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THE MILITARY EDUCATION SYSTEM AS THE FOUNDATION FOR ENSURING THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA[****]

Abstract

The effective preparation of officer personnel within the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces constitutes a key prerequisite for the successful execution of duties related to the safeguarding of national security. The specific tasks and hierarchical structure of the defense system require that the officer corps – as direct participants in the decision-making process – exert a significant influence on operational efficiency and system functionality. Accordingly, the education and training of officers are of critical importance for the development of their professional competencies, which directly affect the overall level of

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national security. Contemporary security challenges, the transformation of the nature of modern conflicts, and the evolution of security strategies necessitate reforms aimed at aligning academic curricula with the principles of modern military operations and the demands of the current security environment. This paper presents an empirical study focused on evaluating the applicability of knowledge acquired at the Military Academy in the context of performing officer duties at various hierarchical levels of military decision-making. The research is based on an analysis of the correlation between knowledge obtained through military education and the requirements imposed by operational and tactical military practice. The methodological framework encompasses both quantitative and qualitative data analysis collected through surveys, employing appropriate statistical techniques to determine the extent of the relationship between the educational process and officers' professional competencies. The findings indicate that officers perceive greater applicability of knowledge acquired through military studies at the tactical level, while at the operational level of decision-making, knowledge from the social sciences is considered relatively more important. These insights contribute to a deeper scientific understanding of the relationship between academic education and military practice, and they provide a foundation for the systematic improvement of curricula with the aim of optimizing the educational process and enhancing its practical relevance.

Keywords: military, education, training, officers, decision-making, military sciences, national security

INTRODUCTION

The rapid pace of scientific and technological advancement, coupled with the presence of global challenges that pose a real threat to the very existence of life on Earth, places increasing demands on the international community, individual states, and each citizen. One of the decisive factors in a country's economic power and the high standard of living of its population today is intellectual property, which enables the offering of promising projects and technologies on the global market. The issues of innovation and, consequently, the quality of intelligence – which is directly linked to the level of education and

culture of a nation's population – have come to the forefront (Adler 2025). The scope and quality of the overall national product are directly dependent on the level of education and culture of its producers, that is, the country's population. The higher the educational and cultural level of the population, the greater and more advanced the national product. Even now, modern, highly developed countries achieve up to 40% of national product growth through an efficient education system (КонсультантПлюс 2022). Each year, governments around the world allocate funds for science and determine expenditures for research and development (Конотоп *и др.* 2022, 66). In the modern world, education should be viewed as a leading mechanism for societal development and a foundation for reproducing its spiritual potential. The presence of an efficient and sustainably developing education system should be regarded as a guarantee of both internal and external societal security, a crucial condition for ensuring sovereign existence, and an integral component of stability and security.

In the postmodern era – characterized by the use of knowledge-intensive technologies during the transition from an "industrial" to an "informational" civilization – education and security are closely intertwined categories. Moreover, the strategic development doctrines of the vast majority of advanced nations are based on the concept of continuous growth and the increasing role of education within the national security system. In line with global trends, education determines the prospects for socio-economic and cultural development, as well as the resilience of the state (Tikly 2019). Fundamentally, education represents one of the core state institutions and, as such, becomes a decisive factor in economic efficiency and the national security of the state as a whole. A state may withdraw from financing specific projects in any sector of the economy, but it cannot afford to withdraw from the education sector. A country that loses the ability to educate and train personnel for the needs of its own economy, science, and culture forfeits its historical prospects for progressive development. The assurance and maintenance of national security continue to significantly depend on the armed forces – their morale, motivation, and professional competencies – which are shaped by academic education and professional training (Milošević Stolić i Marček 2019). The current national security objectives of the Republic of Serbia, as outlined in the 2019 National Security Strategy (NSS) and other strategic-doctrinal documents, point to the necessity of establishing an appropriate educational system. In this context, the

societal and economic justification for the existence of the Military Academy (MA) and the National Defence School (NDS) within the University of Defence (UoD) arises from the Republic of Serbia's need to educate and train officer personnel. For 175 years, the most consistent and stable source of officer cadre for the Serbian Armed Forces (SAF) has been the military education system centered around the Military Academy (Đukić 2025). In this regard, the system for officer training holds a vital position within the national security framework, as it is directly linked to maintaining and enhancing the defensive capabilities of the state. Organizationally subordinate to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) but structurally part of the national university system, the University of Defence plays a pivotal role in the education, training, and qualification of officer personnel for the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces. It also conducts research in the field of military sciences and houses the Institute for Strategic Research.

The correlation between practical training and academic education represents a significant challenge across numerous professional domains (Jensen 2025). This issue is well-documented in policing (Cordner 2019; Williams, Norman, and Rowe 2019; Bartkowiak-Théron 2019), medicine (Ten Cate and Carraccio 2019), and military education (Kime and Anderson 1997). Within modern military academies, cadets preparing for officer roles simultaneously acquire military skills and develop strategic thinking, aiming to integrate practical training with academic education (Hornstra *et al*. 2024, 1). Contemporary globalization trends and the development of emerging technologies place new demands on the process of military education and training. This study focuses on the professional development of military academy cadets, emphasizing the necessity of integrating academic and practical components within the educational process. In line with this, Lindsay and Goldfarb argue that artificial intelligence (AI) should not be viewed as a replacement for human decision-making, but rather as an augmentation and support tool (Goldfarb and Lindsay 2022, 7–50). In the military context – especially regarding decision-making by officers – this position is particularly significant (Jensen 2025; Collazzo 2025). The integration of AI into the assessment and decision-making process enables officers to complement personal experience and intuition with the analytical capabilities of modern algorithms, thereby enhancing the speed, accuracy, and relevance of decisions in high-risk and complex situations (Miljković i Beriša 2023, 82; Collazzo 2025; Jensen 2025; Adler 2025).

The overarching goal is to develop a well-educated and highly competent officer corps, capable of performing tasks efficiently in both national and international contexts, in accordance with modern standards and value frameworks (Anishchenko 2024). This requires bridging the gap between skill-based training and academic education to ensure comprehensive and effective preparation of cadets for the complex professional roles of commissioned officers. Achieving this objective necessitates a balance between academic and vocational-specialist education, as well as the integration of social-humanistic and technical-technological disciplines. The contemporary era of information technologies demands continuous adaptation of educational approaches, with particular emphasis on the development of abstract thinking. This development is facilitated through university-level education and the promotion of lifelong learning. In turn, this underscores the importance of continuous professional military education, within which officers must become proactive problem-solvers and collaboration-oriented experts.

In today's complex security environment – characterized by heightened uncertainty and ambiguity, especially within the military profession – critical thinking in the decision-making process emerges as a foundational component of effective military leadership. In that context, it is essential to continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs based on scientifically relevant methodological approaches.

DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN THE FIELD OF SECURITY AND DEFENSE

One of the key instruments for achieving state sovereignty is its armed forces, which must be capable of protecting national interests and national security. Accordingly, a state's position in the international arena depends on the level of development of its armed forces. One of the critical components of a state's military organization is the military education system, designed to provide timely, comprehensive, and high-quality personnel support. An example of this is Ukraine, which has incorporated training programs on unmanned systems, cybersecurity, and drone technologies in its higher military education institutions since 2014 (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine 2025; *Interfax-Ukraine* 2025; Shevchenko *et al.* 2024; Buriachok *et al*. 2023).

The conceptual and theoretical frameworks of security and defense studies are based of broadly defined and complex notions of security and defense. In the contemporary era, the concept of security encompasses a wide range of challenges – from internal issues at the state level, through regional threats, to global phenomena such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, radicalization, human trafficking, smuggling, and organized crime.

The dynamics of the modern security environment require a comprehensive approach that transcends traditional frameworks of defense policy. This expanded understanding of security simultaneously challenges classical forms of professional advisory and governance, necessitating an interdisciplinary approach. Such an approach includes the integration of knowledge and skills from the intelligence community, the military, judicial bodies, and police, as well as expertise in the fields of regional and local politics, social and economic sciences (Bures and Pernica 2016, 1).

Modern military operations are marked by increasing complexity, which necessitates adaptations in the education of future officers (Mitrović and Bojanić 2021). According to Bekkers and Sweijers, operations occur across multiple domains – land, sea, air, space, information, and the human dimension – and at different levels – strategic, operational, and tactical – thus requiring a multidisciplinary approach (Bekkers and Sweijers 2019; NATO's Strategic Warfare Development Command 2023). Additionally, potential adversaries' inherent unpredictability and escalation of military capabilities further complicate operational environments (Soldaat and Tuinman 2023). This underscores the need to enhance the professional competencies of officers, which include not only technical and tactical skills but also the ability to engage in strategic thinking and decision-making under uncertainty (Anishchenko and Razumeyko 2022). Leadership, combat readiness, and survival skills remain key elements of military training. As Hornstra *et al.* emphasize, in developing these skills, there is always a clear correlation between learning activities and specific performance outcomes (Hornstra *et al.* 2023a). For example, weapons handling exercises at the shooting range are directly linked to the ability to use them effectively in combat. However, limiting cadet development solely to military skills proves insufficient in the face of contemporary security challenges.

Parallel to military training, the development of cadets' cognitive and analytical capacities – particularly in the realm of strategic thinking

– has gained importance. These skills are cultivated through academic education, which increasingly occupies a central place in military academy curricula. Unlike military training, academic education often lacks a direct and immediate link between the knowledge acquired and its practical application (Hornstra *et al*. 2023a). For instance, cadets study cultural norms and values in academic courses, which may be crucial in diplomatic engagements during stabilization missions, even though the specific context for applying such knowledge is usually unknown during instruction. To fully grasp the modern concept of security, armed forces and broader national security systems must adapt to emerging and increasingly complex threats. Future officers – cadets – as well as members of other components of the national security apparatus, must be equipped to operate under conditions of uncertainty and, as the literature suggests, must learn to "combat the disease of certainty in decision-making" (Thomas and Gentzler 2013, 70). In this regard, education plays a central role: the fundamental assumption is that members of the armed forces must be educated to respond effectively to challenges in the unpredictable national security environment. Modern military education is no longer viewed merely as training in technical and tactical skills but rather as a process of developing reasoning ability, critical thinking, and strategic reflection (Sookermany 2017). In Lithuania, the education of highly qualified officer-leaders is aligned with the Sectoral Qualifications Framework for the military profession, with particular emphasis on developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The cultivation of these competencies is primarily advanced through student-led activities, in contrast to traditional professor-centered modes of content delivery (Dudzevičiūtė 2025).

It is important to emphasize that a potential disruption to the development of reasoning and critical thinking skills lies in the lack of integration between skill acquisition and academic education. At modern military academies, such as the Royal Netherlands Military Academy (NLDA), cadet training is typically conducted through two parallel, yet often unintegrated, educational processes. On one hand, military instructors deliver training focused on the development of practical military skills; on the other, civilian academic staff provide academic education using their own pedagogical methodologies, frequently without mutual coordination (Hornstra *et al*. 2023a). This divided approach results in cadets being left to independently reconcile and integrate two distinct cognitive frameworks: the military one, which relies on rapid

decision-making under time pressure and with limited information, and the academic one, which emphasizes analytical reasoning based on more comprehensive information and under less temporal constraint (Jansen, Brænder, and Moelker 2019).

An example of such military thinking can be found in standardized NATO procedures for tactical operations planning, which require officers to analyze and compare various courses of action within a short timeframe and based on available data (North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] 2024). In operational settings, officers are often confronted with situations that require simultaneous application of tactical skills and strategic reasoning – necessitating integrated knowledge. For instance, during a combat operation, a commander must simultaneously manage fire control and unit leadership (practical skills) while coordinating logistics and proactively influencing soldier behavior to avoid negative media exposure that could jeopardize the mission (strategic reasoning).

There is no guarantee that integration of these components will occur spontaneously, nor will it be effective or safe in real-world conditions. Therefore, it is of critical importance that the professional development of cadets includes the systematic promotion of integration between military skills and academic education within the context of strategic thinking (Hornstra *et al.* 2023a). A key step in this direction is establishing mutual understanding and coordination between military training programs and the academic curriculum delivered by civilian faculty.

The functionality and long-term stability of the national security system are founded on the systematic application of knowledge and competencies acquired through military education, both within military and civilian institutional structures, thereby ensuring an integrated approach. Adapting to an increasingly unpredictable security environment entails mutual learning and operational interdependence among diverse actors in the security sector (Kalu 2008). Within the European Union, there is a growing emphasis on a joint response to global security threats through international cooperation (Bojanić, Marček, i Ristić 2019, 12). While multilateralism represents a valuable asset in building common capacities, it simultaneously challenges nation-states in preserving sovereignty in the defense domain.

CURRICULUM OF THE MILITARY ACADEMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The educational system at the Military Academy is designed in accordance with contemporary academic standards and is structured across three levels of higher education: undergraduate (bachelor's), master's, and doctoral studies. In line with implementing the Bologna Declaration principles and applying the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the study programs are organized into four-year undergraduate, one-year master's, and three-year doctoral cycles. This structure enables the systematic development of cadets' cognitive, analytical, and professional competencies, ensuring their comprehensive preparation for the complex and dynamic demands of the modern security and defense system.

Undergraduate Academic Studies

Undergraduate studies at the Military Academy are designed to prepare cadets for effective decision-making and command responsibilities at the tactical level. The curriculum is based on an integrated approach that combines theoretical and practical education, with an emphasis on foundational knowledge in the fields of social sciences, management, economics, organizational sciences, mathematics, and natural sciences, as well as in engineering, mechanical engineering, transportation, electrical engineering, computer science, and military sciences. The program integrates academic disciplines, military training modules, and physical education to ensure the comprehensive development of professional competencies.

During the first two years, students engage with general education content, while the final two years are focused on professional specialization through dedicated study tracks, including: "Land Forces, Military Electronic Engineering, Military Mechanical Engineering, Technological Engineering of Materials and Protection, Military Transportation Engineering, Military Aviation, and Defense Economics. The Land Forces program includes elective areas – modules (Infantry, Armored Units, Artillery, Engineering, and River Units)" (Vojna akademija 2025). The Military Electronic Engineering program includes modules aligned with the roles and missions of the Serbian Armed Forces, such as: "Artillery-Missile Units for Air Defense, Electronic

Warfare Units, Telecommunication Services, Technical Services, Information Services, and the Air Surveillance and Reporting Service" (Vojna akademija 2025). The primary objective of these programs is to ensure the systematic and purposeful preparation of cadets for their first command duty – as platoon leaders – as well as for other entry-level positions within the defense system.

Advanced levels of higher education in the field of Military sciences

The higher levels of academic education at the MA encompass master's and doctoral studies in the field of military sciences. These programs represent a continuation of professional and scientific development for officers, aimed at acquiring and deepening competencies relevant to addressing complex problems within the defense system and the broader security environment.

The purpose of the master's academic studies is to enhance existing and develop advanced knowledge, skills, and analytical capacities that enable officers to critically analyze, interpret, and solve strategic and operational challenges in the field of defense through the application of an interdisciplinary approach. Particular emphasis is placed on the ability to critically engage with relevant academic and professional literature in the context of real operational and organizational situations.

Doctoral studies are oriented toward the education of highly qualified researchers in the field of military sciences who are capable of independent scientific research and managing complex projects of national importance. The primary objective at this level of education is the development of personnel who, by relying on scientific methods and the highest academic standards, can contribute to the innovative advancement of doctrine, theory, and practice in the domain of defense, as well as to the broader development of scientific thought in both social and academic contexts.

Officer Professional Development Programs

The officer professional development program encompasses a series of advancement courses, including the Basic Command and Staff Course, Command and Staff Advanced Course, General Staff Training, and Advanced Studies in Security and Defense. The Basic Command

and Staff Course aims to systematically develop leadership competencies and professional qualifications necessary for officers to perform complex command and staff duties. The program focuses on preparing officers to effectively assume the roles of company commanders, deputy battalion commanders, and staff officers within battalion-level units.

The Command and Staff Advanced Course is designed to provide strategic and professional education to officers for effective command of tactical units at the battalion level, either within branches or services, and for key staff duties within brigade-level commands and higher organizational structures of the Serbian Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defense.

General Staff Training represents the highest level and a key component of formal military education within the defense system of the Republic of Serbia. Its primary objective is to enable officers to acquire advanced knowledge and skills necessary for commanding tactical units at the brigade level and for executing complex staff and leadership duties at the operational level of command, within the General Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces (GS SAF) and organizational units of the Ministry of Defense. The structure of the program is aligned with relevant national doctrinal and regulatory defense frameworks, as well as with interoperability standards for participation in multinational operations.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION FOR THE COMPLEX DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IN A MILITARY CONTEXT

The execution of officer duties at all levels of decision-making requires a clearly defined and efficient decision-making process, shaped by the specific characteristics of the hierarchical structure and mission of the military organization (Kuczynski 2023). The process of command and leadership entails the systematic direction of the functioning of military organizational structures, grounded in scientific principles and methodology (Jevtić, Miljković, and Đorđević 2024, 38). Using force under unpredictable circumstances, limited resources, and time pressure further complicates this process. Poor decisions tend to multiply upward through the chain of command, while the availability and quality of information directly reflect the individual's professional competence. Decision-making, as a core component of military leadership, involves

a cognitive, recursive, and nonlinear mechanism that relies on data analysis, logical reasoning, and the implementation of actions (Farmer 2022; Ernst *et al*. 2023; Adler 2025). This process is influenced by numerous factors – including psychological, organizational, and political dimensions – where cognitive ability has the greatest impact on the effective performance of leadership tasks. Knowledge is a mediator between cognitive ability and job performance, while work experience contributes to the accumulation of applicable knowledge.

In the military system, decision-making occurs on three levels: tactical, operational, and strategic. The tactical level involves the direct command of units in combat; the operational level encompasses the coordination of multiple tactical formations; and the strategic level includes the formulation of long-term military policy and strategy. While operational and strategic planning are typically structured and formalized processes, tactical decision-making is characterized by a high degree of dynamism and uncertainty. The complexity of these processes underscores the need for continuous academic and professional development of officers to ensure their ability to effectively manage challenges across all levels of decision-making (Jevtić, Miljković, and Đorđević 2024, 41).

METHODOLOGY

Research objective

As part of the research project "The Military Profession in Serbia within the Contemporary Security Environment," conducted by the Institute for Strategic Research, an empirical study was carried out in units of the Serbian Armed Forces during 2024. One of the primary objectives was to determine whether, and to what extent, the knowledge acquired through academic studies at the MA contributes to the effective performance of military leadership duties at various decision-making levels within the MoD and the SAF. Additionally, comparisons were made with professional SAF personnel who had completed their education at civilian higher education institutions or the Reserve Officer School before entering professional service. The focus of the research was the current accredited academic program in military sciences.

The sample was selected based on convenience, though it was exhaustive concerning the subject matter, and comprised two groups

of participants. The study included 452 respondents, divided into two groups: (1) officers holding command positions – 13 captains, 44 senior captains, 62 majors, and 52 lieutenant colonels (N = 171) – who had completed Command and Staff Development (CSD); and (2) junior officers – 196 second lieutenants and 85 lieutenants, of whom 176 graduated from the MA and 85 from the Reserve Officer School – currently serving in command roles (N = 281). The study was conducted in September and October 2024 and surveyed officers who had recently assumed leadership duties after graduating from the MA, those who had completed the Basic Command and Staff Course (BCSC), and those who had completed Command and Staff Development. The sample included both male and female participants, with an average age of 36 and an average of 14 years of service in officer positions. While all respondents held officer ranks, 346 had graduated from the Military Academy, while the remainder had obtained degrees from other universities.

Instruments

The study employed evaluation scales developed specifically for the purposes of this research. Respondents assessed the extent to which the knowledge acquired during their academic studies had been useful in the practical execution of officer duties, both during tactical-level assignments and while performing tasks within the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces at tactical and operational levels. Assessment was conducted using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "not useful at all" and 5 indicated "extremely useful."

Data processing methods

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, analysis of variance (F-test), Pearson's correlation coefficient, and factor analysis. Data processing was conducted using the statistical software package SPSS, version 15.0.

RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Relevance and Practical Applicability of Undergraduate Academic Courses at the Tactical Level during Initial Officer Duties:

- The analysis of the results demonstrates that the average applicability of undergraduate academic courses in performing initial officer duties is above the overall mean (M = 3.10), with values ranging from 1.29 to 4.49. These empirical findings underscore the relevance and practical orientation of the curriculum and confirm its alignment with the operational requirements of officer responsibilities, providing a basis for informed recommendations to enhance educational effectiveness.
- The statistical analysis did not reveal significant differences in the perception of the applicability of curricular content with respect to gender ($F = 0.762$; $p = 0.481$).
- The highest degree of applicability during professional practice was observed in mandatory courses, particularly *Weaponry with Shooting Instruction*, *Military Physical Training with Methodology of Physical Education* (M = 4.46), *Command in Combat Operations of Basic Tactical Units* (M = 4.09), *Telecommunication Support* (M = 3.72), and *Unit Tactics by Branches* (M = 3.95). In contrast, the lowest applicability levels were recorded in courses such as *French Language* (M = 1.24), *German Language* (M = 1.39), *Fundamentals of Electromechanics and Electronics* (M = 1.69), as well as *Mathematics 1B* and *2B*. These findings suggest that courses directly oriented toward the development of practical and tactical skills demonstrate significantly higher applicability in real service conditions compared to general education disciplines.

