Academy of the University of Defence, through subjects at basic, master's and doctoral academic studies, courses, and training, enables the acquisition of the necessary knowledge for participation in multinational operations. This knowledge is further supplemented through career training for officers at the National Defence School of the University of Defence. Finally, the Peacekeeping Operations Centre of the Serbian Armed Forces conducts preparations

and training of individuals and units and monitors their engagement in multinational operations. In certain segments, such as in professional and specialist training for participation in the European Union naval operation, the Peacekeeping Operations Centre is also assisted by the Military Academy (Šoškić, Radojević, and Komazec 2014).

RESEARCH ON INTEREST AND MOTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION IN MULTINATIONAL OPERATIONS

For the purposes of this article, Battistelli's (*Fabrizio Battistelli*) paradigm of premodern, modern, and postmodern motivational factors for participation in peacekeeping operations was applied. Table 1 presents Battistelli's typology of motivational factors for participation in peacekeeping operations (Battistelli 1997, 471).

Table 1. Battistelli's typology of motivational factors for participation in peacekeeping operations

Origin	Motivational factors
Paleomodern/ Premodern	Be useful for the environment Contribute to strengthening the reputation of the state in international relations
Modern	Earn extra money (financial benefit) Acquiring knowledge and skills that can be useful in your future career
Postmodern	Need for adventure Gaining significant personal satisfaction/experience

Source: Edited by the authors.

The author's starting assumption is that the motivational factors of our participants and future participants range from traditional (premodern) to modern. The participation of our Army in peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the UN and the EU, in addition to positively influencing the Republic of Serbia's reputation, also positively influences the development and raising of the level of readiness of our Army to respond to various security challenges, risks, and threats (Radončić 2009, 130). Bearing in mind that our country, by participating in multinational operations, strengthens its reputation as a

state that provides assistance in establishing and maintaining peace in the world, and that as a result, we are recognized in the world as a state for our peacekeeping programs and initiatives.

Research on the participation of the Serbian Army in peacekeeping operations was carried out in 2007 (Radončić 2009, 132). There were 150 respondents, and the survey was conducted at the Military Academy and the Faculty of Security in Belgrade (Radončić 2009, 132). The survey was conducted via a survey (Radončić 2009, 132). Among the 150 respondents were cadets (at that time students) of the Military Academy, students of the Faculty of Security in Belgrade, commanders and commandants at the Military Academy, teachers, as well as students at the Command and Staff Training and the General Staff Training (Radončić 2009, 132). The aim of the survey was to find out their views on peacekeeping operations (Radončić 2009, 132).

To the question: "In your opinion, should the Serbian Armed Forces participate in peacekeeping operations?", the largest number of respondents answered that it should, 29%, according to the UN's request, 22% believed that it should participate with smaller forces, 18% believed that it should participate mandatory, while 16% believed that it should only send observers (Radončić 2009, 132). Overall, 85% of respondents had a positive attitude towards the participation of the Serbian Armed Forces in peacekeeping operations, which indicates an understanding of the importance of this mission of the Army. To the question "What composition of the Serbian Armed Forces should be in the peacekeeping forces, in your opinion?" 47% of respondents answered: "Mixed composition, but well-trained and practiced forces." (Radončić 2009, 132).

As part of the project "Value orientations and attitude towards tradition of Military Academy cadets" (Starčević, PI 2024), among other things, a survey was conducted on a sample of 200 cadets on their motives and interest in this military mission. Regarding motivation for participation, the question was asked: "I would participate in multinational operations regardless of whose organization?" To the specific question about personal participation in multinational operations, the percentage of uncertain answers decreases in the direction of agreement (mostly-completely – 39.3%), but about 35–36% of cadets are not interested in participating in multinational operations. When asked: "Would I participate in multinational operations only under the auspices of the UN?" almost 30% of cadets are not sure about

participating in multinational operations under the auspices of the UN, while 34.3% of cadets are not interested in participating in multinational operations. Together with the percentage of those who are unsure and those who are not interested, this makes up 64.3% of cadets. A third of cadets, 34.8%, would mainly or completely participate in multinational operations.

When asked: "Would I participate in multinational operations under the auspices of the UN and the EU?" almost 40% of respondents would participate in multinational operations under the auspices of the UN and the EU. There is still a large percentage of cadets who are not sure – 30% of respondents (which can be explained by the level of information and knowledge about multinational operations), while 31% would not participate in multinational operations at all. The research also asked the question: "Is gaining experience the primary reason for the decision to participate in multinational operations?" The highest percentage of respondents, 66%, believe that gaining professional experience is the motive for the decision to participate in multinational operations, and this percentage reduces the percentage of respondents who usually declare that they would not participate in multinational operations. Insisting on professional maturation and acquiring professional authority and integrity is a "space" for promoting participation in multinational operations. Furthermore, the financial motive for participation in multinational operations was examined with the question: "Is financial motive the primary reason for the decision to participate in multinational operations?"

Although almost 57% of respondents believe that financial motives are important for the decision to participate in multinational operations, a higher percentage of respondents, 24%, believe that they are not (which is a higher percentage compared to the denial that professional experience is 12%). When respondents were asked about the motives for the decision to participate in multinational operations, the percentage of those unsure about personal engagement decreases. In order to assess the cadets' attitude towards the importance of multinational operations for the position of our country in international relations, the question was asked: "Is building the reputation of the Republic of Serbia in international relations the primary motive for participation in multinational operations?"

It is interesting that a large number of respondents believe that participation in multinational operations is important for professional

experience (67%), finances (57%), while it is important for building the reputation of the Republic of Serbia in international relations (54%). This result should be interpreted in the light of the cadets' knowledge of the importance of the Army for the state (an element of statehood), the importance of the Army in international relations, and the formation of attitudes about the Army as a segment of global peace and security. The percentage of usually uncertain people is transferred to the importance of reputation in international relations.

In our research, the type of secondary school completed and the success in the previous course of education at the Military Academy are not important for the decision to participate in multinational operations. Statistically significant associations appear only on the issue of participation decisions and gender, place of residence and social origin, and the motives for participation should be sought in the characteristics of gender roles (equality and ability to provide for the family), place of origin up to the age of 15 (the opportunities that the place provides for education and additional income) and social origin of the primary family (the possibility of the primary family helping the family of the future officer).

Our research also included a kind of control group of 15 members of the University of Defense who were participants in various multinational UN and EU operations in the period from 2012 to 2022. The research determined the existence of traditional (premodern) and modern motives in the control group, as well as the absence of postmodern ones.

It is important to point out the importance of such research on motivation that is applied and conducted in other countries. A certain difference is observed when comparing the cadets and their responses from our study with a similar study conducted in the Swedish Armed Forces, where all cadets said that they go on peacekeeping missions "for the adventure and for their personal satisfaction," which represents postmodern motives (Hedlund 2011, 189).

In a similar study with the Slovenian Armed Forces, the authors state that Slovenian participants in peacekeeping operations are "mainly motivated by modern reasons such as career, earning extra money, gaining new military experience, etc., and who, on the other hand, lose their altruistic ideals during participation" (Juvan and Vuga 2011, 108). Namely, like our results, these are modern motivational factors for participation.

In a similar study conducted with 18 members of the Norwegian Armed Forces (nine males and nine females), a semi-structured interview was used (Stabell 2012, V). According to Stabell (2012, V), “the eight identified motivations were organized using Battistelli’s motivation typology with the following categories: pre-modern, modern, and post-modern.” All three categories were found among Norwegian soldiers, with modern motivations (material and personal motivations, such as economic gain, benefits for a future civilian or military career) and postmodern motivations (characterized by egoistic but not materialistic motivations, such as adventure and excitement, gaining experience, and competence) being more frequent than premodern motivations (characterized by normative obligations, such as doing something good for others and contributing to the international community) (Stabell 2012, V).

According to Jelušić and Garb (2005, 461) “The influence of different motivational factors varies from country to country and usually represents the specific social and historical circumstances of the country sending its armed forces to peacekeeping operations”. As Jelušić (2004, 36) argues “If we return to Battistelli’s typology of motivations for joining these missions, based on current research, we can conclude that in the pre-deployment phase, peacekeepers are guided by pre-modern motives (helping those in need, contributing to the country’s image) and post-modern motives” (attractiveness of the job). Over the course of the mission, postmodern motives decrease in influence, and modern motives (economic reward, military experience) become more dominant (Jelušić and Garb 2005, 465).

CONCLUSION

The current increase in security challenges at the global level has resulted in peacekeeping operations as the key and most powerful mechanism for achieving peace in an unstable world. Peacekeeping operations have undergone certain important changes in their historical development. At the beginning of their development, they were only observation missions whose main task was to monitor the established peace between the parties to the conflict, and over time, they have grown into peacekeeping, support and peacebuilding operations. Today, multinational operations in general and peacekeeping missions as a part of them are faced with conflicts that are politically complex

and characterized by serious security challenges, risks, and threats. All this affects the demands of missions and operations, and therefore the complexity of personnel engagement as well as the specificity of their actions. In fact, current peacekeeping operations are multidimensional, and a new adaptive approach is needed that requires great agility and constant monitoring of the necessary knowledge and experiences for participants (Radojević 2024).

Through the history of the Army's participation in multinational operations, one can trace the tradition and legacy of serving across the world's meridians as a guarantor of global peace and security. The aim of the paper was actually to explain and present the contribution of the Serbian Army to achieving and maintaining global peace and security through engagement in peacekeeping operations around the world. A special aim of the paper is to research the motivation of its members to participate in such tasks. The paper also presents certain research that has been conducted on this topic, analyzes it and draws conclusions. Motivational factors that influence the decision of members of the Serbian Armed Forces to participate in multinational operations are presented using Battistelli's paradigm as premodern, modern and postmodern motives. The authors of the paper assume that the motivational factors for the participation of our members are in the domain of traditional (premodern) and modern.

By presenting the history and significance of the participation of the Serbian Armed Forces in multinational operations, the authors emphasize their role in preserving global peace and security. In fact, the process of acquiring experience and knowledge necessary for participation in multinational operations, as well as the process of their transfer, is indicated.

A special place in the paper is occupied by the results of research on the interest and motivation of participants and future participants in peacekeeping (multinational) operations. The research relied on previous research in this area and was conducted within the project "Value orientations and attitude towards tradition of Military Academy cadets" (Starčević, PI 2024). Within the framework of this project, among other things, a survey was conducted on a sample of 200 cadets on the motives for participation in multinational operations. The main significance of the research results is that it was confirmed that strengthening the foreign policy reputation and international relations of our country, the general development of our Army and the acquisition of valuable experience,

as well as the financial position of the participants, are the strongest motivational factors for participation in multinational operations. According to Battistelli's methodology, they fall into traditional and modern motivational factors. The paper, therefore, establishes that, in line with the increased security challenges, the importance of multinational operations is growing, and therefore the importance of acquiring the necessary knowledge for participation in them. Due to the demanding tasks and missions of operations, personnel engaged in multinational operations must be trained, as well as adequately informed and educated. Due to the multidimensionality of multinational operations, an adaptive approach to education and knowledge acquisition is needed that requires great agility and constant monitoring of the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences for participants. What can be stated as a final conclusion is that the research that was conducted actually confirmed the author's initial assumption, stated above, that the motivational factors of our participants and future participants in multinational operations are of a traditional and modern nature. However, the motivation for participants in peacekeeping operations must be continuously monitored and encouraged through the provision of the necessary knowledge, the transfer of experiences, and the development of adequate benefits.

The research conducted confirmed the author's initial assumption that the motivational factors of our participants and future participants in multinational operations are of a traditional and modern nature. These research results can be interpreted as the importance of traditional values that are inherited in our society, but also transmitted and encouraged during education, training, and preparation for participation in multinational operations.

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ВОЈСКА У СЛУЖБИ ГЛОБАЛНОГ МИРА И БЕЗБЕДНОСТИ: ИНТЕРЕСОВАЊЕ И МОТИВАЦИЈА ЗА МУЛТИНАЦИОНАЛНЕ ОПЕРАЦИЈЕ***

Резиме

Циљ рада је да објасни допринос Војске Србије постизању и одржавању глобалног мира и безбедности кроз ангажовање у мировним операцијама широм света, а посебно приказивањем мотивације њених припадника за учешће у таквим задацима. У раду су представљена одређена истраживања спроведена на ову тему, анализирани су и изведени закључци. Мотивациони фактори за одлуку припадника војске да учествују у мултинационалним операцијама представљени су као премодерни, модерни и постмодерни применом Батистелијеве парадигме. Претпоставка од које су аутори пошли у овом раду била је да су мотивациони фактори за учешће наших припадника у домену традиционалног (премодерног) и модерног. Истраживање се заснива на традицији учешћа наше војске у мисијама везаним за успостављање, одржавање и изградњу мира. Аутори су као полазну тачку узели историјску анализу која је представила претходно ангажовање војног особља у мировним операцијама као историјску чињеницу на којој се заснивају активности Војске Србије у овој мисији доприноса глобалном миру и безбедности. Аргументовано представљајући значај ове мисије наше војске и првенствено истичући њену улогу у очувању глобалног мира и безбедности, рад такође представља процес стицања искуства и знања неопходних за учешће у

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*** Рад је настало као резултат истраживања на пројекту „Вредносне оријентације и однос према традицији кадета Војне академије” (ВА/ДХ/1/24-26).

мултинационалним операцијама, као и процес преношења искуства и знања стечених у мултинационалним операцијама. Примарни значај резултата истраживања је у томе што је потврђено да су: јачање спољнополитичког угледа и међународних односа наше земље, општи развој наше војске и стицање вредног искуства, као и финансијски положај учесника најјачи мотивациони фактори за учешће у мировним операцијама. Применом Батистелијеве парадигме мотивационих фактора, код наших припадника пронађени су мотивациони фактори који спадају и у традиционалне и у модерне категорије. Посебно место у раду заузимају резултати истраживања о интересовању и мотивацији учесника и будућих учесника у мировним (мултинационалним) операцијама. Истраживање се заснива на претходним истраживањима у овој области и спроведено је у оквиру пројекта „Вредносне оријентације и однос према традицији кадета Војне академије”. У оквиру овог пројекта, између осталог, спроведено је истраживање на узорку од 200 кадета о интересовању и мотивацији за учешће у мултинационалним операцијама. У раду се утврђује да у складу са повећаним безбедносним изазовима расте значај мултинационалних операција, а самим тим и важност стицања потребних знања за учешће у њима. Због захтевних задатака у савременим операцијама, особље ангажовано у мултинационалним операцијама мора бити обучено, као и адекватно информисано и образовано. Наиме, услед вишедимензионалности мултинационалних операција, потребан је адаптивни приступ образовању и стицању знања, што захтева велику агилност и стално праћење потребних вештина, знања и искустава учесника. Наравно, неопходно је стално праћење интересовања и мотивације за учешће у мировним операцијама, као и подстицање и развијање ових категорија. Коначан закључак рада је да је спроведено истраживање заправо потврдило почетну претпоставку аутора да су мотивациони фактори наших учесника и будућих учесника мултинационалних операција традиционалне и модерне природе.

Кључне речи: Република Србија, Војска Србије, Војна академија, мултинационалне операције, мировне операције, мотивациони фактори

* This manuscript was submitted on June 8, 2025, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on August 20, 2025.

UDC 327(497.11:497.7)"2006/2025"
DOI: 10.5937/spm92-58190
Review article

Српска политичка мисао
(Serbian Political Thought)
No 4/2025.
Vol. 92
pp. 95-113

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FOREIGN POLICY RELATIONS BETWEEN SERBIA AND NORTH MACEDONIA 2006–2025.**

Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyze the foreign policy relations between Serbia and North Macedonia in the period from 2006 to 2025, specifically from the moment Serbia reestablished its statehood after Montenegro's secession. In this context, the first part of the paper offers a brief overview of the historical background of relations between Belgrade and Skopje during the final phase of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, i.e., during the era of the joint state FRY/SCG from 1991 to 2006. The central part of the paper focuses on the political, security, economic, and cultural relations between the two states in the period following Serbia's renewed statehood. Specifically, through the issues of recognition of the so-called Kosovo,* the church dispute, then the status of national minorities but also participation in joint programs and initiatives, economic ties and interdependence, as well as humanitarian cooperation, which were the most topical and which aroused the most interest in political and media terms in both countries, we will try to consider the development of bilateral relations between Serbia and North Macedonia. They are highly complex, primarily due to issues of national and spiritual identity, as well as a shared cultural heritage,

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** This paper was written within the research activity of the Institute of European Studies, funded by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia.

* All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of United Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

which has served both as a point of connection and a barrier to the national emancipation of Macedonians on one side and the modern understanding of Serbian identity on the other. The entire period of the dissolution of the former common state was marked by very poor bilateral relations, which culminated in Skopje's recognition of the secession of Albanian separatists in Priština in 2008. In recent years, relations between Serbia and North Macedonia have been warming on both the political and economic fronts, despite a change of government in Skopje in 2017 and the country's accession to NATO in 2020. A particularly significant turning point was the recognition of the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church by the Serbian Orthodox Church in 2022. The paper also explores the prospects for future relations between the two countries.

Keywords: Serbia, North Macedonia, Balkans, Church, NATO, identity

INTRODUCTION

Serbia and North Macedonia are neighboring countries with many similarities. In terms of foreign policy, both countries are strategically committed to membership in the European Union, and at the same time, they are members of numerous regional organizations and initiatives, such as the Open Balkans, the CEFTA agreement, the Berlin Process, etc. On the other hand, while North Macedonia is a member of the NATO pact, Serbia pursues a proclaimed policy of military neutrality, with participation in the NATO program called Partnership for Peace. Although the statehood of North Macedonia was built on territory that once belonged to the internationally recognized Kingdom of Serbia, it was achieved following the successful realization of separatist aspirations and tendencies during the Yugoslav era and the full affirmation of a new Macedonian national identity in the, until then, majority Serbian ethnic area,¹ towards the end of World War II (Ilić 2024, 56). In this regard, it is no surprise that the prevailing opinion today is that these are the closest nations in the region, and interethnic trust in the ex-Yugoslav and Balkan space is highest between Serbs and Macedonians (Raković 2015, 221–222).

¹ Many ethnologists have written about this. See also: Erdeljanović 1925.

After the secession of North Macedonia² from the SFR Yugoslavia on September 8, 1991, relations between Belgrade and Skopje were not immediately established. This only occurred after the end of the civil war in the western parts of the former state in 1996. At that time, the FR Yugoslavia recognized its southern neighbor under the name of the Republic of Macedonia,³ which provoked strong reactions from the Greek side (Todić 2018, 84–85).

After secession of Montenegro in 2006, the Republic of Serbia maintained its embassy in Skopje and continued to apply all previously ratified agreements with North Macedonia. Therefore, there was no need to reestablish diplomatic relations between Belgrade and Skopje, as they had already been considered established since 1996. At the very beginning of Serbia's renewed statehood, Belgrade faced an existential challenge. At that time, negotiations on the status of Serbia's southern province were already underway in Vienna, but they ultimately failed following the rejection of the Ahtisaari Plan and the unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence by Albanian separatists. This issue also had significant repercussions on the political scene in Macedonia, considering the large percentage of the Albanian population and the consensus among all relevant Albanian political parties on the matter.⁴ In coordination with Montenegro and the United States, the Macedonian government⁵ made the decision to recognize the so-called Kosovo on October 9, 2008. The Serbian government responded the next day by withdrawing hospitality to Macedonian ambassador Aleksandar Vasilevski and delivering a protest note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Skopje, requesting that the FYROM reconsider its decision (Čolak i Roknić 2008).

² The current constitutional name of this state will be used in this paper. It should be noted that this country was admitted to the UN under the name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), while official Belgrade has always recognized Skopje under its constitutional name, the Republic of Macedonia.

³ Despite the naming dispute Skopje officially had with Greece until 2018.

⁴ In this regard, it is worth noting that after the constitutional changes of 2001, conditioned by the adoption of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the Albanian community, as one of the non-majority communities, through the so-called Badinter Rule, received the right to veto the revision of the Constitution, (Галева 2019, 235) as well as certain policies, which also determines the foreign policy of this country.

⁵ The coalition government of VMRO-DPMNE and the largest Albanian party, DUI, led by Nikola Gruevski.

By recognizing the illegal secession of Kosovo and Metohija, Skopje officially jeopardized the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia within its constitutional and internationally recognized borders. As a result, relations between the two states reached their lowest point since the disintegration of the SFRY (Igrutinović i Paunović 2019, 116). It is worth noting that Skopje did not respond with reciprocal measures, likely assessing that the act of recognizing so-called Kosovo was itself more impactful than any response from official Belgrade. Only a few months later, relations began to thaw. In May 2009, Ljubiša Georgievski was appointed as the new Macedonian ambassador to Serbia (*Glas Srpske* 2009). That same August, for the first time in five years, a Macedonian state delegation visited the Serbian monastery of St. Prohor Pčinjski, led by the Speaker of the Parliament, Trajko Veljanoski, who laid a wreath at the site believed to be the location of the first ASNOM session on Ilinden in 1944 (*Time.mk* 2009).

SERBIAN–MACEDONIAN RELATIONS 2012–2022.

A new phase in relations between the two countries appears to have begun with the change of government in Belgrade in 2012. That year coincided with the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Kumanovo, which marked the beginning of the final liberation of these territories from centuries-long Ottoman occupation. For the first time at the highest state level, two national Serb delegations (from Serbia and Republika Srpska) attended the commemoration of this significant event. On that occasion, the President of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolić, in the presence of the Macedonian Minister of Culture, Elizabeta Kančeska, emphasized that the celebration of this anniversary was “a message of peace, cooperation, and understanding that Serbia and Macedonia send to the region and to the whole world. Zebrnjak is a place that unites us” (Predsednik Republike Srbije 2012). Despite potential geopolitical challenges, the organization of this ceremony, with intertwined Serbian and Macedonian flags, represented an important step in building bilateral relations between Belgrade and Skopje (Živaljević 2019, 158). However, the internal political crisis in North Macedonia also positively influenced the deepening of relations. The first signs of this crisis were seen in 2013 when the opposition walked out of the Sobranie (Macedonian Parliament), and again during the 2014 presidential elections. In 2016, the situation escalated into

massive protests against Nikola Gruevski, known as the “Colorful Revolution”. During these developments, Gruevski’s regime further strengthened ties with Belgrade, with a common practice of holding joint government sessions. In May 2015, the largest terrorist attack in the country since the 2001 insurgency occurred in Kumanovo. Among the eight killed police officers were three ethnic Serbs from Macedonia. This fact, along with the proximity to the Serbian border, prompted reactions from the Serbian public and authorities, who expressed support for Macedonian institutions in their fight against Albanian extremism and terrorist activities. In this context, some authors argue that this act was a “replay of the deep crisis in Albanian-Serbian relations, albeit on a smaller scale,” which “stimulated regional debate about Albanian aspirations, their status, and relations with neighbors” (Teokarević 2015, 43). The Albanian terrorist threat could at that moment have been a factor in bringing the two countries closer together, considering that Skopje had overcome the Albanian uprising in 2001 after the uprising in south-central Serbia the same year (Митевски 2009, 183). The factor of ethnically based terrorism represented a kind of cohesive factor between both societies but, at the same time, it did not have a serious impact on the foreign policy relations of the two states.