Factor structure of course usefulness

Based on the Guttman-Kaiser criterion, the applied factor analysis identified six fundamental (latent) dimensions that reflect the applicability of undergraduate academic courses in the context of performing initial officer duties. These dimensions collectively account for 82.1% of the total variance, as follows:

- Scientific-Professional Factor – 45.48%
- Theoretical-Methodological Factor – 15.15%
- Specific Academic Skills Factor – 6.65%
- Supplementary Applied Disciplines Factor – 5.20%
- Organizational-Leadership Factor – 3.40%
- Additional Foreign Language Factor – 2.74%

The analysis of the correlation matrix indicates relative independence among the identified factors, except for moderate positive

correlations between the third factor and both the first and fifth factors, suggesting a complementary relationship and a significant association between the first and fifth factors.

Comparison of usefulness by scientific fields

The analysis of the results indicates that the highest degree of applicability was achieved in courses within the professional-scientific field (M = 3.76), as well as in *Military Physical Training with Methodology of Physical Education* (M = 4.22), when considered as a separate category. Conversely, the lowest level of applicability was recorded in the natural-mathematical field (M = 1.76), with a statistically significant difference confirmed in comparison to other domains ($F = 21.426$; $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that *Military Physical Training with Methodology of Physical Education* exhibits significantly higher practical applicability than courses in mathematics (MD = 2.376; $p < 0.001$), social sciences (MD = 1.557; $p < 0.001$), and technical sciences (MD = 1.389; $p < 0.001$), though not when compared to military science courses. In contrast, mathematics-related courses showed a significantly lower level of applicability relative to military sciences (MD = -1.783; $p < 0.001$) and technical sciences (MD = -0.932; $p = 0.025$). At the same time, courses in military sciences demonstrated greater practical relevance than those in technical (MD = 0.941; $p = 0.033$) and social sciences (MD = 1.061; $p = 0.008$), while no statistically significant differences were found between technical and social sciences. These results suggest that the educational process is most strongly oriented toward developing practical knowledge and skills within military and related disciplines, thereby underscoring their relevance for tactical-level decision-making.

The relevance and suitability of undergraduate academic courses, in the context of acquiring and applying professional competencies for performing duties at the tactical level of decision-making, differ during internship compared to work within the MoD and the SAF:

- The average perceived usefulness of core academic subjects in performing tasks within the Ministry of Defence and Serbian Armed Forces at the tactical level was rated high (M = 4,24), with a range from 2.92 to 5.00.
- The highest-rated subjects in the context of tactical leadership tasks were Tactics 1 and Tactics 2 (N = 12; M = 5.00). Among compulsory

subjects, the highest ratings were for Military Physical Training (M = 4.81), Armaments and Shooting Practice 2 (M = 4.81), as well as Fundamentals of Weapons Construction, Fundamentals of Command, and Military History (all M = 4.81). Conversely, the lowest-rated subjects were Fundamentals of Electrical Engineering and Electronics (M = 2.81), along with subjects from the natural-mathematical field: Chemistry (M = 2.95), Physics (M = 3.05), and Mathematics (M = 3.19). These results correspond to the assessments of applicability during professional internship.

- It was observed that all subjects from the core academic studies were perceived as more useful in the context of initial duties compared to the internship period, except for elective subjects. This category does not include Branch Tactics ($F = 12.861$; $p < 0.001$) and Branch Armaments and Shooting ($F = 11.097$; $p < 0.002$), whose necessity for application is still evident in operational practice.
- All observed scientific fields demonstrated significantly higher usefulness within initial duties at the tactical level in the defense system compared to their application during the internship ($F = 35.471$; $p < 0.001$). This indicates the importance of work experience in developing the ability to assess the practical value of knowledge acquired during studies at the Military Academy.
- The highest-ranked scientific field in terms of practical applicability for initial duties at the tactical level is military sciences (M = 4.75), while the lowest-ranked is the natural-mathematical field (M = 3.10). This difference is statistically significant ($F = 22.406$; $p < 0.001$). Subjects from the natural-mathematical field have significantly lower usefulness compared to subjects from social sciences (MD = -1.25; $p < 0.001$) and technical sciences (MD = -0.97; $p < 0.001$). Simultaneously, subjects from military sciences show higher usefulness compared to technical sciences (MD = 0.65; $p = 0.015$).

The perceived usefulness of core academic subjects at the Military Academy differs when performing duties at the tactical versus the operational level within the MoD and the SAF:

- The overall perception of the usefulness of core academic subjects at the Military Academy in the context of performing duties at the operational level was rated as high (M = 3.68), with ratings ranging from 2.05 to 4.76.
- Within the scientific-professional subject factor, the highest applicability was demonstrated by English Language (M = 4.76),

Military Physical Training (M = 4.62), Information Technologies (M = 4.52), and Introduction to Strategy (M = 4.76). Conversely, the lowest-ranked subjects originated from the natural-mathematical scientific field: Chemistry (M = 2.53), Mathematics and Physics (M = 2.86), Fundamentals of Electrical Engineering and Electronics (M = 2.05), as well as Sociology (M = 2.82).

- It was established that the core academic study program of the Military Academy is significantly more useful in the context of performing duties at the tactical level compared to the operational level ($F = 29.026$; $p < 0.001$).
- Analysis showed that approximately half of the subjects exhibit statistically significant differences in perceived usefulness between the two decision-making levels, with reduced usefulness noted at the operational level. However, for most subjects ranked highest and lowest, the differences are minimal. This includes subjects in mathematics, as well as three subjects from social sciences (Military Psychology and Andragogy, Military Law and International Humanitarian Law, Fundamentals of Economics) and three from technical sciences (Armored Combat Vehicles, Telecommunications Security, Fundamentals of Electrical Engineering and Electronics).
- Regarding scientific fields, three areas – social sciences ($F = 4.329$; $p < 0.044$), technical sciences ($F = 75.975$; $p < 0.001$), and military sciences ($F = 28.617$; $p < 0.001$) – showed significantly greater usefulness at the tactical level compared to the operational level. No statistically significant difference in perceived usefulness was observed between the two levels for natural-mathematical sciences.
- At the operational level of decision-making, subjects from social sciences exhibited the highest degree of usefulness, while subjects from the natural-mathematical field had the lowest usefulness, representing a statistically significant difference ($F = 75.59$; $p < 0.001$). Natural-mathematical sciences showed significantly lower applicability compared to military sciences ($MD = 1.14$; $p < 0.001$) and technical sciences ($MD = 0.62$; $p < 0.02$). Simultaneously, social sciences were somewhat less applicable than technical sciences ($MD = 0.647$; $p < 0.015$).

The relevance and purposefulness of professional development programs – most notably the Basic Command and Staff Course (BCSC) – are of critical importance at the operational level, as they contribute

directly to the acquisition and effective application of professional competencies required for command and decision-making roles:

- At the operational level of duties within the MoD and the SAF, the content of the BCSC demonstrates greater usefulness compared to core academic subjects at the Military Academy ($F = 44.54$, $p < 0.001$).
- All BCSC subjects have high average ratings ($M = 4.48$), ranging from 4.12 to 4.83.
- The highest-ranked subject is Tactics ($M = 4.83$), while the lowest-ranked elective subject is Operations Modeling ($M = 4.18$).
- Factor analysis indicates that the BCSC curriculum comprises two distinct usefulness factors at the operational decision-making level, jointly explaining 82.57% of the total variance:
  - First factor: General Security Factor (63.24%).
  - Second factor: Skills Factor (19.33%).
- These two factors are completely independent ($r = -0.02$, $p > 0.05$).

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The conducted research has shown that the knowledge acquired during undergraduate studies and the first level of professional development at the Military Academy, Department of Land Forces, has a high degree of practical application in performing initial officer duties. In this way, the adequacy and alignment of curricula with the requirements of service within the Land Forces study program are confirmed. At the same time, significant differences were observed in the priorities of academic subjects and scientific fields between the two levels of study, which are directly conditioned by the differing demands of the decision-making process. These findings create space for formulating relevant conclusions and recommendations aimed at improvement:

- The structure of the curriculum demonstrates a logical and professional progression within the military profession, where effective military leadership necessitates the integration of academic knowledge and practical skills that characterize a competent and successful officer.
- Subjects highly rated at the undergraduate level, especially at the tactical level, largely correspond to the requirements of direct personnel management and unit leadership. Conversely, content from natural and mathematical sciences, although often perceived as abstract and theoretical, contributes to the development of logical

thinking, a critical component in decision-making processes at higher command levels. The usefulness of subjects such as foreign languages becomes increasingly pronounced with growing professional experience, particularly in the context of international cooperation and overseas education.

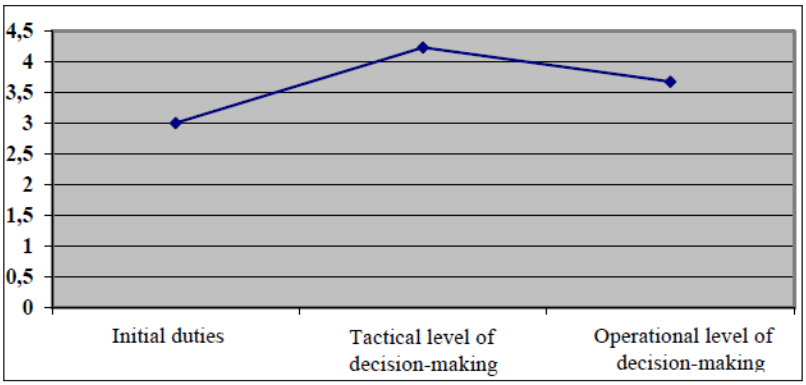
- Comparative analysis of perceived subject usefulness by cadets and officers at the tactical level reveals a high degree of alignment, indicating consistency in assessing the practical relevance of the curriculum. However, officers' work experience contributes to greater awareness of the importance of certain subjects, reflected in a broader spectrum of highly valued disciplines.
- Although the overall assessment of the applicability of undergraduate subjects is higher at the tactical level, it is evident that success at the operational level is partly based on augmented knowledge and skills gained through service experience, as well as competencies not fully covered by the curriculum.
- Subjects highly ranked for the operational level are characterized by multidisciplinarity and cross-branch applicability. These include content enabling effective performance in staff duties, modern information systems, and maintaining the psychophysical capacity of military leaders.
- Differences in dominant scientific fields between tactical and operational decision-making levels stem from varying demands and priorities. While the tactical level emphasizes the application of weapons, systems, and tactical procedures, the operational level primarily relies on planning skills and operational management.
- The second-cycle study program at the Military Academy, particularly in the domain of operational-level decision-making, focuses on planning force employment on the battlefield. This constitutes the essence of duties at this level, contrasting with previous generations whose competencies were more limited in information technologies and their application in operational planning, as well as in conducting complex simulations and military exercises.

The results can be summarized in the following conclusions, as illustrated in the presented graphs:

- The degree of applicability of knowledge acquired during studies at the Military Academy varies depending on the hierarchical level at which decisions are made within military leadership (Figure 1).

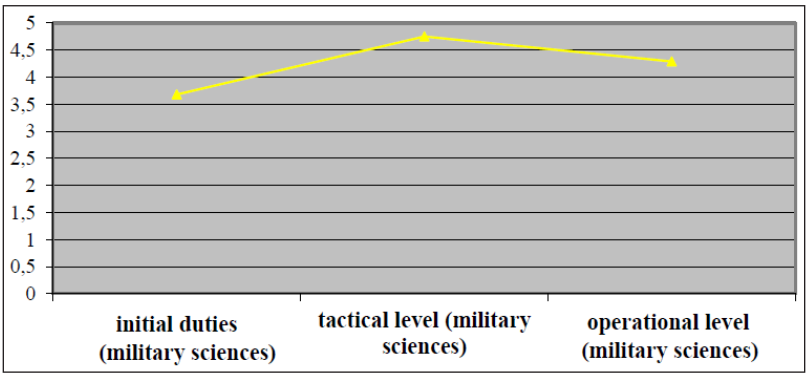
- The relevance and application of knowledge from various scientific fields in the military context depend on the decision-making level, with dominant scientific domains shifting from the tactical to the operational level (Figure 2).
- For effective performance at the operational decision-making level, the knowledge and skills obtained during the Specialization for Command and Staff Duties (Basic Command and Staff Course, BCSC) play a critical role, representing a pivotal stage in the professional development of officers (Figure 3).

Figure 1. Level of usefulness of the curriculum of the MA's Undergraduate Academic Studies at initial assignments and in performing leadership duties at various decision-making levels



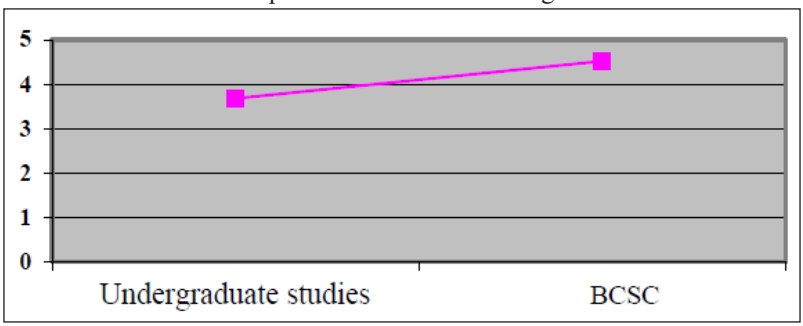
Source: Authors

Figure 2. Scientific Fields with the Highest Utility in the Curriculum of the MA's Undergraduate Academic Studies in the Performance of Duties at Each Level of Decision-Making



Source: Authors

Figure 3. Level of usefulness of the Military Academy's curriculum in the performance of duties by military leaders at the operational decision-making level



Source: Authors

Guidelines for future research

This study is based on the perceptions of the respondents, which entails certain methodological limitations. While the obtained results provide valuable insights into the practical usefulness of the curriculum content in military leadership, it is necessary for future research to expand and deepen the data set in order to achieve more reliable and comprehensive conclusions.

Specifically, the following gaps in the available data have been identified:

- Lack of information regarding the objective performance success of the respondents in their duties;
- Absence of academic grades for individual courses during studies;
- Exclusion of the impact of courses from previous curricula no longer in use;
- Lack of analysis of potential content deficiencies in the current curriculum;
- Omission of assessment of the influence of teaching staff on the quality and effectiveness of the acquired knowledge;
- Potential subjectivity in course evaluations, which may be influenced by factors such as personal attitudes toward the course or instructor, motivation level, current mood, cognitive bias, or fatigue during surveying.

For these reasons, it is recommended to conduct broader, multidimensional research that incorporates objective performance

indicators and qualitative methods to fully understand the effectiveness and further enhance the relevance of the Military Academy's curriculum.

CONCLUSION

The Military Academy represents a unique institution in the Republic of Serbia, legally authorized to conduct training and higher education for officers of the MoD and the SAF. In accordance with the demands of the defense system's transformation and alignment with the concept of total defense, the Military Academy is undergoing a reform process, which includes a revision of the curriculum.

Scientific evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum in the context of practical application of acquired knowledge at various levels of command is a critical element for the qualitative improvement of the military education system. Decision-making, as an essential competency of a military leader, requires the integration of cognitive abilities and knowledge, with knowledge serving as a mediator of paramount importance.

Therefore, military education attains the status of one of the key factors in maintaining and strengthening national security. Due to its specificity, it can be regarded as an operational personnel, scientific, technical, and cultural reserve of the state, capable of effective utilization amid economic and political reforms to overcome the consequences of crises.

Empirical data demonstrate that the Military Academy's courses are significantly applicable in practice; however, the degree of their relevance varies depending on the specific course, study cycle, and decision-making level (tactical or operational). These findings indicate the necessity for further research through a more comprehensive scientific project that would incorporate additional performance indicators and provide well-founded recommendations for optimizing the curriculum in line with the real needs of the military profession.

All of the above enables the fulfillment of the military organization's demand for officers whose professional level must meet both the long-term conditions for enhancing the operational efficiency of the armed forces and the tasks of reforming higher vocational education at the national level, while taking into account contemporary global trends.

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СИСТЕМ ВОЈНОГ ОБРАЗОВАЊА КАО ОСНОВА ОБЕЗБЕЂЕЊА НАЦИОНАЛНЕ БЕЗБЕДНОСТИ РЕПУБЛИКЕ СРБИЈЕ[****]

Резиме

Ефикасна припрема официрског кадра у Министарству одбране и Војсци Србије, представља кључни предуслов за успешно извршавање дужности у обезбеђивању националне безбедности. Специфични задаци и хијерархијска структура система одбране захтевају да старешински кадар, као непосредни учесник у процесу доношења одлука, остварује значајан утицај на оперативну ефикасност и његову функционалност. Сходно томе, образовање и обука официра су од суштинског значаја за развој њихових професионалних компетенција, што се директно рефлектује на укупни ниво безбедности државе. Савремени безбедносни изазови, трансформација физиономије савремених сукоба и еволуција безбедносних стратегија намећу неопходност реформи усмерених ка усклађивању академског програма са принципима савремених војних операција и захтевима безбедносног окружења. Овај рад представља емпиријску студију усмерену на вредновање степена применљивости стеченог знања на Војној академији у контексту

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практичног извршавања официрских дужности на различитим хијерархијским нивоима војног одлучивања. Истраживање се заснива на анализи повезаности између знања стеченог током војног образовања и захтева које намеће оперативна и тактичка војна пракса. Методолошки оквир истраживања обухвата квантитативну и квалитативну анализу података прикупљених путем анкетирања, уз примену одговарајућих статистичких техника за утврђивање степена повезаности између образовног процеса и професионалних компетенција официра. Анализа показује да старшине уочавају већу примену знања са војних студија на тактичком нивоу, док се на оперативном нивоу доношења одлука уочава релативно већа важност знања из друштвених наука. Ови налази доприносе научном разумевању односа између академског образовања и војне праксе, те представљају основу за систематско унапређење наставних планова и програма у циљу оптимизације едукативног процеса и његове практичне релевантности.

Кључне речи: војска, образовање, обука, официри, доношење одлука, војне науке, национална безбедност

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RUSSIAN ENERGODIPLOMACY IN THE BALKANS: PURPOSES, FACTORS, AND OBSTACLES[**]

Abstract

The study's subject is the Russian Federation's energy diplomacy in Turkey and the Balkans. The article aims to identify the goals, factors, and obstacles to implementing the Russian energy diplomacy in Turkey and the Balkans. Theoretical and methodological approach of the research: the paradigm of neorealism in international relations, system approach, comparative analysis. Results and conclusions of the paper: The author clarified the importance of the Turkish and Balkan direction in Russian geopolitics and energy diplomacy, noting the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles' key role in Russian security and foreign economic relations. Turkey is now Russia's most important partner and stakeholder in the Balkan transport and energy highways. Anti-Russian sanctions have led to Serbia's enclave location in the Balkan energy diplomacy system, exacerbating the competition of world powers and transnational structures for raw materials and the territory of Serbia.

Keywords: energodiplomacy, contemporary Russia, Turkey, Balkans, purposes, factors, obstacles

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INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the topic. In the context of an unprecedented but unsuccessful blockade by the "collective West", Russia desperately needs geopolitical and geo-economic routes of access to the international space. The Balkan Peninsula and the adjacent territories of Turkey and the Eastern Mediterranean are one of such strategic routes as the Baltic, the Arctic, the Caspian Sea, and the Far East. At the same time, the membership of most Balkan countries in NATO and the European Union does not negate the contradictions between the interests of the states, their desire to maximize their raw materials, transit, and industrial potential in competition with their neighbors. Threats of international terrorism and ethnic and religious extremism are clearly expressed in the Balkans, complicating interstate cooperation in the energy sector. These circumstances make the topic relevant for political science.

The study's subject is the Russian Federation's energy diplomacy in Turkey and the Balkans. The article aims to identify the goals, factors, and obstacles to implementing the Russian energy diplomacy in Turkey and the Balkans.

The territorial scope of the study includes the Russian Federation, Turkey, and Serbia, as well as other states located on the Balkan Peninsula. The chronological framework of the work consists of the period 2020–2024, when the West's desire to block Russian energy diplomacy in the Balkans was visibly manifested, and new forms of energy diplomacy were being sought in the context of anti-Russian sanctions.

The degree of development of the scientific topic: Generalizing studies of Russian energy diplomacy were created by Sergey Zhiznin (Zhiznin 2005) and Alexander I. Shumilin (Shumilin 2008). The role of the Balkan direction in Russian energy diplomacy is highlighted by A.R. Tekeev (Tekeev 2014), K. Khudoley and E. Koloskov (Khudoley and Koloskov 2021), T.V. Akhmadulina and P.V. Lazareva (Akhmadulina and Lazareva 2023), and M. Yaruyev (Yaruyev 2023, 2024). Among the foreign studies of the Balkan energy diplomacy of Russia, one can mention the works of A. Rustem and R. de Wick, K. Dunlop, etc. (Rustemi *et al.* 2021), N. Stanoevich (Stanojević 2023), D.R. Bashkalo and M. Sikimich (Башкало и Сикимич 2023). The impact of the Ukrainian conflict on the Balkans is being investigated by Lj. Kolarski (Kolarski 2022).