In this regard, just a few months later, FYROM voted in favor of the self-proclaimed “Republic of Kosovo” joining UNESCO at the Executive Board and General Assembly (Габер 2017, 305). The aim of the Albanian separatist authorities was to gain control over four of the most important Serbian religious and cultural heritage sites in Kosovo and Metohija. Although this proposal was ultimately unsuccessful, this attitude showed that Gruevski’s tenure could be characterized as a period in which Serbian-Macedonian relations seriously fluctuated, rather than as a period of significant rapprochement between Belgrade and Skopje. This claim is further supported by the persecution of the canonical Archbishop of Ohrid, Jovan (Vraniškovski), which was most intense during this period (Raković 2019, 205–206). It is also noteworthy that Serbian historian Aleksandar Raković, who at the time was welcomed in Skopje as an advocate for improved relations, reported that Nikola Gruevski received advice from non-canonical church circles of the Macedonian Orthodox Church to vote in favor of Kosovo’s UNESCO membership (Raković 2016, 157). This indicates that not only official Skopje, but also the church hierarchy in the country, worked toward erasing Serbian religious and cultural heritage both within their own borders and on Serbian territory.

On the other hand, as the internal political crisis deepened in the following year, the regime in Skopje recognized the need to win over Belgrade in order to preserve its already shaken international standing. However, relations deteriorated again in early 2017 when the opposition SDSM, led by Zoran Zaev, formed a new government with former Albanian coalition partners of VMRO-DPMNE. The crisis reached its peak when disgruntled protesters and Gruevski supporters stormed the Sobranie on April 27. Belgrade initially viewed the formation of the new government in Skopje with distrust. On the other hand, a scandal broke out in Skopje over the alleged involvement of an advisor at the Serbian embassy in that country in the riots in the Parliament (Živaljević 2019, 202–223). Belgrade then withdrew the entire staff of the Serbian Embassy in Skopje for consultations in Belgrade. At that time, bilateral relations seemed to be at their lowest point since October 2008. However, after a few days, Belgrade announced the return of its personnel, and both sides stated that they would resolve disagreements through dialogue. (Igrutinović i Paunović 2019, 122). While relations with Belgrade were very turbulent in the first months of the new Macedonian government, Skopje soon significantly improved relations with Sofia and resolved the long-standing name dispute with Greece by signing the Prespa Agreement in June 2018, officially changing the country's name to North Macedonia.⁶ After that, Albanian was declared the second official language of North Macedonia (Закон за употреба на јазиците 2019, чл. 2). Normalization of relations with these three neighbors eventually led, with Belgrade's involvement, to a thaw in Serbian–North Macedonian relations through a new integrative process. Namely, at the end of 2019, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Albania launched an initiative to create a so-called Mini Schengen, aimed at improving economic integration and creating a common market based on the free movement of people, goods, capital, and services. In July 2021, this regional initiative was renamed the Open Balkan (Rikalović, Molnar, and Josipović 2022, 32–33). It served as a framework for renewed closeness between the two countries, particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Belgrade

⁶ Although many citizens boycotted the referendum that confirmed this agreement. A significant portion of the academic community also opposed the Prespa Agreement, with some authors highlighting violations of both international and domestic law (Никодиновска Крстевска 2018, 127–131).

donated a large number of vaccine doses to North Macedonian citizens (Filipović 2021, 22), which was accepted as a gesture of goodwill.

In July 2019, the prime ministers of both countries, Ana Brnabić and Zoran Zaev, opened the integrated border crossing Preševo–Tabanovce, facilitating easier border passage (Đurić 2019). Also, Serbian citizens no longer need a passport to enter North Macedonia –only a biometric ID card is required, and vice versa. However, an additional security challenge to these significant steps towards rapprochement between the two states was Skopje's membership in the NATO alliance, which contributed to the almost complete encirclement of Serbia by NATO forces, which complicated Belgrade's position in preserving its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Especially considering the gravity of Belgrade's historical relations with NATO, as well as the position of most members of this organization on the issue of Kosovo's status. The situation became even more complex with the escalation of the war in Ukraine and the start of the Russian special military operation in February 2022. Unlike Serbia, which did not align its foreign policy with that of the EU and NATO and refused to impose sanctions on the Russian Federation, Skopje fully followed the other NATO members – besides political and economic sanctions, it also provided significant military aid to Kyiv, including tanks. The war in Eastern Europe, in addition to marginalizing the Open Balkans project, divided the Western Balkans on this issue. In addition to pressure from Brussels on Belgrade to impose sanctions on Russia, Moscow, on the other hand, unlike Serbia, put North Macedonia on the list of enemy countries (Gugić 2022, 36). Thus, the two countries find themselves in different positions when it comes to the biggest security crisis in Europe at the moment, which may also affect their mutual relations in the future.

When it comes to the difference in the policies towards Serbia of the two largest North Macedonian parties, it seems that their roles have changed over time. While in the 1990s, Ljubčo Georgievski established VMRO-DPMNE on old pro-Bulgarian and anti-Serbian traditions, Gruevski, in the later stages of his rule, increasingly turned this party towards a more conciliatory policy towards Belgrade, as the only neighbor that did not dispute the borders, identity, name, or other factors on which North Macedonian statehood was built. On the other hand, SDSM, initially perceived as a pro-Yugoslav relic of the former League of Communists of Yugoslavia, over time emerged as a purely pro-Western option. For this party, targeting the alleged Serbian

influence on the extension of the power of her bitterest political rival will be a kind of justification for the support of Western structures in returning this party to power in 2017.

RESOLUTION OF THE CHURCH DISPUTE

However, the year 2022 was marked by an event that represents a precedent in mutual relations. After fifty-five years of church schism, into which the so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church entered in 1967 by uncanonically separating from the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), reconciliation between the two hierarchies was finally achieved. In early May 2022, the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople accepted the clergy and faithful of the Orthodox Church in North Macedonia into Eucharistic and canonical communion after decades of isolation. Although this move was a direct non-canonical intervention by the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Phanar) into the canonical territory of the SOC, it did not amount to a recognition of autocephaly, a step for which the Ecumenical Patriarchate had no jurisdiction, nor did it resolve the final status of this ecclesiastical territory or definitively determine the name of the new local church. The Ecumenical Patriarchate took the position that it was up to the Serbian Church to regulate, within canonical norms and church tradition, the administrative matters between it and the Church in North Macedonia, referring to the new church body as the Archdiocese of Ohrid, while simultaneously denying it the right to use the name "Macedonian" (Perić 2023, 126). Amidst these developments, it was revealed that the hierarchies of Belgrade and Skopje had begun negotiations regarding the canonical status of the eparchies in North Macedonia. During the May session of the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Bishop Fotije of Zvornik-Tuzla informed the public about the renewal of dialogue between the SOC and the MOC regarding the potential restoration of canonical unity (*Религија. мк* 2022). On the other hand, the non-canonical interference of the Ecumenical Patriarchate was largely ignored and, by some religious analysts, even relativized. Despite being seen as hasty, this intervention was considered welcome in the context of pan-Orthodox acceptance of such a decision (Gagić 2022).

Just a few days later, negotiations were successfully concluded, and on May 19, 2022, reconciliation and the restoration of canonical unity between the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) and the Macedonian

Orthodox Church (MOC) took place. Through a joint liturgy held at the Church of Saint Sava in Belgrade, Serbian Patriarch Porfirije and Macedonian Archbishop Stefan marked the return of the Macedonian Orthodox Church to the status of an autonomous church within the Serbian Orthodox Church, the same autonomous status it had held since 1959 (Perić 2023, 127). Aside from a few critics, this event was met with overwhelmingly positive reactions from both sides, as well as throughout the Orthodox world. The Serbian public interpreted this move as the restoration of canonical unity and the return of the Macedonian dioceses under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church, while the public in North Macedonia seemed to see it as an intermediate step towards achieving full autocephaly through canonical means. However, in the statement issued by the Holy Council of Bishops of the SOC, it was already made clear, through the expression of hope that the final status of the Macedonian Church would be resolved in the fraternal spirit of pan-Orthodox consensus, that the autonomous status of the MOC would not be its final status (Ilić 2022a). The suspicions of a small number of observers were confirmed just five days later, when on May 24, 2022, Serbian Patriarch Porfirije, on behalf of the entire Holy Council of Bishops, granted autocephaly to the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Archdiocese of Ohrid, during a joint liturgy held in the Cathedral of Saint Clement of Ohrid in Skopje, in the presence of both Serbian and Macedonian hierarchs (Perić 2023, 128). This historic moment, in which the SOC relinquished part of its canonical territory, was welcomed the same day by the presidents of Serbia and North Macedonia, Aleksandar Vučić and Stevo Pendarovski, who were at the time holding talks on the Open Balkan initiative in Davos (NI 2022). However, the act of recognition alone did not resolve all open issues, and the official document of recognition in the form of a Tomos of Autocephaly was still awaited. Once again, unexpectedly, on June 5, 2022, in Belgrade, the Tomos was handed over by Patriarch Porfirije to Archbishop Stefan. With this act, the new Church was recognized under its full name, and all Serbian holy sites, as well as all SOC property on the territory of North Macedonia, were handed over for use to the new local Church. Thus, at first glance, the canonical status of the new Church was fully resolved (Perić 2023, 130).

However, two serious issues emerged that could complicate both inter-church and inter-state relations between Belgrade and Skopje. The first was the status of the canonical Orthodox Ohrid Archdiocese,

which, as a result of this decision by the Belgrade Patriarchate, became an internal ecclesiastical issue within North Macedonia – one in which the Serbian Church no longer involved itself. The second issue presents an open challenge to future Serbian–North Macedonian relations. The new Church in Skopje calls itself the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Archdiocese of Ohrid – Justiniana Prima. This third designation represents not only a clear aspiration by Skopje to lay claim to the broader ecclesiastical history of the region, but also a direct challenge to the remaining canonical territories of the Serbian Orthodox Church, considering that the historical site known as *Justiniana Prima* is located near Lebane, within the borders of present-day central Serbia. Since the Serbian Orthodox Church recognized the Macedonian Orthodox Church under its full name, it means that it has agreed in principle to the third part of the new Church's name, which directly claims the southern Serbian canonical areas. These facts should be kept in mind, especially considering that autocephaly, including the name of the new Church, for the public in North Macedonia was primarily a matter of national identity (Risteski 2009, 144).

NEW PERSPECTIVES IN MUTUAL RELATIONS

Amid efforts to resolve open church issues, just one day after the granting of the *Tomos* of autocephaly, the authorities of North Macedonia banned the overflight of a plane carrying the Russian Federation's Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, who was scheduled to visit Serbia (Симоновски 2022). In this way, the Macedonian side closed the last open issue it had with Belgrade. Although both states are nominally secular, such a significant concession by the Serbian Church, which led to an additional rapprochement of the two peoples, and therefore the two states, was not accompanied by any concessions from the Macedonian side when it comes to Serbian interests; quite the opposite. It is therefore not surprising that the North Macedonian delegation voted in favor of the resolution on Srebrenica submitted to the UN General Assembly in May 2024 by Germany and Rwanda, which qualifies this war crime as genocide, which was a heavy blow to Serbia's position internationally. This move was even less surprising considering that North Macedonia was among the 34 co-sponsors of the resolution. On the other hand, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić expressed regret over this decision by Serbia's southern neighbors, whom he referred to

as “brothers” (*Сакам да кажам* 2024). However, official Belgrade did not undertake any countermeasures, as had been the case in previous years. At that time, VMRO-DPMNE returned to power in Skopje, led by Hristijan Mickoski, who took the party helm after Nikola Gruevski stepped down and left the country in 2017. A long-time loyal ally of the largest Macedonian party, Ivan Stoilković’s Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia (DPSM) once again became part of the ruling coalition. Stoilković was appointed Minister for Community Relations and Deputy Prime Minister, marking a significant step forward. Relations between the two countries continued to improve, as confirmed by Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić and North Macedonia’s new President, Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, during the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the first ASNOM session at the St. Prohor Pčinjski Monastery (*Politika* 2024).

Serbia reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining the closest foreign policy relations with North Macedonia during a moment of unprecedented tragedy that struck the city of Kočani on March 16, 2025. A fire at a local nightclub has killed 62 people and seriously injured more than 190. Among all countries that admitted the injured, such as Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Croatia, and others, Serbia hospitalized the highest number of patients (Крстески 2025). On the other hand, the North Macedonian side has shown increasing interest in military cooperation with the separatist authorities in Priština. Namely, in late 2024, Turkey signed a framework defense agreement with Albania, North Macedonia, and the so-called Kosovo (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of North Macedonia [MDRNM] 2024). Following announcements about the formation of a military alliance between Zagreb, Tirana, and Priština, Turkey also announced its ratification of the pact in late March 2025 (*Nordic Monitor* 2025). Regarding anti-Serbian actions by third countries on North Macedonian territory, it is important to note that, at the end of 2024, some scenes of a Turkish TV series dedicated to Naser Orić were filmed in North Macedonia (*Sandžačke.rs* 2024). Orić, the wartime commander of Muslim forces from Srebrenica, is charged by Serbian judicial authorities with grave war crimes against the Serbian population in the Podrinje region.⁷ All these provocative moves by

⁷ An additional curiosity is the fact that the footage of this series, which was filmed on the territory of North Macedonia, was filmed mainly in the area of Serbian villages of Skopska Crna Gora, more specifically in the majority Serbian village of Banjani. It is clear that this choice of location represented a provocation, both

Skopje went unanswered by Belgrade. It is obvious that the thesis put forward by some geopolitical analysts at the beginning of the century, that Skopje, especially after the limited civil war in 2001, completely surrendered to the Atlanticist vector, has turned out to be correct after a quarter of a century. North Macedonia's relationship with Serbia is the best indicator of the thesis that this country has become a tool in the hands of Atlanticism (Proroković 2007, 561).

Finally, it is important to highlight that the Republic of Serbia officially recognizes the Macedonian national minority, which, according to the latest 2022 census, numbered 14,767 individuals. Macedonians in Serbia primarily reside in Belgrade and parts of the Banat region (including Pančevo, Jabuka, Kačarevo, and Plandište). They have their own National Council as well as media outlets in their native language. In 2010, the Union of Macedonian Associations of Serbia was established, bringing together over 50 Macedonian organizations dedicated to preserving tradition, customs, folklore, language, culture, education, information, and similar activities (Raduški 2021, 59). On the other hand, after North Macedonia's independence, Serbs faced years of difficulty in obtaining recognition as a national minority (Галева 2019, 227). However, following the signing of the Ohrid Agreement in 2001, Serbs gained constitutional recognition as a national minority. Since then, they have been granted the right to use their language in three municipalities with a significant Serbian presence (Čučer-Sandevo, Staro Nagoričane, and Kumanovo). St. Sava's Day was officially declared the Day of the Serbian National Minority, and Serbian political representatives have occasionally participated in the executive government. Nevertheless, the religious rights of the Serbian population have been continuously violated, largely due to the decades-long church schism. As a result, the number of Serbs has declined over time to just 23,847, and the percentage of Serbian language speakers has fallen below that of so-called Bosnian language speakers (Ilić 2022b, 24–25).

In addition to the issue of national minorities, the border question remains unresolved, particularly in the context of North Macedonia's recognition of the so-called Kosovo. Specifically, in 2009, Skopje signed an agreement with the separatist authorities in Priština

for the Serbian community in this country and for official Belgrade. However, the aforementioned actions were completely ignored, and were not followed by any reaction from the Serbian side.

on border demarcation, which in essence defines the border between Serbia and North Macedonia (Dimitrijević 2015, 108–109). Despite all the aforementioned challenges, relations between the two countries have continued to develop in recent years. Fifteen years after opening an honorary consulate in Bitola, Serbia also opened an honorary consulate in Ohrid. On the other hand, economic relations have been significantly improved, with a noticeable increase in trade volume and investments, as well as growing economic interdependence between the two economies. Over the 15-year period (2006–2021), Serbia's exports to North Macedonia grew at an annual rate of 7.75%, from \$319 million in 2006 to \$976 million in 2021 (Jelisavac Trošić and Arnaudov 2023, 152). North Macedonia's exports to Serbia were 800.72 million USD during 2022 (Jelisavac Trošić and Arnaudov 2023, 153). Serbia's exports to North Macedonia were 1.02 billion USD during 2022 (Jelisavac Trošić and Arnaudov 2023, 153). Serbia is Macedonia's largest trading partner among all countries in the Western Balkans region, and Serbia is North Macedonia's fourth trading partner, after Germany, the UK, and Greece (Jelisavac Trošić and Arnaudov 2023, 154–155). The two countries have signed a large number of bilateral agreements in recent years, and they also achieve economic cooperation through other broader frameworks, such as the CEFTA agreement (Jelisavac Trošić and Arnaudov 2023, 155). All these processes will affect the bilateral relations between Belgrade and Skopje in the future.

CONCLUSION

Foreign policy relations between Serbia and North Macedonia are highly dynamic and complex, shaped by a complicated historical background and burdened with numerous challenges. Given that the process of forming the Macedonian nation and state unfolded alongside the disintegration of the Serbian state and ethnic space, it is clear that in the complex historical circumstances of the late 20th and early 21st century, these relations could not have been simple. All identity-related disputes between Belgrade and Skopje were effectively settled with the recognition of the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church by the Serbian Orthodox Church, along with the complete transfer of Serbian heritage south of the Šar Mountains to the new Church, resulting in the final affirmation of Macedonian identity. There are still open political and economic issues between the two countries. These

concern North Macedonia's non-recognition of Serbia's territorial integrity, its NATO membership, and its military alignment with the separatist regime in Priština through a defense agreement with Ankara and Tirana, which poses a serious security challenge for Serbia. The minority issue is becoming increasingly irrelevant, primarily for demographic reasons. With each census, the number of Serbs in North Macedonia and Macedonians in Serbia continues to decrease, so neither group represents a significant factor in their respective states. The brightest point in bilateral relations remains economic cooperation, including trade exchange, investments, and the integration of economic space. Therefore, it is expected that future cooperation between the two countries will primarily focus on the economic, and to some extent cultural, spheres, while the political and security dimensions will depend on numerous uncertainties.

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СПОЉНОПОЛИТИЧКИ ОДНОСИ СРБИЈЕ И СЕВЕРНЕ МАКЕДОНИЈЕ 2006–2025.**

Резиме

Циљ овог члanka је анализа спољнополитичких односа Србије и Северне Македоније у периоду од 2006–2025. године, тачније од тренутка када је обновљена државност Србије, након отцепљења Црне Горе. С тим у вези, у првом делу рада биће учињен краћи осврт на предисторију међусобних односа Београда и Скопља у последњој фази распада Југославије, односно у епохи постојања заједничке државе СРЈ/СЦГ од 1991. до 2006. године. Потом ће централни део рада бити посвећен политичким, безбедносним, економским и културним односима две државе у периоду након обнове српске државности. Конкретно, кроз питања признања тзв. Косова, црквеног спора, потом статуса националних мањина, али и учешћа у заједничким програмима и иницијативама, економске повезаности и међузависности, као и хуманитарне сарадње, која су била најактуелнија, и која су изазвала највише интересовања у политичком и медијском погледу у обе земље, покушаћемо да размотримо развој билатералних односа Србије и Северне Македоније. Они су веома сложени, пре свега, због питања националног и духовног идентитета, али и културног наслеђа које је заједничко и које је представљало препреку националној еманципацији Македонаца са једне, односно савременом схватању српског идентитета, са друге стране. Целокупан период распада претходне заједничке државе обележен је веома лошим међусобним односима, који су кулминирали признањем сепресије албанских сепаратиста у Приштини од стране Скопља 2008. године. Последњих година односи Србије и Северне Македоније

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** Овај рад је написан у оквиру научноистраживачке делатности Института за европске студије, коју финансира Министарство науке, технолошког развоја и иновација Републике Србије.

отопљавају како на политичком, тако и на економском плану, упркос промени власти која се додогодила у Скопљу 2017, те уласка ове земље у НАТО 2020. године. Посебно, након признања аутокефалности МПЦ од стране СПЦ 2022. године. У раду ће се разматрати и перспективе међусобних односа две државе.

Кључне речи: Србија, Северна Македонија, Балкан, Црква, НАТО, идентитет

* This manuscript was submitted on April 14, 2025, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on August 20, 2025.

ESSAYS

UDC 323(497.11)+316.77:174
DOI: 10.5937/spm92-59451
Original research article

Српска политичка мисао
(Serbian Political Thought)
No 4/2025.
Vol. 92
pp. 115-140

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SCOPE AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF AI IN JOURNALISM: THE PERSPECTIVE OF JOURNALISM STUDENTS***

Abstract

This study examines the perceptions of journalism students at the University of Belgrade concerning the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the journalistic profession. Specifically, it explores their opinions toward the potential benefits and drawbacks of AI, its appropriate and inappropriate applications in newsroom settings, and the ethical dilemmas it may pose. The research was conducted among 204 final-year journalism students from the Faculty of Political

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*** Paper presented at the international scientific conference EMERGE 2024: Ethics of AI Alignment (December 11–13, 2024, at the Institute of Philosophy and Social Theory in Belgrade). URL: emerge.ifdt.bg.ac.rs/#program

This paper was published with funding from the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia based on the Agreement on the Implementation and Financing of Scientific Research Work NIO in 2025, number: 451-03-136/2025-03 dated January 27, 2025.

Sciences at the University of Belgrade. A mixed-method survey was used, incorporating both closed and open-ended questions, as well as rating scales, to gather comprehensive data. Findings suggest that future media professionals are highly aware of the growing influence of AI on journalism. A significant majority of respondents perceive AI as having a strong or very strong impact on the field, while only a small number consider its influence to be minimal or limited. Although participants acknowledge both the opportunities and challenges posed by AI, the overall perception of its impact on journalism is predominantly negative.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, contemporary journalism, journalism students, journalistic ethics, Serbia

INTRODUCTION: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND JOURNALISM

The rapid evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) and the expansion of AI-based tools have revealed immense potential for its application in media and journalism. This development reinforces the notion that “the digital media era is defined by innovation and radical change across all aspects of journalism” (Franklin 2014, 481). This technology, particularly generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), has already been in use in newsrooms worldwide for several years, yet its scale and diverse applications raise numerous ethical concerns and professional dilemmas. Nevertheless, despite all limitations and potential risks it brings, it is already evident that AI will represent one of the greatest challenges for journalism in the coming years. The way it is adopted by journalists and editors, as well as the extent of its integration into editorial processes, will significantly influence newsroom efficiency, media credibility, and public perception of the value of journalism itself.

In most discussions to date regarding the impact of AI on journalism and the future of media, the emphasis has primarily been placed on the technological dimension, highlighting the capabilities of AI as the driving force behind media evolution and its expanding role in news production. This trend is evident in our country as well, as illustrated by the fact that “academic debate on the digital

transformation of traditional media in Serbia shows that authors often focus on issues related to the adoption of digital technologies, concerns over privacy, anonymity of users' comments and sources, as well as the general decline in trust in digital tools" (Krstić 2023, 1016). While this approach is valid – since it is impossible to overlook the fact that "journalism is always shaped by technology" (Pavlik 2001) – scholars are increasingly drawing attention to the often-overlooked influence of journalists' and editors' perceptions and expectations concerning the scope and manner of AI implementation. In other words, although technological advancement unquestionably brings new possibilities, the specific ways in which these tools are integrated into editorial workflows largely depend on the attitudes and decisions of newsroom professionals themselves (Nerlich and Halliday 2007).