Another critical area of research is the analysis of achievements and problems of Russian-Serbian energy cooperation. Among the Russian

works on the topic, we note the report by E.G. Entina, E.S. Chimiris, and M.S. Lozovich (Entina, Chimiris, and Lozovich 2023), articles by D. Rastegaev (Rastegaev 2023), S. Zhuikova (Zhuikova 2023), and A. Belogoryev (Belogoryev 2023). P. Yakovlev's publication (Yakovlev 2024) is devoted to a narrower aspect – trade between the Russian Federation and Serbia. For their part, Serbian researchers assess the bilateral relations of our countries as a whole (Trailović and Rapaić 2023), Serbia's positioning in a multipolar world (Proroković 2023), issues of national security and neutrality of the country (Mihajlović and Obradović 2022), and the impact of European integration on Serbian-Russian interaction (Stanković 2021).

In the context of anti-Russian sanctions, the importance of Russian-Turkish cooperation in the energy sector has increased. Its factors and manifestations are evaluated by I.V. Zeleneva and E. A. Savkina (Zeleneva and Savkina 2020), K. A. Gumbatov (Gumbatov 2021), A. Kostrov (Kostrov 2022), A.V. Gerasimov (Gerasimov 2023), P. Zavalny (Zavalny 2024), and N. Kurbanov (Kurbanov 2024). E. A. Markelova (Markelova 2022) and Zh. Kanapiyanova (Kanapiyanova 2022) conducted special cooperation studies in the gas sector. The strategy and resources of Turkey's influence in the Balkans were studied by V. Andreev (Andreev 2021), V.V. Evseev and others (Evseev, Pivovarenko, and Gadzhiev 2021). Experts from the Caspian Institute for Strategic Studies (Moscow) in 2023 predicted the progress of Russia and Turkey towards a strategic alliance (Caspian Institute of Strategic Studies 2023).

Thus, quite a lot of research on the topic has been conducted. At the same time, the geo-economic situation in Turkey and the Balkans is changing rapidly, and the latest trends in the development of Russian energy diplomacy in the region have not been studied enough.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research includes the paradigm of neorealism in international relations and a systematic approach. The concepts of "key points" and "geopolitical fields" developed in postclassical geopolitics for the analysis of cross-border regions are applied (Cohen 2003; Kaplan 2013; Ballesteros 2015). A comparative study of Russia's energy diplomacy with the Balkan countries and Turkey before and after the start of a special military operation in Ukraine is carried out. The author believes that in the context of globalization, many states are experiencing a shortage of resources for their foreign economic and foreign policy influence, turning into "market states" with limited sovereignty; they have become the object of geopolitical rivalry between world powers and transnational associations.

The study's empirical basis consists of information sources such as international and interstate agreements, statistical data on the volume of trade turnover, exports, and imports of the studied countries, statements by political leaders, and mass media reports. The studied sources make it possible to determine the goals and directions of energy diplomacy, the favorable and hindering factors of its implementation, and the contradictory impact of the participation of the Balkan countries and Turkey in international organizations on their interaction with Russia.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BALKANS AND TURKEY AS A SPACE OF ENERGY DIPLOMACY

The Balkans and Turkey are promising areas for intergovernmental cooperation in the field of energy, being a capacious market in need of energy resources to develop modern sectors of the economy and transit towards the European Union. The combined population of these countries is over 133 million people (estimated for 2024), including 88.5 million people in Turkey. From the point of view of geopolitics, the Balkans and Turkey are a convenient transport and energy "bridge" between Western Europe and Asia. They give the EU access to the oil and gas fields of the Near East and the Caspian region. At the same time, from Russia's point of view, the Balkans and Turkey are an important "window to the world", a key point in the South-Western direction; this region opens up export routes for Russian energy carriers and energy technologies not only to the Balkans and Turkey, but also to countries in Africa and the Middle East. For China, the region provides access to European markets for goods, services, and capital. However, the interests of these actors do not coincide, which generates competition for political, economic, and ideological control over the Balkans. In addition, the West is seeking to transfer the Balkans and Turkey from a state of "cross" (competitive) geopolitical field to a state of "total" (wholly owned by NATO and the EU) field (Stanković 2021). Currently, only Serbia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina are not members of either NATO or the EU, but they also participate in European integration programs. From the point of view of the internal structure of the region, Turkey, Greece, and Serbia play key roles; they have the most advantageous location relative to oil and gas pipelines, railways, and highways. Turkey is actively striving to become a "gas" and "oil" hub – gas pipelines from Russia, Azerbaijan, and Iran, oil pipelines from Iran and Azerbaijan run through its territory, into

whose systems coal products from Central Asian countries are supplied by sea. Serbia is not in such a good position due to its lack of access to the sea (see map one below). The importance of "key points" is Istanbul, Thessaloniki, and Belgrade, and the junction points of various oil and gas pipelines. In the context of increased competition, the importance of the shelf of the Middle and Black Seas, on which geological exploration and production of energy resources and their transportation, is rising. For example, there has been an escalation of the Greek-Turkish and Turkish-Egyptian territorial conflicts.

Map 1. Gas pipeline routes through Turkey and the Balkans (for 2020).

Source: Business Magazine 2018

The geopolitical situation in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean has changed qualitatively since the start of the special military operation in Ukraine (February 2022). NATO, the United States, and the EU have already imposed anti-Russian sanctions, seeking to completely exclude Russia's economic cooperation with the Balkan countries and Turkey, and thereby undermine Russian budget revenues and lead Russia to autarky. But despite these measures, Western policy has not achieved the expected success.

THE TURKISH DIRECTION OF THE RUSSIAN ENERGY DIPLOMACY

Turkey is a dynamically developing country, the second in the world in terms of growing demand for electricity and natural gas. But Turkey covers 74% of its energy needs through imports. Russia has become Turkey's leading export trading partner and the 4th largest importer. In particular, in 2020, Russia provided 33.6% of natural gas imports to Turkey; by 2022, this share had increased to almost 45% (Kanapiyanova 2022; Kostrov 2022). According to the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia, for 2022, the trade turnover of the Russian Federation with Turkey doubled and exceeded 69.8 billion dollars, primarily due to the sale of energy resources (51.5% of the value) (Kostrov 2022; Kurbanov 2024; Интерфаксе 2022). However, the pressure of sanctions from the West led to the fact that in 2023, the trade turnover between the two countries decreased by 17% and was fixed at 57.0 billion dollars (РИА Новости 2024).

Turkey ranks third in the world ranking of importers of Russian gas (Gumbatov 2021, 471). As the Turkish newspaper Hürriyet notes, concerning data from the Energy Market Regulation Authority, in October 2023, Russian gas already accounted for 59.1% of all gas imported by Turkey, and Russia provided an urgent payment (TACC 2023). This contributed to reducing economic risks and the victory of R.T. Erdogan in the presidential elections. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, for 2023, Exports of Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Turkey increased 1.4 times compared to 2022 and reached 814 thousand tons.

Turkey is the third-largest buyer of Russian crude oil after China and India. According to the Reuters news agency, Turkey doubled its crude oil imports from Russia in 2022. In 2022, more than 200 million tons of crude oil and petroleum products from Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan (mainly from the Russian Federation) passed through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles (Kostrov 2022). According to the publication of the Turkish newspaper Hürriyet, in October 2023, Russia's share in Turkish oil imports increased to 49.9% compared with 40.74% a year earlier (TACC 2023). The export of Russian diesel fuel has also increased. Also, for 2023, Supplies of Russian thermal coal to Turkey increased by 46%, amounting to 27.5 million tons (Tadviser 2025). More than 70% of the cost of Russian supplies to Turkey for the first half of

2024 (16 billion US dollars) is fuel supplies (oil, gas, coal). Turkey partly uses these supplies for re-exports to EU countries, despite pressure from US sanctions, due to which the cost of Turkish imports from Russia decreased by 10.3% in January–June 2024, maintaining its physical volumes (РБК 2024).

Projects such as the Trans-Balkan gas pipeline, the Blue Stream gas pipeline (two lines provide pumping of 16 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year), and the Turkish Stream have been implemented. The construction costs of the Turkish Stream alone for 2012–2019, according to estimates by the Interfax news agency, amounted to $ 13 billion, and the design capacity reached 31.5 billion cubic meters of gas per year; half of the volume is intended for Turkey, and half for the Balkan countries (Gumbatov 2021, 472–474; Kostrov 2022). It is planned to create a distribution hub in Turkey for gas exports to the European Union by developing the Turkish Stream gas pipeline infrastructure. The implementation of the gas hub project in Turkey started in the autumn of 2023.

The creation of generating capacities in Turkey plays a significant role in Russia's energy diplomacy. In particular, the Akkuyu nuclear power plant project, worth $ 22 billion, is essential, as it is designed to generate 4,800 MW (10% of Turkey's needs). Russia fully funds the project. After completing the Akkuyu NPP construction, it will remain Rosatom's property. Despite the pressure from Western countries, the first batch of nuclear fuel was delivered to the station in April 2023. The first of the four reactors was implemented in 2023 and will reach its full design capacity in 2025. It is planned to sell the produced fuel on the Turkish market at a price above the market price (Вестник Кавказа 2024). Turkey will buy half of the electricity generated by Akkuyu for 15 years. The total cost of purchases will be about $32 billion (Рыбарь 2023). Russian-Turkish negotiations are underway on Rosatom's construction of a second nuclear power plant, Sinop. Turkey intends to build a third nuclear power plant in the Igneada area in Thrace, northwest of the country. A joint venture of Rosatom and Turkish organizations will be able to conclude contracts for constructing new nuclear power plants.

An essential consequence of the Russian-Turkish energy cooperation was training young specialists at Russian universities and creating new jobs in the Turkish economy.

Cooperation between Russia and Turkey is also underway in the import substitution of equipment and maintenance of the energy industry.

The production of liquefied natural gas in the Russian Federation now depends on Western equipment, which has to be replaced. In particular, the Turkish company Karpowership supplies replacement equipment to Russia – gas turbines and floating power plants. However, according to the Turkish Institute of Statistics, TurkStat, the export of Turkish machinery to the Russian Federation for 9 months of 2022 amounted to only $ 1.5 billion. (26% of the value of Turkish exports to Russia), which is not enough (Kostrov 2022). Turkey is not yet ready to permanently abandon the dollar and the euro in mutual payments with Russia, which can be compensated by the supply of Turkish goods and the activity of the Turkish construction business in the Russian Federation, and this will balance the value of Turkish exports and imports in bilateral relations (by the end of 2023, Turkish exports to the Russian Federation amounted to 11 billion dollars, and Russian exports to Turkey – over 46 billion dollars) (РИА Новости 2024).

So, the Russian energy diplomacy about Turkey has the following directions: 1) export of energy resources – oil and natural gas; 2) investments in the Turkish energy sector, including in electricity generation, nuclear energy, supply of energy equipment and services for its maintenance; 3) Russian–Turkish projects for the exploration and production of hydrocarbon resources; 4) import of equipment and maintenance of enterprises the energy sector. Due to its strategic location on the Balkans and the Middle East border, Turkey is an energy hub, partly replacing the lost markets of the European Union for Russia. Both countries benefit from energy cooperation without intermediaries.

According to the Caspian Institute for Strategic Studies (Moscow) assessment for September 2023, "over the past year and a half, the relationship between Russia and Turkey has increased many times, and in a variety of areas – from trade and logistics to energy and security. [...] The time has come to transform the situational alliance between Moscow and Ankara into a full-fledged strategic alliance. It is about joining forces in the name of joint dominance and to protect against external enemies. Such an alliance is based on political pragmatism, consideration of national and common interests, and the addition of potential to achieve a synergistic effect. In this union, each country will preserve its independence and cultural identity" (Caspian Institute of Strategic Studies 2023). The project of a single gas distribution hub in Turkey creates a fundamentally new geo-economic situation for the countries of Southern Europe and the Balkans. Their reliable

access to cheap energy resources from Russia and the countries of the Caspian basin (primarily from Azerbaijan) is emerging, which creates opportunities for accelerated economic development. The role of Hungary is noticeably increasing, and it, together with Turkey, is becoming an energy and political "switchboard" for the macroregion (Caspian Institute of Strategic Studies 2023).

At the same time, Turkey intends to become an independent energy power. Therefore, it actively develops energy imports from Azerbaijan, Iran, Algeria, and other countries. The Turkish TANAP gas pipeline objectively competes with Russian projects in the region. As noted by V. Andreev, Turkey is striving to gain a foothold in the energy sector of the Western Balkans, using the energy transition of these countries by the "Green Agenda" of the European Union, since Turkey has an infrastructure for natural gas transit to the Balkans (Andreev 2021).

RUSSIAN ENERGY DIPLOMACY TOWARDS SERBIA

A more restrained optimism should be applied when assessing Russian-Serbian relations. Cooperation between the two countries in the energy sector is based on the Declaration on Strategic Partnership between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Serbia, signed on May 24, 2013 (Официальный сайт Президента России 2013). In 2022, the trade turnover between the two countries increased by 53%, amounting to $4.28 billion, but the Russian Federation provided only 4.28% of Serbia's trade turnover with foreign governments (Евгений Пудовкин 2023; Trend Economy 2024). According to the calculations of the TrendEconomy portal, as a result, in 2023, Russia provides 4.33% of Serbia's imports worth $1.72 billion, as well as 3.86% of Serbia's exports worth $1.19 billion. Russia ranks fifth in the share of foreign countries in the import of silver and eighth in exports. As a result of pressure from Western sanctions, the value of trade between Russia and Serbia decreased in 2023 from $4 billion to $2.91 billion (by 25%) (Yakovlev 2024).

Energy resources account for a significant share of the trade turnover between the two countries. According to D. Rastegaev's generalizations, Serbia covers 68% of its crude oil and 76% of its natural gas needs through imports (Rastegaev 2023). As a result of the implementation of the Balkan Stream project (its Serb section was commissioned in the summer of 2021), gas supplies from the Russian Federation to Serbia almost doubled in 2021–2022 (from 1,384 to 2,294 million cubic meters per year). The

share of Russian natural gas in the structure of Serbia's consumption in 2021 was 80%, and the share of Russian oil was about 23%. Russia carries out energy supplies at low special prices.

Gazprom Concern owns a key stake (56%) in Serbia's leading oil company, NIS (Naftna Industrija Srbije), a monopolist in oil exploration and production in the country. NIS owns the largest oil refinery in the Balkans, Pancevo, which was modernized thanks to investments from Gazprom. NIS and Lukoil control 27.6% of the Serbian gasoline retail market. Gazprom also owns 51% of shares in Banatsky Dvor, Serbia's only gas storage facility, and 50% of shares in Yugorosgaz, which buys Russian gas for Serbs (Rastegaev 2023).

In addition to energy trade, Russian-Serbian cooperation in creating and modernizing electric power plants is actively developing. The Russian concern Power Machines and the Electric Household of Serbia have modernized the Jerdap-1 hydroelectric power plant by 2021 and are implementing the same project at the Jerdap-2 station. In December 2021, Rosatom Concern and the Government of Serbia signed a general framework agreement on constructing the Center for Nuclear Science and Technology, the first in a foreign European country, co-founded by Rosatom (Rosatom 2022).

At the same time, Serbia is pursuing multi-vector diplomacy. It seeks to diversify oil and gas production routes and connect to pan-European, Balkan, and Turkish energy projects. In particular, we are talking about the Bulgarian-Serbian interconnector, opened in December 2023 in a Niche thanks to a grant from the European Union (it will provide 60% of the current consumption of natural gas in Serbia) (Europa 2025), and the Turkish TANAP project – The Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project, which brings gas from Azerbaijani fields to the Trans-Adriatic pipeline (TANAP 2025). Serbia's accession to anti-Russian sanctions under increasing pressure from the West cannot be ruled out.

RUSSIAN ENERGY DIPLOMACY IN THE REST OF THE BALKAN COUNTRIES

As for other Balkan countries' importance in energy contracts with Russia is lower. According to A. Belogoryev, in January–February 2023, Turkish Stream gas was distributed among the countries of the region in the following way: to Serbia, taking into account transit to Bosnia and Herzegovina – 40.3%, to Hungary – 35.0%, to Romania –

17.8%, to Northern Macedonia – 4.3%, to Greece – 2.6% (Belogoryev 2023). Bulgaria had a European Union permit to import Russian crude oil until April 2024. For 2023, Bulgaria imported $2.5 billion worth of oil via the sea route (РБК 2023). The trade turnover between Russia and Romania decreased by almost 5 times in 2023, totaling no more than $ 1 billion. Russian exports to this country in the first 10 months of 2023 amounted to 290.9 million euros (ТАСС 2024a). According to the Greek statistical service Elstat, in March 2024, the cost of imports from the Russian Federation decreased to 140.8 million euros, one-third less than in March 2023. As in other Balkan countries, energy was dominant in Greek imports (ТАСС 2024b). The growing competition with Russian supplies of liquefied natural gas provided by Greece is predicted.

The authorities and political figures of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), especially the Republic of Srpska, show some interest in energy cooperation with the Russian Federation. Member of the Presidium of BiH, Milorad Dodik, speaking at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2022, said: "The Balkans cannot live without Russian energy resources, without oil and gas (ТАСС 2022)." The Prime Minister of the Republic of Srpska, Radovan Viskovich, noted in October 2023 that Russian gas supplies are carried out at reduced prices, and the republic reached an agreement on signing at the end of 2023, an agreement on long-term gas supplies from the Russian Federation. A gas pipeline from Serbia to the Republic of Srpska is planned to be built (The Balkan Club 2023). At the same time, the Council of Ministers of BiH has been blocking the project "New Eastern Interconnection Bosnia and Herzegovina – Serbia" since April 2023 to reduce the country's dependence on Russian gas in favor of Azerbaijani gas supplies through Croatia, lobbied by the United States and the EU. The necessary sections of the pipeline with all branches have already been built within the Republic of Srpska. Still, for gas to flow throughout BiH's territory, the Muslim–Croatian Federation's consent is necessary (Balkan Club 2025). While the Russian project is almost completed, the pro-Western project requires the construction of the Ionian-Adriatic gas pipeline, which, at best, will be effective in 2025. In June 2024, Srbiyagaz started work on the Pale – Jahorina gas distribution pipeline, creating a reliable Belgrade – Banja Luka interconnector. It should be noted that the Republic of Srpska consumes four times less gas than the Muslim-Croatian Federation (Balkan Club 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

The author clarified the importance of the Balkan direction in Russian geopolitics and energy diplomacy, noting the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles' key role in Russian security and foreign economic relations. Turkey is now Russia's most important partner and stakeholder in the Balkan transport and energy highways. Anti-Russian sanctions have led to Serbia's enclave location in the Balkan energy diplomacy system, exacerbating the competition of world powers and transnational structures for raw materials and the territory of Serbia.

The Russian energy diplomacy about Turkey has the following directions: 1) export of energy resources – oil and natural gas; 2) investments in the Turkish energy sector, including in electricity generation, nuclear energy, supply of energy equipment and services for its maintenance; 3) Russian–Turkish projects for the exploration and production of hydrocarbon resources; 4) import substitution of equipment and maintenance of enterprises the energy sector. Due to its strategic location on the Balkans and the Middle East border, Turkey is an energy hub, partly replacing the lost markets of the European Union for Russia. Both countries benefit from energy cooperation without intermediaries.

It can be concluded that the role of Turkey and Serbia in the Russian energy diplomacy has increased significantly since February 2022, while the rest of the region's countries have critically decreased. A partial exception can be recognized as Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is interested in importing Russian energy resources, updating its pipeline network, and power plants. However, the confederate type of statehood of this country and significant international pressure from NATO, the EU, and the United States make it difficult for reliable cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Russia.

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РУСКА ЕНЕРГОДИПЛОМАТИЈА НА БАЛКАНУ: ЦИЉЕВИ, ФАКТОРИ И ПРЕПРЕКЕ**

Резиме

Предмет истраживања је енергетска дипломатија Руске Федерације у Турској и на Балкану. Циљ рада је идентификација циљева, фактора и препрека у спровођењу руске енергетске дипломатије у Турској и на Балкану. Теоријско-методолошки приступ истраживања заснива се на парадигми неореализма у међународним односима, системском приступу и компаративној анализи. Резултати и закључци рада указују на разјашњење значаја турског и балканског правца у оквиру руске геополитике и енергетске дипломатије, при чему се посебно истиче кључна улога Босфора и Дарданела у обезбеђивању руске безбедности и спољноекономских односа. Турска данас представља најзначајнијег партнера и актера Русије у оквиру балканских транспортних и енергетских коридора. Антируске санкције довеле су до тога да се Србија нађе у енклавској позицији у систему балканске енергетске дипломатије, што је додатно појачало конкуренцију светских сила и транснационалних структура за сировинске ресурсе и територију Србије.

Кључне речи: енергетска дипломатија, савремена Русија, Турска, Балкан, циљеви, фактори, препреке

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Elections in Serbia and the Republic of Srpska: the Challenges of Representation

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NATIONAL MINORITIES IN LOCAL ELECTIONS IN SERBIA – HISTORY, RESULTS, AND CONSEQUENCES[***]

Abstract

This paper analyzes the participation of national minorities in local elections in the Republic of Serbia, with a particular focus on the most recent ones held on December 17, 2023, and June 2, 2024. Our primary attention is on the parties of the largest national minorities in Serbia – Hungarians, Bosniaks, and Albanians – and collectively, on the parties

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of other national minorities. This paper aims to indicate the trajectories of minority representation at the local level in Serbia. The authors use descriptive statistics to provide findings on the results of minority parties in local elections in Serbia since the restoration of multiparty politics. The main research question is whether the developments in electoral law have affected the representation of national minorities at the local level in Serbia and their broader social integration. The second question relates to the degree of homogeneity of minority communities in Serbia, given that some are territorially concentrated in certain geographical regions, while others are territorially dispersed. Also, to what extent does positive discrimination affect the number of minority parties, given the more liberal conditions for minority political organization and participation in elections?

Keywords: Republic of Serbia, local elections, national minorities, political parties, minority representation

INTRODUCTION

More than three decades since the introduction of the multiparty system in the Republic of Serbia has provided a sufficient time span to observe various political phenomena that have accompanied it. This includes the participation of national minorities in local elections. The freedom of political organizing, established through the legislative framework in the early 1990s, also created a space for the political organizing of the national minorities in Serbia – especially the largest ones – Hungarians, Bosniaks, and Albanians, and others. Of course, minority representatives have pursued political representation through the majority catch-all parties (Kolarski 2021, 24–25).

The issue of minorities' political organization and representation is a significant factor in the rule of law within any political system. This is particularly evident in European countries, since numerous documents addressing minority protection have been adopted on this continent. Some authors argue that, despite the existence of formal legal prerequisites for minority representation, practice has shown an insufficient level of integration of minority communities into broader society (Đorđević i dr. 2018, 15). Furthermore, the issue has gained particular importance in post-conflict societies, and Serbia has carried this burden since the 1990s. Different systems apply varying models

of minority representation. For example, many systems use quotas or guaranteed seats in representative institutions. Thus, as many as 28 countries apply this model (Bird 2014, 12).

The aim of this paper is to point to certain trajectories of minority representation at the local level in Serbia. Local election results will be monitored in the period of more than three decades since the renewal of the multiparty democracy, with special emphasis on the most recent election terms in late 2023 and mid–2024. Some local elections coincided with parliamentary elections, while others were held separately. This provides the basis for deeper insights into the effects of local elections, with a focus on minority representation. The paper will analyze changes in electoral legislation and reforms in electoral law that have accompanied minority representation at the local level in Serbia. Using descriptive statistics, it examines the results of minority parties in local elections. The main research question is whether advancements in electoral legislation impacted on the representation of national minorities at the local level in Serbia and their broader social integration. The second question concerns the degree of homogeneity among the minority communities in Serbia, considering that some are territorially concentrated in specific geographic areas, while others are more dispersed. Furthermore, the paper will explore how positive discrimination affects the size of minority parties, given the more liberal conditions for minorities' political organizing and electoral participation.

Since the socialist period, Serbia – which, notably, includes two autonomous provinces and a population where national minorities account for one-third – has maintained high standards of respecting minority rights, in terms of preserving their ethno-cultural identity and ensuring participation of minority representatives in public and political life (Bašić i Crnjanski 2006a, 29).

This is undoubtedly a sensitive issue, as all minorities in modern society, including national minorities, possess dual awareness: an awareness of themselves as a distinct entity compared to the majority (the minority perspective), and, in a certain way, internalized stereotypes by the majority, portraying them as minority or marginal groups and as such, always subject to social pressure (Babić 2010, 218). Of course, it is the task of legislation in any democratic state to reduce this potential pressure, and numerous steps in that direction have been taken over time, including electoral legislation, in Serbia's legal framework.

A significant incentive in this process has been the European integrations process, as respect for minority rights is a condition for both the EU membership and regional stability (Raduški 2014, 114).

ELECTORAL LEGISLATION REFORMS AND MINORITY REPRESENTATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Within the context outlined above, we can distinguish two periods of political representation of national minorities in Serbia: from 1990 to 2008, and the second one from 2009 to the present political circumstances (Jovanović 2022, 116). Following the restoration of the multiparty system in Serbia in 1990, parties of ethnic Hungarians, Bosniaks (Muslims), and Albanians were formed in geographically concentrated areas of Serbia – Raška/Sandžak, Vojvodina, in the south of central Serbia, and in Kosovo and Metohija, where these populations reside (Orlović 2008, 313 cited in: Mijatović 2015, 84). It is also a fact that, since the early 1990s, there has been a systemic boycott in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija by Albanians rallied around the Democratic League of Kosovo (*Demokratski savez Kosova* – DSK) and other political groups that started to act as the so-called Albanian alternative (Lutovac 1997, 148).

Alongside their participation in elections and entry into representative bodies at all levels of government, including the executive power at the local level, there was a continuous upgrade of the legislation in the area of minority rights protection – which became especially prominent after 2000, when Bosniak and Hungarian parties started to participate in the executive government at the national level.

Certain distortions regarding national minorities that had existed in the national-level electoral system adopted after the changes of 2000 and the October 5th, when Serbia, by consensus of all leading national majority parties, became a single electoral district with the proportional electoral model applied in parliamentary elections and a 5% threshold (often unattainable for minority parties), were partially eliminated in 2004, by the adoption of the so-called "natural threshold" for national minority parties (Zakon o lokalnim izborima 2022, Art. 62). This significant shift toward positive discrimination greatly influenced the dynamics of the party system and the political system as a whole. The fact that this reform move contributed to a broader minority representation within the national legislation and the local parliament, and locally

opened the space for a more frequent participation of minority parties in ruling coalitions at all levels of government in the Republic of Serbia.

The adoption of the new Constitution of the Republic of Serbia in 2006, which defined our country as "the state of the Serbian people and all other peoples who live in it," along with other constitutional and legal acts, provided a broad foundation for further affirmation of national minorities in Serbia (Bašić i Crnjanski 2006b, 11–30).

Despite all these steps, it is fair to say that 2009 marks a significant milestone for the status of national minorities, with the adoption of the legislation establishing national minority councils as institutions of self-government in the fields of culture, education, information, and official use of language and script (Zakon o nacionalnim savetima nacionalnih manjina 2009). It should be noted that, although these are self-government bodies, minorities' political parties compete for positions within them and manage their operation. Gradually, these councils have become bodies with political aspirations (Jovanović 2022, 126).

In general, the electoral rules for the 2023/24 local elections were defined by the "consolidated" Law on Local Elections from 2022 (Zakon o lokalnim izborima 2022). The main principles of this law are that elections are held using a proportional system, with the local self-government unit "(city, municipality, or city municipality) as a single electoral district, with closed candidate lists. The electoral threshold is 3%, and mandates are allocated using the D'Hondt method. All mandates are distributed according to the order on the electoral list, and in the event of termination of a mandate of a deputy elected from a coalition list, he/she is replaced by a member of the same political party" (Zakon o lokalnim izborima 2022, Art. 61, Art. 62, Art. 73 cited in: Matić i Mijatović 2024b, 204)

National minority parties enjoy a privileged status in some respects. Namely, "national minority parties are those for which the electoral commission has determined that their primary goal is to represent and protect the interests of a national minority and to promote the rights of national minority members in accordance with international legal standards. A special decision on this matter is issued by the electoral commission, which may consult with the National Council of the respective national minority" (Zakon o lokaknim izborima 2024, Art. 75 cited in: Matić i Mijatović 2024a, 204). "National minority parties are further favored in elections by increasing the electoral quotient of parties or coalition lists that received less than 3% of the vote by 35%" (Zakon

o lokalnim izborima 2022, Art. 78, cited in: Matić, Mijatović 2023b, 198–199). This form of positive discrimination of national minorities is unique in the world, as it questions the principle of vote equality.

These provisions on recognizing a national minority's party status and weighting its results – also left two "open" questions. First, there is the issue of the arbitrariness of the relevant electoral commissions in determining the status of a national minority party and the lack of clear criteria for its determination, primarily because of potential abuse. Second, the weighting of minority parties' electoral score may conflict with the constitutional principle of equal voting rights and the prohibition of discrimination (Jovanović 2022, 126).

According to Matić and Mijatović, "the normative framework for the 2024 local elections differed slightly from the part of the local elections held in December 2023. Legislative amendments involved the government's concessions regarding the slating of elections (the earliest date for slating elections was extended from 120 to 150 days before the expiration of the local assemblies' mandates). Additionally, voters who changed their residence within the past 11 months were not allowed to vote at their new address but had to vote at their previous one" (Matić i Mijatović 2024b, 203–204) – an issue that was more related to the communities with the majority, rather than national minority populations.

NATIONAL MINORITIES IN LOCAL ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA BETWEEN 1992 AND 2022

It is possible to observe that, since the restoration of the multiparty system, the number of national minority parties has steadily increased. Thus, between 1990 and 2000, 19 such parties were established, while in the period between 2000 and 2009, that number was 43 (Jovanović 2022, 119). This trend intensified after 2009, and by 2020, 75 out of 124 parties registered in the Register of Political Parties, or 60.48%, were minority parties (124). This is mainly due to the streamlined registration process: majority parties require 10,000 signatures, while minority parties need only 1,000 or ten times less. This indicates that the trajectory went toward liberalizing conditions for minorities' political organizing. At the same time, newly created parties include both national minority parties, as well as those representing the interests of ethnic communities.

According to Mijatović, "the first party to articulate the interests of Hungarians in Vojvodina, i.e., in Serbia, was the Democratic Community

of Vojvodina Hungarians (*Demokratska zajednica vojvođanskih Mađara* – DZVM), founded in 1990" (Mijatović 2015, 84). It actively participated in the first local elections in 1992 as the sole and relatively powerful representative of the Hungarian community (Republički zavod za statistiku [RZS] 1993).

Just two years later, in 1994, a split occurred within the DZVM, leading to the formation of the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (*Savez vojvođanskih Mađara* – SVM), which won the next local elections in 1996, securing around 60% of the Hungarians' vote at the local level (RZS 1997). Another rift within the DZVM in 1997 resulted in the creation of the Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarians (*Demokratska stranka vojvođanskih Mađara* – DSVM). Despite some subsequent divisions, these three parties, and primarily the SVM, have shaped the political life of the Vojvodina Hungarians. Other parties participating in the 1990s and 2000s elections included the Civic Movement of Vojvodina Hungarians (*Građanski pokret vojvođanskih Mađara*), the Christian Democratic Movement of Vojvodina Hungarians (*Demohrišćanski pokret vojvođanskih Mađara*), and the Christian Democratic Bloc (*Demohrišćanski blok*) (Mijatović 2016, 195–196).

In the 2000 elections, SVM and DZVM partnered with the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (*Demokratska opozicija Srbije* – DOS), although they ran independently at the local level, while DSVM ran independently, SVM again prevailed (Republički zavod za informatiku i statistiku [RZIS] 2001). In the first local elections following the changes of October 5th held in 2004, the SVM won more than half the votes, while the remaining votes were split between DSVM and DZVM (RZS 2005). In the 2008 local elections, the leading Hungarian parties reached an agreement to run together as the Hungarian Coalition (SVM, DZVM, and DSVM), with only the Civic Alliance of Hungarians (*Građanski savez Mađara*) remaining outside the coalition. The coalition captured nearly all Hungarian votes (RZS 2009). In the 2012 local elections, rivalry among Hungarian parties resurfaced (Mijatović 2015, 312). This time, the SVM won decisively, securing 90% of the Hungarian vote, while DSVM, DZVM, and the Civic Alliance of Hungarians shared the rest (RZS 2012).

In the 2016 local elections SVM also maintained its decisively predominant position. The remaining votes went to DZVM, DSVM, and the Hungarian Unity Party (*Stranka mađarskog jedinstva* – SMJ). For example, in Subotica, SVM won 22.52% of the vote and 16 council

seats; DSVM won 1.63% and one seat; while DZVM, in coalition with the Civic Alliance of Hungarians, the Croatian Democratic Community of Croats (*Demokratska zajednica Hrvata* – DZH), Bosniak Democratic Union (*Bošnjačka demokratska zajednica* – BDZ), and Slovak Party (*Slovačka stranka*), won 0.76% and no seats (RZS 2016).

Aside from its superior role among the Vojvodina Hungarians, SVM's position in the 2020 local elections was additionally facilitated due to the boycott of the elections by its rival DZVM (which was part of the then-opposition Alliance for Serbia). In this election cycle, SVM again achieved a dominant victory (RZS 2020).

From the very outset of the restoration of multiparty democracy in Serbia, SVM has accepted cooperation with the parties of the majority population at all levels (although initially, it participated in the executive government only at the local level). It partnered with DOS in 2000, and between 2004 and 2016, it collaborated intensely with the Democratic Party (*Demokratska stranka* – DS) and participated in the provincial government of the AP Vojvodina. Since 2012, and especially since 2016, SVM cooperated increasingly with the Serbian Progressive Party (*Srpska napredna stranka* – SNS), eventually forming a strategic partnership.

Within the Bosniak (Muslim) national minority in the Raška/Sandžak region, the Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka demokratske akcije* – SDA) was founded in 1990 (Minić 2023, 259), followed by the Muslim-Bosniak Organization (*Muslimansko-bošnjačka organizacija* – MBO) in 1991 (266–267). In the following years, the SDA gained an absolute primacy. Due to the radicalization of their views, both SDA and MBO boycotted the local elections in May and December 1992 (266–267, 269). Meanwhile, in Kosovo and Metohija, due to the general boycott by Albanian political parties, the Democratic Reform Party of Muslims (*Demokratska reformska stranka Muslimana*) participated in the elections in Prizren in 1992 and 1996.

According to Mijatović, "fragmentation also affected the Muslim (Bosniak) political parties. In the mid-1990s, an internal rift within the SDA caused the splinter group to leave the party and form the dissident Sandžak Coalition," led by Rasim Ljajić (Mijatović 2015, 141). At all levels of government, even at the local level, in the 1996 elections, the SDA won a convincing victory (RZS 1997). Among the Bosniak parties, on the eve of the 2000 local elections, the "Sandžak Coalition" and the SDA actively cooperated with the Democratic Opposition of Serbia at the national level. Unlike the Sandžak Coalition (*Koalicija Sandžak*)

(renamed the Sandžak Democratic Party [*Sandžačka demokratska partija*] since 2000), the Party of Democratic Action – "List for Sandžak" (*Stranka demokratske akcije* – „*Lista za Sandžak*") decided to run independently at the local level and prevailed among Bosniak voters in these local elections (RZIS 2001). After the democratic changes of October 5th, both leading Bosniak political actors continue to cooperate with the leading political parties in Serbia at the national level.

In the 2004 local elections, SDA's dominance was challenged for the first time by the newly formed Sandžak Democratic Party (*Sandžačka demokratska partija* – SanDP), with a vote ratio of 50% for the SDA compared to SanDP's 40%. The remaining 10% went to the People's Movement of Sandžak (*Narodni pokret Sandžaka*) and the Party for Sandžak (*Stranka za Sandžak*) (RZS 2005). A new dynamic brought by one of the Bosniak parties on the Serbian political stage was introduced by the Sandžak Democratic Party (SanDP), which expanded its activities beyond the Raška region/Sandžak to other areas with Bosniak populations (Mali Zvornik, Loznica, Subotica, etc.). Eventually, SanDP would participate in the creation of a national party—the Social Democratic Party of Serbia (*Socijaldemokratska partija Srbije* – SDPS) (Mijatović 2016, 282–283).

Bosniak parties had the opportunity to take part at the extraordinary local elections in Novi Pazar in 2006. They ran in the elections according to their previous coalition arrangements. "List for Sandžak," winning over half of the votes, while the "Together for Novi Pazar" („*Zajedno za Novi Pazar*") coalition (SanDP, DS, G17 Plus) won less than a quarter. No other Bosniak party managed to cross the electoral threshold, except for the Party for Sandžak, "Bosniak Coalition – Sandžak Alternative" („*Bošnjačka koalicija – Sandžačka alternativa*"), and Sandžak Democratic Union (*Sandžačka demokratska unija*)). Likewise, in the 2008 local elections, SanDP seemed to be on the offensive, winning over 50% of the Bosniak vote. On the other hand, Sandžak's SDA took about one-third, while the Democratic Party of Sandžak (*Demokratska partija Sandžaka* – DPS) and the "European Movement of Sandžak" (*Evropski pokret Sandžaka*) coalition also achieved some impact (Mijatović 2016, 294; RZS 2009). Following the 2008 election cycle, the fragmentation within the Bosniak political bloc continued. A new significant political option emerged – the Bosniak Democratic Union (*Bošnjačka demokratska zajednica – BDZ*).

This new split among Bosniak voters (with BDZ drawing more support from SDA's voter base) led to a situation in 2012 where three strong political parties each captured roughly one-third of the vote in local elections: SDA ("List for Sandžak"), the Sandžak Democratic Party (*Sandžačka demokratska partija*), and the newly formed Bosniak Democratic Union. The Democratic Party of Sandžak and the Sandžak People's Party (*Sandžačka narodna partija*) remained far behind (RZS 2012).

Fragmentation within the Bosniak political corpus also persisted in the 2016 local elections. SDA emerged as the individual winner, while SDP's results were obscured by numerous coalitions. In Novi Pazar, they made a coalition with SDPS, the Party for Sandžak, BDZ of Sandžak, and Liberal Democratic Party (*Liberalno-demokratska partija* – LDP), in Tutin with SDPS, in Prijepolje with SDPS and in Sjenica with SDPS. BDZ (despite suffering a split that led to the creation of a new party from its ranks – BDZ of Sandžak), gained 14,433 votes and 23 councilors. Far fewer votes went to the Sandžak People's Party, the Democratic Party of Sandžak, and the Bosniak People's Party (*Bošnjačka narodna stranka*). The 2016 local election results showed the most significant influence of three Bosniak parties: SDA, SanDP, and BDZ (RZS 2016).

The situation was similar in the 2020 local elections, with a near-even success among the Party of Justice and Reconciliation (*Stranka pravde i pomirenja* – SPP) (a faction of BDZ that formed the Bosniak Democratic Community and changed its name into Party of Justice and Reconciliation in 2017), SDA, and SanDP. It is possible to note that, among the Bosniak parties, SDA and SanDP held strong positions in Novi Pazar. At the same time, SDA dominated in Tutin (having been in power continuously since 1996, with just a two-month break), and both SDA and SPP were influential in Sjenica (RZS 2020).

Albanians from the south of central Serbia accepted the political framework of the Republic of Serbia after the restoration of the multiparty system, unlike Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija. The first Albanian party from the south of central Serbia was the Party for Democratic Action (*Partija za demokratsko delovanje* – PDD), established in August 1990. The second was the Democratic Party of Albanians (*Demokratska partija Albanaca* – DPA), also founded in 1990. Among the Albanians from the south of central Serbia, in the municipalities of Medveđa, Preševo, and Bujanovac, the dominant position in the 1992 local elections was gained by PDD, which ran in all three municipalities, while DPA, which ran in

two municipalities, also had a certain impact. PDD won about 80% of the vote and DPA about 20% (RZS 1993). In the 1996 local elections, PDD and DPA confirmed their earlier positions among the Albanians from the south of central Serbia. During these elections, PDD ran independently in three municipalities, DPA in two, and the newly formed Parliamentary Party of Albanians in one. This time, PDD won two-thirds of the vote, and DPA one-third (RZS 1997).

Among the Albanian parties from the south of central Serbia, PDD and the Party for Democratic Unification of Albanians (*Partija demokratskog ujedinjenja Albanaca*) (a dissident group which split from PDD) participated in the 2000 local elections. PDD also retained its dominance in these elections, by winning two-thirds of the vote, while the dissident Party for Democratic Unification of Albanians won one-third (RZIS 2001) The rioting in the south of central Serbia in late 2000 changed the local Albanian political scene. During this period, i.e., between 2000 and 2004, new parties were formed, including the Movement for Democratic Progress (*Pokret za demokratski progress* – PDP) (2001), which ran under this name as a citizens' group, while the Democratic Union of the Valley (*Demokratska unija Doline* – DUD) was established in 2003.

In the 2002 local elections, the leading position of the Party for Democratic Action was reasserted, as well as the status of the Democratic Party of Albanians and the newly formed Democratic Union of the Valley and of the Movement for Democratic Progress. Divisions within the political elite of the Albanian national minority spurred the proliferation of parties and the fragmentation of the party scene. PDD retained its dominant position among the Albanian voters, but it was also possible to detect the growth in influence of its political rivals – especially DPA and to a lesser extent Democratic Union of Albanians (*Demokratska unija Albanaca* – DUA) (Mijatović 2016, 248). In the 2008 local elections, PDD again achieved the best result among Albanian parties, winning nearly half of the Albanian vote. It was followed by DPA, PDP, DUD, DUA, and the National Democratic Movement (*Nacionalno-demokratski pokret*) (RZS 2009). Fragmentation of the Albanian parties continued, and in 2011, the Democratic Party (*Demokratska partija* – DP) split from PDD.

In the 2012 local elections, PDD was the relative winner with about one-third of the vote, followed by DPA, DP, DUA, and PDP (RZS 2012). On the eve of the 2016 election term, a new political option

emerged—Alternative for Change (*Alternativa za promene* – AZP) –which further challenged PDD's position. DPA achieved the best individual result with about one-third of the vote, while Alternative for Change and PDD each received about one-quarter. PDP, DP, and DUD received far fewer votes (RZS 2016).