Taking this context into account, this paper explores the attitudes and expectations of future media professionals regarding the role of AI in journalism. These attitudes will significantly influence the ways in which AI is utilized once they enter the journalism field. Moreover, understanding how journalism students in Serbia perceive AI, specifically its positive and negative impacts on the profession, justified and unjustified uses, and the ethical challenges that arise, can serve as a valuable corrective tool in journalistic education and professional development. Their perspectives are important because they reflect how young journalists approach this technology and how, based on their current understanding, they might employ it in their future work. These insights are highly valuable for identifying the new knowledge and skills that need to be cultivated in aspiring journalists and editors to ensure responsible and constructive use of AI. After all, "today's media workers, in order to survive, must possess knowledge and skills that go beyond their immediate responsibilities" (Deuze and Steward 2011, 8).

The findings of this study gain additional significance when considering that AI-based tools will predominantly be used by younger professionals, a trend already established in most leading media organizations worldwide. This means that final-year journalism students represent one of the most critical target groups for professional training in the responsible and constructive use of AI in the media. In fact, the use of certain AI tools will likely become part of their daily responsibilities from their very first editorial assignments. "Precisely because of this, digital-age journalists must pay special attention to

acquiring the knowledge that will be key to future success,” and it is clear that among these essential skills today is the ability to effectively use AI in newsrooms (Kljajić i Nedeljković 2015, 318).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DEVELOPMENT AND TYPES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

In order to adequately understand the evolution, current state of development, and potential applications of AI in journalism, it is essential to begin by defining this technology, outlining its various types and purposes, and exploring its practical uses in the media industry. Rather than a single unified technology, AI is often described as a loosely defined set of algorithms, techniques, and tools that offer a powerful “mathematical method for prediction” (Broussard 2018, 32). Given the vast and diverse nature of the AI field, several types of AI have already been classified according to their functions and use cases. Each type serves a specific purpose, incorporates different tools and technologies, and therefore operates in unique ways. One of the tech giants and pioneers in AI development, Microsoft, identifies the foundational category as “traditional artificial intelligence.” This type relies on machine learning models and is primarily used to automate repetitive tasks where efficiency and precision are crucial. Within this traditional AI framework, two key subtypes are most commonly distinguished: predictive AI, which analyzes historical data and past behaviors to identify patterns and forecast future outcomes; and conversational AI, which enables interaction between humans and machines (such as chatbots and virtual assistants) through text-based or voice-based interfaces (Microsoft 2025).

Of particular relevance to the field of journalism and media studies is generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), which is distinguished by its capacity to produce original media content across diverse formats. “Generative AI performs tasks that no other form of artificial intelligence can – it creates new, unique content,” utilizing deep learning, “a sophisticated subset of machine learning designed to handle complex tasks and process large volumes of data. Through this process, GenAI is capable of generating new outputs in response to relatively simple prompts articulated in natural language” (Microsoft 2025). This enables GenAI to produce distinctive textual content, images, video, music, and various forms of code, and it is frequently

described as “creative and innovative.” However, such creativity is inherently constrained by the system’s dependence on existing data. GenAI’s outputs are derived from its ability to detect and replicate patterns embedded in pre-existing, human-produced media content and other accessible data sets. Consequently, the content it generates is not the result of autonomous or original thought, but rather an outcome of the recombination and imitation of recognizable patterns. As the volume of available data and published media content continues to expand, the number and diversity of detectable patterns similarly increase. This, in turn, enhances the system’s generative capacity over time, leading to more sophisticated and contextually nuanced outputs.

However, although this characterization of GenAI may, at first glance, suggest boundless opportunities for its application in journalism, the fact that its “creativity and innovation” are fundamentally rooted in replicating patterns recognized in pre-existing, human-generated media content implies that its editorial potential remains rather limited. From the outset, the use of AI for generating written formats has been largely restricted to producing texts characterized by low complexity and a high degree of standardization. Such outputs are primarily feasible when clean, structured, and reliable datasets are available, such as official statistics from sporting events, data from institutional financial reports, or meteorological forecasts (Graefe 2016, 14). At the core of this process of automated journalism lies an algorithm that explores existing databases, evaluates and analyzes the data, and subsequently generates narratives autonomously by utilizing pre-programmed text modules (Graefe 2016). “In practice, the use of this capability is confined to a limited number of scenarios in which the data and information used for media content creation are so reliable and credible that they require no further journalistic verification, nor do they pose a risk of misinterpretation” (Nedeljković 2023, 61–62).

Based on the above, it can be concluded that AI primarily generates textual forms that are fact-based and exhibit a more objective linguistic style (Tatalović 2018). These are predominantly fact-centered journalistic formats, namely news reports and factual accounts. However, as artificial intelligence tools continue to evolve, the complexity of the texts that can be generated by AI-driven systems is also gradually increasing to some extent (Brennen, Howard, and Nielsen 2020). Nevertheless, all such advancements remain considerably limited within the domain of journalism. This is largely due to the fact that, at present, we still only

have access to what many researchers refer to as “narrow or weak” AI, whereas “general or strong” AI remains an aspirational goal for the future. “Narrow or weak artificial intelligence refers to systems capable of performing one or two tasks that require human intelligence,” while “general or strong artificial intelligence refers to systems that would be capable of performing any task that involves human intelligence.” The limiting factor, however, lies in the fact that general AI does not yet exist, and many experts believe it is uncertain whether such a level of development will ever be attained, even though it remains the ultimate objective (Brennen, Howard, and Nielsen 2020, 33).

Thus, although debates surrounding the role of AI in journalism frequently raise the question of whether it is capable of replacing journalists, the fact that Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) does not yet exist renders this question, to some extent, irrelevant within the current phase of technological development. As noted, “despite the sense of AI inevitability, its future is still in the process of being built” (Brennen, Howard, and Nielsen 2020, 34). The clearest indication that AGI remains a distant prospect is provided by the most recent study conducted by the British public broadcaster, the BBC (*BBC* 2025), which reveals that AI assistants produce various types of errors in as many as 51% of responses that incorporate the BBC’s content. Specifically, “19% of all AI assistant responses that cite BBC content include factual inaccuracies – incorrect statements, figures, and dates,” while simultaneously, “13% of quotes attributed to BBC texts were either altered or did not appear in the cited articles at all” (*BBC* 2025, 2). These findings offer compelling evidence of the current limitations of AI, and the report concludes with a warning that AI assistants risk misleading audiences by distorting BBC journalism (1).

Another crucial factor limiting the application of AI in journalism is the fact that transparency regarding the process of text generation and the identity of the author is one of the key elements in fostering greater trust in the media (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2007). The lack of such transparency represents one of the most significant challenges associated with the integration of AI into newsrooms. The reality is that AI tools – and the models that drive them – are often unclear even to those using them, including journalists, and this inherently complicates the assessment of their reliability. According to Thomson and associates, “without transparency about the sources and materials used, and the functioning of the algorithms, AI tools and the content

they generate pose a challenge to journalism, which has historically valued verifiability, authentication, and a certain level of openness. AI tools that explain their decision-making processes, disclose the source material they rely on, and are transparent about when and how their outputs are utilized, present fewer risks to journalists than those that do not" (Thomson *et al.* 2025, 9).

Therefore, one of the key imperatives concerning the use of AI in journalism is the clear labeling of media content that has been fully or partially generated by AI, as well as content in which AI has been used during the production process. According to Thomson and associates, "both audiences and journalists consider transparency about when and how artificial intelligence is used to be important. The public states that a label indicating the use of artificial intelligence should be clearly displayed at the beginning of the media content, whether it is video, audio, or written format" (Thomson *et al.* 2025, 9). For audiences, it is also essential to be informed about the extent to which AI has been used in the generation or editing of news and other media content, that this information is consistently placed in the same location within the media output, and that a universal symbol is adopted to indicate content generated or edited by AI (Thomson *et al.* 2025, 9).

Due to the evident importance of transparency in the use of AI, ethical guidelines and journalistic codes – from international to national levels – have already been updated to reflect this standard. These guidelines particularly emphasize the irreplaceable role of editorial and journalistic responsibility in the use of AI. For example, Reporters Without Borders in the "Paris Charter on AI and Journalism" (2023) state that "any use of artificial intelligence that has a significant impact on the production or distribution of journalistic content must be clearly indicated and publicly disclosed to users," and that "media organizations bear responsibility for the use of AI in the process of gathering, processing, and disseminating information" (Reporters Without Borders 2023). The same principles are reflected in the amendments to the "Code of Journalists of Serbia," particularly in Chapter Three, which addresses journalistic responsibility – "Media outlets must use artificial intelligence in a transparent, responsible, and proportionate manner in content creation and are fully accountable for any such published content. Media organizations are obliged to inform the public when media content has been created using tools based on artificial intelligence" (Savet za štampu 2025, 12).

DIFFERENT APPLICATIONS AND SCOPE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE MEDIA

After defining the basic types of AI, its actual capabilities in journalism, and the key ethical considerations, the next important aspect concerns the various ways in which AI is applied in the media. Based on current research, several different domains of AI use in media can be identified, and one particularly useful classification was employed in last year's study by the strategic research agency Craft and the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. This study distinguishes three domains of AI use in journalism, reflecting the processes of news gathering, content production, and distribution. The first category, labeled "Behind the Scenes", refers to the use of AI as an assistive tool in news gathering and journalist preparation – processes that are typically invisible to the audience. This includes tasks such as information gathering, interview transcription, speech or text translation, automated fact-checking, and similar activities. The second category, titled "Creating Content," is directly visible to the audience, as it involves the production of media content that consumers interact with, such as writing articles, generating images, graphics, or video materials. The third category, named "Delivering News in New Ways," relates to the use of AI to create new modes of news consumption. This includes the development of new formats, chatbot-facilitated conversations, personalized front pages, automated summarization, and AI-generated news narration (Collao 2024, 16).

The aforementioned study reveals that among the identified domains, the audience most readily accepts and approves of the use of AI "behind the scenes", followed by "delivering news in new ways," while significantly less support is expressed for the use of AI in "content creation." In other words, the more limited and journalist-supervised the role of AI in newsrooms, the more acceptable it is to the audience. Conversely, as AI operates with greater autonomy, public trust decreases, and the level of acceptability declines. One of the study's key conclusions is that human presence remains indispensable in journalism, particularly in the domain of content production. According to Collao, "human judgment and journalistic skills are still needed to offer interpretation and, where relevant, emotion in journalistic storytelling", as "journalism is often more than just relaying objectively verifiable facts" (Collao 2024, 16).

Interestingly, a direct correlation can be observed between the previously mentioned audience attitudes toward the use of AI in journalism and the views of media leaders regarding how AI should be implemented in newsrooms. The latest research conducted by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, based on a sample of 326 media leaders from 51 countries worldwide, reveals that over the past year, the perceived importance of AI use has increased across all media domains, particularly in those areas most acceptable to the audience (Newman and Cherubini 2025). More specifically, the results indicate that backend automation corresponding to the “behind-the-scenes” domain (e.g., tagging, transcription, and copyediting) is by far the most significant area of AI application in media, according to media leaders. As many as 96% of media publishers report that the use of AI for these purposes will be either very important (60%) or somewhat important (36%) in the years to come (Newman and Cherubini 2025, 31). Ranked second in importance is the use of AI to enhance personalization and recommendations, aligning with the “new ways of delivering news” domain (e.g., personalized homepages and alerts/notifications), which 80% of publishers regard as either very important in the future (41%) or somewhat important (39%). As with audience preferences, AI-assisted content creation with human oversight (e.g., summarization, headline writing, graphic and video generation) ranks third, with 77% of publishers considering it important. However, in this case, a smaller proportion identify it as very important (30%), while a larger portion sees it as somewhat important (47%) (Newman and Cherubini 2025, 31). It is also worth noting that the use of AI for newsgathering (e.g., verification, data processing, research) ranks fourth, with 73% of publishers deeming this domain either very important (24%) or somewhat important (49%). This application largely corresponds to the “behind-the-scenes” domain, which has already emerged as the leading area of focus (Newman and Cherubini 2025, 31).

The majority of media professionals in Serbia also believe that artificial intelligence cannot replace media workers or traditional journalistic roles, as confirmed by a 2024 study conducted on a sample of 110 media practitioners. Media professionals primarily identify the negative aspects of AI use in journalism as the “unverified nature of information, loss of authenticity and content quality, manipulation of information, job displacement, and lack of creativity,” which leads to “concern over the spread of disinformation and the erosion of public

trust in the media as a result of AI adoption" (Tadić i Medić, 2025). On the other hand, the study also acknowledges that "there are positive aspects of using artificial intelligence in the media sphere, such as speed, efficiency, process automation, reduction of monotonous tasks, and support for journalists" (Tadić i Medić 2025).

On the other hand, the BIRN study "Digital Transformation and Artificial Intelligence," conducted in 2024 on a sample of 124 journalists and editors, reveals that media professionals in Serbia are unprepared for the use of AI, noting that "not a single media outlet has yet developed internal ethical guidelines for AI use," and consequently, there is also no "clear definition of how AI is employed in processes such as information gathering, processing, or presentation" (Maksić 2025, 31). This study also confirms that media professionals remain highly skeptical regarding the use of AI in content creation, as such content may be both biased and inaccurate. One example cited by journalists and editors in focus groups is that "the quality of video materials and accompanying graphics is unsatisfactory, and hallucinations have been observed during the analysis of larger data sets" (29).

Another study conducted last year among media editors reveals an even greater level of distrust in the ability of AI to generate specific journalistic genres, particularly those that require authenticity and in-depth analysis. "Among the genres deemed unsuitable for AI-generated content, editors most frequently cite commentary and opinion columns, high-quality interviews, feature stories – which some theorists consider *the pinnacle of journalistic craft* – as well as investigative journalism as a distinct and complex branch of journalism" (Cvejić 2024, 88–89).

Based on all the previously mentioned findings, we can identify at least three key domains of AI applications in journalism:

1) *The domain of routine operations* involves the use of AI as an aid to journalists in performing technical, repetitive, or simple tasks – those that do not require a high level of journalistic expertise. This domain includes, for example, data collection and verification, transcription, and translation, and is therefore largely invisible to the audience.

2) *The domain of journalistic production* entails the use of AI in the creation of media content and encompasses a broad range of tasks and roles assigned to AI, depending on assessments of its actual capabilities. This domain may include texts that are fully or partially generated by AI, as well as photographs, audio and video materials,

infographics, and similar outputs. As a rule, all AI roles within this domain are subject to the oversight and editorial control of journalists and/or editors, since the content produced in this way is directly visible to the audience.

3) *The domain of media content distribution* refers to the use of AI to enhance the efficiency of delivering media content to audiences. This domain includes, for example, intelligent targeting, content personalization for individual users, and the generation of various media formats to more effectively tailor content to the diverse needs of users or specific content distribution platforms.

METHODOLOGY

The research conducted for the purposes of this paper was carried out through a survey of final-year journalism students at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade (fourth-year students and graduates), using a written questionnaire of a mixed format that included both closed and open-ended questions, as well as rating scales. The sample included 204 respondents, and the survey was conducted in person at the Faculty of Political Sciences during May and June 2024. The questions were organized into three thematic sections in order to obtain systematic, precise, and comprehensive responses, enabling an accurate assessment of respondents' dominant views regarding the intensity of AI's impact on journalism, its application in newsrooms, as well as related ethical issues.

The first section of the questionnaire included more general closed-ended questions and rating scales regarding the impact of AI, with the aim of precisely identifying students' main attitudes about the extent to which AI generally influences journalism, as well as the nature of that influence, i.e., whether it is perceived as positive or negative. The second section contained considerably more specific rating scales and open-ended questions relating to various domains of AI use in newsrooms, specifically focusing on the three most frequently mentioned domains in the literature: performing routine operations, creating media content, and distributing content to the audience. The objective of this segment was to reveal which AI applications respondents consider useful and justified, because they can facilitate journalists' work without negatively affecting the quality and reliability of the media, and which applications they regard as potentially harmful

and thus unjustified. Finally, the third segment of the questionnaire comprised both open and closed-ended questions concerning ethics, credibility, and the reliability of AI-generated content, aiming to identify the risks that students recognize and consider most significant.

It should be noted that the theoretical framework served as the basis for the development of the questionnaire, and the three thematic sections previously mentioned were defined according to the three key questions most commonly addressed in theoretical discussions. Similarly, the part of the questionnaire relating to the specific application of AI in newsrooms was also structured to correspond to the three theoretically defined domains of AI use in the media (routine operations, content creation, and distribution). In this way, the perception of AI use in the journalism profession by journalism students was first clearly established, along with their attitudes toward different domains of application and ethical issues. Subsequently, their views were compared with those of media professionals both domestically and internationally, in order to clearly identify similarities and differences between them.

RESEARCH RESULTS

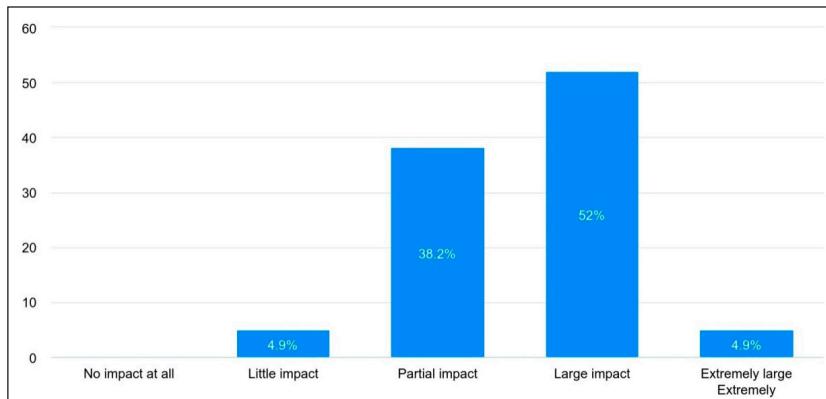
The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Journalism

The first question that most frequently arises in both theoretical and practical discussions is the extent to which artificial intelligence impacts journalism. The data presented in the previous section clearly demonstrate that media professionals perceive this impact as significant and increasingly intense year after year. The results of the research conducted for this paper reveal similar trends among future media professionals, as they are well aware of the influence AI has on the journalistic profession.

The findings of this research indicate that a significant majority of respondents consider AI to have a significant or extremely significant impact on journalism, while only a small number perceive this impact as minor or limited. More precisely, the largest group consists of those who believe the impact is significant (52%), followed by respondents who acknowledge a partial impact (38.2%), whereas an equal number of respondents consider the impact to be either small or extremely significant (4.9% each). Simultaneously, the results show that there

were no respondents who believed that artificial intelligence has no impact on contemporary journalism.

Chart 1. The impact of artificial intelligence on journalism



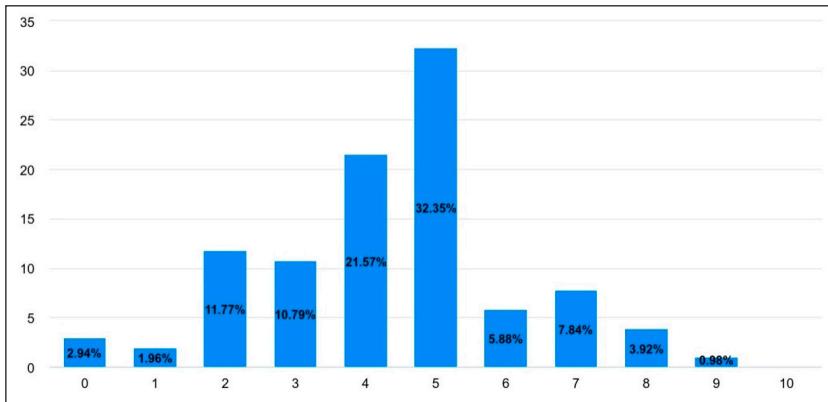
Source: Authors

The second most common question concerns the nature of this impact, specifically whether it is predominantly positive or negative, and consequently, whether artificial intelligence is regarded as an opportunity or a threat. Based on the prevailing stance on this issue, two general positions can be identified. On one side are the optimists who believe that the positive impact and numerous benefits AI brings to journalism and the media prevail, while on the other side are the pessimists who claim that the negative impact is greater and that AI is predominantly detrimental to the journalistic profession.

The research reveals that respondents recognize positive effects of AI on contemporary journalism, yet they nonetheless assess this impact as predominantly negative. Thus, journalism students rated the positive impact of AI on journalism with an average score of 4.36 on a scale from zero to 10 (where zero means “no positive impact” and 10 means “extremely positive impact”), while simultaneously rating the negative impact at 6.41 (where zero means “no negative impact” and 10 means “extremely negative impact”). If the score of five is treated as the midpoint on the 0-to-10 scale, the perception of positive impact falls below this value, whereas the perception of negative impact exceeds it – specifically, the average rating of the negative impact is 2.05 points higher than that of the positive. Considering the theoretically defined

scope of AI in the media and comparing it with the aforementioned results, it could be concluded that respondents are neither pessimists nor optimists but rather take a very realistic view of AI's impact on journalism, especially when all results detailed below are taken into account.

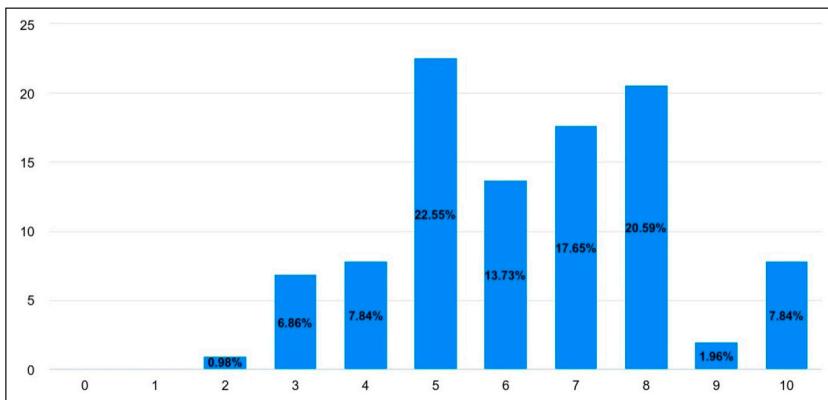
Chart 2. The positive impact of artificial intelligence on journalism



Source: Authors

Assessment by journalism students of the extent to which artificial intelligence has a positive impact on journalism, measured on a scale from zero to 10, where zero means "has no positive impact at all", and 10 means "has an extremely positive impact."

Chart 3. The negative impact of artificial intelligence on journalism



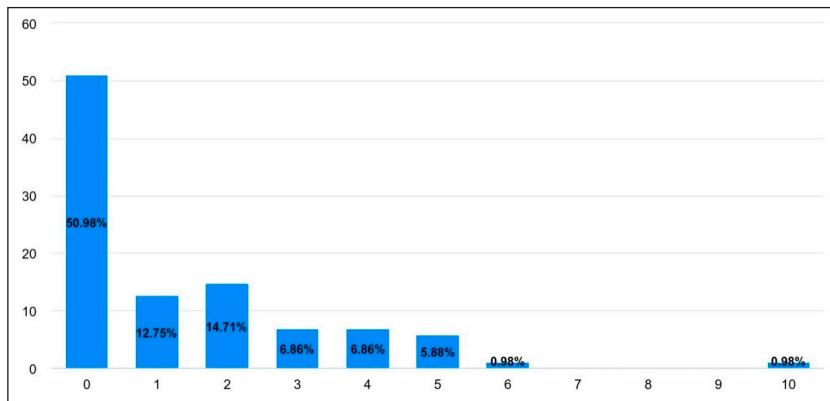
Source: Authors

Assessment by journalism students of the extent to which artificial intelligence has a negative impact on journalism, measured on a scale from zero to 10, where zero means “has no negative impact at all”, and 10 means “has an extremely negative impact.”

Application of Artificial Intelligence in Newsrooms

Although the previous insights are valuable as they reveal the basic attitudes of respondents, the most significant findings emerged from investigating the following key question: for what purposes is the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in media justified? The results indicate a strongly negative stance among journalism students regarding the possibility of AI completely replacing journalists in performing their work, specifically in creating journalistic content. The positive impact of such replacement was rated with an average score of 1.35, whereas the average score for the negative impact was 8.75. This means that the perceived negative impact is more than six times greater than the positive one, clearly demonstrating the respondents’ dominant view that replacing journalists with AI would be detrimental to the journalism profession.

Chart 4. Positive Impact of Replacing Journalists with Artificial Intelligence

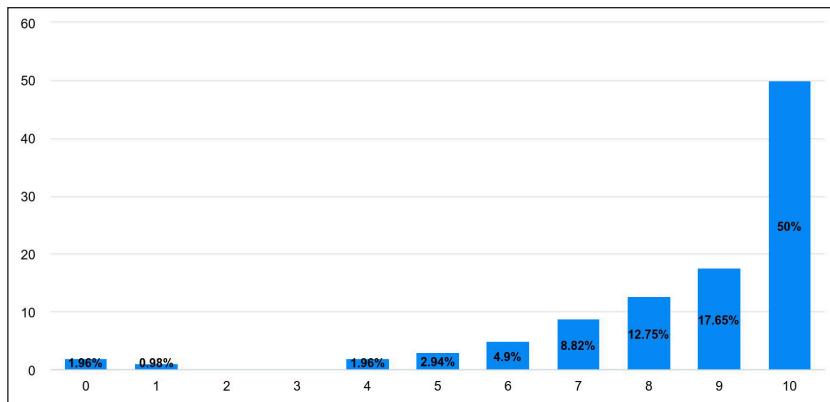


Source: Authors

Assessment by journalism students of the extent to which the complete replacement of journalists by artificial intelligence in creating

certain types of media content has a positive impact on journalism, measured on a scale from zero to 10, where zero means “no positive impact at all” and 10 means “extremely positive impact.”

Chart 5. Negative impact of the replacement of journalists by artificial intelligence

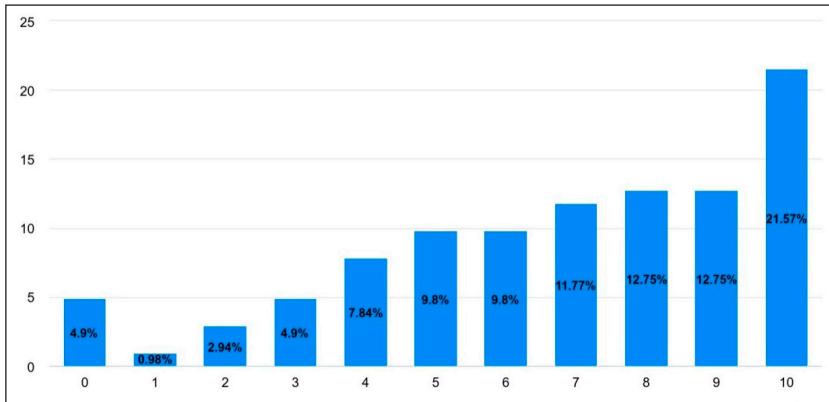


Source: Authors

Assessment by journalism students of the extent to which the complete replacement of journalists by artificial intelligence in creating certain types of media content has a negative impact on journalism, on a scale from zero to 10, where zero means “no negative impact at all” and 10 means “an extremely negative impact.”

However, respondents' attitudes shift dramatically when it comes to the use of AI as an auxiliary tool in the process of producing media content, which implies that journalists remain the primary content creators but utilize AI to independently generate or facilitate work with certain elements such as photographs, illustrations, infographics, or video. The positive impact of such AI use was rated at 8.75, while the negative impact received a score of 3.33, indicating that the perceived positive effects of this form of AI application are two and a half times greater than the negative ones.

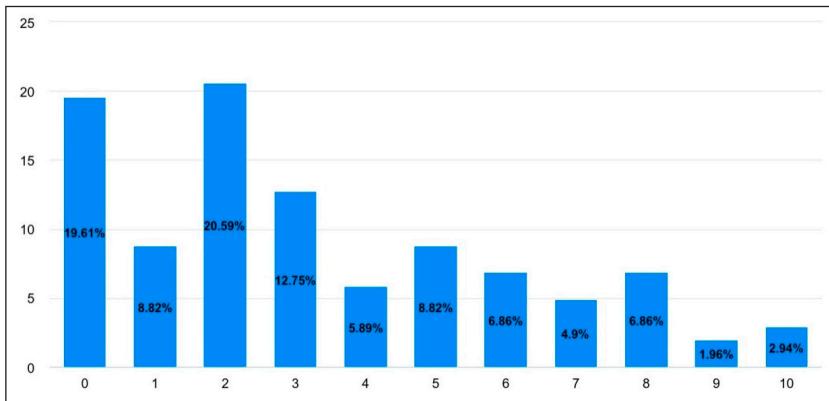
Chart 6. Positive impact of artificial intelligence as an aid (assistant) in journalists' work



Source: Authors

Assessment by journalism students of the extent to which the use of artificial intelligence as additional support for journalists in creating media content would have a positive impact on journalism, on a scale from zero to 10, where zero means “no positive impact at all” and 10 means “an extremely positive impact.”

Chart 7. Negative impact of artificial intelligence as an aid (assistant) in journalists' work



Source: Authors

Assessment by journalism students of the extent to which the use of artificial intelligence as additional assistance to journalists in creating media content would have a negative impact on journalism, on

a scale from zero to 10, where zero means “no negative impact at all” and 10 means “an extremely negative impact.”

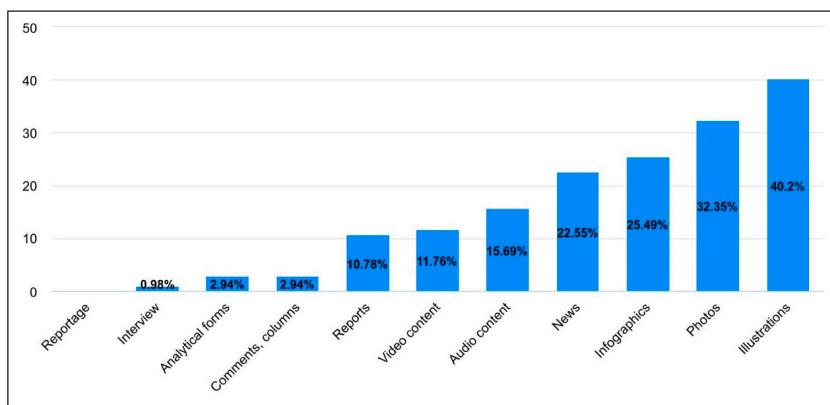
The specific domains of AI application that respondents recognize as predominantly positive and beneficial for the media relate to the execution of technical tasks or auxiliary journalistic duties that are an integral part of newsroom work but do not require a higher level or more demanding journalistic competencies. Thus, among the six most valuable aspects of AI applications in journalism, the following domains stand out:

1. analysis of large volumes of data (positive impact rated at 7.60, negative impact at 2.50);
2. automation of routine journalistic tasks, such as transcribing audio recordings/interviews, automatic subtitling of video content, automated photo processing, etc. (positive impact rated at 7.38, negative impact at 2.83);
3. more efficient content distribution to the audience through more precise user targeting (positive impact rated at 6.89, negative impact at 3.16);
4. search engine optimization (positive impact rated at 6.84, negative impact at 3.14);
5. verification of specific data or sources (positive impact rated at 6.55, negative impact at 3.45);
6. content personalization (positive impact rated at 6.48, negative impact at 3.78).

To gain a more detailed insight into the areas of media production in which respondents perceive journalists as irreplaceable despite the development of AI, a specific set of questions in the study focused on respondents’ assessment of which journalistic genres and media formats AI can create in a journalistically relevant and professional manner, measured on a scale from zero to 10, where zero means “cannot create them in a journalistically relevant and professional manner at all,” and 10 means “can fully create them in a journalistically relevant and professional manner.” The findings reveal an almost unanimous belief among journalism students that AI cannot replace journalists in producing journalistic genres that require a high degree of authenticity, creativity, or analytical rigor. None of the 204 respondents believe that AI can fully create reports in a journalistically relevant and professional manner; one in one hundred considers this possible for interviews, and one in thirty-four for

analytical formats, commentaries, and columns. As the required degree of authenticity, creativity, or analytical rigor decreases for the creation of certain journalistic genres or formats, the percentage of respondents who rate the possibility of AI fully producing such content in a journalistically relevant and professional way with the highest score increases. For news reports, this percentage rises to 10.78%, followed by video (11.76%) and audio content (15.69%), with an additional increase observed in the case of news items, for which 22.55% of respondents believe AI can create them with equal journalistic relevance as journalists. The largest proportion of respondents believe that AI can fully and relevantly replace journalists in the domain of graphic production, specifically in creating infographics (25.49%), photographs (32.35%), and illustrations (40.2%).

Chart 8. Journalistic Genres and Media Formats That Artificial Intelligence Can Create in a Journalistically Relevant and Professional Manner



Source: Authors

The chart shows the percentage of respondents who rated with the highest score of 10 the possibility that artificial intelligence can fully create the specified journalistic genres and media formats in a journalistically relevant and professional manner.

Artificial Intelligence and Journalistic Ethics

One of the most critical issues concerning the use of AI in media is journalistic ethics, specifically whether all principles of journalistic ethics are upheld when employing AI in media, including transparency, credibility, and journalistic accountability.

The research findings indicate that the largest proportion of journalism students, precisely 47.06%, identify the greatest risk of using artificial intelligence in everyday journalistic work as the unreliability of media content produced by AI, highlighting concerns that such content is inaccurate or manipulative. The second most commonly recognized risk is the lack of journalistic ethics and professional responsibility, which 29.41% of respondents consider the greatest threat. The third most cited concern, noted by 23.53% of participants, is the insufficient originality, authenticity, and creativity of media content generated by AI.

The fact that unreliability is perceived as the greatest risk by journalism students is further reinforced by their responses to the question of how they would treat content known to be created by artificial intelligence: as many as 9 out of 10 respondents (90.2%) indicated that they would consider such content less reliable compared to content produced by journalists. Only one in ten (9.8%) regard such content as equally reliable, while none of the 204 respondents stated that they would treat AI-generated content as more reliable.

Considering the previous findings, it is not surprising that respondents demonstrate a moderate openness to the possibility of using artificial intelligence in their professional work. When asked to what extent they would use AI in their future newsrooms, the largest proportion of respondents indicated partial use (43.14%), followed closely by those who would use it minimally (39.22%). A significantly smaller group, approximately ten times fewer, reported that they would use AI to the fullest extent (3.92%). Additionally, 6.86% stated that they would not use it at all, while the same percentage were uncertain or declined to answer the question.

CONCLUSION

The results of our research clearly indicate that journalism students perceive the replacement of journalists by artificial intelligence as having extremely negative consequences for the field of journalism. However, this does not imply that future journalists oppose any use of AI by professional journalists and media organizations. On the contrary, respondents hold a distinctly positive attitude toward the use of AI as an auxiliary tool in everyday journalistic work, particularly in areas that facilitate the execution of certain routine tasks, as well as in the creation of specific elements within media content, provided

that the primary role in the process and the final oversight of tasks performed by AI remain firmly in the hands of journalists.

The findings of the conducted research also reveal that journalism students approach the current capabilities of AI use in the media in a rational and realistic manner, recognizing both its positive and negative impacts. Moreover, they assess very responsibly in which domains the application of AI presents opportunities for the media, and in which it poses risks. Thus, the positive influence of AI is primarily identified in the areas of performing routine editorial tasks and content distribution to the audience, as the use of AI-based tools can save time and facilitate journalists' work in executing these tasks. On the other hand, there is a noticeable skepticism and lack of trust regarding the use of AI for media content production, especially concerning the possibility of AI independently creating media content that would be relevant and professional from a journalistic perspective.

On the other hand, this study reveals that journalism students are highly skeptical regarding the ethical use of artificial intelligence, raising concerns about the credibility, journalistic ethics, and professional responsibility of media content created through AI. In all these aspects, the students' perception closely aligns with that of media leaders worldwide, as demonstrated by the studies referenced in the theoretical framework of this work. In both cases, there is a clear consensus that AI cannot fully replace journalists, but rather can provide valuable assistance in performing certain tasks, under the supervision and control of media professionals. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that, according to journalism students, AI remains far from a level of development that would enable it to perform any task involving human intelligence (general artificial intelligence), and that within journalistic newsrooms, respondents primarily regard AI as an assistant.

Thus, journalism, from the perspective of journalism students in Serbia, remains a profession in which artificial intelligence cannot replace the human element, and where journalists are superior to machines. The reason is straightforward. Future journalists, who attended the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, believe that adherence to professional and ethical standards, editorial responsibility, and the still irreplaceable authenticity of journalists remain beyond the reach of AI. Whether AI will bring positive or negative consequences to journalism will primarily depend on the role

assigned to it by the media. Existing findings from the global academic literature and numerous studies addressing this topical issue point to two possible outcomes. Firstly, those who use AI as an assistant for “behind-the-scenes” tasks could experience multiple benefits. On the other hand, media outlets that attempt to use AI as a replacement for journalists will face the downfall of professional journalism, transparency of media content, professional integrity, ethical standards, and credibility. In both cases, decisions will ultimately be made by the people working within newsrooms, which leads to the conclusion that journalistic responsibility will remain an irreplaceable category, at least for the foreseeable future.

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ДОМЕТИ И ЕТИЧКА РАЗМАТРАЊА ВЕШТАЧКЕ ИНТЕЛИГЕНЦИЈЕ У НОВИНАРСТВУ: ПЕРСПЕКТИВА СТУДЕНАТА НОВИНАРСТВА***

Резиме

Овај рад испитује перцепције студената новинарства Универзитета у Београду о примени вештачке интелигенције (ВИ) у новинарској професији, тачније њихове ставове о позитивним и негативним утицајима, оправданим и неоправданим доменима примене у редакцијама, али и етичким изазовима које ова технологија са собом доноси. У ту сврху спроведено је истраживање које је обухватило 204 студента новинарства на завршној години студија на Факултету политичких наука Универзитета у Београду, а као метода истраживања коришћен је писани упитник комбинованог типа који садржи затворена и отворена питања, као и скале процене. Резултати показују да су будући медијски професионалци и текако свесни утицаја који ова технологија има на новинарску професију, па велика већина испитаника сматра да ВИ има велики или изузетно велики утицај на новинарство, док само мали број њих препознаје овај

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*** Рад представљен на међународној научној конференцији EMERGE 2024: Ethics of AI Alignment (11–13. децембра 2024. године на Институту за филозофију и друштвену теорију у Београду). УРЛ: emerge.ifdt.bg.ac.rs/#program. Овај рад је публикован средствима Министарства науке, технолошког развоја и иновација Републике Србије на основу Уговора о реализацији и финансирању научноистраживачког рада НИО у 2025. години, број: 451-03-136/2025-03 од 27.01.2025. године.

утицај као мали или ограничен. Иако истраживање открива да испитаници препознају и позитивне и негативне утицаје ВИ на савремено новинарство, овај утицај ипак оцењују као доминантно негативан.

Кључне речи: вештачка интелигенција, савремено новинарство, студенти новинарства, новинарска етика, Србија

* This manuscript was submitted on June 12, 2025, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on August 20, 2025.

UDC 323:338.2(497.11)"20"
DOI: 10.5937/spm92-58575
Original research article

Српска политичка мисао
(Serbian Political Thought)
No 4/2025.
Vol. 92
pp. 143-167

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THE TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY POLICY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA***

Abstract

Since the early 21st century, recurring global crises have exacerbated social inequalities and poverty across the world. The responses to these challenges have led to substantial transformations in public policy frameworks, particularly in areas aimed at enhancing labor market conditions. Within this evolving societal landscape, the concept of the social and solidarity economy has emerged as a pivotal shift, offering a sustainable alternative that merges economic and social policy objectives. This paper aims to explore the following research question: Which international actors have influenced the development of the social and solidarity economy, and how, particularly through the lens of social

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*** This paper was previously presented as an oral contribution at the scientific conference "Social Crisis and Social Work, Buen Vivir: A Shared Future for Transformative Change," held on March 19, 2024, at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was developed within the framework of the scientific project "Political Identity of Serbia in the Regional and Global Context," funded by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia (project number: 179076).

entrepreneurship practices in the Republic of Serbia since the start of the 21st century? To answer this, the paper outlines several objectives: to identify the main international actors shaping the global discourse on the social and solidarity economy; to present and analyze key principles, initiatives, and programs associated with this development; and to investigate the influence of these actors within Serbia's national context. The research takes a macro-level political learning perspective and uses content analysis of relevant documents as its principal methodological tool. The findings suggest that certain international organizations have played a decisive role in the transnational diffusion of the social and solidarity economy concept. The European Union is identified as the most influential actor in policy design in the Republic of Serbia, although its impact remains limited in scope.

Keywords: social and solidarity economy, international actors, political learning, Republic of Serbia

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary global economy is undergoing profound structural transformations that adversely affect opportunities for decent work at a time when labor market demand is rising and economic inequalities are reaching record levels. Automation and technological advancements are rapidly decreasing the demand for human labor, while sectors less susceptible to such trends, such as the service sector, often rely on informal or non-standard forms of employment (Borzaga, Salvatori, and Bodini 2017). At the same time, escalating economic, social, and environmental crises are questioning the sustainability of the dominant model of economic development, underscoring the need for alternative models of production, consumption, and entrepreneurial organization that are not exclusively based on the principles of market liberalization. In this context, the concept of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) has emerged as a key framework used to denote such models, alongside related terms such as the third sector, social economy, solidarity economy, and nonprofit sector (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] 2023a).

Reports indicate a low global economic growth rate that is insufficient to stimulate sustainable development, with recent years

witnessing the slowest growth in the past three decades (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, The World Bank [IBRD–WB] 2025). Under such economic conditions, labor markets are characterized by high unemployment rates, ranging from 8.2% in high-income countries to 20.5% in low-income countries in 2023 (International Labour Organization [ILO] 2024a). It has been assessed that global poverty reduction is stagnating, attributed to the slow recovery from the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly 700 million people continue to live in extreme poverty, while one-fifth of the global population resides in economies marked by high inequality (World Bank 2024). National indicators in the Republic of Serbia reflect similar trends. The at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate stood at 27.2% in 2023, with more than half of those affected belonging to the unemployed population by labor market activity status. Furthermore, a significant share of the working population was engaged in very low work intensity (9.2%) during the same year (Republički zavod za statistiku [RZS] 2024).

In response to these challenges, international actors have promoted more dedicated development of national active labor market policy (ALMP) programs as a means to combat poverty and unemployment among vulnerable groups, including low-skilled workers, individuals with health limitations, those with limited labor market experience, and persons with care responsibilities at home (OECD 2021). On the other hand, an alternative model for building inclusive labor markets has relied on the social and solidarity economy, which has experienced significant growth, particularly through the development of social enterprises in Europe, Asia, and North America. Historically, these enterprises have evolved from nonprofit organizations that began offering goods and services as part of their core activities, as well as from traditional cooperatives that broadened their objectives from member interests to broader societal benefit (Borzaga, Salvatori, and Bodini 2017). Globally, the SSE has emerged as a key framework in which social goals are combined with economic activity, gradually fostering initiatives that respond to concrete social needs, as well as to market and state failures (Borzaga and Galera 2014).

The conceptual development of SSE has been shaped by international actors operating in the fields of economic and social policy, who have sought to guide effective and efficient public policy at the national level. Their engagement has ranged from the provision of

comparative data at the global level to expert support in policymaking and capacity building for national stakeholders. In this regard, one important channel of influence has been political learning, defined as the adaptation of beliefs and understandings about how public policies should be designed and implemented (Dunlop and Radaelli 2013). This form of influence affects the policy process by “leading actors to select a different view of how things happen (‘learning that’) and what courses of action should be taken (‘learning how’)” (Zito and Schout 2009, 1104).

Learning from international actors at the global level has contributed to the contemporary recognition of SSE as a vital segment of the economic system. In the European Union, this sector employs over 13.6 million people, accounting for 6.3% of the total working-age population (OECD 2023a). Such macro-level learning, typically implemented at the level of national governments, is commonly referred to as “policy transfer” (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000) and is particularly prevalent in countries undergoing reform or in the process of joining economic and/or political communities with clearly defined normative and operational policy frameworks. In the national context of the Republic of Serbia, the intensified development of the social and solidarity economy has been linked to the post-socialist transition during the first decade of the 21st century, especially in the form of social entrepreneurship. It is estimated that this model of entrepreneurship has been formally recognized in 47 enterprises, although the number may reach up to 2,000 entities that are legally registered under alternative frameworks but operate according to the principles of the solidarity economy (Koalicija za razvoj solidarne ekonomije [KoRSE] 2023).

In line with the above, the research question of this paper is focused on the role of international actors in the transfer of SSE policies to the Republic of Serbia, building on the research objectives: identifying key international actors in the transnational development of the SSE concept; presenting and analysing the key principles, initiatives, and programmes of SSE development at the global level; and analysing the activities of international actors in the development of SSE in the national context. Given that this topic has not yet been sufficiently researched in the context of international influences in the Republic of Serbia, the scientific contribution of this paper lies in: the conceptual contribution of defining the key concepts related to SSE globally and nationally; the systematisation and critical analysis of the development of SSE policies within the national framework; and the expansion of the multidisciplinary

scientific perspective on SSE by connecting social policy, international relations, and economics. On the other hand, the practical contribution of the paper is reflected in providing support for the development of the SSE sector for decision-makers and practitioners in the Republic of Serbia by identifying potential partners, highlighting examples of good practice, and indicating obstacles encountered so far during the reform.

The method applied in this paper is document content analysis, whereby policies, programmes, and the roles of international actors are examined based on data derived from: scientific and professional literature related to the topic; documents of international organisations and national institutions (strategies, reports, and legislative documents); project documents; and publications of non-governmental organisations active in the field of SSE development. The content of the documents was categorised into thematic areas (actors; objectives, and activities; impact on reform; challenges and limitations), while the criterion for selecting the documents was their direct relevance to the process of SSE development in the global context and the transfer of policies to the national context from 2000 to the present.

SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AS A SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE – THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT IN GLOBAL SOCIAL POLICY

The development of alternative models of economic organization and provision of goods and services has been accompanied by the emergence of various terms to denote them, such as social economy, solidarity economy, popular economy, and the third sector. Each of these terms reflects specific social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts in which they emerged. Although these concepts are relatively new, socially and solidarity-oriented, self-managed processes of organizing economic life – based on cooperation and the sharing of resources – have existed since prehistoric and ancient times, as evidenced by examples such as Egyptian collective relief funds, Roman craft guilds, and Greek mutual societies that funded burial services (Polanyi [1944] 2001; Defourny and Develtere 1999).