In the 2017–2020 local elections, results were highly fragmented: Alternative for Change received just over 20%, PDD around 15%, and DPA and DP about 10% each. PDP, DUD, and DUA received a minimal voter support (RZS 2020). In Preševo, in the extraordinary local elections held in 2021, Alternative for Change won with 32.97% of the vote. DPA came second with 22.86%, and PDD third with 18.44%. The Reform Movement (*Pokret za reforme* – PZR) was fourth with 13.93%, followed by the SNS-led coalition with 6.69%, and the Democratic Union of Albanians with 2.41% (Dejanović 2021). Due to deep divisions between PDD and Alternative for Change, the local assembly failed to convene for nine months, leading to temporary measures and to extraordinary elections, held on June 2, 2024 — one year ahead of schedule (a similar situation also occurred in 2017, when the institutions were blocked and extraordinary local elections were held, indicating a significant instability of the local political scene).

As for other national minorities, aside from those with long-standing, indigenous representation (such as the Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina (*Demokratski savez Hrvata u Vojvodini* – DSHV) for the Croatian national minority), from a chronological perspective, instability is characteristic of other minorities, with the appearance and disappearance of certain minority options at the local level.

Thus, in the 1992 local elections, alongside Hungarian, Bosniak, and Albanian parties, the Democratic Party of Roma of Serbia and FR Yugoslavia (*Demokratska partija Roma Srbije i SR Jugoslavije* – DPRS), the Social Democratic Party of Roma of Serbia (*Socijaldemokratska partija Roma Srbije* – SPRS), the Democratic Alliance of Bulgarians in Yugoslavia (*Demokratski savez Bugara u Jugoslaviji* – DSB), and the Movement of Vlachs and Romanians of Yugoslavia (*Pokret Vlaha i Rumuna Jugoslavije* – PVRJ) also participated (RZS 1993). In the 1996 elections, participants included the "Roma" of Serbia and Yugoslavia (*„Roma" Srbije i Jugoslavije)* – Democratic Political Party the Roma Community of Yugoslavia (*Demokratska politička partija Zajednice Roma Jugoslavije*), the Bunjevac-Šokac Party (*Bunjevačko-šokačka partija*), the Democratic Alliance of Bulgarians of Yugoslavia

(*Demokratski savez Bugara Jugoslavije*), and the Democratic Alliance of Turks (*Demokratski savez Turaka*) (RZS 1997). In the 2000 local elections, only the Bunjevac-Šokac Party and the People's Party of Roma (*Narodna stranka Roma*) participated (RZIS 2001).

In the 2004 local elections, parties that participated included the Roma Social Democratic Party (*Romska socijaldemokratska partija*), Democratic Party of Roma (*Demokratska partija Roma*), Party of Roma Unity (*Partija romskog jedinstva*), Roma Congress Party (*Romska kongresna partija*), Social Democratic Party of Roma (*Socijaldemokratska partija Roma*), Slovak People's Party (*Slovačka narodna partija*), Vlach Democratic Party of Serbia (*Vlaška demokratska stranka Srbije*), Bunjevac Party (*Bunjevačka stranka*), and the Croatian Bunjevac Party (*Hrvatska bunjevačka stranka*) (RZS 2005).

Participating in the 2008 local elections were also the New Democratic Party of Roma of Serbia (*Nova demokratska stranka Roma Srbije*), the Roma Party (*Romska partija*), the Roma Union of Serbia (*Unija Roma Srbije*), the Roma Renewal Movement (*Romski pokret obnove*), the Roma Unification Party (*Romska partija ujedinjenja*), the United Roma Party (*Ujedinjena partija Roma*), Alliance of the Vojvodina Romanians (*Alijansa vojvođanskih Rumuna*), Democratic Movement of Bulgarians (*Demokratski pokret Bugara*), Party of Bulgarians of Serbia (*Partija Bugara Srbije*), the Vlach Democratic Party (*Vlaška demokratska stranka*), the Vlach Democratic Party of Serbia, the Slovak People's Party, the Slovak Party, Democratic Party of Macedonians (*Demokratska partija Makedonaca*), Bunjevac Party of Vojvodina (*Bunjevačka stranka Vojvodine*), Montenegrin Party (*Crnogorska partija*), and Democratic Community of Croats (RZS 2009).

In the 2012 local elections, participating parties included the Roma Democratic Party (*Romska demokratska stranka*), Roma Party, United Roma Party, Democratic League of Roma (*Demokratska liga Roma*), Roma Unity Party (*Romska stranka Jedinstvo*), Roma Movement of Doljevac (*Romski pokret Doljevac*), Bunjevac Party, Vlach Democratic Party, Vlach Democratic Party of Serbia, Vlachs of Ćuprija (*Vlasi Ćuprije*), "None of the Above" (*Nijedan od ponuđenih odgovora*), Party of Vojvodina Slovaks (*Stranka vojvođanskih Slovaka*), Slovak Party, Alliance of Vojvodina Romanians, Rusyn Democratic Party (*Rusinska demokratska stranka*), Democratic Alliance of Bulgarians (*Demokratski savez Bugara*), Alliance of Bačka Bunjevci (*Savez bačkih Bunjevaca*), and Montenegrin Party (RZS 2012).

In the 2016, participants in the local elections also included: Democratic Union of Roma (*Demokratska unija Roma*), United Roma Party, Roma Union of Serbia, Roma Unity Party, Roma Party, Russian Party (*Ruska stranka*), Russian Democratic Party (*Ruska demokratska stranka*), Party of Russians of Serbia (*Stranka Rusa Srbije*), Serbian-Russian Movement (*Srpsko-ruski pokret*), United Russian Party (*Jedinstvena ruska stranka*), Democratic Party of Bulgarians (*Demokratska partija Bugara*), Democratic Party of Bulgarians (*Demokratska stranka Bugara*), Rusyn Democratic Party, Vlach Party (*Vlaška stranka*), Vlach Democratic Party, "None of the Above," Alliance of Bačka Bunjevci, Bunjevci Party (*Stranka Bunjevci*), Citizens of Serbia (*Građani Srbije*), Democratic Community of Croats, Alliance of Bačka Bunjevci, Slovaks Forward! (*Slovaci napred!*), Party of Vojvodina Slovaks, Slovak Party, Democratic Movement of Romanians in Serbia (*Demokratski pokret Rumuna Srbije*), Montenegrin Party, and Democratic Party of Macedonians (RZS 2016).

The following parties ran in the 2020 local elections: Democratic Union of Roma, United Roma Party, Roma Unity Party, Russian Party, Party of Russians in Serbia, Serbian-Russian Party "Wolves" (*Srpsko-ruska partija Vukovi*), United Russian Party, European Green Party (*Evropska zelena partija*) (representing the Russian minority), Democratic Party of Bulgarians (*Demokratska partija Bugara*), Vlach Party, Vlach Party (Bridge) (*Vlaška stranka* [*Most*]), Truth – Adaviera (*Istina – Adaviera*), Vlach People's Party (*Vlaška narodna stranka*), Slovaks Forward!, Green Party of Serbia (*Zelena stranka Srbije*) (representing the Slovak minority), Republican Party (*Republikanska partija*) (representing the Hungarian minority), Democratic Party of Macedonians, Bunjevci – Citizens of Serbia (*Bunjevci – građani Srbije*), and the Montenegrin Party (RZS 2020).

All these data clearly indicate a continuous increase in the number of national minority parties participating in local elections in the Republic of Serbia. Accordingly, the number of their representatives in local parliaments has also grown.

PARTICIPATION AND RESULTS OF NATIONAL MINORITY PARTIES IN THE MOST RECENT LOCAL ELECTION CYCLE OF 2023 AND 2024

In the most recent local elections in the Republic of Serbia, held on December 17, 2023, and June 2, 2024, national minority parties participated in a total of 60 local self-governments (9 out of 66 in December 2023 and 51 out of 89 in June 2024) (RZS 2024). As expected, the most prominent were the participation of the largest national minorities – Hungarians, Bosniaks, and Albanians. There was a clear continuation of the trend of Hungarians' political unity around the SVM, and a more or less pronounced fragmentation among the Bosniak and Albanian political actors (Lončar 2020, 864).

The context of these elections among the Hungarian parties clearly favored the SVM. In addition to strategically strong bilateral relations between Serbia and Hungary, SVM's position within its strategic partnership with the SNS was unchallenged. Separate campaigns in predominantly Hungarian areas showed SVM's willingness to cooperate in broad coalitions with SNS and other Hungarian options (DSVM, SMJ). SVM's opposition was embodied in DZVM, which ran either independently or as part of the "I Choose to Fight" („*Biram borbu*") coalition (*Narodni pokret Srbije* – NPS). Among other issues, DZVM criticized SVM of forming an "unprincipled coalition with Šešelj", referring to SVM's participation in the Belgrade city elections in a coalition around SNS that included the Serbian Radical Party (*Srpska radikalna stranka* – SRS) (*Beta* 2024a).

However, Bosniak parties remained divided. SanDP (through strategic cooperation with SDPS and SNS) and SPP were in a coalition arrangement with SNS at the national level. Yet, this did not positively impact on local rivalries, especially in Novi Pazar. At the national level, however, the SDA ran openly as an opposition party and officially supported the ProGlas document for improving electoral conditions in Serbia, signed in March 2024 by the still-active "Serbia Against Violence" (*„Srbija protiv nasilja"*) coalition and the NADA coalition (*Beta* 2024c).

The fractures in local governments preceding the elections – such as in Tutin (Novosel 2024) – along with independent party campaigns, along with a large number of local citizens' groups linked to the parties'

dissident circles, created a rather confusing pre-election atmosphere in the Raška/Sandžak region.

However, the most complex pre-election situation was that among the Albanians in the south of central Serbia, characterized by a high degree of party fragmentation and internal conflicts (Popović 2024). Elections were held in Medveđa in December 2023, regular elections in Bujanovac in June, and early elections in Preševo (due to temporary measures introduced in April 2024). The campaign revealed extremely tense political relations. The Albanian political bloc was internally divided and in conflict with local Serbian parties, which had been excluded from the majority Albanian local assemblies in Preševo and Bujanovac by the "All-Albanian Agreement" back in 2020. This was in response to Serbian parties forming the local government in Medveđa in 2019 without Albanian participation—breaking a two-decade tradition of joint executive government in the three southern municipalities (Lazić 2021). Other minorities' parties were far less represented in the elections and dispersed across Serbia.

In December 2023, elections were held in three municipalities in the Raška Region/Sandžak – Novi Pazar, Priboj, and Prijepolje – with Bosniak parties participating (SanDP, SPP, SDA in all three towns/municipalities, and Bosniak Civic Alliance [*Bošnjački građanski savez* – BGS] and GPS in one). In southern and southeastern Serbia, the Democratic Party of Bulgarians (*Demokratska partija Bugara*) ran in two municipalities (Dimitrovgrad), and the Democratic Party of Macedonians in Vranje and Vranjska Banja (Matić i Mijatović 2024a, 202).

Among the Bosniak minority parties in December 2023, SanDP won 20 seats, SPP 19, SDA 12, DPS and Bosniak-Serb Alliance (*Bošnjačko-srpski savez* – BOSS) 3 seats each. In Novi Pazar, the new-old coalition of SanDP–SDPS and SNS–Socialist Party of Serbia (*Socijalistička partija Srbije* – SPS)–SRS formed the government (Bakračević 2024).

Also, in this election cycle, the Democratic Party of Bulgarians (*Demokratska partija Bugara*) won 3 seats, while the Albanian Democratic Party won 2. Among other national minority parties, the Montenegrin Party, in coalition with the movement "Boris Kovačević Forest – My World Kragujevac! Šumadija Bloc 21" („*Boris Kovačević Šuma – Moj svet Kragujevac! Šumadijski blok 21*") won one seat (Matić i Mijatović 2024a, 202–204).

In the June 2024 election cycle, among the national minorities' parties, out of all Hungarian parties, SVM ran in the most municipalities (23), followed by DZVM (11), and DSVM and SMJ (2 each). Among Bosniak parties, SPP ran in six towns and municipalities, BGS in four, BOSS and SDA in two each, and SanDP in one. Among the Albanian parties, PDD, DUA, and AZP ran in two municipalities. In contrast, PDP, PZR, DPA, DP, and Alternative for the Valley (*Alternativa za Dolinu* – AZD) ran in one local self-government each (RZS 2024).

According to Matić and Mijatović, "among other national minorities: Croatian Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina (DSHV) ran in two municipalities and DZH in one. The Russian Party ran in 15 municipalities, while the Russian minority's European Green Party ran in 12, and BUNT–True Serbia in two. Among the Roma parties: DUR ran in six municipalities, URS in two, and the Roma Unity Party in one. The Vlach People's Party, Vlach Party, and Vlach Party – Truth/ Adaviera each ran in one municipality. The Slovak Green Party of Serbia ran in seven municipalities, and the Slovak Democratic League in two. The Montenegrin Party – SCG ran in four municipalities, and the Montenegrin Party ran in one municipality. The Civic Party of Greeks in Serbia ran in six municipalities and the Yugoslav Party in one" (Matić i Mijatović 2024b, 210).

The results showed that among the Hungarian parties, SVM won 156 seats, DZVM 2, and DSVM 1. Among the Bosniak parties, SDA won 25, SPP 17, and SanDP 10 seats. Among the Albanian parties: PDD won 16, AZP 11, DPA 8, PDP 8, DUA 6, DP 6, PZR 6, and Alliance for the Valley 3 seats. The other national minorities' score was as follows: the Russian Party won 13 seats, the Russian European Green Party (EGP) 5, Croatian DSHV 5, DZH 1. The Montenegrin Party won 1 seat, the Slovak Democratic League also 1, etc (Matić i Mijatović 2024b, 213).

Among the national minorities overall, the situation was the clearest for the Hungarians, with SVM as the sovereign winner. Its participation in government at all levels alongside SNS was confirmed by the Coalition Agreement for joint programmatic action and participation of SVM in the Government of the Republic of Serbia, signed on September 13, 2024, by the presidents of SNS and SVM (Srpska napredna stranka i Savez vojvođanskih Mađara 2024).

This dominance is not so clear-cut in the case of Bosniak parties, as Raška/Sandžak has three relatively strong options—SanDP, SDA, and SPP—as re-confirmed in this election cycle. In Novi Pazar, SanDP

was victorious and formed the local government with the SNS–SPS coalition; in Tutin, it was the SDA (*Radio Televizija Novi Pazar* 2024a); and in Sjenica, SPP, SNS, SPS, New Democratic Party of Serbia (*Nova demokratska stranka Srbije* – NDSS), and Group of citizens (GC) "No Discrimination" (*Grupa građana „Bez diskriminacije"*) formed the local government (*Radio Televizija Novi Pazar* 2024b).

The highly fragmented Albanian party landscape in the south of central Serbia led to a reversal in Bujanovac— the former ruling PDD and DP lost, while the hitherto opposition coalition Front for Change (AZP and DUA) and PDP won (*Bujanovačke* 2024). On the other hand, in Preševo, the previously ruling Alternative for Change also lost, while PDD achieved the best result. Furthermore, the initial post-election reactions confirmed the apparent affinity of the provisional self-government institutions in Priština (represented by the Self-Determination Party [*Stranka samoopredeljenje*]) for the Albanian political leaders in the south of central Serbia—especially those from the ranks of PDD (*Beta* 2024b). In Bujanovac, a multiethnic government was formed by the Front for Change led by Arben Pajaziti, SNS, the Bosniak-Roma SPP, Citizens' Group Dejan Stojanović, and the opposition NPS councilor Saša Arsić, who was expelled from his party for this decision (Canić Milanović 2024). In Preševo, the government was formed by PDD–DPA–DUA (Stevanović 2024).

CONCLUSION

Through its electoral legislation, the Republic of Serbia has fully provided the conditions for the participation of national minorities in elections at all levels of government. Minority parties – especially Hungarian, Bosniak, and Albanian – have actively participated in national, provincial, and local elections. This was also the case in the most recent local election cycle, which, for the first time since the restoration of the multiparty democracy, was held in two parts – on December 17, 2023, and June 2, 2024. The main conclusion from this election cycle, aside from the high level of participation, is also the fact that some national minorities rallied around a single political option (Hungarians), some around three (Bosniaks), and others around several of them (Albanians).

Regarding other national minorities and their participation in elections, there were no greater impacts as they generally ran in a

small number of local governments. However, heightened pre-election tensions, local elections in major cities, and anticipated close results in certain areas brought to light the emergence of the so-called "phantom lists." These often bore names similar to opposition lists and were formally backed by citizens' groups or formal minority parties. For example, the Russian European Green Party ran in Surčin, Grocka, and Lazarevac under the uniform name "I am Surčin/Grocka/Lazarevac, You are Surčin/Grocka/Lazarevac – Start the Change" (*„Ja sam Surčin/Grocka/Lazarevac, Ti si Surčin/Grocka/Lazarevac – Pokreni promene"*), which closely resembled the opposition list "Start the Change" (*„Kreni promeni"*). A similar case involved the Green Party of Serbia, formally a party of the Slovak national minority, which ran in the Belgrade municipalities of Vračar and Savski Venac.

However, the most controversy was stirred by the Russian Party's participation in about ten local self-governments, where it won a number of mandates. Due to its close ties with SNS, specifically in Niš and New Belgrade, its votes were decisive and drew criticism—both for being seen as an extension of the ruling party and for its formal basis, given that, according to the 2022 Census, Russians make only 0.16% of Serbia's population and in major cities, like Belgrade and Niš, the party won 1–2% of the votes (RZS 2023). This raised suspicions about the nature of the list and whether it was a "phantom" list created to benefit the ruling party by siphoning votes from other political actors. The liberalization of election conditions definitely led to widespread political organizing among minority parties in Serbia's political system. The candidates on minority lists were often members of the majority population, which raised issues regarding the integrity of minority representation in the Republic of Serbia.

These ambiguities reopened the issue of sufficient regulation of minority representation established by the 2020 electoral reforms, in terms of the criteria for the recognition of a national minority party status, to prevent potential abuses. There is a need to re-examine the creation of certain minority parties, given that they now account for more than half of all registered parties in the Republic of Serbia.

Findings show that electoral reforms in minority representation have aimed to ensure a more balanced representation of minority communities in the local representative bodies. This especially applies to parties representing minorities that are not territorially concentrated. Many of these changes were driven by the process of European integration and became more pronounced after 2000.

It is also evident that positive developments in minority representation have affected on the participation of minority parties in coalitions at both national and local levels. This is particularly true for the Hungarian minority, and, to a lesser extent, for the Bosniak minority. This dynamic is also influenced by other contextual factors, such as Serbia's relations with the home countries of certain minorities and their involvement in government formation at all levels of the political system hierarchy.

Regarding possible future research on minority representation at the local level in Serbia, there is room for deeper quantitative and qualitative analyses of the direct and indirect factors that influence this process. Some research should also focus on identifying which parties genuinely represent national minorities and what reforms are needed to ensure adequate minority representation.

In both domestic and broader academic literature, few studies research minorities' participation in elections at the lowest level of government. This opens space for broader insights and incoming analysis into this area of the political system. The issue of minority representation is especially important in post-conflict societies like Serbia, and the local level of government provides fertile ground for their inclusion in active political life.

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НАЦИОНАЛНЕ МАЊИНЕ НА ЛОКАЛНИМ ИЗБОРИМА У СРБИЈИ – ИСТОРИЈАТ, РЕЗУЛТАТИ И ПОСЛЕДИЦЕ[***]

Резиме

Овим радом анализирамо учешће националних мањина на локалним изборима у Републици Србији, са посебним акцентом на оним последњим, одржаним 17. децембра 2023. и 2. јуна 2024. године. У првом плану биле су странке најбројнијих националних мањина у Србији – Мађара, Бошњака и Албанаца, а збирно и странке осталих националних мањина. Активно учешће мањинских партија на изборима, као и фаворизовање националних мањина у изборном законодавству Србије створило је погодне основе за њихово представљање у локалним парламентима и улазак у власт у локалним срединама где чине већину. Као део коалиционих аранжмана са странкама већинског народа оне учествују у власти и у другим срединама. То је, коначно, до чињенице да странке националних мањина узимају учешћа у власти у неколико десетина општина и градова широм Републике Србије. Настављајући тренд претходних изборних циклуса странке националних мањина узеле су активног учешћа у локалним изборима 2023 и 2024. године. На њима су наступале у складу са својим програмским афилијацијама – у сарадњи са странкама власти или опозиције, или пак неутрално, комбинујући самосталне и коалиционе наступе. Након одржаних избора мањинске странке, као и након ранијих избора, ушле су у локалне извршне власти. Позитивна дискриминација је довела до

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адекватног представљања националних мањина на локалном нивоу у Србији. Њихови представници учествују у владајућим коалицијама на свим нивоима власти, од централног, преко покрајинског до локалног.

Кључне речи: Република Србија, локални избори, националне мањине, политичке странке, мањинско представљање

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LIMITATIONS OF THE PLURALITY SYSTEM IN THE ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA: POLITICAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

Abstract

This paper analyzes the political, institutional, and social consequences of applying the plurality (first-past-the-post) electoral system for the election of the President of the Republic of Srpska. The goal is to assess how well this electoral model meets the democratic needs of an ethnically divided, post-conflict society and to propose recommendations for potential reform to strengthen democratic legitimacy and political stability. The analysis relies on a comparative case study of presidential elections in the Republic of Srpska, drawing on theoretical literature on electoral systems in divided societies. The findings show that the plurality system undermines the legitimacy of the elected president, fuels political polarization, ethnic mobilization, and personalized leadership, while reducing incentives for political compromise. As alternatives, the paper considers a two-round majority system and preferential voting, which could encourage more moderate political discourse and broader social support. It concludes that changing the electoral model could enhance both legitimacy and political stability in the Republic of Srpska.