The roots of the social economy can be traced back to the 18th century and the early cooperative movement in Europe (Monzón and Chaves 2008). Although the term first appeared in France in the early 19th century, it gained broader use only in the 20th century when it

came to denote organizations focused on the collective improvement of working conditions and living standards (Noya and Clarence 2007). In the 1990s, with the aim of redefining economic relations through principles of justice, cooperation, reciprocity, and mutual aid (Laville and García-Jané 2009, cited in: Villalba-Eguiluz *et al.* 2023), this model of economic organization emphasized systemic transformations, redistributive justice, sustainability, and participatory democracy, offering an alternative to dominant capitalist structures (Utting 2015). In this sense, the solidarity economy is viewed as a developmental and transformative project capable of addressing contemporary challenges – including poverty, unemployment, the rise of informal economies, and the consequences of climate change (Razeto Migliaro, 2013, cited in: Utting, Van Dijk, and Mathei 2014) – with a strong focus on empowering citizens and marginalized groups through democratic self-management at the organizational level and broader participation in the public sphere (Dacheux and Goujon 2011).

The concept of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), grounded in the fulfillment of economic and social objectives, is defined by contemporary scholars as a set of “economic activities conducted by enterprises, primarily co-operatives, associations and mutual benefit societies, whose ethics convey the following principles: 1) placing service to its members or to the community ahead of profit; 2) autonomous management; 3) a democratic decision-making process; 4) the primacy of people and work over capital in the distribution of revenues” (Defourny and Develtere 1999, 16). In the literature, SSE is recognized as an umbrella concept, while other related terms represent diverse local practices or sets of organizations (Kawano 2018; Utting 2015). For example, concepts such as the popular economy or solidarity economy primarily focus on informal, unpaid, or domestic spheres of economic activity (Pérsico *et al.* 2017, cited in: Vieta and Heras 2023), whereas the social economy encompasses more formal organizations and institutionally recognized forms of paid or voluntary work operating between the private and public sectors (Defourny, Hulgård, and Pestoff 2014; Quarter, Armstrong, and Mook 2018). Thus, SSE, as the broadest term, includes both formal and informal collective economic activities, encompassing paid and unpaid labor, as well as market and non-market forms of production, distribution, and exchange. A defining characteristic is that the processes and outcomes of economic activity are based on principles of social solidarity and collective action (Fonteneau *et al.* 2010).

International organizations increasingly recognize the importance of SSE and are actively integrating it into their strategic frameworks, policies, and action plans, thereby facilitating the development of the concept and institutional support for the advancement of SSE globally (OECD 2023a). The International Labour Organization (ILO) has developed the longest tradition and most comprehensive expertise on SSE enterprises and organizations. The ILO's Cooperative Unit was established in 1920, just a year after the organization's founding, while the first official document directly referencing enterprises within the social economy dates back to 1922 (Borzaga, Salvatori, and Bodini 2017). In the 1980s, the ILO developed the concept of social finance, which covers a wide range of microfinance institutions and services. In the 1990s, it began promoting community-based protection schemes and mutual benefit societies in the field of social protection (Fonteneau *et al.* 2011). Several normative instruments relevant to the promotion of SSE have been developed within the ILO, such as Recommendation No. 193 on the Promotion of Cooperatives (R.193, 2002) and Recommendation No. 189 on Job Creation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (R.189, 1998). The ILO renewed its interest in SSE with the adoption of the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008) (ILO 2008), while the adoption of the 2022 Resolution concerning Decent Work and the Social and Solidarity Economy marked a turning point in promoting SSE at the international level (ILO 2022). In addition to presenting a universal definition of SSE, the resolution provided guidelines for addressing challenges and harnessing potential in this field, clearly delineating the roles of governments, social partners, and the International Labour Office. According to this definition, SSE encompasses “enterprises, organizations and other entities that are engaged in economic, social, and environmental activities to serve the collective and/or general interest, which are based on the principles of voluntary cooperation and mutual aid, democratic and/or participatory governance, autonomy and independence, and the primacy of people and social purpose over capital in the distribution and use of surpluses and/or profits as well as assets” (ILO 2022, 2). Building on this resolution, the ILO adopted the Strategy and Action Plan for 2023–2029, aimed at deepening the understanding of SSE, identifying key needs, and strengthening capacities to promote decent work within and through the SSE (ILO 2024b), thereby reinforcing international standards in this domain.

The United Nations, as another key actor in the development of SSE, adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 as a new global development agenda. Since then, the UN has been actively developing programs, launching initiatives, and encouraging cooperation at the global, national, and local levels to promote the stronger role of SSE in achieving these goals (Jayasooria and Yi 2023). The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTSSE) was established in 2013 to increase the visibility of SSE in international academic and policy circles. Composed of 18 UN agency members and 15 observer organizations (international and regional organizations working on SSE-related issues), the Task Force actively promotes SSE through policy dialogues, research, documentation, and advocacy both within and beyond the UN system. Through these initiatives, the Task Force has raised the visibility of SSE and documented its contribution to the implementation of the SDGs (UNTSSE 2020; Jayasooria and Yi 2023). In 2018, the UNTSSE launched the SSE Knowledge Hub for the SDGs, a platform that aggregates research on the potential of SSE in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (UNTSSE 2020). On April 18, 2023, during its 66th plenary Session, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution “Promoting the Social and Solidarity Economy for Sustainable Development.” The Resolution provides an official definition of the SSE, aligned with the one adopted by the ILO in 2022, and recognizes its potential to contribute to the achievement and localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations General Assembly, A/77/L.60).

The third relevant international actor is the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which, through the Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Programme, significantly contributed in the mid-1990s to the conceptual and practical understanding of the social economy (OECD 2022). For more than 25 years, the organization has been conducting research in this field and supporting governments at the national, regional, and local levels in designing and implementing strategies for the development of the SSE and social enterprises, providing them with empirically grounded and tailored recommendations (OECD 2023b).

The OECD's commitment to this field is also reflected in its long-standing cooperation with the European Union. Between 2020 and 2023, the organisation implemented the Global Action “Promoting the Social and Solidarity Economy Ecosystems” funded through

the EU's Partnership Instrument, to support the development and internationalisation of the social and solidarity economy. The initiative focused on increasing visibility, establishing reference frameworks, and providing recommendations in key areas of SSE, primarily concerning legal frameworks and the measurement of social impact (OECD 2023b). In addition, the initiative sought to encourage the creation of a strong policy ecosystem through international partnerships, the exchange of good practices, the development of international statistics, and the analysis of specific thematic areas such as internationalisation and public procurement (OECD 2023c).

In order to further strengthen the institutional framework for SSE, the aforementioned organisation adopted in 2022 the Recommendation on the Social and Solidarity Economy and Social Innovation, which provides guidance to countries, regions, and cities for fully leveraging the potential of this sector (OECD 2022). The Recommendation defines SSE as “a set of organisations such as associations, cooperatives, mutual organisations, foundations and, more recently, social enterprises [...] the activity of these entities are typically driven by societal objectives, values of solidarity, the primacy of people over capital and, in most cases, by democratic and participative governance” (OECD 2022, 6).

Although the social and solidarity economy has existed in its contemporary form and been recognized in European countries for several decades (Seelos and Mair 2017), it was not until the first decade of the 21st century that the European Union (EU) began making more substantial efforts at the supranational level to promote and support the development of this sector. Since the 1980s, the foundations of European policy towards SSE were laid through a series of documents prepared by two key institutions advocating for a legal basis for social economy action at the EU level before the European Commission: the European Economic and Social Committee, as an advisory body, and the Social Economy Intergroup of the European Parliament (Monzón Campos and Chaves Ávila 2012). Since then, two types of policies have been identified for that purpose: “soft policies”, which aim to develop an enabling ecosystem in which social economy enterprises emerge and grow, and “hard policies,” which are directly targeted at enterprises as business units (Chaves Ávila and Monzón Campos 2018).

A more significant impulse to the development of SSE under the auspices of the EU came at the end of the global economic crisis in 2011, when the European Commission, through the document

“Social Business Initiative,” established an action plan with concrete measures to build an enabling ecosystem for SSE enterprises (European Commission [EC] COM/2011/682). One of the most important contributions of this initiative was the establishment of an operational definition of social enterprises, including three dimensions: entrepreneurial/economic, social, and inclusive governance and ownership. A more detailed operationalisation of the SSE concept for policy harmonisation purposes was made only within the “Regulation on the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation” from 2013, while in the following years a series of initiatives more substantially dedicated to SSE were implemented through funding programmes (EU research programmes, European Structural and Investment Funds, ERASMUS+) (Haarich *et al.* 2020, 1–5).

Currently, the new “Social Economy Action Plan” adopted by the European Commission in 2021 and to be implemented until 2030, is in effect (EC COM/2021/778). The plan emphasizes the EU’s achievements in recognising social entrepreneurship within the legal frameworks of specific Member States, while the European Commission commits to developing and utilising tools and resources that will enable mutual learning among countries (such as workshops for public officials and guidelines for enabling social enterprise operations). In the processes of mutual learning and transferring good practice examples, the EU will support the exchange of regional and local actors with a focus on cross-border cooperation, through funding (European Social Fund Plus, European Regional Development Fund, and the Just Transition Fund) and support for initiatives (such as the European Social Economy Regions initiative or the Social Economy Mission). In its relations with third countries, the European Commission plans to encourage public authorities and EU delegations in these countries to use funds from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument to develop the social economy, while strengthening local initiatives and intermediaries in the Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership, and Southern Neighbourhood to improve access to available financial resources for social entrepreneurs (EC COM/2021/778). This EU approach, in the context of international engagement in promoting SSE, acts complementarily to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the current action plan recognises the joint engagement of the aforementioned international actors in cooperation with the EU.

THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Although the social and solidarity economy (SSE) has existed in practice throughout the 20th century in the form of agricultural cooperatives or associations of persons with disabilities (Velev *et al.* 2011), and although the importance of its development has been a topic of wide-ranging discussions on public policy reform in the Republic of Serbia over the past two decades, it was only with the adoption of the Law on Social Entrepreneurship in 2022 that a legal framework in this area was formally and most directly established.¹ According to this Law, social entrepreneurship is defined as “the execution of activities of general interest, to create new and innovative solutions to address social challenges, the problems faced by individuals or vulnerable social groups, and to prevent and mitigate the consequences of social exclusion, strengthen social cohesion, and respond to other challenges in local communities and broader society” (Zakon o socijalnom preduzetništvu [ZSP] 2022, član 3). It is estimated that between 500 and 2,000 entities operate in this emerging sector in Serbia, registered under various legal forms derived from earlier legislation, while only 47 are listed in the database of the Coalition for Solidarity Economy Development (KoRSE 2023; Smart Kolektiv 2017).

The legal regulation of the SSE in Serbia was preceded by a long phase of discursive framing of social entrepreneurship and related concepts, which started in 2000. Scholars argue that two key factors were crucial to the development of social entrepreneurship during this period: the existence of unmet, authentic social needs of the population and “the influence of foreign donors who raised awareness

¹ Prior to the adoption of the current law, the field of social economy was regulated by the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities from 2009, which narrowed the target population of social economy beneficiaries to persons with disabilities, specifically regarding their participation as employees in the activities of economic entities. In parallel, it was possible to establish a special type of cooperative under the 2015 Law on Cooperatives – social cooperatives, which may operate as economic entities (Zakon o zadrugama [ZZ] 2015). These cooperatives function based on principles and goals that can essentially be classified as social entrepreneurship, and the category of beneficiaries under this Law was expanded to include vulnerable social groups in a broader sense.

among various actors and provided financial and other support to social enterprises" (Cvejić 2018, 10). In the first decade of the 21st century, the introduction of the concept of social entrepreneurship into the national framework was supported by the United Nations and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), in collaboration with national-level experts. These actors funded research carried out by independent researchers, expert organizations (e.g., SeConS – Development Initiative Group), and non-governmental organizations (e.g., the European Movement in Serbia), which resulted in the publication of studies on conceptual frameworks, good practices, and the identification of the state of SSE in Serbia².

However, a comprehensive understanding of the SSE and social entrepreneurship in the modern national context was further facilitated by the cultural and political rapprochement with the European Union (Cvejić 2018). As part of the EU accession process, especially after submitting a formal application for membership in 2009, Serbia gradually introduced the concepts of social inclusion, social services, and the vulnerability of social groups into relevant strategies and legislation. In order to align social policy with European values and practices and to build capacities for public sector reform, the Government of Serbia established the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (SIPRU)³ in the same year. Over the twelve-year course of the "Support to Improve Social Inclusion in the Republic of Serbia" program, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), SIPRU promoted these concepts, contributed to public policy development and intersectoral dialogue on social welfare, and provided assistance in reporting on SSE developments during the EU accession process. Its most direct contribution was through participation in the Negotiating Group on Social Policy and Employment under Chapter

² Some examples include the following publications: Parun Kolin i Petrušić 2007; Cvejić, Babović, i Vuković 2009; Vukmirović *et al.* 2014.

³ Within the thematic area of "Economic Development and Employment," the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit was designated to actively participate in the promotion and development of the concept of social entrepreneurship in the Republic of Serbia. Thanks to the expert support provided by the Unit, the concept of social cooperatives was incorporated into the Draft Law on Cooperatives, and a series of analyses were conducted on the possibilities for developing microcredit schemes and the potential of social entrepreneurship in the Republic of Serbia (Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of the Republic of Serbia 2019).

19 – Social Policy and Employment. This particularly pertained to the development of social entrepreneurship in Serbia in the context of meeting the objectives set out in the European Commission's Social Business Initiative of 2011 (Dejanović 2019).

In addition to the aforementioned influence on the conceptual framing and direction of reforms toward the strengthening of the SSE, the EU has also played a direct role in providing financial support to associations working on the development of social services. This support has been delivered through pre-accession programs, various EU financial instruments, and EU-funded donor assistance. During the period preceding the institutionalization of social entrepreneurship, entities operating within the SSE sector faced significant funding challenges. Research on grants awarded to social enterprises indicates that their operations largely rely on external donations. In 2016, while 65% of these entities utilized public sector funds, 55% relied on resources from foreign donors and foundations (Smart Kolektiv 2017). Various forms of entrepreneurial activity in this initial phase were financed by the EU and other international donors, applying a bottom-up approach to the development of social entrepreneurship in cooperation with civil society actors and local authorities (Kolin 2013; Hazenberg *et al.* 2016). Further financial support from the EU was observed in the form of a credit line provided by the European Investment Bank in 2022, aimed at increasing employment among vulnerable social groups. This measure continues the EU's earlier cooperation efforts involving the provision of credit to small and medium-sized enterprises in the Western Balkans through selected banks in the Republic of Serbia. Simultaneously, cooperation continued within the framework of the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), intended to fund micro-enterprises and social entrepreneurship, following the accession agreement to the Programme signed by the Government of the Republic of Serbia in 2015.

The current stage of institutionalizing social entrepreneurship, launched with the enactment of the Law on Social Entrepreneurship in 2022, has seen the Council for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship take the lead in proposing a Development Programme accompanied by an action plan and targeted measures. This process has also engaged non-governmental actors, many of whom had already been actively involved in the working groups responsible for drafting the Law. Their activities further point to the involvement of

external actors. In recent years, the Coalition for Solidarity Economy Development – established in 2010 and known until 2018 as the Coalition for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship – has emerged as the most prominent actor in this domain, comprising a network of partner non-governmental organizations. Following the enactment of the Law, the German Development Agency (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit – GIZ*) funded the project “Social Entrepreneurship Development Programme – Support to the Implementation of the Law on Social Entrepreneurship”. This project aimed to provide expert support and knowledge to the Council during the programme development process and built upon a previous initiative focused on raising awareness about the importance of the SSE sector, capacity building of relevant stakeholders, professionalization of the sector, and support in policy development (“Support to the Development of the Social Enterprise Ecosystem: Strengthening the Impact of Social Enterprises”) (KoRSE 2025). To examine multi-sectoral challenges to the development of social entrepreneurship, identify local needs, and build local capacities, the Coalition for Solidarity Economy Development implemented the project “Strengthening the Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem” between May 2022 and April 2023, financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. During a similar period, the project “Dialogue for Change – Supporting Reforms through Civil Society and Public Authority Cooperation” was implemented with funding from the EU Delegation to Serbia. The aim was to strengthen communication and cooperation between public authorities and civil society organizations in implementing the Law. Since 2022, several additional projects have been financed through the EU’s Erasmus+ Programme, focusing on youth engagement in the development of social entrepreneurship in local communities (KoRSE 2025).⁴ The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) funded the project “Solidarity Economy Perspectives”, aimed at enhancing stakeholder dialogue, analyzing relevant policies and instruments, and formulating policy recommendations that would promote the integration of the social economy perspective into public policies. This project was succeeded by the ongoing initiative “Social

⁴ The aforementioned projects were titled as follows: *Ground UP: Fostering the Development of a Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem for the Creation of Resilient Local Communities; Shift to Unlock: Empowering Social Enterprises to Ensure Dignity, Rights, and Skills; Social Entrepreneurship Barometer*.

Economy Perspectives at the Local Level”, which seeks to empower civil society organizations to exert greater influence in introducing social economy approaches into local policy frameworks. Both projects were implemented within the context of Serbia’s EU accession and were financed through the “Civil Society for Advancing Serbia’s EU Accession – Europe ASAP” Programme (KORSE 2025).

One of the Coalition’s partner organizations, Smart Kolektiv, has been organizing the “Regional Incubator for Social Entrepreneurs” for five consecutive years. This free Programme for youth aims to equip young people with the skills and knowledge needed to launch social enterprises, offering potential financial and practical support during the start-up and development phases. The project has received support from several partners, primarily the French Development Agency (*Agence Française de Développement – AFD*) and the European Union (Smart Kolektiv 2024). Notably, in 2019, Smart Kolektiv also established the Sustainable Economy Development Fund with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), aimed at providing professional and financial assistance to entrepreneurs, including access to non-repayable loans. Another partner of the Coalition, the Trag Foundation, has been implementing a three-year EU-funded project since 2022 titled “The Drive Movement”, intending to provide financial and expert support to civil society organizations in Serbia. The aim is to enhance their capacities for policy analysis and policy proposal formulation at both national and local levels, particularly in the areas of improving the employability of vulnerable groups and developing social entrepreneurship (Trag fondacija 2022).

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) also financed the project “Public Procurement and Good Governance for Greater Competitiveness”, implemented by the National Alliance for Local Economic Development (NALED). Among its various components, the project focused on building the capacities of actors to use public procurement as a tool to achieve social inclusion objectives within local public policies. The project was conducted from December 2022 to May 2024, with some of the activities including training sessions and workshops to enhance the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, including those within the social and solidarity economy sector (NALED 2023). At the end of 2022, the Social Entrepreneurship Center in Kruševac was opened with support

from the Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 (ReLOaD2), funded by the EU and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme. In 2023, taking into account the gender dimension of social entrepreneurship, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), with financial support from the EU, developed a guide to educate and promote women's social entrepreneurship in the Republic of Serbia (UN Women 2023).

CONCLUSION

As a sustainable alternative for economic organization, the role of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) became even more visible during global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, when SSE organizations responded in ways that strengthened community resilience (OECD 2023a). In this context, SSE has become a key actor in social and economic development at the global level, with its importance recognized not only by local stakeholders but also by international organizations.

At the global level, international actors in the field of economic and social policy have been intensively engaged in coordinating efforts to develop SSE in cooperation with national governments. The involvement of the ILO, OECD, UN, and EU has been identified in launching initiatives and dialogues at the highest political levels, through the following activities: promoting the social and solidarity economy; operationalizing the concept – defining its meaning, key characteristics, and guiding principles; providing expert and financial support for sector development; and offering platforms for the exchange of best practices among countries and local communities.

In the Republic of Serbia, since the period of democratic changes, international actors have contributed to the development of the social and solidarity economy in various ways. In the early period of societal reform, processes related to the reform of public sector support programs for vulnerable groups, aligned with EU accession efforts, contributed to framing the concepts associated with this sector. Of particular importance was the incorporation of the concept of social inclusion into public policies and the introduction of social services for this purpose, alongside the pluralization of service providers, which supported the creation of an enabling ecosystem for the development of

social entrepreneurship. The inclusion of vulnerable groups in the labor market, as part of the broader process of reducing poverty and social exclusion, was supported by EU donations and funding programs for the civil sector, which also operated in the field of the social economy. Direct financial support to the civil sector was also provided by governmental development agencies, confirming a preference for a bottom-up approach, i.e., prioritizing non-state actors as cooperation partners. During the observed period, limited engagement was recorded in terms of international actors supporting the development of public authorities' capacities for the strategic advancement of the social entrepreneurship sector, resulting in challenges regarding the sector's sustainability, financing, and competitiveness.

In the phase of social entrepreneurship development following the adoption of the Law in 2022, a lack of significant engagement by certain international actors in the institutionalization of social entrepreneurship (OECD and ILO) was observed, precisely when the need for knowledge dissemination was greatest. Besides the EU's continued support in financing sector development, the activities of international development agencies from European countries were particularly important in building stakeholder capacities and professionalizing practices within the social and solidarity economy sector. To enable this sector to achieve its economic and social objectives in the Republic of Serbia, the support of international actors over the past two decades, resulting in the transformation of the national environment into a favorable ecosystem for its operation, must continue, with an emphasis on transferring knowledge for its further development and effective functioning.

Building on these findings, further reform efforts should prioritise the development of targeted support programmes for SSE entities, leveraging existing capacities for collaboration between national policymakers and international actors, as well as diverse forms of external assistance. A key question, why the effectiveness of previous SSE development efforts in Serbia has diminished, requires deeper investigation in future research in two directions. First, qualitative research should be undertaken to understand the contextual characteristics of the domestic environment, including perceptions among decision-makers, SSE organisations, and international partners regarding the factors that facilitate or constrain SSE development within the current legal and institutional framework. Second, once

these influencing factors have been identified, it will be important to assess the potential to engage new actors and financing mechanisms, informed by a comparative analysis of good practices from neighbouring countries and the European Union.

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**ТРАНСФОРМАТИВНА УЛОГА
МЕЂУНАРОДНИХ АКТЕРА У РАЗВОЈУ
ПОЛИТИКЕ СОЦИЈАЛНЕ И СОЛИДАРНЕ
ЕКОНОМИЈЕ У РЕПУБЛИЦИ СРБИЈИ*****

Резиме

У последњих неколико деценија, у области креирања јавних политика, нарочито економских и социјалних, приступ политичког учења препознат је као начин за обезбеђивање ефикасног и ефективног трансфера политика између земаља. Међународни актери имају кључну улогу у овом процесу, а њихови начини ангажовања крећу се од пружања упоредне анализе података на глобалном нивоу у одређеним областима, до понуде стручне и финансијске помоћи у изградњи капацитета актера који спроводе реформе националних политика. Економске и социјалне последице међународних криза у последњим годинама представљају додатни подстицај за реформе у областима тржишта рада и смањења сиромаштва. Поред потребе за унапређењем програма активне политике запошљавања, све чешће се препоручује развој социјалне и солидарне економије као могућ одговор на социјалну искљученост рањивих група. Узимајући у обзир претходно наведено, циљеви рада су идентификовање кључних међународних актера у развоју

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*** Рад је претходно изложен у виду усменог саопштења на научној конференцији „Друштвена криза и социјални рад, Buen Vivir: Заједничка будућност за трансформативну промјену“, одржаној 19. марта 2024. године на Факултету политичких наука Универзитета у Сарајеву, Босна и Херцеговина. Настао је под окриљем научног пројекта „Политички идентитет Србије у регионалном и глобалном контексту“, који финансира Министарство науке, технолошког развоја и иновација Републике Србије (број пројекта: 179076).

концепта социјалне и солидарне економије у оквиру глобалних оквира, анализа њихових програма и иницијатива, као и испитивање деловања међународних актера у развоју социјалне и солидарне економије у националном контексту Републике Србије. На основу анализе садржаја докумената релевантних за деловање међународних актера у овој области, у раду се износе одређени закључци. Ангажовање међународних актера било је значајно у активностима промоције социјалне и солидарне економије, затим у операционализацији самог концепта – дефинисању његових кључних карактеристика и принципа, пружању стручне и финансијске подршке за развој сектора, као и у обезбеђивању платформи за размену најбољих пракси међу земљама и локалним заједницама. Међународна организација рада (ILO), Организација за економску сарадњу и развој (OECD), Уједињене нације (UN) и Европска унија (EU) идентификовани су као посебно значајни међународни актери у овој области. У оквиру националног оквира Републике Србије, развој социјалне и солидарне економије путем развоја социјалног предузетништва, у односу на ангажман међународних актера може се поделити у две фазе са специфичним карактеристикама. У првој фази концептуализације реформи у правцу изградње екосистема погодног за социјалну и солидарну економију, водећи утицај имала је Европска унија у сарадњи са владиним и невладиним актерима, кроз промоцију социјалног предузетништва, развој самог концепта и приступа који ће се примењивати у јавним политикама. Истовремено, Европска унија је финансирала конкретне активности на развоју социјалног предузетништва у пракси. У другој фази, фази институционализације социјалног предузетништва, значајнију улогу преузимају међународне развојне агенције из европских држава, уз повремени ангажман Уједињених нација, у изградњи капацитета националних актера за постизање ефикасног деловања субјеката који припадају сектору социјалне и солидарне економије у Републици Србији.

Кључне речи: социјална и солидарна економија, међународни актери, политичко учење, Република Србија

* This manuscript was submitted on April 30, 2025, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on August 20, 2025.

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NIETZSCHE'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AS A SPIRITUAL RESPONSE TO THE UPHEAVAL OF MODERNITY**

Abstract

The central focus of this paper is Nietzsche's philosophical poem, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra." While acknowledging its profound philosophical and literary value, this paper also explores its potential to reveal hidden aspects of the future of large political landscapes, in accordance with Nietzsche's advice. Nietzsche did not aspire to be universally loved or understood; rather, his thoughts resonated deeply with a select few, leaving behind a legacy of guiding principles for the future he envisioned as promising. This legacy was founded upon his pivotal concept of *value reevaluation*, making him a profoundly politically engaged thinker. Nietzsche's nihilism was underpinned by a persistent hope, a shared belief with Hegel, who also envisioned a new dawn, system, and dominant leadership class. Consequently, this paper delves into the similarities and dissimilarities between Nietzsche and Hegel, particularly in relation to Hegel's conception of historical consciousness as a stage for the historical spirit and the absolute idea, which Nietzsche saw as equivalent to the concept of the Übermensch. Hegel also underwent three distinct stages of transformation to emerge as the new man in the dawn of the world, thereby negating the polarities that surrounded him and within himself, ultimately rising to victory alongside his society. The decision of a single individual, the

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** This paper was written within the research activity of the Institute for Political Studies, funded by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia.

Übermensch, becomes the collective decision of the nation he leads, and it possesses the capacity to evolve and expand over time.

Keywords: Nietzsche, Übermensch, Hegel, historical consciousness, idea, Europe

“The world does not revolve around the inventor of new noise, but around the inventor of new values – it revolves silently.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

“THE WHOLE WORLD IS A STAGE”

To grasp the core thread of Nietzsche's philosophical thought, one must abandon classical positivist frameworks and approach his work through a hermeneutic-phenomenological lens. Nietzsche calls for a transfiguration of the spirit, and thus the interpretation of his oeuvre demands a fusion of contextual reading with a phenomenological reconstruction of the inner logic of the text. This study will interpret his work on multiple layers – through the aphoristic structure, genealogical analysis of values as foundations of modern political constructs, and the phenomenon of heightened intuition. By examining texts such as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Dawn*, and *Human, All Too Human*, we establish a continuity between Nietzsche's prophetic vision and the epoch of nihilism. We re-examine the ontological structure of his concepts, such as the *Übermensch* and *will to power*, while leaving room for philosophical cartography that charts the movement of spirit through historical cycles. In a societal system dominated by mass culture, Nietzsche calls for the regeneration of individual consciousness and the affirmation of harmony as a guiding principle of spiritual transfiguration – one that begins within the individual and reflects outward onto the world. The Übermensch is no longer merely a hero of new consciousness, but a bearer of the possibility that reality itself may be recreated through the creative act of the spirit. In this, the spirit and the Absolute Idea fulfill their role upon the stage of society, politics, and history, where politics is no longer technocracy, but a spiritual transfiguration and the path of the Absolute Idea – the path of justice, freedom, and harmony. The aim of this paper is to offer an interpretation of the political dimension of Nietzsche's philosophy, with

particular emphasis on the spiritual potential carried by the bearer of a new epoch, embodied in the figure and work of the Übermensch. The spiritual dimension of his being is transposed onto the plane of political reality as a whole, and a part of personal identity becomes the spiritual identity of a nation. The emanation of the Übermensch, in this case, as always and without exception, is not merely a catalyst for change or a single link in the creation of a new epoch. It is the new epoch itself, and political reality becomes the closest reflection of the spirit.

The central question of this paper concerns the philosophical-prophetic dimension of Nietzsche's thought and whether Nietzsche genuinely possessed prophetic tendencies. History may reveal this to us. As a philosopher, he is undisputed, and the poetic strength of his expressions is undeniable. Therefore, does he impart additional wisdom through the unity of philosophy and poetry in the realm of dreams, with the subtle guidance of a wise eye? To address this challenge effectively, we must primarily comprehend Nietzsche's affinity for riddles and enigmatic expressions. For Nietzsche, the riddle encapsulates the essence of existence, and its solution holds the world's destiny – a quest he consistently envisioned. Where does he perceive and discern the world's destiny? For him, the world is a stage striving for its culmination through the unification of opposing concepts and their apparent reconciliation in the grand tapestry of Europe's destiny, about which he dreamt with fervor. For him, philosophy, or geopolitics (as he invariably commenced from the philosophy of space and earth "remaining true to the earth," rather than the world as Hegel did), the entirety of philosophical thought is perpetually prepared and anticipating its culminating moment when it transforms into the philosophy of unification, and when the masks are removed, revealing the entire expanse as a stage where the Übermensch emerges, embodying the profound call of his own being for transformation (Hegel 2006). The Übermensch finds his ultimate expression only in such an environment, where his authority and chosen status are inexorably acknowledged (Niće 2005a). Will Europe ever attain this pinnacle, and what does Nietzsche, with his prophetic and philosophical view on the reality of things, impart to us regarding this matter?

Nietzsche primarily posits the revaluation of all values, albeit in a manner that these values, now reimagined, contribute to the collective progress of the entire community and the world that inhabits the same earthly space, "remain true to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue" (Niće 1999, 281). Fidelity to the Earth is encouraged by the

internal conflict that exists within the human spirit. Individuals are called upon to make decisions about their own destinies and transform their personal paths through the power of their own potential and transformative abilities. This aligns perfectly with the three fundamental aspects of Hegel's dialectic: *thesis*, *antithesis*, and *synthesis*. External influences are perceived as the necessary antithesis that propels individuals towards a form of development (Hegel 1987, 191). Nietzsche's theodicy centers on humanity, not due to a disregard for religion, but rather because he recognized the potential risks associated with human overreliance on external factors. Is there a way for individuals to find purpose in their own realization and then contribute to the development of the society they belong to? When do the politics of the individual align with the politics of the nation, and when do the outcomes of individual purpose transcend external plans? What insights can Nietzsche provide on these matters? Ultimately, what are the inherent flaws with this approach? This paper will address these related questions, focusing on Nietzsche's often-overlooked political philosophy.

Many authors who have engaged with Nietzsche's work have primarily focused on his inevitable nihilism and the concept of the Übermensch as the pivotal determinant of his philosophical trajectory. Could we discern potential future political perspectives within his ideas? Heidegger offered the following perspective on this matter: "It is quite evident. Values are conditions established by the will to power itself." (Hajdeger 2000, 180). Heidegger would say the following on the matter: "It is perfectly clear. Values are conditions set by the will to power itself for its own realization. Only when the will to power appears as the fundamental purpose of all that is real—that is, when it is actualized and thereby understood as the reality of all that is real—does it become evident where values originate and what sustains and directs every value judgment" (Hajdeger 2000, 180). In this light, Heidegger recognized the ontological significance of the concept of the will to power in everyday contexts by defining his approach as the "metaphysics of the will to power." (Hajdeger 2000, 187). The metaphysics of the will to power has, to date, been primarily viewed as an isolated phenomenon, distant from its true domain or perhaps precisely from the perspective where it can be comprehended. Hannah Arendt contends that this theory is irrevocably refuted by the concept of eternal recurrence, which "implies the unconditional negation of the modern linear concept of time and its continuous progression" (Arent 2010, 273). Conversely, circular movement affirms the authority of being, as circular movement in this

context is perceived as a means of expressing historical consciousness, likely a consequence of Hegel's influence on Nietzsche, a topic that will be extensively discussed in this paper. However, this concept is scarcely recognized in contemporary thought regarding Nietzsche, despite his frequent challenges to Hegel's ideas, despite their shared spiritual affinity. Even in these challenges, the unwavering strength of thought exhibited by both philosophers was acknowledged, akin to a river flowing towards the same source from which it drew nourishment – antiquity. Nevertheless, the narrative of the Übermensch does not depict a solitary individual, and this aspect will be the primary focus of our discussion. While he advocated for internal transformation, Nietzsche envisioned it as a precursor to a broader societal shift. This transformation, he believed, would manifest because of the individual's spiritual evolution, culminating in the emergence of new aspects and ideals. Spiritual change, according to Nietzsche, serves as a mirror, reflecting the individual's transformation and eventually reflecting the entire society – here, Nietzsche is unwavering: "The Übermensch lies close to my heart, he is my first and only concern – not man: not the neighbor, not the poorest, not the greatest sufferer, not the best" (Niče 2005a, 275). Only an individual who has mastered self-overcoming possesses the capacity to envision authentic social change. To achieve this, we must explore Nietzsche's thought and identify approaches that illuminate the role of the Übermensch as a catalyst for social transformation. Specifically, we should examine how the Übermensch initiates social apotheosis and odyssey, and the extent to which they embody the essence of social change. Nietzsche's emphasis lies in the internal plan, which subsequently manifests in the external world. Key social transformations occur when individual consciousness aligns with the plan of manifestation in a novel form. Consequently, change emanates from the transformation of a single individual, spreading like a wave to others. For substantial social change to transpire, the transformation of the Übermensch, a natural leader whose role is to inspire the masses through exemplary behavior, becomes indispensable. Nietzsche writes: "And what you have called the world, that still needs to be created: let it become your mind, your image, your will, your love! And truly, to your bliss, you knowers" (Niče 2005a, 81).

Who is this leader – Nietzsche's Übermensch – and what qualities must he possess? Does he bear a moral and social responsibility to awaken others? This Übermensch, as envisioned by Nietzsche, possesses specific qualities that enable them to fulfill their leadership

role. Notably, they bear moral and social responsibility to inspire others. This responsibility stems from their primary objective of not only transforming their own world but also the broader society. As they are the first to awaken to their own truth, they become the embodiment of that truth for the nation. In this analysis, we acknowledge Hegel's influence on Nietzsche's thought. Both philosophers posited that the individual shapes the nation and history. Hegel asserted that the individual becomes the historical consciousness that embodies the national spirit, embodying "freedom that has only itself as an end and which at the same time contains the simple concept of reason, as well as what we call the subject, self-consciousness, the spirit that exists in the world" (Hegel 2006, 59). Similarly, Nietzsche's Übermensch emerges as a transformative figure, akin to a storm that awakens individuals to their own truths, which become the prevailing truths of an era. Nietzsche's Übermensch, like Hegel's *absolute*, possesses the potential to reshape history, which aligns with its own trajectory and serves as the foundation of existence. As Hegel stated, "the experience that consciousness gains about itself can by its concept encompass nothing less than the entire system of consciousness or the entire kingdom of the truth of spirit" (Hegel 1974, 48). Although Hegel's concept is presented immediately, Nietzsche's Übermensch emerges later. Nevertheless, their certainty is evident. While this convergence may exceed Nietzsche's initial comfort level, it is undeniable. The Absolute idea selects individuals we can refer to as geniuses of spirit and geniuses of their time, while Nietzsche's Übermensch initiates its own journey of self-discovery and boundary-pushing, ultimately transforming its personal world into a global plan. This process of reconstructing one individual's world can lead to the reconstruction of a nation or, ultimately, the very fabric of being itself. Therefore, in Nietzsche, we discuss the development of a nation, which progresses in the following sequence: *man, nation, being*. In contrast, Hegel's path is irreversible, leading to the sequence: *being, nation, man*. Hegel's world is centered around the absolute as the primary cause of everything, originating from the world of ideals and ideas. Hegel posits that "freedom can only be where individuality is recognized as something truly existing in the divine being" (Hegel 2006, 61). Nietzsche, on the other hand, adopts a more practical approach. His world consistently begins with the individual and ultimately returns to them. This understanding is fundamental to his philosophy. Nikolai Trubetskoy (*Евгений Николаевич Трубецкой*) says: "The more people in a given nation who

have ‘known themselves’ and ‘become their own,’ the more successful the work on national self-knowledge and the creation of a self-sufficient national culture, which in turn represents the condition of the success and intensity of individual self-knowledge” (Trubeckoj 2004, 75). Consequently, the truths of one individual can become the truths of a nation and the history of a specific time. In contrast, Hegel’s approach involves selecting the best offspring to ‘record’ history as the “concrete existence of the divine essence” (Hegel 2006, 61). The focus remains on the absolute idea initially, with the individual ultimately taking center stage. Both Hegel and Nietzsche acknowledge Hellenism as the foundational nourishment of the spirit. While Plato’s concept has been interpreted through Hegel’s lens, Nietzsche’s thought draws inspiration from the audacious Heraclitus, who contemplates the transience of existence while recognizing the cyclical nature of all that exists.

AUTHENTICITY AS THE FIRST CALL OF THE SPIRIT

In Nietzsche’s philosophy, the path to the Übermensch encompasses the journey of transformation, which is the selfless revelation of the Übermensch on his path to self-discovery. Authenticity is primarily recognized as the initial station of the spirit or the initial stage towards a man destined for transformation and self-actualization. To attain self-knowledge, an individual must undergo various forms and transformations, ultimately leading to the transcendence of their natural limitations. Therefore, it can be asserted that for Nietzsche, the path of transformation from man to Übermensch is marked by self-awareness, as a man destined for transformation towards his true nature: “The wonderful self-concealment of earlier epochs, when thinking, belief, and feeling had different polarities, is no longer there. Thinking disappears into thoughts, feeling into things that are felt, will into what is wanted, and belief into what is believed. A fury of disappearing bewitches and captures the actor in his act. Now the stage is revolving, the actor is emerging from his creation, placing himself in front of it, and declaring. Look, I did this, this is where I felt and believed, and this is where my ‘will to [...]’ did its job” (Safranski 2002, 310).

In contrast, Hegel’s path involves understanding and comprehending one’s being as an integral part of the spirit. Hegel posits that “only in those changes occurring in the realm of the spirit does something new appear” (Hegel 2006, 65). Consequently, knowledge of

the spirit and being is derived from understanding the ideal world as a guiding principle. In Nietzsche's perspective, the journey traversed is aimed at bridging the gap within one's personality. Self-awareness is the sole truth; the being must recognize its limitations and transcend them through growth and self-awareness. Hegel's *being* is revealed over time through the negation of all external constraints, affirming that "freedom can only exist where individuality is recognized as something truly existing in the divine being" (Hegel 2006, 61). Conversely, Nietzsche's Übermensch authentically asserts himself over time, overcoming all polarities within his spirit to affirm his presence on the stage of life, mind, and reality. As Nietzsche aptly states, "Upwards flies our path, from our kind to the super-kind. Upwards flies our spirit: so it is the parable of our body, the parable of exaltation" (Ničé 1999, 116).

All that is necessary is for him to remain a man striving to conquer his own spirit. Here, Nietzsche's moment, now crystal clear, emerges that only through the shape and refinement of one's own spirit can we attain the essence of the concept of being. Spirituality is not found as immanence, as is the case in Hegel's view of the concept "the state is the spiritual idea in the external manifestation of human will" (Hegel 2006, 57). Nor is it present in Plato's definition of knowledge as *forgotten memory*. In Nietzsche, spirituality flourishes, and here lies the infinitely clear determinant of his political philosophy. The political spirit is cultivated, and political readiness is prepared, and this is simply the fundamental characteristic of his ideology. In fact, this is the trait that later defines a man, not only as the transformer of his own life but also as someone who transforms an entire epoch. The entire epoch is not solely dedicated to serving an individual in the manner Hegel would comprehend, nor is it concealed from truth, as Plato perceived it through his renowned allegory of the *cave exit*. Rather, its purpose is to affirm an individual's readiness to govern primarily themselves and subsequently define the epoch. The transformation of society, even in contemporary times, invariably commences with the transformation of the individual who chooses to act. Nietzsche exhorts, "Return, as I do, the flying virtue to the Earth – yes, return it to the body and life: to impart meaning to the Earth, a human meaning!" (Ničé 1999, 117). His actions now leave an indelible mark on the fabric of reality, and the entire reality serves as a confirmation of the reflection of the Übermensch's work within the society surrounding him. Thus, this society will follow his example, reflecting Nietzsche's *ideal*. This is precisely why his discourse on the transformation of man, traversing three distinct stages, holds immense

significance and resonates with the transformation of the Übermensch. While it may not be straightforward, it is always profoundly rewarding. Spiritual authority is not unveiled but rather established. What is the reason behind that? The reason lies in Nietzsche's perception of an individual who fails to realize their full potential as incomplete. They must transcend their own limitations and thereby overcome and redefine everything that hinders them. Through Zarathustra's lens, Nietzsche elucidates the significance of the Übermensch's transformative journey and its ultimate destination. For Zarathustra, *the will to power* is the fundamental characteristic of every individual; it drives them to pursue specific definitions and accomplishments in their lives, thereby defining their essence. Through this process of overcoming, life transcends its inherent limitations. Contrary to Hegel's notion of a final purpose in this dance of concepts, there exists merely a gap between humanity and the Übermensch, and this gap must be transcended. The spirit undergoes a series of transformations, evolving from a camel to a lion and ultimately to a child. The lion's spirit confronts and overcomes the attributes of the camel's spirit, having transcended its physical limitations through the initial transformation. The second transformation leads to the lion's transformation into a child. What does it imply to us? The answer can be found within Nietzsche's thought: "The present is the past on earth – ah, my friends, that is what I find most unbearable; and I would not know how to live if I were not a seer of what must come" (Niče 1999, 189). He further states: "And how could I endure being a man if man were not also a poet, a solver of riddles, and a redeemer of chance." (Niče 1999, 190). These insights collectively suggest that the philosophical poem about Zarathustra is not merely a narrative but a coded prophecy.

This transformation serves as a profound revelation, suggesting that the present is akin to the past on Earth, presenting a significant challenge. The individual grapples with the unbearable nature of this realization and acknowledges the necessity of possessing the ability to perceive the future. The poem further emphasizes the multifaceted nature of humanity, highlighting the roles of poet, interpreter, and redeemer of chance. These insights collectively suggest that the philosophical poem about Zarathustra is not merely a narrative but a coded prophecy.

This is the definitive conclusion of the spirit that manifests itself in the stage of life, initially as its antithesis and subsequently as its thesis. This entity journeys towards itself, to ground its own essence and delineate itself in relation to the manifold articulations and movements

of being, striving to fill the gaps left by incomplete reality and heal them with the elixir of eternity, which defines humanity on this stage as the first and last hope of the spirit, having transcended all initial limitations. As Nietzsche proclaims, “New nations will arise, and new springs will burst forth, filling new depths” (Niče 1999, 269). Spiritual transformation invariably commences and concludes with humanity, serving as the initial and final juncture of such transformations. It is exclusively humanity that records their defeats and victories on life’s journey, which, along with them, undergoes metamorphosis. *The will to power* is the genuine impetus of the profound spirit, yet this power is not directed towards conquering others but rather towards conquering oneself, primarily. An individual who recognizes their responsibility for their own development and the struggle against their own limitations becomes an Übermensch, or superman in the Nietzschean sense, whose mission is to establish dominion over their own being while upholding the autonomy of their own spirit. Nietzsche proclaims: “This, in essence, is the secret of the soul. Only when the hero departs does the super-hero approach it in a dream” (Niče 1999, 164). Subsequently, this spiritual giant becomes an exemplary for others, shaping the annals of history with the covers of immortality. In contrast, Hegel would, by the author’s free interpretation, vehemently assert, “No! He is not immortal because he has transcended the contradictions within his spirit, but because those contradictions necessitated their resolution. He did not choose spirituality; rather, the spirit chose him!” However, if we adopt the premise that spiritual reality is the foundational and fundamental reality for Hegel, this assertion becomes invalid. In general, Hegel never stopped implying “History is the development of the spirit over time, akin to nature’s development of ideas in space” (Hegel 2006, 86).

THERE IS NO MAN OF MODERNITY, BUT ALWAYS AND ONLY THE MAN OF AN EPOCH

What, then, would be the true response in contemplating the man of modernity, in the sense in which Nietzsche envisions the Übermensch and his political role within the reality of life? There is no such thing as a “man of modernity” in the sense that Nietzsche conceives of the Übermensch and his political role in the world. Rather, there is always and only the “man of the epoch.” However, who is this man of the epoch? Is he a political offspring of hope? Does Nietzsche provide us

with a pattern for recognizing him and the level of transformation he represents, given that he himself mentioned three? To gain a deeper understanding, we would need to introduce a third name into this exploration of the immortals – Homer. Can Homer help us resolve this antinomy? Homer can assist us in reconciling elements of fate with elements of character decision, as exemplified in the portrayal of the greatest Greek hero, Achilles. I will illustrate this reconciliation in the work “(Im)mortal Fate of a Demigod,” and through these elements, we can now identify the domains of fate and character and determine whether these two aspects can ever be reconciled. In this paper, the dichotomy is resolved in this way: “The fundamental question about Achilles’ fate can be approached from several perspectives. Certainly, Achilles had the opportunity to choose between a short and immortal life and a long and mortal one. However, in the face of this choice, an even more profound question arises: did Achilles choose his fate?” (Dokić 2020, 227). This question can be split into two: 1) Did Achilles make a conscious decision regarding his fate? 2) Did the heroic fate choose Achilles?