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Keywords: The Republic of Srpska, elections, president of the Republic of Srpska, political stability, electoral reform

INTRODUCTION

The President of the Republic of Srpska (RS), as a directly elected entity leader, symbolizes its political identity and plays a crucial role in the political dynamics within Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), which is shaped by the complex constitutional arrangements of the Dayton Agreement and deep ethnic divisions (Bieber 2006; Belloni 2007; Keil 2013; Vukojević 2017a). Despite this importance, the first-past-the-post (plurality) system used to elect the RS president has rarely been the subject of systematic scholarly analysis, even though it carries significant consequences for legitimacy, political competition, and the broader political dynamics in both the RS and BiH.

The plurality system allows a candidate to win with the highest number of votes without crossing the 50% threshold. This feature can result in the election of a president with minority support in the electorate, thereby diminishing the perception of democratic legitimacy (Shugart and Taagepera 1994). In an ethnically fragmented, post-conflict society where parties often mobilize along ethnic lines (Horowitz 1985), such a system may exacerbate polarization, limit inclusiveness, and reduce incentives for inter-party cooperation and compromise. This raises the question of how well the plurality system aligns with the democratic needs and specific context of the RS and BiH.

Previous research on elections in BiH has primarily focused on parliamentary contests and the complex institutional design intended to preserve peace and balance among constituent peoples (Manning 2004; Kapidžić 2017; Vukojević 2016, 2022). Presidential elections in the RS have received less scholarly attention, despite the direct election of the executive having significant symbolic and political impacts on entity and state-level stability. This paper seeks to fill that gap by analyzing the limitations and consequences of the plurality system in this specific context.

The main aim of the paper is to identify and explain the political, institutional, and social consequences of using the plurality system to elect the president of the RS. It specifically addresses the following research question: What are the political, institutional, and social consequences

of the plurality system in electing the president of the RS, and how might changing the electoral model strengthen democratic legitimacy and political stability? The paper employs a comparative case study of presidential elections in the RS using the plurality system. Drawing on theoretical literature on electoral systems in divided societies, it analyzes the effects of plurality voting and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of alternative models of direct presidential election.

Based on the constitutional and legal framework regulating the position and election of the RS president, empirical data on past presidential election results in the RS, and comparative analysis of alternative electoral models, this paper offers a comprehensive and reasoned basis for evaluating the adequacy of the existing system and considering possible reforms. The structure of the paper is organized as follows. After the introduction, the second section presents the theoretical framework and relevant literature on the consequences of presidential elections under a plurality system, with a particular focus on its application in divided societies. The third section explains the institutional context of the president's position and the election process. The fourth section explores in detail the political, institutional, and social limitations of the plurality system in the RS. The fifth section offers comparative insights and considers alternative models for electing the RS president, while the sixth section provides concluding reflections and recommendations for possible electoral reform.

SYSTEM OF PLURALITY: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Electoral systems are the foundation of any democracy's political architecture. They shape patterns of political competition, structure party systems, and influence the very nature of political representation (Norris 2004). Classical comparative literature distinguishes among majoritarian, proportional, and mixed systems, with majoritarian systems – including plurality (first-past-the-post) – emphasizing simplicity, stability, and clarity of electoral outcomes. This model allows a candidate to win with the most votes without needing an absolute majority, often prioritizing efficiency over inclusiveness (Lijphart 1999).

While the plurality system is seen as effective in producing stable, accountable governments in stable two-party democracies such as the United Kingdom, its weaknesses become apparent in societies marked by

deep ethnic divisions and post-conflict instability. Such contexts demand electoral mechanisms that do more than simply translate votes into seats – they must actively encourage interethnic cooperation and prevent exclusive mobilization along ethnic lines (Horowitz 1985; Lijphart 2004; Reilly 2001).

The theoretical literature on elections in divided societies identifies two contrasting approaches. The consociational model, developed by Lijphart (1977, 2002), institutionalizes power sharing through principles of proportionality, joint decision-making, and segmental autonomy, ensuring representation of all significant groups. This approach recognizes and channels conflict institutionally, reducing the likelihood of violent confrontation. In contrast, the centripetal approach advocated by Horowitz (1985) and Reilly (2001) focuses on electoral system design that encourages political actors to compete for votes beyond their ethnic bases. Examples include two-round majority systems or preferential voting, where candidates must attract broader support to secure victory, creating incentives for moderation and compromise.

Empirical studies on the effects of plurality systems show that their impact depends heavily on context. In stable democracies without deep ethnic divisions, such systems can facilitate the formation of stable governments and apparent oppositions. However, the plurality system can produce exclusive outcomes and intensify identity-based mobilization in plural and fragmented societies. The classic Duvergerian hypothesis on the tendency toward a two-party system via psychological and mechanical effects of elections is well demonstrated in countries like the United Kingdom and the United States (Norris 2004). Yet, it does not automatically lead to moderation, primarily when voter preferences are structured along ethnic lines (Horowitz 1985).

Additionally, theoretical literature suggests that plurality systems often reward candidates with strong personal profiles who can dominate the campaign and political arena. This focus on the "strongest personality" can foster personalized forms of leadership, where success depends on charisma and control of resources rather than a willingness to compromise or build broad coalitions (Rhodes-Purdy and Madrid 2020; Frantz *et al.* 2021). In post-conflict societies, this further complicates the consolidation of fragile democratic institutions, as political competition becomes personal and polarized.

Electing a president via a plurality system can have several negative consequences for the political system and society. First, the

president may be elected with a relatively small share of the total vote, lacking broad voter support and thus democratic legitimacy in the eyes of the public, which can undermine respect for human rights and democratic norms (Shugart and Taagepera 1994). Such a system also often encourages polarization and a "winner-takes-all" dynamic, increasing political tensions and reducing the scope for compromise, particularly in societies with deep divisions.

Moreover, plurality elections can destabilize the party system by complicating the formation of stable governments and predictable coalitions, as the president often lacks parliamentary majority support (Horowitz 2008; Bértoa and Weber 2024). In elections with many candidates, the winner can be elected with well below 50% of the vote, further reducing representativeness (Cheibub, Limongi, and Przeworski 2023). This system can also fragment the political space and increase the influence of extremist candidates, since no majority support is needed to win (Horowitz 2008). All these consequences suggest that electing a president via a simple plurality system can weaken democratic institutions and undermine political stability.

In the context of BiH and the election of the RS president, empirical data show that winners have often secured mandates with relative majorities below 50%, sometimes even below 40%, leaving a majority of the electorate without identification with the elected president (Vukojević 2024). Instead of fostering coalition-building or integrative rhetoric, political competition in the RS tends to follow ethnic and party lines, with an emphasis on mobilizing "safe" voter bases and provoking antagonisms.

This empirical picture points to several key consequences: the plurality system reduces incentives for inter-party cooperation and consensus-building, favors large parties, and enables the victory of candidates representing only a limited segment of society, further diminishing the president's representativeness and democratic legitimacy. In the divided and post-conflict context of BiH, this entrenches ethnic cleavages, limits the possibilities for inclusive governance, and undermines the long-term perception of democratic legitimacy. These weaknesses are recognized in comparative studies that warn simple majoritarian models rarely succeed in complex societies without additional corrective mechanisms (Reilly 2001; McGarry and O'Leary 2004; Reynolds 2005).

POLITICAL CONTEXT AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA

The Republic of Srpska is one of two entities in BiH, created by the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. The Dayton constitutional framework established a complex, multilayered state structure that combines centralized and decentralized elements to preserve peace and ensure reconciliation among constituent peoples (Bose 2002; Bieber 2006). Within this framework, the RS enjoys a high degree of autonomy, including its own constitution, legislative and executive branches, and a specific electoral system for electing the entity's president.

The political role of the RS president is significant and can vary from almost ceremonial to highly influential, depending on the political context and the balance of power in the National Assembly. The constitution stipulates that the president represents the entity, nominates the prime minister-designate, has the power to dissolve the National Assembly after consultations, proposes laws and general acts, and can initiate the dismissal of the prime minister on the proposal of at least 20 deputies even without the prime minister's resignation (Constitution of the Republic of Srpska, Arts. 80–85). This demonstrates that, although the RS is not a classic presidential system, it contains strong presidential elements in which the president can play a key political role. The real power of the president often depends on parliamentary majorities in both the executive and legislative branches, meaning the role can range from "super-presidential" to nearly ceremonial (Vukojević 2019, 2024).

The election for the RS president is held on the same day as the general elections in BiH. The president is elected via a simple or plurality system (first-past-the-post), while the RS National Assembly is elected using proportional party-list representation. This combination of two different electoral formulas reflects an attempt to balance executive stability with legislative proportionality. However, such a hybrid system has important implications for political dynamics and the quality of political representation.

Until 2002, elections were held every two years, after which constitutional changes extended the presidential term to four years. The plurality system for presidential elections has been used continuously since the first post-war elections, except in 2000, when an absolute majority system – alternative vote – was applied. The return to the plurality system reaffirmed the simplest model: the winner is the

candidate with the most votes, without needing an absolute majority of 50% + 1 vote. This allows candidates with relatively narrow support bases to win, which is particularly problematic in ethnically fragmented societies.

The 2002 constitutional amendments further defined the election of the president and two vice-presidents of the Republic of Srpska, who together must represent the three constituent peoples. According to the RS Constitution, the president and vice-presidents are elected from a single list of candidates, with the presidency going to the candidate with the most votes and the vice-presidencies assigned to the next highest-polling candidates from the other two constituent peoples (Constitution of the Republic of Srpska, Art. 83). While this provision aims to address ethnic representation symbolically, it does not change the fundamental logic of electing the president by plurality, which still favors the majority group and does not require broader support.

Nevertheless, the system has practical advantages. Plurality voting allows for straightforward ballots and rapid counting of results. The RS voters often know the new president's identity within hours of polls closing. Such efficiency and transparency are valuable democratic qualities, but do not eliminate the fundamental weakness of the model, which permits the election of a president without majority support and without incentives for broader political inclusion.

This institutional design is not explicitly adapted to the specific needs of a divided, post-conflict society. Although the RS Constitution introduces a symbolic element of ethnic representation by electing vice-presidents from other constituent peoples, the election of the president by plurality remains the central weakness, reproducing the dominance of the majority narrative and limiting opportunities for interethnic cooperation and compromise.

DRAWBACKS OF ELECTING THE PRESIDENT BY PLURALITY

The plurality system is globally well-known and widely used for parliamentary elections, but it is much less popular for direct presidential elections. Globally, there was a significant shift in preferences for presidential electoral models during the 1990s. In the 1950s, only about 6% of countries with directly elected presidents used an absolute majority system, but that number rose to over 60% by the 1990s. This

trend was especially pronounced among new democracies in Eastern Europe and Africa, where the goal was to ensure broader popular support for elected presidents and thus strengthen the legitimacy of democratic institutions (Golder 2005).

Empirical analysis in the late 1990s and early 2000s shows that among 91 countries with directly elected presidents, only 20 used a plurality system, while as many as 61 employed an absolute majority system (Blais, Massicotte, and Dobrzynska 1997). Particularly among democratic states – 32 with direct presidential elections – only 6 used a plurality system, while 19 used an absolute majority system (Blais and Massicotte 2002). These data indicate a global preference for models that secure broader legitimacy for elected presidents and promote political consensus-building.

When this global context is compared with elections in the RS, it becomes clear that the system belongs to a less common and less popular group of models. The biggest problem with electing the president by simple plurality is that it allows a candidate to wia majority of voter support, undermining perceptions of democratic legitimacy. This is especially problematic in post-conflict societies where political and ethnic divisions are already deep, and where the legitimacy of elected leaders is crucial for maintaining stability.

Across the Balkans and in states that emerged from the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, the use of absolute majority systems in presidential elections is widespread. Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia all use models that require majority support to ensure the president has broad popular legitimacy. In this sense, BiH departs from the regional pattern by maintaining the simple plurality model in the RS. This leaves the RS as an outlier in a region that, following the democratic transitions of the 1990s, adopted electoral rules designed to strengthen executive legitimacy.

This difference has important political consequences. In the RS, the plurality system allows a candidate to win with a narrowly defined partisan or ethnic base without needing to appeal broadly across society. This reduces incentives for political compromise and moderation in rhetoric and strategy, further entrenching ethnic and partisan divisions. Additionally, this system creates incentives for a personalized style of politics that emphasizes individual leadership and power, often at the expense of institutionalized party structures and democratic accountability (Rhodes-Purdy and Madrid 2020; Frantz *et al.* 2021).

A candidate who can cultivate the image of the strongest personality can capitalize on opposition fragmentation and win power without broad support, creating space for authoritarian leadership patterns and the erosion of democratic norms. In the RS political practice, these patterns of personalized leadership are most evident in the rise and long-term dominance of Milorad Dodik and the SNSD. Dodik has built his political brand on a strong personal profile and a rhetoric emphasizing determination, confrontation, and the protection of Serb ethnic interests, often marginalizing the need for broader consensus or compromise. His election campaigns have relied on personalized mobilization of the party base, while control of public resources has enabled clientelist networks that further consolidate personal political power (Bieber 2020).

The plurality system facilitates this strategy because it does not require majority support – only the consolidation of a loyal base, eliminating the need for programmatic convergence or coalition-building with rival blocs. Such a pattern of personalized leadership reduces political pluralism and weakens institutions' capacity to provide checks and balances on executive power, creating conditions for the centralization of power in the hands of a single political leader.

A review of presidential election results from 1996 to 2022 shows that only three times has a candidate won with an absolute majority: Biljana Plavšić in 1996 (59.2%), Mirko Šarović in 2000 (50.1%), and Milorad Dodik in 2010 (50.52%). In all other election cycles, winners secured between 35% and 48% of the vote. Particularly striking is the 2002 election, when Dragan Čavić became president with only 35.9% of the vote, while the remainder was fragmented among multiple candidates.

Table 1. Elections for the President of the Republic of Srpska

1996	SDS	Biljana Plavšić	636654 (59.2%)
	SDA	Abid Đozić	197389 (18.3%)
	NSzSM	Živko Radišić	168024 (15.6%)
	Other candidates		6.9%
1998	SRS-SDS	Nikola Poplašen	322684 (43.9%)
	Koalicija „Sloga“	Biljana Plavšić	286606 (39.0%)
	Bosanska stranka	Zulfo Nišić	107036 (14.6%)
	Other candidates		2.6%

2000	SDS	Mirko Šarović	313607 (50.1%)
	SNSD	Milorad Dodik	162154 (25.9%)
	PDP	Momčilo Tepić	54433 (8.7%)
	Other candidates		15.8%
2002	SDS	Dragan Čavić	183121 (35.9%)
	SNSD	Milan Jelić	112612 (22.1%)
	PDP	Dragan Mikerević	39978 (7.8%)
	SDA	Adil Osmanović	34123 (6.7%)
	Other candidates		27.1%
2006	SNSD	Milan Jelić	271022 (48.87%)
	SDS	Dragan Čavić	163041 (29.40%)
	SDA	Adil Osmanović	22444 (4.05%)
	Other candidates		17.7%
2007	SNSD	Rajko Kuzmanović	169863 (41.3%)
	SDS	Ognjen Tadić	142898 (34.8%)
	PDP	Mladen Ivanić	69522 (16.9%)
	Other candidates		7%
2010	SNSD-DNS-SP	Milorad Dodik	319618 (50.52%)
	Koalicija zajedno za Srpsku	Ognjen Tadić	227239 (35.92%)
	SDP	Enes Suljkanović	15425 (2.44%)
	Other candidates		11.12%
2014	SNSD-DNS-SP	Milorad Dodik	303496 (45.39%)
	Savez za promjene	Ognjen Tadić	296021 (44.28%)
	Domovina	Ramiz Salkić	24294 (3.6%)
	Other candidates		6.68%
2018	SNSD	Željka Cvijanović	319699 (47.04%)
	Savez za pobjedu	Vukota Govedarica	284195 (41.82%)
	Zajedno za BiH	Ramiz Salkić	21292 (3.13%)
	Other candidates		8.01%
2022	SNSD	Milorad Dodik	300180 (47.06%)
	PDP	Jelena Trivić	273245 (42.84%)
	Independent candidate	Ćamil Duraković	13760 (2.16%)
	Other candidates		7.96%

Source: Institute of Statistics 2015, 39–58; CIK BiH n.d.

These data show that the plurality system in the RS has almost always resulted in the election of a president without an absolute majority. This pattern confirms Duverger's hypothesis about the tendency of simple plurality systems to produce two-party or two-bloc competition (Duverger 1954). In the RS, this manifests in a clear polarization between two blocs – parties allied with SNSD on one side and SDS and its opposition partners on the other (Vukojević 2017b, 2023). Such bipolar competition has a strong polarizing effect because the elected president typically represents only their own coalition or party base, leaving a large portion of the electorate excluded from the legitimization process.

During politically turbulent periods, tight races between two candidates can further intensify polarization and deepen divisions between party blocs. Examples include the presidential elections of 1998, 2014, and 2022.

The 1998 election saw Nikola Poplašen of the SRS-SDS coalition defeat Biljana Plavšić of the Sloga coalition (SNS-SP-SNSD) by around 5% – even though Sloga held a parliamentary majority. The political divide at that time was evident in their approaches to cooperation with the international community over Dayton implementation, with Sloga seen as the international community's preferred partner. The divide escalated when Poplašen repeatedly attempted to nominate a prime minister from outside the parliamentary majority, leading to an institutional crisis that was resolved only after the High Representative removed him from office. This crisis deepened the two-bloc polarization, prompting the international community to change the electoral system for the 2000 elections to the alternative vote system. The aim was to allow voters to rank candidates, enabling Bosniak and Croat second preferences to go to Biljana Plavšić, who could then have secured a majority and won.

The 2014 election occurred amid declining support for the ruling SNSD. Nonetheless, Milorad Dodik, representing the SNSD-DNS-SP coalition, narrowly defeated opposition candidate Ognjen Tadić of the Alliance for Change (SDS-PDP-NDP) by roughly 1% or around 7,000 votes. At the same time, in the election for the Serb member of the BiH Presidency, opposition candidate Mladen Ivanić narrowly defeated ruling coalition candidate Željka Cvijanović by fewer than 7,000 votes (Central Election Commission BiH [CIK BiH] 2014). These different outcomes at two levels of government can be explained by the candidates' appeal to different ethnic groups in the RS. For the Presidency, which elects only a Serb representative from the RS, Ivanić won partly thanks to strategic

support from Bosniak voters, who viewed him as more moderate. In the RS presidential election, however, Bosniaks had their own candidates for vice-presidency, and their votes did not transfer to Tadić, enabling Dodik's narrow victory. As a result, the SNSD-led coalition retained power in the RS, while the opposition formed a coalition government with Bosniak and Croat parties at the state level. The entire mandate was marked by mutual accusations and deepened polarization between the two blocs.

A particularly illustrative case confirming the structural weaknesses of the plurality system is the 2022 presidential election. In 2022, Milorad Dodik defeated Jelena Trivić of the PDP with 47.06% to 42.84% of the vote, while the remaining roughly 10% went to minor candidates and independents. The result was extremely close, with a margin of fewer than 30,000 votes out of more than 600,000 valid ballots. Immediately after the preliminary results were announced, the opposition accused the ruling party of electoral fraud, sparking days of protests in Banja Luka and other cities. The BiH Central Election Commission ordered a recount (Reuters 2022). Although the authorities ultimately confirmed Dodik's victory, the controversy further undermined perceptions of legitimacy and deepened the political polarization between the two major blocs. This case illustrates a typical weakness of the plurality system in a fragmented political and ethnic context: there is no institutional mechanism forcing candidates to seek a broad consensus or an absolute majority. Instead, victory is achievable through disciplined mobilization of one's own base. This dynamic favors the personalization of power and creates conditions for the centralization of political control in a single leader's hands, with long-term implications for the functionality of fragile institutions in the RS.

COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS AND POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE MODELS FOR ELECTING THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA

The question of electoral system design for the RS presidency is not merely a technical matter but a profoundly political and normative one that concerns democratic legitimacy, political stability, and social cohesion. To understand potential solutions, it is useful to examine how different electoral models function in other countries, especially those

sharing characteristics with BiH, such as post-socialist transition, ethnic fragmentation, or polarized party competition.

A key argument for reforming the system in the RS is that a different electoral model could create different incentives for both presidential candidates and voters. The current plurality system directs candidates primarily toward mobilizing their most loyal voter base. This is especially evident among ruling party candidates who can focus almost exclusively on their core supporters without needing to win over broader segments beyond their party-coalition or ethnic constituency.

By contrast, absolute majority systems – such as the two-round majority (majority-runoff) or preferential voting (alternative vote) – are designed to encourage candidates to seek broader social support and political compromise. These systems require building more inclusive, moderate political platforms to attract votes beyond a candidate's primary electoral base, particularly in a second round or through preference transfers (Horowitz 1991; Reilly 2001).