According to Dokić: “If Achilles is already confronted with a choice, does he genuinely decide, or is his destiny predetermined to be that very Achilles, as per his character and aspirations, who is incapable of deviating from his path? From the outset, it is evident that Achilles is faced with a pivotal choice that compels him to decide between a protracted and idyllic existence or a brief but impactful life. Fate presents him with a choice, yet it is certain that his destiny is to remain that very *Achilles*. Consequently, he is compelled to conform to his nature and cannot deviate from his predetermined path. This profound understanding permeates the entirety of the Iliad and significantly contributes to the narrative’s impact. The greatest human suffering is mitigated by the greatest human triumph. Death becomes his triumph, akin to any other victory achieved on the battlefield. The sole response to such heroism lies in the promise of immortality” (Dokić 2020, 227).

As we observe, every complexity can be divided into less complex elements. I will now enumerate some of these elements. Each of these elements is indispensable for achieving character maturity or character revelation, as characters also seek an opportunity to manifest themselves in the cosmos. Is this opportunity a matter of chance, or not? An individual with specific inclinations will seek their opportunity in a precisely defined location, and here we can discern the keys to character manifestation. Not only does force seek an opportunity to manifest, but

also to grow and develop. An individual with abilities in a particular area finds an optimal environment where their abilities can flourish. However, it is crucial to remember that the genius of any field has the responsibility not to affirm outdated values, but as Nietzsche himself reminds us, to reevaluate old values by introducing new ones: "This is what he described as his fulfilled need for immortality; in addition, however, through the detour of his first interpreters and intermediaries, he above all imposed his name as a brand name for a successful immaterial product, for a literary- lifestyle-drug or an elevated way-of-life. This is the Nietzschean design of individualism: We free spirits! We who live dangerously! When the author identifies himself as author, the self-eulogistic melody appears; when the market-maker launches the brand, the advertisement appears" (Sloterdijk 2007, 68).

A talented individual achieves great success in affirming, evaluating, and revolutionizing existing values, but only a genius can bring something novel, something the world can only aspire to. It is precisely such a political genius that Nietzsche refers to. His task extends beyond illuminating the path; he aims to construct a novel one. Not only does he rephrase old values but also recognizes new ones, which can only be achieved by an individual born to perceive them, noticing concealed threads within the intricate tapestry of ideas. It is undeniable that both Nietzsche and Hegel, as well as Plato, succumb to the notion that distinguishes the individual from the mass. Only the individual can discern the essence of things and identify the areas and types of change necessary. In this sense, they are more productive than the masses of people who lack the necessary guidance and direction. At that juncture, the Übermensch emerges as their beacon, offering them a path out because his perspective enables them to perceive connections that an unaccustomed eye overlooks: "The stillest words are those that bring the storm. Thoughts that come on dove's feet rule the world" (Niće 2005a, 144).

This individual is constructed according to the principles of a bygone era, but his purpose (and this is where Nietzsche's reevaluation of all values lies) is to usher in a new epoch; with him, a new era must emerge, as only thus can he solidify his position as the Übermensch. He stands as an antithesis to his time and embodies the thesis of the new era he brings forth, which evolves from his spiritual representation. Consequently, his political philosophy is grounded in the ideals of the individual who finds a way to distinguish themselves from the masses and subsequently leads that same mass. His objective is to reconcile

and revalue the normative and political aspects of political authority within the context of the contemporary state. As Zoran Milošević implies: “It is crucial that the various channels of ideological influence on personality do not degenerate into a factor that undermines and destroys the spiritual and moral values that have been cultivated by the people over centuries, leading to division and disintegration of the people as a community. Conversely, if utilized in the correct direction, these channels can strengthen national strength, national power, and integration processes” (Milošević 2009, 65).

For Nietzsche, the concept of command holds particular significance, but it is not directed towards others but rather towards life itself and the transformation of life as the primary determining force and element on the path of spiritual development. Commanding also entails self-limitation, which serves as the defining characteristic of the Übermensch (Niče 2005a, 144). Their task is to redesign and redefine the temporal context within which they exist, whether in the realm of politics or their own essence: “To accomplish great deeds is difficult: but to command great deeds is more difficult” (Niče 2005a, 144). Notably, negation in Nietzsche’s philosophy does not possess an ontological dimension, akin to Hegel’s approach. It is not an ontological category but rather possesses inherent value as it fortifies the Übermensch on their journey of evaluating values. In contrast, Hegel’s negativity of the spirit serves as a pivotal station in determining its substantial value, leading to spiritual transformation. However, Hegel’s perspective also encompasses three distinct stages, each representing a different aspect of transformation compared to Nietzsche’s. In Nietzsche’s view, the negativity of being affirms a novel reality that emerges from the boundaries of opposition. Hegel identifies three fundamental elements in overcoming the spirit: the *finite*, the *infinite*, and the *infinitely infinite* (Hegel 1987, 143). Conversely, Nietzsche conceptualizes the transformation as a progression from a camel to a lion to a child. The crux of the matter lies in the nature of the final transformation, the metamorphosis of the spirit of the lion into the spirit of the child, but why? According to the author of this text, Nietzsche masterfully guides the Übermensch back to the commencement of a new circular path of the apotheosis of reality. This transformation process is not and cannot be automatically concluded; it is characterized by a cyclical nature akin to metamorphosis, which is *circulus vitiosus*. Consequently, the game persists, presenting new challenges on the path of the Übermensch. To continue the transformation process, which began in his mind and then

reflected in his environment by surpassing reality, he must return to the simplicity of a child in order to reinitiate the process of metamorphosis, which primarily unfolded within his consciousness and later around him, as a consequence of the transcendence of reality – one that is directly and originally manifested in the spirit itself, as such. We note that, although he – like Hegel – does not speak explicitly of spirit, he nonetheless cannot avoid it.

This enables a new metamorphosis, which is an artful allusion to the political game, where the strength of the lion replaces the naivety of the child, ready to confront the next challenge. This readiness is exemplified in our Übermensch. The central thesis of Nietzsche's Zarathustra is the stark contrast between stagnation and conformity on one hand and creativity and a reevaluation of values on the other. However, Nietzsche also highlights the alarming number of individuals who have lost their enthusiasm for change. Change, in its essence, no longer captivates them unless it manifests outwardly. This is precisely what Nietzsche frequently criticizes, as he is horrified by false idols, which he also refers to as false gods. Consequently, he denounces resignation as the culmination of the human species, a stage beyond which any progress becomes futile. The reevaluation of all values is precisely aimed at this juncture, emphasizing the necessity for life to transcend the constraints imposed by consumer culture and conformity. These constraints are directed towards self-development as a sacred principle, surpassing all others. Moreover, they encompass the neglected spiritual aspects, fostering a new unity rooted in a shared spiritual imprint and value of living. In this regard, the Übermensch transcends the traditional role of a leader and becomes the embodiment of the spiritual essence of his time. This is no longer merely another epoch in a series but a spiritual construct reshaped to conform to the principles of a new reality.

A NEW SOCIETY AS THE FOUNDATION FOR A NEW POLITICAL PARADIGM

His aspiration to transcend such a stage is evident in his assertion that human *is a challenge that must be overcome*. While this notion is not directly integrable into his political philosophy, his critiques of values are directed at the critique of society as a whole, necessitating a comprehensive reevaluation of all values for even the possibility of progress. He describes society as a state of collective resignation

and emphasizes the urgent need for novel forms of expression and the establishment of new values and laws. He poses a critical question to those who seem complicit in the current frenzy of nations: “Are you complicit in the madness of nations? Their madness to produce as much as possible and accumulate wealth? Your task would be to present them with a counter-argument: how much great internal value is sacrificed for the sake of such an external objective? Where, then, is your internal value if you no longer comprehend the essence of living freely” (Niće 2005c, 140). In this profound *reevaluation*, a deeper significance emerges that points to the concept of “creating new.” This is the essence of the new society he envisions as the foundation of a novel political reality. This is the crux of his inquiry and the determination to “overcome man,” for man is indeed a challenge that must be conquered within this context. Does this imply that Nietzsche’s political philosophy of hope can manifest as a transformative force, leading individuals from the lowest rungs to the highest heights? Indeed, this is precisely what it entails. Nietzsche’s concept of the Übermensch embarks on a journey from the lowest to the highest rung, affirming its own existence through time. He proclaims, “The European man must overcome himself and embark on a new direction. He can indeed achieve this, for ‘his arrow must now strike the farthest targets’” (Glendinning 2016, 283). Can we draw parallels between this notion and Hegel’s absolute idea, wherein the ruler serves as a confirmation and anticipation of the era in which he resides, embodying the position of power that the ruler currently holds? Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s concept of the ruler has always been predetermined for their position. It is crucial to remember the aspect of spiritual determination of the nature of things, as posited by Hegel, which is immanent to the very essence of existence. The ruler Hegel speaks of is a manifestation of this fundamental aspect in the material realm. They are chosen and, in this sense, carry their inherent nature with them until it manifests in the material world as a validation of their inherent value: “The deeds of great historical figures, who embody world history, appear justified not only from the internal significance they may not fully comprehend but also from a worldly perspective. However, from this worldly standpoint, moral demands should not be placed on these historical figures and their accomplishments, as they are irrelevant. This same formalism is applied to indeterminacies surrounding genius, poetry, and even philosophy, perceiving them – genius, poetry, and philosophy – in the same manner across different contexts” (Hegel 2006, 81). In contrast to Friedrich Nietzsche’s notion

of Übermensch, the Übermensch who triumphs over their higher nature, Hegel's ruler uncovers or is made aware of their true essence. Hegel holds the view that: "As previously mentioned, world history represents the development of the spirit's consciousness of its freedom and the realization of freedom, a realization that is a product of this consciousness" (Hegel 2006, 77).

THE ÜBERMENSCH AS AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS AND ETHICAL TRANSFORMATION

Nietzsche posits that ethical transformation serves as the initial step towards a novel social order, commencing when individuals adopt novel values. This transformation catalyzes a metamorphosis, akin to the lion emerging from the camel's spirit. Driven by lion-like strength, the individual forges their own path, characterized by self-overcoming as the sole viable option. These solitary figures, cognizant of the deception, collectively construct a new truth: "In history prophecy holds a place. Moreover, history is scientific to the extent of its feasibility. When we plant a tree, we anticipate its entire life cycle. While we cannot predict lightning's destructive power, we are certain that a cherry seed will not yield a poplar leaf" (Ortega i Gaset 2019, 16). What is the most important aspect of Nietzsche's approach? The most salient aspect of Nietzsche's approach lies in the self-selected individuals who embark on the path of self-overcoming, resisting the conformity of the masses. What is Nietzsche's most important aspect in this approach? Nietzsche recognizes the potential of these individuals to usher in a new era, propelled by their unwavering determination and brisk steps. The moment an Übermensch awakens and creates themselves, as well as their own path, they become an inspiration to others, embodying a glimmer of hope and a solution to the challenges of their era. Their remedy deviates from conventional practices, relying solely on the example they set through their actions. Individuals who closely associate with the Übermensch and heed their words now learn from the Übermensch, as their ideas and thoughts ignite their own potential. Through collective efforts, a society emerges that embodies political maturity and embraces a new reality. The Übermensch's remedy initially resonates with those closest to him, who witness his unwavering pursuit of creating a new reality through self-overcoming. Subsequently, this society evolves into a realm of new reality, with the Übermensch

emerging as an equal among equals. In Nietzsche's perspective, this society represents a novel aristocracy. It devises novel laws and values, eliminating structural inequality among its members. This society and its ruler embody the early stages of meritocracy in the modern sense, characterized by the rule of the most capable individuals. Nietzsche asserts that "this aristocracy would not derive its status from 'blue blood' or wealth but solely from the gravity and significance of its responsibilities" (Granje 2000, 118). This is not the classical aristocracy, as the pursuit of power is achieved through personal effort and self-assurance. This transformative society emerged from the individuals who withdrew from the previous system. However, since the new society is now composed of those who prioritize personal self-overcoming as its fundamental principle, does this imply the emergence of an equal number of new values as new individuals who adopt self-overcoming as their way of life in political reality? On the contrary, it is crucial to remember that the original Übermensch serves as an exemplar. The awakening of one Übermensch triggers the collective consciousness to embrace the new and unconventional. They transcend the limitations of individuality and collaborate in the spirit of a unified entity. In this sense, the ultimate transformation aligns with the child who adopts and transmits the values of the lion. How would Hegel interpret this phenomenon? What happens to people who try to negate the Übermensch? Regrettably, those who attempt to refute the Übermensch remain behind him, unable to follow the same path because they lack the perception and comprehension to grasp his essence. The resentment they harbor towards the Übermensch hinders their recognition of his nature, preventing them from awakening the spirit of that nature within themselves and joining the ranks of the greats. They either fail to perceive or choose not to acknowledge him: "But, my brother, if you aspire to be a star, you must not diminish your brilliance for their sake" (Niče 1999, 102). Nietzsche advises against reflecting on or even feeling pity for these individuals, as he perceives them as inherently susceptible to falling short of their potential. He asserts, "To be just to me, you must say, 'I choose your injustice as my allotted part'" (Niče 1999, 102). Refuting the concept of the Übermensch also entails negating the potential for personal growth and self-discovery, thereby hindering the source of inspiration. What is Hegel's perspective on this? From Hegel's perspective, these individuals are viewed as negation and antithesis, which will inevitably be overcome in

favor of the ruler. This is not due to the inherent superiority of the ruler, but rather to the inherent superiority of the historical order that propels this progression and cannot be halted. It is noteworthy that, unlike Hegel, Nietzsche maintains a firm stance on personal responsibility. From Nietzsche's viewpoint, the political order gradually evolves, and the Übermensch gradually realizes their true nature, ultimately achieving the pinnacle of existence. Conversely, for Hegel, the fate of these individuals is predetermined, regardless of their circumstances. Hegel asserts, "In this determination, the spirit expresses all its consciousness and volition, its entire reality. Its religion, its political organization, its morality, its legal system, its customs, even its science, art, and technical skills – all bear its stamp" (Hegel 2006, 77). However, it is essential to recognize that from Hegel's perspective, the true antithesis lies not in the individuals Nietzsche describes but rather in the very fabric of everything else. He posits that all other entities are merely playthings, lacking the substance to provide genuine confirmation. This understanding is evident in Homer's portrayal of Achilles and Hector, where Homer deliberately pits Achilles against Hector, recognizing their shared qualities and potential for equality in such a situation. Any other opponent would have resulted in another routine victory for Achilles, devoid of any meaningful challenge. In contrast, Nietzsche's concept of the Übermensch would necessitate Homer himself (as Nietzsche demands a certain level of virtuosity in expression); his initial condition is creativity, which is why the ultimate transformation of the spirit is akin to that of a child – creativity reaches its peak when it is unhindered. Nietzsche highly values novel words and thoughts, as well as individuals who forge unexplored paths that cannot be easily molded, as this is their unique task. He perceives Europe as a unified entity governed by a single culture and spirit. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that this region now becomes a bastion of culture, its most spirited, identical, and common expression. It has grown within a single culture and spirit and must reemerge anew. It cannot establish a new world of values by conforming to the norms of others. A creator who follows the conventional path of others, adhering to rules, may be technically accurate, but they lack authenticity. Nietzsche famously declared, "The great is already here" (Niće 1977, 82). Ernst Bertram concludes: "Nietzsche is a child of that same classical cosmopolitanism, and of the century-long cultivation of it in Goethe's spirit of maturation and de-barbarization through love of Hellenism"

(Bertram 2009, 169). The pivotal factor lies in the fact that if everyone were to be the same, progress would cease. Consequently, Nietzsche was the first to champion differences and embrace individuality, even though he acknowledged the potential drawbacks. He recognized that the world did not require a replication of someone else's philosophy but rather his own unique perspective. It does not necessitate a replica of what another creator can produce but rather the exceptional creations of an individual, a feat that no one else can replicate. Nietzsche aptly stated, "Nietzsche is the first to discover the new path, yet it is so terrifying that one genuinely fears when one witnesses him traversing it alone, walking an untrodden path" (Niće 1996, 241). In his view, this is the sole criterion for excellence in any endeavor – irreplaceability and a distinctive style that becomes recognizable solely through the author's personal touch. Conversely, the Übermensch cannot engage in the mundane tasks of the world, as it would diminish the opportunity for the creative spark that must be his most sacred endeavor. A gifted individual is primarily responsible for their talent, as it is a spiritual aspect of their personality that deviates from equal values and laws, and whose purpose is to establish new ones: "The most profound words are those that ignite the storm. Thoughts that descend like doves' feet – govern the world" (Niće 1999, 198).

PROPHETIC WORDS OF ZARATHUSTRA

His enigmatic intimation of what is to come is expressed in the following words: "The wisdom of the past is always prophetic. Only as architects of the future and connoisseurs of the present will you comprehend it" (Niće 2021, 65). The multifaceted nature of his words inspires us to reflect on the past with enlightenment gained from the knowledge of the future, skillfully concealed by the concept of the *cyclical movement* of existence, being, and conceptuality through time. This ancient, classical notion resonates throughout his writings, revealing that the foundation of his thought and prophecy lies in his undisguised Hellenism.

The present is the past for the eye of the prophet that Nietzsche was and through the encrypted prophecy he conveyed to us, we seek to understand his most beautiful poetic-philosophical work: Thus Spoke Zarathustra. What profound insights does his reflection on the Übermensch, the great ruler of the future, impart to us, conveyed in

thoughts that descend like doves' feet, "will be on the earth of great politics" (Niče 2018, 158)? Perhaps his message lies concealed within the ideal he envisioned, *the ideal of Europe*, which he passionately expresses in the following words (particularly noteworthy given his renowned epitaph): "The eternal blessing of Europe: then the seventh day will come again when the old Jewish God will delight in himself, his creation, and his chosen people – and we will all share in his joy together" (Niče 2005b, 140). Alternatively, we could encapsulate his message in the words he sang in the prophetic and philosophical poem *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "Watch and listen, solitary souls. Winds with the delicate flutter of wings are approaching from the future; and good news reaches the ears of the discerning. You, today's loners, who separate yourselves, will one day unite into single people. From you, who have chosen selfhood, a chosen people will emerge – and from it, the Übermensch. Truly, the Earth will once again become a sanctuary of healing! And already, new scents, salutary, and new hope have enveloped it" (Niče 1999, 118).

Based on all that has been said, we conclude that Nietzsche and Hegel, through their joint efforts, left us not only a map, but a profound understanding of the identity of the absolute idea realized in the work of the Übermensch – who, through a spiritual turn on the political and European stage, transforms the entire reality around him, reaffirming the world's structure through his actions. They also initiated a line of thought whereby harmony becomes the guiding idea, under whose watchful gaze reality is transfigured – all through the work of the Übermensch, in whose creative framework the absolute is continuously affirmed. The central thesis and contribution of this work lies in connecting Nietzsche's and Hegel's philosophies through the concepts of the Übermensch and the absolute idea, both placed before a mirror, as well as in positioning Nietzsche's understanding and philosophical reflection on the future and development of the political epoch, where both thinkers consciously place the individual in contrast to the collective, spiritual transformation in contrast to the material. All of this opens space for future research, where it will be considered how this affirmation takes shape over time, and to what extent history has truly been the actualization of the absolute idea, up to the present moment. Has any epoch ever existed without the Übermensch, or has it only dreamed a deep dream, waiting to be awakened along with him?

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**НИЧЕОВА ПОЛИТИЧКА ФИЛОЗОФИЈА
КАО ДУХОВНИ ОДГОВОР
НА СТРЕМЉЕЊА МОДЕРНОСТИ****

Резиме

Централна тема овог рада је скривена теза Ничеове филозофске поеме „Тако је говорио Заратустра”, којој се приступа из аспекта, не само њене неупитне филозофске и књижевне вредности, већ и проучавајући шифроване елементе који говоре о будућности политичке позорнице, као и о његовим упутствима за исту. Ниче можда није желео да га сви разумеју и воле, али је онима који су имали слуха за његову мисао, оставио смернице за будућност какву је он сматрао светлом, а која се темељи на његовој основној појмовности *превредновања свих вредности*, и у том смислу је апсолутно (над)политички обојена. Његов нихилизам овом приликом је уступио месту светлу наде, коју је у том погледу појмовности делио са Хегелом, а који кроз своју личну метафору такође говори о доласку новог система, и предиспозицијама за ничеанског натчовека. Управо из тог разлога, основни део рада биће посвећен његовом поређењу са Хегелом, те Хегеловим посматрањем историјске позорнице као светла историјске стварности у којој се, као под рефлекторима, испољава светскоисторијски дух, који је за Ничеа нико други до сам натчовек, а који на свом путу остварења мора пронаћи начин да превазиђе три аспекта испољавања духа, и да на тај начин потврди себе кроз самопревазилажење, и аутоматски, како би то Хегел изразио, негацијом поларитета дође до сопствене самопотврде кроз време. Она потом постаје и потврда историјске стварности

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** Овај рад је настао у оквиру научноистраживачке делатности Института за политичке студије, коју финансира Министарство науке, технолошког развоја и иновација Републике Србије.

и друштва као таквог. Одлука натчовека (п)остаје одлука целине, која проналази свој начин да се, као таква, транскрибује и испољи кроз време.

Кључне речи: Ниче, натчовек, Хегел, историјска свест, идеја, Европа

* This manuscript was submitted on May 31, 2025, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on August 20, 2025.

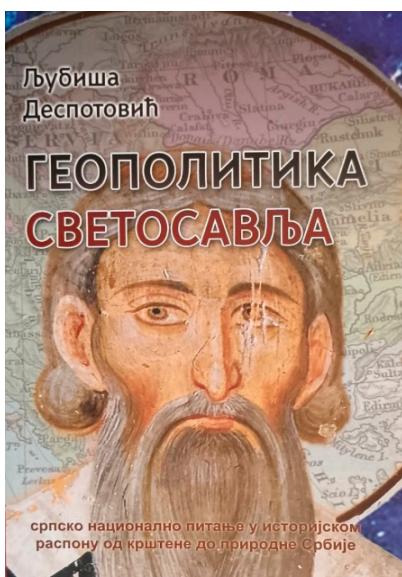
REVIEWS

UDC 323.1(=163.41)
DOI: 10.5937/spm92-58844
Book review

Српска политичка мисао
(Serbian Political Thought)
No 4/2025.
Vol. 92
pp. 193-197

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SOLELY SVETOSAVLJE SAVES THE SERBS



Despotović, Ljubiša. 2025.
Geopolitika Svetosavlja – Srpsko

nacionalno pitanje u istorijskom rasponu od krštene do prirodne Srbije. Novi Sad: Arhiv Vojvodine; Beograd: Institut za političke studije, 378 pp.

In 2019, the first edition of the unique scientific work by Prof. Dr. Ljubiša Despotović, *Geopolitics of Svetosavlje – The Serbian National Question in the Historical Span from Baptized to Natural Serbia* (Despotović 2019a), was published. In 2025, the second and expanded edition appeared (Despotović 2025). Within the Serbian academic community, there is a whole array of scholars dealing with various aspects of geopolitics, but none have studied Serbian Orthodoxy – Svetosavlje¹ – as thoroughly and exclusively as Prof. Dr. Ljubiša Despotović.

Before delving into a deeper analysis of the work itself, it is necessary to explain certain

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¹ Svetosavlje could be translated as: Spirituality in the Saint Sava way.

concepts without which the meaning of this book cannot be adequately understood. First, Despotović does not attempt to glorify the Serbs falsely – Serbian history already contains ample evidence of national rises and falls. The author deals with the geopolitical position of Serbia and the Serbs, the formation of their national identity, language, and faith, the loss of linguistic unity among the Serbs, religious stratification, and the loss of historical territories.

Second, Despotović openly relies on earlier Serbian historical and cultural tradition in his work, adopting terms such as “Baptized Serbia” from the time of King Constantine Bodin and his rule over Bosnia (1081–1101), Duklja, and other Serbian lands (Dimitrijević 2019). This term is especially significant because it merges two identity-defining elements: Serbian and Christian.

It concerns the formation of an original Serbian cultural code (identity) based on the values of the Christian Faith. Therefore, a Serb is a Christian, with all the moral principles Christianity entails, and these concepts are inseparable.

Looking at the bigger picture, we realize that Serbia and the Serbian people are not the only Slavic nation that went through this type of cultural “encoding.” Take, for example, Kievan Rus, the first East Slavic European state, which

accepted Christianity in the 10th century, specifically in the year 988, thanks to Prince Vladimir (in Orthodoxy: Saint Equal-to-the-Apostles Vladimir the Baptizer of Rus) (Velimirović 1988). Adopting Christian values and worldview radically transformed the previously pagan East Slavic, or Russian, people. It can be said that true Russian civilization begins with the reception of the Christian faith and the wise decision of Prince Vladimir the Great.

There are many such examples, and beyond the identification of the Serb with the Christian, the same can be said for the entire Slavic race. Slavs are Christians, and that is an inseparable part of their cultural code, even though, after the Great Schism of the Churches, they experienced a split within their tribal community. Those who, like the Serbs, remained Orthodox have remained deeply and inseparably connected to this day, with the best example being Serbian-Russian relations, which are reflected in the work of Ljubiša Despotović (Despotović 2025, 60–65).

Thirdly, Despotović also refers to the works of his fellow scholars (Milomir Stepić, Petar Milosavljević, Dušan Proroković, Radoslav Gaćinović, Kosta Čavoški, Darko Tanasković, Zoran Petrović Piroćanac, Vasilije Krestić, Milorad Ekmečić, Momčilo Subotić, Zoran

Milošević, and others, including foreign scholars), demonstrating the continuation of a comprehensive academic tradition of researching Serbian national identity, the acquisition or loss of historical territories, as well as the suffering of Serbs throughout history due to various forms of open or covert “clashes” with adversaries.

Among these names, Despotović adopts from Petar Milosavljević, Doctor of Philological Sciences, the concept of “Natural Serbia.” The author Despotović, however, proposes a way to unite Baptized and Natural Serbia through Svetosavlje. However, to avoid the conclusion that such designations of “Serbia” are archaic or utopian, we will focus only on the concept of Svetosavlje, which is indeed the main and incomparable element of Serbian national identity (Despotović 2025, 14–34).

As previously mentioned, the Russian people have their own Prince Vladimir, a saint who transformed people from paganism into Christianity; and the Serbs have their first enlightener, the founder of the Serbian Church, diplomat, writer, father of the state and the nation, Saint Sava. Despotović openly refers to him as the “saint civilizer” (Despotović 2025, 14). As a people, the Serbs existed even before Saint Sava, which is indisputable. However,

their national identity and self-awareness were strengthened through the devoted work of Saint Sava and his Orthodox Christian legacy, known as Svetosavlje. Let us not forget that Svetosavlje is also martyr-like and thus pleasing to God, as it was destined for crucifixion from its inception – between the Byzantine and Roman churches, between the Heavenly and Earthly Kingdoms, and other trials.

Despotović emphasizes the influences of both East and West on Svetosavlje, and they certainly exist. However, the ideal is for Svetosavlje to be “above East and West,” in the words of Saint Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović. One of the characteristics of such Svetosavlje is reflected in the folk saying: “A brother is dear, whatever his faith,” which is especially important and necessary to recognize in the “powder keg” that is the Balkans (Đorić 2024).

Correctly understanding Svetosavlje is fundamental to understanding autochauvinism among Serbs, which has gained traction among Serbian people (Damjanac 2015). In certain circles, Svetosavlje is viewed as Serbian fascism (a complete distortion of the idea of Svetosavlje-style nationalism of Saint Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović), which certainly is neither its basis nor its goal. The definitions and

aspects of healthy Svetosavlje are presented in the book by Ljubiša Despotović, which is symbolically divided into two parts: Baptized Serbia and Natural Serbia.

In the section on Baptized Serbia, the geopolitical position of Serbia and the Serbs is analyzed, as well as the aforementioned Serbian autochauvinism; also addressed are security aspects – the clash of Christian and (radically) Islamic powers in the Balkans. In the section on Natural Serbia, linguistic, cultural, and religious elements are examined. However, we see the reformation of the previously mentioned cultural code in which being Serbian was equated with being Christian. With the arrival of the Ottomans in the Balkans, we see the emergence of “Serbs of the Muhammadan faith” (Despotović 2019b). Natural Serbia would encompass even them within its borders; there is awareness that they are Serbs, even though they have adopted a new faith. However, this leads to forming artificial (or, as Despotović terms them, synthetic) nations.

During the dissolution of Titoist Yugoslavia, the Serbs were denounced, demonized, and vilified. We still suffer the consequences to this day, and the burning issues regarding language, culture, historical role, territorial affiliation, and the fateful path of the Serbs remain unresolved.

Widely accepted discourses assure us that Serbia is on the “European path.” Still, it seems that the Western world, of which Europe is undoubtedly a part, is making considerable efforts to fragment even the small territory of Serbia and to convert the Serbs culturally (Milošević and Lazarević 2024).

Despotović shows a gracious light upon the Serbian people, which has preserved them for centuries from all historical hardships, and that is Svetosavlje. Only Svetosavlje has the power to unite Baptized and Natural Serbia, as it represents the foundation of Serbian national identity, the main codifier of culture, and a unique and righteous worldview based on the image and deeds of Saint Sava and the religious tradition inherited from him.

It is important to emphasize that writing and promoting such a work as *The Geopolitics of Svetosavlje* takes great courage. The scholarly apparatus is presented, the ideas and motives are visible from the first sentence, yet there is also a psychological-emotional coloring in this book, courage, and patriotism. These characteristics further enrich the book and bring it closer to a broader audience.

We wholeheartedly recommend the book for reading, wishing our people to remain on the path of Svetosavlje, mutual love, understanding, and truth.

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* This book review was submitted on May 14, 2025, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on August 20, 2025.

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EUROPEAN UNION AND THE LANGUAGE OF POWER**



Juška, Žygimantas. 2025. *Soft Power of the European Union: Mastering*

the Language of Power Politics.
Cham: Springer, 202 pp.

The book by Žygimantas Juška on the European Union's (EU) soft power and the refinement of its use of the language of power is an important read for practitioners in the field of European integration, as well as for students who are just beginning to explore its various dimensions. The author of this book is an EU diplomat who has served in Delegations in Ukraine and Rwanda, making him a profound connoisseur of the contexts he writes about. In addition, he is a visiting lecturer at the University of Rwanda.

In addition to the introduction and conclusion, this book contains the following five chapters: (1) an overview of the soft power pillars, (2) the effectiveness of the soft power pillars, (3) an overview of the EU's soft power influence across four regions, (4) the hard power game with Russia, within the case study of Ukraine, and (5) the European way to power

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** This book review was written within the research activity of the Institute for Political Studies, funded by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development, and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia.

politics. Professor Juška starts from the definition of soft power developed by the originator of the concept, Joseph Nye, providing a brief explanation: "Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others and achieve one's objectives through attraction or persuasion and contrasts with hard power, which relies on military strength or economic coercion." (Juška 2025, vii).

In his book, Juška outlines six pillars of the EU's soft power, which include: (1) development assistance, (2) foreign policy, (3) economic cooperation, (4) communication, (5) culture, and (6) science and education. Interestingly, the author does not list the enlargement policy as a separate pillar of soft power, even though Andrew Moravcsik sees it as the "single most powerful policy instrument Europe possesses" (Moravcsik 2010, 93). On the other hand, it can be concluded that the enlargement policy underlies nearly all of the mentioned pillars of soft power.

In the second chapter, Dr. Juška presents the instruments and mechanisms through which the pillars of power exert influence, while the third chapter analyzes their effectiveness. For clarity, this review discusses the second and third chapters as a single unit. Professor Juška states that the European Union provides

development assistance to support economic, environmental, social, and political development through the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI). This instrument is structured around geographic, thematic, and response pillars and includes a reserve of funds for unforeseen circumstances. When discussing the impact of development assistance, the author identifies the most effective instruments: budget support, the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), grants, technical assistance, and contribution agreements. Within the same chapter, the author examines foreign policy instruments, highlighting political and public policy dialogue, and the *Global Gateway* program. The *Global Gateway* aims to promote partnership instead of dependency, and Professor Juška identifies China's *Belt and Road Initiative* and the U.S. *Build Back Better World* as its competitors. Although the author does not mention *Global Britain*, we consider that it could also, in a broader sense, be seen as a competitor to the aforementioned initiatives (see: Krstić 2023, 161–166). Professor Juška notes that the foreign policy pillar is further strengthened by the role of the High Representative of the Union

for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS). Economic cooperation, speaks for itself, as one of the pillars of power, given that the EU is the leading investor in strategically important regions and the world's third-largest economy, following the United States and China. As one of the leading economic powers, according to Dr. Juška, the EU essentially possesses the capacity to expand its regulatory power. The European Union's soft power, through the pillar of economic cooperation, is reflected in the incorporation of data protection and carbon provisions in numerous trade agreements with as many as 78 partner countries. Communication is conceived as a combination of public diplomacy and strategic communication, which includes the creation and the fight against disinformation, manipulation, and various forms of interference. In this section, Professor Juška also offers normative recommendations regarding the development of the EU's soft power, particularly concerning challenges where some progress has been made but which are portrayed differently in the public eye – such as the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the migration crisis, and the war in Ukraine. The author further notes that

culture, science, and education are considered secondary pillars of power, as their ability to influence the behavior of various actors remains limited. Although we believe these secondary pillars deserve more space and deeper analysis, their mapping nonetheless represents progress compared to 2022, when science and education had not yet been recognized as potential sources of EU power (Young and Ravinet 2022, 981). An international organization with 27 member states possesses an immense wealth of cultural heritage, and thanks to its economic development, it also has the means to finance activities in the field of cultural diplomacy. Professor Juška, within the pillar of science and education, highlights *Horizon Europe* and *Erasmus+* as highly significant programmes that contribute to the spread of the EU's soft power.

In the fourth chapter, the author overviews the European Union's relations with four geopolitically significant regions: the Western Balkans, the Eastern Partnership, the Southern Neighbourhood, and Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to examining the EU's soft power pillars in the Western Balkans, Dr. Juška also analyzes the region's prospects for EU membership. The analysis is structured in pairs, ranked

according to their perceived likelihood of accession, from the most to the least promising: Serbia and Montenegro, followed by North Macedonia and Albania, and finally Bosnia and Herzegovina and so-called Kosovo*. The European Commission's 2018 Enlargement Strategy anticipated that Serbia and Montenegro would become the next EU member states by 2025. The author notes, however, that this has not materialized, citing Serbia's lack of alignment with the EU's foreign policy decisions – particularly following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine – and because of internal political turbulence in the case of Montenegro. When it comes to the Eastern Neighbourhood, the author distinguishes between the "distant trio" (Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Armenia) and the "associated trio" (Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia), and suggests that this *de facto* division should also be institutionalized *de iure*. The European Union aims to strengthen the economy, governance, connectivity, and society as a whole in these six countries, while expecting them to focus their efforts on combating corruption and curbing the influence of oligarchs. The

Southern Neighbourhood, known as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership or the Barcelona Process, focuses on economic cooperation and conflict resolution. This process includes ten countries: Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Israel, Palestine, Syria, Jordan, and Tunisia. It would be redundant to discuss the EU's successes in resolving conflicts in this region, given the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, although the author notes that the EU has not done much economically for the participants in the Barcelona Process. Regarding Professor Juška's observation, these countries have experienced relatively modest economic growth due to insufficient domestic reforms and political will, low intra-regional integration, and unfair conditions on the international market. Finally, the EU's activities in the Sub-Saharan Africa region have a legal basis in the Cotonou Agreement and the Post-Cotonou Agreement, which was officially replaced in 2023 by the Samoa Agreement. These agreements cover a total of 79 countries, including 47 African countries, 16 Caribbean countries, and the Republic of the Maldives. This geopolitically significant region

* All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

also encompasses the widest range of actors, which is why the EU increasingly encounters other interested parties, such as the People's Republic of China, which aims to surpass the EU in both the number and volume of investments. In the conclusion of this chapter, Dr. Juška states that the European Union has not achieved the expected influence in four important regions. He argues that the main reasons for this are the failures to resolve the Ukrainian crisis, the migration crisis (see: Cvetković and Obrenović 2024, 63–64), and the health crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

According to the author, the game of hard power between Russia and the EU is reflected in Russia's instrumentalization of its energy resources, while the EU seeks to weaken Russia through sanctions and simultaneously provides financial, humanitarian, and military assistance to Ukraine. This *game*, will have long-term effects on the perception of the European Union in the future, particularly in the context of Ukraine's potential membership. Despite being at war, Ukraine applied for EU membership, was granted candidate status, and opened accession negotiations in record time. Apart from Ukraine, Moldova has also opened accession negotiations, while Georgia was

granted candidate status even though it met only three of the twelve recommendations set by the European Commission. Professor Juška criticizes the determination of EU member states in the field of energy trade with Russia, citing as an example the fact that by 2015 Germany was importing 35% of its gas from Russia – a figure that rose to 65% by 2020, despite the official policy (Caon 2022 cited in Juška 2025, 170; see: Đorić and Obrenović 2022). For all these reasons, the author devotes Chapter 6 to analyzing the required number of votes, that is, the different majorities (simple, qualified, and unanimous) needed for decisions that influence the EU's power perception. He concludes that there is an increased need for the use of passarelle clauses, which have proven effective in establishing the EU's civilian mission in Kosovo* (EULEX), as well as in the case of providing military aid to Ukraine in 2022.

The conclusion of this book consists of three recommendations: (1) the use of the carrot and stick approach, (2) unity when acting on the international stage, and (3) sacrifice for the sake of the collective good. As an example of using the carrot and stick approach, the author cites the suspension of financial aid to Ethiopia in 2020 due to internal conflicts. Unity

would be easier to achieve after changing the decision-making process for joint actions, but this requires sacrificing financial, economic, or diplomatic gains. Professor Juška acknowledges that it is impossible to achieve these three recommendations fully but believes that even the attempt to realize them is significant for the future of the EU.

The book “Soft Power of the European Union: Mastering the Language of Power Politics”

is not only a timely read but also a unique opportunity to examine the current and future position of the European Union from the perspective of a diplomat of this international organization. In addition, it offers a wealth of concrete data and tabular overviews, which can be helpful to any researcher interested in the European Union, development assistance, or one of the four strategic regions – one of which is the region we live in.

REFERENCES

Cvetković, Nenad, i Zoran Obrenović. 2024. „Uticaj Evropske unije na suprotstavljanje iregularnim migracijama u Republici Srbiji.” *Politika nacionalne bezbednosti* 27 (2): 53–77. DOI: 10.5937/pnb27-47311

Juška, Žygimantas. 2025. *Soft Power of the European Union: Mastering the Language of Power Politics*. Cham: Springer.

Krstić, Milan. 2023. „Globalna Britanija” u međunarodnoj politici i strateške opcije Srbije u odnosima sa Ujedinjenjim Kraljevstvom.” *Srpska politička misao* 80 (2): 159–184. DOI: 10.5937/spm80-44286

Moravcsik, Andrew. 2010. “Europe, the Second Superpower.” *Current History* 109 (725): 91–98.

Young, Mitchell, and Pauline Ravinet. 2022. *Knowledge Power Europe*. *Journal of European Integration* 44 (7): 979–994. DOI: 10.1080/07036337.2022.2049260

Đorić, Marija, and Strahinja Obrenović. 2022. “Evolution of EU energy law and policy: a big comeback of energy security in 2022.” *The Policy of National Security* 23 (2): 67–86. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22182/pnb.2322022.4>

* This book review was submitted on August 1, 2025, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on August 20, 2025.

AUTHOR GUIDELINES

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

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

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

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

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

Authors are obliged to submit a signed and scanned declaration of authorship when submitting their works. The declaration form can be downloaded from the journal's website: https://www.ips.ac.rs/en/magazines/srpska-politicka-misao/authors_directions/

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

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

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

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

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

CITING AND REFERENCING

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

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

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

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

Books

Books with one author

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

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

(Mearsheimer 2001)

Books with two or three authors

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

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

(Brady and Collier 2010, 211)

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

(Pollitt, Birchall and Putman 1998)

Books with four or more authors

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

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

(Pollitt *et al.* 2005)

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

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

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

(Kaltwasser *et al.* 2017)

Chapter in an edited book

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

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

(Lošonc 2019)

Journal Articles

Regular issue

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

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

Newspapers and magazines

Signed articles

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

Clark, Phil. 2018. “Rwanda’s Recovery: When Remembrance is Official Policy.” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2018: 35–41.

(Clark 2018)

Unsigned articles

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

New York Times. 2002. “In Texas, Ad Heats Up Race for Governor.” July 30, 2002.

(*New York Times* 2002)

Corporate Author

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

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

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

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

Legal and Public Documents

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

Constitutions and laws

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

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

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

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

(LFA 2009, Art. 17)

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

(SA 2019, Art. 3)

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

(Offensive Weapons Act 2019)

Legislative acts of the European Union

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

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

(Regulation 182/2011, Art. 3)

Web sources

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

Bilefsky, Dan, and Ian Austen. 2019. “Trudeau Re-election Reveals Intensified Divisions in Canada.” *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/22/world/canada/trudeau-re-elected.html>.

(Bilefsky and Austen 2019)

Institute for Political Studies [IPS]. n.d. “The 5th International Economic Forum on Reform, Transition and Growth.” *Institute for Political Studies*. Last accessed 7 December 2019. <http://www.ips.ac.rs/en/news/the-5th-international-economic-forum-on-reform-transition-and-growth/>.

(Institute for Political Studies [IPS] n.d.) – *First in-text citation*

(IPS n.d.) – *Second and every subsequent citation*

Associated Press [AP]. 2019. “AP to present VoteCast results at AAPOR pooling conference.” May 14, 2019. <https://www.ap.org/press-releases/2019/ap-to-present-votecast-results-at-aapor-polling-conference>.

(AP 2019)

Special cases of referencing

Citing editions other than the first

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

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

(Bull 2012)

Multiple sources of the same author

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

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

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

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

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

(Walt 2018a)

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

(Walt 2018b)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Special cases of parenthetical citation

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

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

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

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

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

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

3) When *using the same source multiple times in one paragraph*, the parenthetical citation should be placed either after the last reference (or at the end of the paragraph, preceding the final period) if the same page (or page range) is cited more than once, or at the first reference, whereas the subsequent citations should only include page numbers.

Do not use *ibid* or *op. cit.* with repeated citations.

Using brief phrases such as “see”, “compare” etc.

Those phrases should be enclosed within the parenthesis.

(see: Ellwood 2018)

Using secondary source

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

“Its authority was greatly expanded by the constitutional revision of 1988, and the Court of Arbitration can now be regarded as a ‘genuine constitutional court’” (De Winter and Dumont 2009, 109 cited in: Lijphart 2012, 39–40).

Lijphart, Arend. 2012. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, 2nd edition. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Multiple sources within the same parentheses

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

(Mearsheimer 2001, 34; Ellwood 2018, 7)

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

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

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

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

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

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

TEXT FORMATTING

General guidelines for writing the manuscript

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

- Paper size: A4;
- Margins: Normal 2.54 cm;
- Use Times New Roman font (plain letters) to write the text, unless specified otherwise;
- Line spacing: 1.5;
- Footnote line spacing: 1;
- Title font size: 14 pt;
- Subtitles font size: 12 pt;
- Text font size: 12 pt;
- Footnote font size: 10 pt;
- Tables, charts and figures font size: 10 pt;
- Use Paragraph/Special/First line at 1.27 cm;
- Text alignment: Justify;
- Font color: Automatic;
- Page numbering: Arabian numerals in lower right corner;
- Do not break the words manually by inserting hyphens to continue the word in the next line;
- Save the manuscript in the .doc format.

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The manuscript should be prepared in the following manner:

Name and surname of the first author*

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

Affiliation

Name and surname of the second author**

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

Affiliation

TITLE OF THE PAPER***

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

Abstract

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

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

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

FIRST LEVEL SUBTITLE

Second level subtitle

Third level subtitle

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

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

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

Use **the footnotes** solely to provide remarks or broader explanations.

REFERENCES

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

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

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Име и презиме првог аутора*

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

Установа запослења

Име и презиме другог аутора**

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

Установа запослења

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*** Фуснота: по потреби, навести један од следећих (или сличних) података: 1) назив и број пројекта у оквиру кога је чланак написан; 2) да је рад претходно изложен на научном скупу у виду усменог саопштења под истим или сличним називом 3) исказ захвалности.

Резиме

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

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

Review preparation

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

Book review preparation

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

<p>Name and surname of the author*</p> <p>* In the footnote: E-mail address: The institutional e-mail address is strongly recommended. ORCID:</p> <p><i>Affiliation</i></p> <p>TITLE OF THE BOOK REVIEW***</p>	<p>Below the title place the image of the front cover;</p> <p>Below the image of the front cover list the book details according to the following rule:</p> <p>Name and surname of the author.</p> <p>Year of publication. <i>Title of the book</i>. Place of publication: Publisher, total number of pages.</p> <p>The text of the book review should be prepared following the guidelines of the research article preparation.</p>
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REVIEWERS' GUIDELINES

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

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

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

Title of the manuscript:

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

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

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

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

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

Please select one of the recommendations for categorizing the manuscript:

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

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

1. Publish without revision
2. Publish with minor revisions

3. After revision, submit for a new round of review
4. Reject

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СРПСКА ПОЛИТИЧКА МИСАО = Serbian Political Thought / главни и одговорни уредник Миша Стојадиновић. - Vol. 1, бр. 1/4 (1994)- . - Београд : Институт за политичке студије, 1994- (Београд : Донат граф). - 23 см

Двомесечно. - Текст на срп. и енгл. језику. - Преузeo јe: Serbian Political Thought = ISSN 1450-5460. - Друго издање на другом медијуму: Српска политичка мисао (CD-ROM изд.) =

ISSN 1452-3108

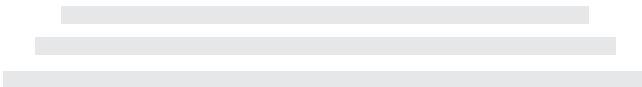
ISSN 0354-5989 = Српска политичка мисао

COBISS.SR-ID 102782215



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ISSN 0354-5989 UDC 32 year XXXII vol. 92 No. 4/2025.



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