The two-round majority system, used in France and most former Yugoslav republics (e.g., Serbia, Croatia), ensures that if no candidate secures an absolute majority in the first round, the top two candidates advance to a second round. This structure significantly alters the candidate's strategy. In the first round, candidates can rely on their primary base, freely articulate their ideological or ethnic messages, and test their appeal. However, in the second round, they are forced to broaden their appeal and become more acceptable to a wider spectrum of voters, including those who supported eliminated candidates in the first round (Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis 2008). This dynamic necessitates more moderate rhetoric, readiness to negotiate, and the formation of informal alliances, reducing polarization and fostering political pluralism.

France is the classic example of a two-round presidential system. Candidates must secure popular support to win the second round, creating pressure for programmatic moderation and coalition-building. The French case demonstrates how the system can channel political competition toward the center, avoiding extremism and fragmentation. Although it has its own issues – such as potential personalization of power – the two-round model ensures that the elected president has a clear majority mandate.

A similar logic applies in Serbia, where negotiations and alliances between the first and second rounds often decide the winner, compelling candidates to moderate their rhetoric and seek support from smaller

parties or ethnic minorities. This model has shown how electoral structure can reduce exclusivity and promote compromise, which was crucial for stabilizing the transitional political scene. Croatia also uses a two-round system for presidential elections, where candidates failing to secure an absolute majority in the first round must adjust their platforms and negotiate with eliminated rivals to attract their voters in the second round. Across multiple election cycles in Croatia, the second round has been decisive precisely because it forces candidates to move away from radical positions and seek consensus, fostering a political dynamic oriented toward compromise rather than polarization.

Therefore, the question for the RS is whether a different electoral system would create different incentives for presidential candidates and voters. Both empirical evidence and theory suggest that adopting an absolute majority system could indeed change the political dynamic. Both of its main variants – the two-round majority and alternative vote – would push candidates to seek broader social support. By design, an absolute majority system is more inclusive and moderate, redirecting political competition toward the center.

However, the two-round model also has challenges. Repeated voting can cause voter fatigue and lower turnout in the second round. This issue has been recognized in practice, leading some countries to adopt alternative solutions like preferential voting (alternative vote). This system functions as an "instant-runoff", where voters rank candidates by preference, and vote transfers in successive counting rounds ensure the election of a candidate with an absolute majority without needing a separate second round. Although technically more complex to count, preferential voting retains the same institutional logic: candidates are compelled to seek support beyond their core base, encouraging them to broaden their platforms and bridge social and political divides (Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis 2008).

It is worth noting that the international community experimentally introduced the alternative vote system in the 2000 RS presidential election. The expectation was that Bosniak voters would give their lower-ranked preferences to more moderate Serb party candidates like SNSD or PDP, thereby reducing the dominance of the then-powerful SDS. However, the results showed the limits of this approach in the context of entrenched ethnic fragmentation. Already in the first preference-counting round, the SDS candidate Mirko Šarović had a clear lead, and the redistribution of lower preferences largely stayed within ethnic lines.

Following that election, the alternative vote was abandoned, with the assessment that prevailing social divisions overwhelmed incentives for cross-ethnic voting.

Nonetheless, this does not mean such a model lacks future potential, especially in the context of tight electoral races where even small preference transfers could determine the winner. The more competitive the political contest, the more important it becomes for candidates to build broad political platforms and negotiate support across different social groups. That is precisely what absolute majority systems systematically encourage.

If the RS considered moving to a two-round majority model, it could look to the examples of neighboring countries that have used it to reduce political polarization and ensure presidential legitimacy. Alternatively, it could consider the alternative vote as a solution that eliminates the need for organizing a second round while preserving the logic of assembling broader support. In both cases, candidates would no longer be able to rely solely on disciplined ethnic or party bases – they would be forced to appeal to the broader population, negotiate, and adapt their platforms. This would create an institutional framework that strengthens presidential legitimacy and rewards moderation, coalition-building, and inclusion instead of polarization and ethnic mobilization.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the plurality electoral system for electing the president of the Republic of Srpska reveals the complex relationship between institutional design and the political dynamics within the entity. A system that allows a candidate to win with the highest number of votes without an absolute majority shapes party competition and electoral strategies, directing them toward mobilizing one's own base and fostering bloc-based divisions in the political arena.

In the context of pronounced ethnic heterogeneity and post-conflict political realities, this model results in specific patterns of electoral competition and the legitimacy of elected candidates. Data on the past RS presidential elections confirm that winners often secure mandates with relatively low vote shares, reflecting a deeply divided political scene and strong partisan polarization. Presidential elections show a stable pattern of two-bloc competition, where ruling and opposition coalitions

typically run close races, and victory often depends on the disciplined mobilization of an ethnically or party-defined voter base.

Comparative insights from other countries demonstrate different institutional solutions to the challenges of directly electing a president. Examples from France, Serbia, and Croatia illustrate the use of two-round majority systems that introduce additional mechanisms for securing broader political support and encourage more moderate political discourse. These models show how electoral rules can shape the behavior of political actors and the structure of electoral competition, creating different patterns of executive legitimacy.

The analysis of the RS institutional framework and political context reveals specific characteristics of its semi-presidential system, where the president holds significant constitutional powers, but whose actual political influence depends on relations with the parliamentary majority. In this context, the plurality system shapes relations between the president and parliament, influencing opportunities for coalition cooperation and the potential for political crises. Understanding these institutional and political dynamics offers a clearer perspective on the role of the electoral system in shaping political stability, party competition, and perceptions of democratic legitimacy in the Republic of Srpska. Such analysis can also provide a relevant framework for further research on the relationship between electoral design and political dynamics in divided societies, particularly in complex post-conflict arrangements such as those in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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ОГРАНИЧЕЊА СИСТЕМА ПРОСТЕ ВЕЋИНЕ У ИЗБОРУ ПРЕДСЈЕДНИКА РЕПУБЛИКЕ СРПСКЕ: ПОЛИТИЧКЕ, ИНСТИТУЦИОНАЛНЕ И ДРУШТВЕНЕ ПОСЉЕДИЦЕ

Резиме

Овај рад анализира политичке, институционалне и друштвене посљедице кориштења система просте (релативне) већине за избор предсједника Републике Српске (РС). Предсједник РС има важну политичку и симболичку улогу у сложеном и етнички фрагментираном институционалном оквиру БиХ који је обликован Дејтонским споразумом. Аутор користи компаративни приступ и теоријску литературу о изборним системима у етнички подијељеним и постконфликтним друштвима, како би процијенио у којој мјери систем релативне већине одговара демократским потребама РС. Рад показује да систем релативне већине има неколико кључних слабости у контексту РС. Прво, омогућава избор предсједника са подршком мањине бирачког тијела – неријетко испод 50%, па чак и испод 40%, што подрива његов демократски легитимитет. Друго, овакав систем подстиче етничку мобилизацију и поларизацију јер кандидатима није потребна шира међуетничка подршка. Кампање се фокусирају на мобилизацију „сигурне" страначке и етничке базе, што учвршћује друштвене подјеле. Треће, систем просте већине награђује персонализовано вођство и јачање личног профила кандидата, што може утицати на јачање клијентелизма и ауторитарних тенденција. Примјери из Републике Српске – посебно дуготрајна доминација Милорада Додика и СНСД-а – показују како овакав систем утиче на консолидацију моћи око једног лидера. Само у три случаја предсједник је изабран натполовичном већином, док су остали избори завршавали с тијесним резултатима и често

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продубљеном политичком поларизацијом. Посебно илустративни примјери укључују изборе 1998, када је избор предсједника из супротног политичког блока од парламентарне већине довео до институционалне кризе и интервенције високог представника, те изборе 2022. које су обиљежиле оптужбе за изборну крађу и масовне протесте. Рад такође наглашава институционалне посљедице система просте већине. Предсједник РС, иако формално ограничен парламентарном већином, има значајна уставна овлаштења. Несклад између предсједника из једног блока и парламента из другог може довести до институционалних блокада и политичких криза. Уз то, двоблоковски образац конкуренције (коалиције окупљене око СНСД и СДС) који се стабилно понавља од 2000-их година сужава политички простор за треће опције, ограничава програмску конкуренцију и фаворизује негативну и поларизујућу кампању. Као алтернативу, рад разматра двокружни већински систем и преференцијално гласање (алтернативни глас). Ови модели захтијевају да кандидат освоји натполовичну подршку, било кроз други круг или кроз трансфер преференција, чиме се кандидати подстичу да шире свој политички апел, ублаже реторику и преговарају о подршци са другим групама. Компаративна искуства Француске, Србије и Хрватске показују да овакви системи могу помоћи у смањењу поларизације и јачању демократског легитимитета предсједника. Закључно, рад сматра да би промјена изборног модела могла допринијети јачању демократске легитимности и политичке стабилности РС.

Кључне ријечи: Република Српска, избори, предсједник Републике Српске, политичка стабилност, изборна реформа

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TWO INDIAS: FEDERALISM, REGIONALIZATION, AND THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Abstract

This paper explores the profound social, cultural, and political divisions between Northern and Southern India, with a particular focus on their impact on the outcomes of the 2024 general elections. Starting from the hypothesis that the North-South divide in India – rooted in linguistic, religious, economic, and cultural differences – directly shapes political dynamics, the paper analyses how these differences have become institutionalized through the party system and regional political organization. The North, dominated by the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, stands in contrast to the South, where regional parties and a more liberal political discourse are gaining strength. This contrast contributes to the deepening of a dual-party or dual-coalition system and further intensifies political polarization. The paper also

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considers the historical context, including the legacy of colonialism, religious and cultural identities, and economic disparities that fuel regional tensions. The research finds that India's federal framework is increasingly challenged by rising political and cultural-identity polarization, which ultimately carries far-reaching consequences for the stability and integration of the state.

Keywords: India, political polarization, regionalism, federalism, Bharatiya Janata Party, general elections

INTRODUCTION

The division of India into North and South is not a recent phenomenon, but the 2024 general elections have helped crystallize this divide – perhaps for the first time since the formation of the modern Indian state – into a clearly institutionalized political reality. The historical and political context of this divide emerges as a consequence of complex socio-cultural differences between the two regions: varying degrees of colonial influence, linguistic divisions (Hindi *versus* Dravidian languages), religious tensions (among secularism, Islam, Hinduism, and Hindutva), economic inequalities (with the South being significantly more developed), differing political traditions (Southern regionalism versus Northern centralism), as well as other important cultural and political factors. In this study, Northern India refers to the federal units of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Delhi, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Haryana. On the other hand, Southern India includes Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Kerala. Symbolically, this paper will often denote this division through the dichotomy of *Bharat: Dravida*, as two opposing visions of India: on the one hand, the concept of *Bharat* or *Bharatavarsha*, driven by Hinduism and centered around the idea of civilizational-cultural dominance over the South and Southeast Asia; on the other, the concept of *Dravida* or *Dravida Nadu*, referring to a vision of India based on pluralism, soft secularism, multiculturalism, and equality. The ideological father of Dravida Nadu is E.V. Ramasamy (*E.V. Ramasamy,* popularly known as *Periyar*), leader of the *Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam* movement (Dravidian Progressive Party).

The guiding research question of this paper is: do the deep cultural, linguistic, and religious differences between Northern and Southern India shape electoral outcomes and fuel political polarization and regionalization in the country? In line with this question, the paper will test three hypotheses: (1) the North-South divide in India, grounded in cultural, linguistic, economic, and political differences, significantly influences the political landscape, reinforces regional identities, and promotes political polarization; (2) Northern India is more inclined toward aligning with parties that promote Hindu nationalism; (3) Southern India demonstrates stronger support for regional parties and resistance to the dominance of leading national parties.

The academic and societal relevance of this research stems from five closely related elements: (1) the significance of the 2024 general elections as a precedent that exposed an intensifying regional division and challenged the idea of one India under one party; (2) the exposure of the limits of Hindu-nationalist hegemony; (3) the importance of understanding the rise of regionalism; (4) the need to assess potential threats to India's federal character; and (5) the analysis of regional and internal stability in India as a multi-national state.

From a methodological standpoint, the paper employs a multi-method approach, including historical analysis (origins of cultural and political differences), political geography (India's electoral map and regional voting patterns), electoral results analysis (seats and vote shares per party), ideological discourse analysis (programs of key political parties), and comparative method (comparison of Northern and Southern states).

Structurally, the second chapter examines the social and political context that led to the emergence and development of the *Bharat–Dravida* divide, presenting the core theoretical framework and the genesis of the regional split along its key dimensions (historical, economic, religious, linguistic, etc.). The third chapter brings these insights into the context of the 2024 general elections, focusing on the observed social and political patterns and trends. The fourth and final chapter provides a synthesis of the previous findings, tests the hypotheses, presents conclusions, and opens up new research questions that extend beyond the scope of this study and deserve further academic attention.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE DIVIDE: *BHARAT* VS. *DRAVIDA*

To analyze the impact of growing regionalism on the 2024 general elections in India, it is necessary to outline the basic theoretical framework and to highlight the context in which this regional polarization has emerged and evolved. Following the hypothetical framework, the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that the North-South divide in India is not merely geographic, but also deeply rooted in identity, history, and institutional structures, and has been further deepened by economic, demographic, and cultural differences. Although emphasizing the *Bharat*/*Dravida* dichotomy may seem ambitious – or even pretentious – the intention is to provide well-grounded arguments not only for the existence of this divide but also for its rapid intensification and expansion in the past decade. This dichotomy, in which the first element refers to territorial and ideological continuity with the Hindu nationalist project, and the second to the vision of South India as a distinct, secular, and inclusive community, is not merely a rhetorical construction – it reflects a real dichotomy in political culture that is highly relevant in contemporary India. Therefore, the aim is to highlight the necessity of understanding how this divide operates to grasp electoral patterns more thoroughly.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: POLARIZED SOCIETIES AND FEDERALISM

At the very beginning, it is important to pose rhetorical questions: What does it actually mean to say that India is a *good example of a divided society*, and where, within theoretical frameworks, can we find arguments supporting this claim? In delving deeper into political science theories and approaches, it is necessary to present key concepts related to divided and polarized societies, the idea of *formative rifts*, the notion of pernicious polarization, and the role of federalism in understanding contemporary political developments in India.

The first step toward understanding the degree of polarization in Indian society is recognizing the elements of pernicious polarization in contemporary India. In this context, one can speak of an increasingly dominant "*us* versus *them*" narrative, a rise in polarizing strategies among political actors – often grounded in identity politics – as well as the formation of polarization around deep formative rifts, most notably

in Hindu (or Hindutva) – Muslim relations, but also in the context of increasingly pronounced tensions between northern and southern India. This also entails the consolidation of interests and identities around a single axis of division, the formation of political demands and interests based on cultural or religious identities, and many other elements of political polarization (see: McCoy and Somer 2019, 234–247).

In this context, identity politics has proven to be one of the primary mechanisms fueling political polarization in India and the broader South Asian region (Đogatović 2025b, 74–90). Language, caste, and religion are significant social stratification areas (Shilpa 2021, 37). Some authors argue that the rise of dominant parties in India is rooted in the successful use of identity politics, with a particular curiosity being that the rise of regional parties in the southern parts of the country is also a consequence of such identity-based strategies (Shilpa 2021, 38). India is not an isolated case – there have been studies for years with clear evidence of shared patterns and a set of dynamic features characteristic of severe political and social polarization in various global contexts, especially those that result in serious consequences for democracy itself (McCoy, Rahman, and Somer 2018, 16).

The consequences of deep political divisions are also reflected in the institutional system, where they can be associated with both democratic empowerment and democratic erosion (McCoy and Somer 2019, 234). In this context, the aforementioned authors particularly highlight the significance of the nature of the electoral system, the powers available to the executive branch, and the capacity and effectiveness of political accountability (McCoy and Somer 2019, 261). One of the direct consequences of political polarization is the growing animosity between opposing social and/or political camps, making voters more willing to accept undemocratic measures against the opposing side (Arbatli and Rosenberg 2020, 1). Higher levels of political polarization are associated with a lack of free and fair elections, increased media censorship, and attacks by the government on judicial integrity (Arbatli and Rosenberg 2020, 8).

India's complex social diversity – in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, and caste – contributes to the constant generation of new lines of division and conflict. The specific focus of this study lies in examining the formation of regional polarization, i.e., the increasingly pronounced rift between the federal units of the north, west, east, and center, on one side, and the south of the country, on the other. This process, which

will be treated as a regional form of polarization, represents a new and significant form of Indian regionalism.

The impact of this regional division on the Indian political landscape, with special emphasis on the 2024 general elections, will be the subject of analysis in the following chapter. It will examine the political preferences of the population within the *Bharat* and *Dravida* regions, as well as the role and future of federalism in the world's most populous country. Given the constitutional obligation of the Indian government to undertake a *delimitation* process after each census – where the boundaries of electoral constituencies are redrawn and the total number of parliamentary seats recalculated – the outcomes and conclusions are bound to be both important and intriguing (Jain 2025). Although this practice was frozen from 1976 to 2026, the moment of its revival is approaching, almost certainly to the detriment of the southern and to the benefit of the northern federal units (Tharoor 2025). According to some estimates, the number of members in the lower house could rise to 753, or even 888 (Tharoor 2025).

SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH

After establishing the theoretical foundation of this academic approach, the following section analyzes the key socio-political catalysts that have deepened the divide between North and South India. This includes the influence of historical and cultural development, the significance of language and identity, the role of religious and cultural factors, and the impact of economic and demographic differences.

Researchers who study the historical-cultural divide often base their argument on the notion that this is a long-standing internal process. Over time, North and South India have developed two distinct socio-political trajectories, which today exist within the same state framework but are subject to growing tensions. Historically, the South was the realm of Dravidian empires (*Chola*, *Pandya*, *Vijayanagar*, and others), while the North came under the influence of Hindu and Islamic dynasties. Moreover, the derogatory term *madrasi* (or *madrassi*), used by northerners to describe their southern compatriots, has not disappeared from informal discourse. It was precisely in the Madras region (The Madras Presidency or Madras Province, officially the Presidency of Fort St. George until 1937) that the Dravidian movement (Dravidar

Kazhagam; Dravidian Association) was born, laying the foundations for the contemporary liberal and secular political culture of the southern region (Naveen 2024).

Sharma (*Arvind Kumar Sharma*) goes so far as to claim that there are two distinct visions of India – one secular, a homeland for Indians of all religions and national backgrounds that respects Gandhi's legacy and historical role, rejects the caste system, permits beef consumption, and views English proficiency as a major asset; and the other, Hindu nationalist, a homeland only for Hindu Indians, which questions Gandhi's efforts to integrate Indian Muslims, upholds the necessity of the caste system, bans beef consumption, and deems the use of any language other than Hindi undesirable (Sharma 2020, 44–46). However, it is important to note that, although it is true that the organizations representing the "first vision of India" have largely inherited an apology for the caste system since their inception, it can generally be said that there is no consensus on the acceptability of such a social system, given the increasingly vocal advocates of abolishing or radically revising the caste system, such as the current head of the RSS, Mohan Bhagwat (see The Hindu 2022).

The administrative division into the Bombay, Madras, and Bengal presidencies further deepened regional differences during British colonial rule. Simultaneously, the North was shaped by Brahmanical Hinduism, while the South has a long tradition of resistance to the caste system, exemplified by movements like Dravidar Kazhagam led by Periyar (a title given to Ramasamy meaning "respected/elder" in Tamil). The Dravidian movement is founded on the idea that the people of South India – speakers of the Dravidian language group, including Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam[1] – constitute a distinct and clearly demarcated nation that must be freed from northern influence. This influence was seen in the dominance of the Brahmin elite, the imposition of Sanskrit and Hindi, and broader attempts to superimpose alien value systems and linguistic codes onto the authentic Dravidian culture – especially the original Tamil cultural heritage (Pillalamarri 2024). These divergent historical trajectories have produced distinct

[1] The Tamil language is most widely spoken in the state of Tamil Nadu as well as in Puducherry; the Telugu language is most prevalent in the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh; Kannada is primarily used in Karnataka, while Malayalam is spoken by the inhabitants of Kerala and Lakshadweep.

political cultures that have become increasingly visible and pronounced in the 21st century.

In parallel with the development of political cultures, different linguistic and ethnic identities have emerged. Hindi gradually became the language of hegemony, while the southern languages – within the broader *Dravida* category – developed as cultural and political alternatives. In this context, language is not merely a means of communication, but the core of political identity. To understand the importance of language in center–periphery relations, one needs only examine the language identity politics proclaimed across India (Đogatović 2025b, 119–133). The dominance of Hindi introduced the term *Hindi belt* into academic discourse, referring to the states where Hindi is dominant – especially as a component of the broader Hindutva political platform. Southern languages have remained deeply rooted in these populations' cultural and political identities. Immediately after gaining independence, there were numerous demands to reorganize federal units along linguistic lines. Particularly significant is the situation in Tamil Nadu, where Tamil identity is strongly tied to the Tamil population in Sri Lanka. Linguistic issues remain an unresolved source of tension and a potential trigger for institutional reconfiguration.

Religious and cultural differences constitute another key layer of this regional divide. Although various powers have historically ruled over the Indian subcontinent, the social role of the dominant religion has remained significant, and Hindutva may continue to be a socially dominant force in the coming decades, regardless of whether the BJP remains in power after the 2029 elections (Đogatović 2025c, 116). What is particularly important in the context of this paper is the fact that religion is an extremely important factor in electoral competition (Mofidi 2014, 20). The dominance of Hinduism, hardline Hindutva, and political nationalism in the North was revitalized with the rise to power of the BJP, now led by the former governor of Gujarat – *Narendra Damodardas Modi*. Three electoral cycles later – two *political nations* are now further apart than ever before. In contrast to the North, permeated by the influence of political Hinduism, the South of India represents a true oasis of secular pluralism. The ideas propagated by Ramasamy – such as rationalism, women's and minority rights, social reform, anti-Semitism, etc. – have been most fully realized in the southern states. In this region, there is a stronger presence of Christians, a deeper secular and liberal tradition, and resistance to the social and political dominance of Hinduism is carried

by social reformist movements with a long tradition. According to one study, 64% of Hindus believe that being Hindu is very important to being truly Indian (Evans and Sahgal 2021, 2). The same study shows that 69% of Hindus in northern and 83% in central India strongly associate Hindu identity with national identity, compared to only 42% of Hindus from the southern parts of India (Evans and Sahgal 2021, 3). Also indicative are the data on the share of Hindus who believe that a Hindu must not eat beef (72%), must believe in God (49%), and must regularly visit temples (48%), while 77% of Muslims believe that a person cannot be considered a Muslim if they eat pork; 60% and 61% of Muslims believe, respectively, that a Muslim must believe in God and regularly attend mosques (Evans and Sahgal 2021, 3).

A significant contribution to understanding contemporary religious stratification in India based on regional belonging is provided through the study of Santhosh Chandrashekar, who points to the significance of the Brahminical conception of India as *Āryāvarta* and the caste structure of Indian society as the logic underpinning the contemporary hegemony of northern India and the provincialization of southern India and lower castes (Chandrashekar 2021, 1). The concept developed from this approach is termed *northernism* (institutionalized domination of the North over the South), and it highlights the popularization of an image of India as synonymous with the Brahminized northern part of the country (Chandrashekar 2021, 1). The *Vindhya Mountain range*, which stretches from Gujarat in the west almost to Varanasi in the east, marks the natural southern border of *Āryāvarta*, beyond which, according to legends and ancient beliefs, the "real Indians" do not live. This range, approximately 1,100 km long, is no longer just a geographical divide (Mukherjee 2024). Thus, in northwestern India and throughout the Indo-Gangetic plain, the "true" Indians live – which, many centuries later, served as the basis for developing the Aryan invasion/domination theory (Chandrashekar 2021, 5). For more on caste stratification and the position of the Dalit caste (formerly *untouchables*, see Đogatović and Krstić 2023, 8–10).

It is also important to present several claims in support of the economic and demographic differences between the North and South. A deeper analysis reveals developmental asymmetries due to differing social and political cultures, and these are often utilized as political resources since they directly translate into political representation, especially in the case of the disproportionate influence on the number of seats in the lower house. Studies confirm that in the mid-1980s, a

definitive economic divergence between the South and North occurred – that is, it was during this decade that a significant gap in economic performance between the northern and southern federal units was formed (Paul and Sridhar 2015, 117). Southern Indian states have a higher *per capita* income, and their economic growth outpaces that of central and northern federal units (Evans 2021). The five southern states contribute approximately 30% of the federal GDP (Jain 2025). Crucial research in this field has been conducted by Ashish Bos and later by Choithani and Khan. While Bose's study was carried out in the early 21st century, Choithani and Khan highlight the ongoing socio-economic trends in northern and southern India. Taking four federal units from the North (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan) and four from the South (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala), Bose identifies trends in the changing population share of these eight federal units relative to India's total population: in 1991 it was 39.6%:23.2%; in 2021 it was 44.6%:19.8% and in 2051 it is projected to be 51.4%:16.5% (Bose 2000, 1698). He also notes changes in the share of these federal units in the number of seats in the Lok Sabha: in 1991 it was 204:129; in 2021 it was 219:119; and in 2051 it will be 229:113 (Bose 2000, 1698). Thus, the *Bharat* region will be able to further capitalize on its demographic advantage in the decades to come. The other side of the coin lies in economic indicators, where Bose points out significant disparities in (1) illiteracy rates (ranging from 28% to 65% in the North vs. 7% to 54% in the South), (2) infant mortality rates (105 to 137 deaths per 1,000 births in the North, vs. 16 to 84 in the South), and (3) female fertility rates (women in northern India give birth to between 3.6 and 4.8 children on average, compared to 2 to 2.85 in the South) (Bose 2000, 1699). Paul and Sridhar, by comparing economic, social, and political indicators and results of southern and northern federal units, also arrived at numerous significant conclusions supporting the thesis of two fundamentally differently oriented and successful regions (Paul and Sridhar 2015, 89–116). Choithani and Khan highlight the increase in internal (labor) migration from North to South Indiaand the unavoidable slowdown in India's population growth and aging (Choithani and Wali Khan 2024, 1–2). Thus, the South exhibits higher GDP growth rates and better health and education indicators (with the contrast between Kerala and Uttar Pradesh being particularly striking), while the North holds a numerical, demographic advantage that secures an increasing number of seats in the lower house. Kerala, for example, is the most

secular federal unit in India: cow slaughter is permitted, beef is served in restaurants, and the BJP had never won a single seat there until the 2024 elections (Anklesaria Aiyar 2020, 11). On the other hand, despite Hindu nationalism, the BJP can be remarkably flexible – in the state of Goa, for instance, the party allowed cow slaughter and beef to be served in restaurants to appeal to Christian voters (Anklesaria Aiyar 2020, 19). Data from the early 2010s shows that foreign direct investment (FDI) in just one southern state – Karnataka – amounted to USD 1.53 billion, which is 2.5 times more than the combined total FDI in four northern states (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh) (Choithani and Wali Khan 2024, 5).

Demographic strength and lower levels of development are increasingly being used as political resources, particularly by the BJP, a phenomenon often referred to as the *demographic dividend*. However, the question of fairness in the federal allocation of resources remains open, especially in light of the vast differences in demography and economic development. This chapter concludes with a striking research finding: a child born in Kerala is more likely to reach the age of five than a child born in the United States, whereas a child born in Uttar Pradesh is less likely to reach the age of five than a child born in Afghanistan (Mukherjee 2024). This quote should serve as a powerful indicator of the depth of India's structural regional inequalities.

POLITICAL SYSTEM, PARTY LANDSCAPE, AND INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION

Before the analysis turns to the 2024 general elections, it is necessary to consider two key aspects of Indian politics: (1) the structure of the party system and (2) the mechanisms of institutional integration.

In this context, a deep partisan polarization between the country's North and South is immediately apparent. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Prime Minister Modi, dominates the northern and central parts of the country, drawing on Hindutva, Hinduis, and the Hindi language. Its campaign often emphasizes centralization and the idea of national unity under a single political banner. In contrast, the southern federal units display a fragmented, pluralistic support for regional and opposition parties that, at the core of their political agendas, nonetheless share numerous common values. Among the most successful southern regional parties are the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Anna

Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP), Telugu Desam Party (TDP), the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and many others. Though ideologically diverse, these parties share a set of values: a commitment to secularism, anti-caste politics, protection of regional identity, and resistance to centralization. DMK, for instance, is often considered the paradigm of southern politics, promoting the values of Dravidian heritage and linguistic autonomy. These shared values form the core of the previously mentioned common ground among many political actors and electoral participants from the southern federal units.

Despite these deep divisions, India still functions as a coherent federation, owing to strong institutional integration mechanisms. Five main factors sustain this cohesion: (1) economic dependence on the central government, particularly through tax policy and budgetary regulations; (2) shared institutions such as Parliament, the Election Commission, the judiciary, the military, and public administration; (3) pan-Indian issues such as relations with China and Pakistan, counterterrorism, and internal security; (4) crisis management – from the COVID-19 pandemic to economic and environmental disasters – which often fosters solidarity and coordination between the center and the federal units; and (5) the threat of force from the center – especially in cases of the development of intra-state armed and/or secessionist tendencies. These processes represent a complex dynamic in which deep political polarization unfolds within a formally unified institutional framework. That very framework will be examined in the next chapter, through an analysis of the 2024 election results and how they have reinforced regional differences.

POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE DIVIDE: THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTIONS

The 2024 general elections marked a turning point in India's contemporary political history – not because of the results themselves, but because of how voting patterns reaffirmed and even deepened the country's regional, cultural, and ideological divisions. While the northern and central states largely remained aligned with the Hindu-nationalist narrative and supported the ruling BJP-led coalition, the South demonstrated strong resistance to this model, backing regional parties and the opposition INDIA alliance (*Hindi-speaking heartland*) (Selvaraj 2024). This divide is not merely partisan – it reflects deeply

rooted differences in political culture, historical experience, and visions for India's future.

This chapter analyzes how the *Bharat*:*Dravida* dichotomy became politically tangible through the election results. The focus is on the spatial distribution of votes and seats, comparisons with previous electoral cycles, and the ideological and programmatic differences between the main actors. The goal is to demonstrate that the 2024 general elections were not merely a power struggle, but an institutional mirror of the cultural and political fragmentation that increasingly shapes Indian society and democracy.

The elections were held in seven phases from April 19th to June 1st, with 543 members of the lower house of Parliament elected by direct vote. This time, Narendra Modi secured his third consecutive term with support from the *Telugu Desam Party* (Andhra Pradesh) and the *Janata Dal* (Bihar). Over 968 million citizens were eligible to vote, and approximately 642 million exercised that right. The BJP contested as part of the existing NDA coalition, while the INC led the opposing INDIA alliance. The BJP won 240 seats, or 36.56% of the vote (about 236 million votes), while the entire NDA coalition secured 42.5% of the vote and 293 seats. On the other hand, the INDIA alliance garnered 40.6% of the vote and 234 seats, with the INC alone winning 99 seats and approximately 137 million votes (21.19%) (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2024, cited in: Đogatović 2025c, 111).

The elections were held amid deep political and social polarization, and unlike the previous two electoral cycles, in which the INC suffered heavy defeats, 2024 was marked by the presentation of a clearly binary framework: NDA versus the INDIA alliance. Ideologically, there was an intensification of Hindutva rhetoric, promotion of the Hindi language's national significance, and the concept of a unified nation, while the opposition emphasized federalism, social justice, and secularism. In this sense, the elections resembled a referendum on the future model of the Indian state more than a conventional party and coalition contest.

The geographic and ideological voting map reveals a tripartite division of political space: (1) the *Hindi-Hindu-Hindutva belt* – dominated by the BJP, especially in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Odisha, marked by media polarization, strong politico-religious mobilization, and economic underdevelopment; (2) the *anti-Hindutva belt* – with strong support for the INDIA alliance and regional secular parties such as *Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam* (Tamil

Nadu), *Samajwadi Party* (Uttar Pradesh), *Shiv Sena* (Maharashtra), among others, characterized by higher levels of general education, less susceptibility to manipulation, and greater resistance to BJP rhetoric; (3) the *transitional belt* – states such as Haryana, Punjab, and Rajasthan, where the most intense contest between national and regional actors unfolded. Andhra Pradesh also stands as a strong example of a *swing state*, reflecting the process of *Hindutvaization* of politics, as the shift from the *YSRCP* & *TDP* (22 + 3 seats) coalition to the *NDA* & *YSRCP* (21 + 4 seats) bloc illustrates (Naveen 2024).

In support of the theses of this study and from an electoral-analytical perspective, this section of the chapter presents the eight most important individual election results:

1. At the national level, the NDA dropped from 348 seats (2019) to 293 seats (2024), a decline of 10.12% of the total number of parliamentary seats;
2. In the North, the NDA dropped from 195/229 (2019) to 140/229 (2024) seats, a 10.12% decline, while in the South it rose from 31/129 (2019) to 49/129 (2024), an increase of 3.31%;
3. Compared to the 2019 elections, the NDA "won over" Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Telangana (+37 seats);
4. At the national level, INDIA rose from 53 seats (2019) to 186 seats (2024), an increase of 24.48% of the total number of parliamentary seats;
5. INDIA rose both in the North from 14/229 (2019) to 84/229 (2024) seats, a growth of 12.89%, and in the South from 28/129 (2019) to 56/129 (2024) seats, representing a growth of 5.15%;
6. Compared to the 2019 elections, INDIA succeeded in "winning" Bihar, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh (+137 seats);
7. Other parties, running independently, declined from 142 independent seats (2019) to 64 independent seats (2024), a drop of 14.36%;
8. Power shifted in two federal units in the North (Haryana and Uttar Pradesh) and four federal units in the South (Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana).

Some patterns that emerge include the following: (1) BJP, or rather the NDA coalition, paradoxically and despite regrouping in many federal units, may in fact be the biggest loser of the election; (2) there is a significant difference in support for the NDA in northern India (61.13% of seats) and southern India (37.98% of seats); (3) the

inclusion of numerous "third parties" into the NDA/INDIA coalitions further intensified political polarization (a two-coalition model); (4) in 6 out of 14 federal units in the North and South, there was a complete change of power; (5) the South has not entirely rejected the NDA (only seven seats fewer than the INDIA coalition), nor has the North completely rejected INDIA (70 seats more than five years ago). However, at the national level, despite certain aberrations (e.g., NDA victories in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, INDIA in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, and divided seats in Goa), the South remains a bastion of anti-NDA sentiment, while the North continues to reinforce the character of the Hindi-Hindu-Hindutva belt. One indicator of polarization is the strong allegiance to the NDA in the western part of the country (Gujarat and Rajasthan) and to the INDIA coalition and third parties in the eastern part (West Bengal, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland). Additionally, the NDA was nearly equally successful in both small (up to 10 seats) and large (10 or more seats) federal units – winning over 50% of seats in 10 out of 18 large and 8 out of 18 small units. On the other hand, anti-NDA parties also "won" half of these units – 8 out of 18 large and 10 out of 18 small. This further confirms the polarization indicator.

Cultural, economic, and educational factors have strongly influenced the formation of these political/electoral patterns. While identity politics and religious symbolism (Ayodhya, cow protection, attacks on Muslims, etc.) dominated in the North, values of civic resistance, inclusion, and secularism contributed to resistance against centralization in the South. On the other hand, one of the decisive reasons for the BJP losing its absolute majority of seats in Parliament is a certain manipulation of the interests and fears of the lower castes (especially Dalits). On the other hand, the votes of Muslim voters consolidated around the coalition between the INC and the Samajwadi Party, which this time ran in alliance (Sen and Khattri 2024). Differences in education levels, patriarchal structures, poverty, and the caste system have further deepened this regional divide. Research has shown that Muslims and Christians predominantly supported the INC and its allies, especially in the South and the far East of the country (Bhattacharya 2024). In Kerala, 18% of the population is Christian and 26% Muslim, and the INC managed to win 18 out of 20 seats, which is mainly attributed to minority community support (Bhattacharya 2024).

Indicators also point to the escalation of political regionalization and the erosion of national unity. Southern states increasingly demand economic and political autonomy, while BJP representatives from the North insist on a new federalism through a centralized model. Slogans such as "one nation, one language, one religion" increasingly clash with alternative visions emphasizing "one federation, many peoples, many languages". Although the BJP has retained key positions in Aryavarta, its presence in states such as Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and eastern regions indicates a broader ambition for control. Nevertheless, the growth of regional parties and the strengthening of the INDIA coalition have led to a decline in national political homogeneity.

The election results have shifted the balance between the two main political actors. Future analyses will almost certainly move toward the thesis that the political system is transitioning from a dominant-party model to a two-party or two-coalition arrangement. In the coming years, it will become clearer whether this new model will lead to (de) stabilization of social relations, and whether India will continue its path toward greater centralization or evolve into a true federation. The idea of a consociational democracy and even confederalism is not beyond the realm of possibility.

The implications of these elections on the state of secularism, the rise of identity politics, and the development of political polarization have been discussed elsewhere (see Đogatović 2025a; Đogatović 2025c). The growing influence of religious values in state policy and the shrinking space for opposition call into question the theoretical model of twin toleration and highlights the risk of a merger between religious and democratic institutions. Opposition forces in the South increasingly position themselves as defenders of Nehruvian and Gandhian legacies. Political tactics – such as weakening institutions, exploiting security narratives, and marginalizing the opposition – have contributed to the erosion of this democratic principle.

Several key questions arise – is regional polarization permanent or temporary? Will India move toward deeper federalization, or continue the process of centralization? To what extent have political divisions become institutionalized? These are just some of the open questions, with potential answers ranging from maintaining the current status quo to ideas of confederalization, federal reforms, political instability, and decentralized pluralism.

There are four key conclusions of this chapter: (1) The 2024 elections represent the culmination of India's geographic-political division; (2) Support for the BJP and regional parties reflects a segment of profound socio-cultural and economic differences; (3) The regionalization of politics raises questions about the sustainability of the current federal system; (4) The process of divergence between two political visions of India – Bharat and Dravida – is in full swing.

CONCLUSION: REGIONALIZATION, SEPARATION, OR...?

The results of the 2024 general elections, as well as the broader socio-political patterns that accompanied them, raise fundamental questions about the direction in which the Indian federation is headed – whether we will witness an ever-tightening regionalization of politics, almost at the verge of institutional and substantive polarization – or whether this is merely a transient stage of a dynamic democratic system in which resistance to centralization and homogenization appears as corrections rather than threats. There is also the question of whether Indian federalism, in its current form, can absorb the growing regional tensions or whether deeper reform is necessary – perhaps even toward asymmetric federalism or a confederal structure. Finally, the question arises whether India is undergoing a process of quiet separation or is searching for a new formula of national unity – one that better fits its complex, plural, and increasingly polarized reality.

The hypothetical framework of this work has been confirmed repeatedly. The first hypothesis, about the increasingly pronounced political and cultural dichotomy between the northern and southern parts of India, has been fully confirmed. The other two hypotheses – about the ideal-typical polarization and the dominance of NDA/BJP in the north and regional parties in the south – have shown partial validity, considering the existence of exceptions, such as the intra-southern rivalry between Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, but the tendencies remain more than clear (Naveen 2024). The 2024 elections have solidified the political map division of India: the north has firmly aligned with the Hindu-nationalist discourse, while the south remains marked as a space of pluralism, secularism, and regional autonomy.

Since the mid-1980s, the dominant political discourse has increasingly aligned with a cultural reservoir marked by confessional

and caste divisions, thus encouraging a type of politics that motivates voters to vote based on narrow, communal identifications – often against their own rational judgment (the so-called vote bank) – where the INC tried to mobilize minority votes, especially Muslim and other marginalized groups, while the BJP systematically built its own voter base among the Hindu majority population (Mofidi 2014, 21). On the other hand, the greatest barrier to the complete Hinduisation of India is about 200 million Muslims (15% of the population). However, despite fears of demographic rise – it is estimated that by 2050 India will have 1.3 billion Hindus and 300 million Muslims (Khan and Lutful 2021, 6). Nevertheless, this does not prevent the Sangh Parivar and its militant wing, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, from constantly manipulating data about the degree of illegal Muslim migration from Bangladesh and Pakistan and the potential demographic rise that would threaten the existence of the Hindu Rashtra (Deshmukh 2021, 6).

Thus, it is not only a matter of geographical division, but also of cultural and economic differences that have permanently marked the relations between the north and the south. However, in terms of politics, this divide is no longer as pronounced as it was in the first decades after independence. While party lines were once clearer – with the Congress dominating both the north and the south, and the BJP having no influence in the southern states – contemporary political dynamics show greater intermingling. In the meantime, the BJP has gained power in Karnataka and is gradually expanding its influence in other parts of the south, while the INC faces a decline in support at the national level. At the same time, regional parties are gaining strength in the north by mobilizing the Dalit electorate, with major parties such as the BJP and INC increasingly seeking to incorporate intra-Dalit divisions into their strategies. In other words, the north-south cultural-geographical framework remains important, but the political landscape today is significantly more fluid and subject to new forms of coalitions and realignments. Federal cohesion is increasingly questioned – not necessarily in terms of formal secession, but as a crisis of national consensus. The key question becomes – can one party, such as the BJP, legitimately govern India if it systematically loses support in a large part of the south, or is a paradigm already forming in which regional parties, such as *Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam* or *All India Trinamool Congress*, take on the role of balancers and bearers of a new political pluralism? This dynamic opens space for the potential thesis of *de*

facto confederalism. India functions as a network of sub-nations, with an increasingly loose institutional reliance on the center.

Already at the beginning of the previous post-election period, India became more centralized and less liberal – the second Modi government managed to shift India from a de facto Hindu-majority state to a de jure Hindu-majority state through the adoption of controversial policies and laws such as the revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, introduction of the National Register of Citizens, and amendments to the citizenship law (Jaffrelot and Verniers 2020, 1–3).

The idea of one India with multiple political cultures is becoming more present, and the Hindi-dominant model is less viable by peaceful means. BJP's centralizing impulses not only deepen regional tensions but also stimulate demands for deeper institutional reform – in the direction of asymmetric federalism.

At this point, several guidelines are proposed: first, a clearer division of competencies between levels of government is needed, especially in the areas of finance and cultural policy; second, overcoming Hindi normativity and recognizing multiple cultural models of Indian identity is essential; and third, institutions must become spaces of inclusivity, not assimilation. Such an approach has a strong chance of preserving the pluralistic character of India and mitigating the centripetal and centrifugal pressures that divide it.

The question remains open – whether India is on the path to transforming into a Bharat-for-all model or whether the southern states, led by the idea of Dravida Nadu, will gradually distance themselves from a unitary national vision. Instead of answers, a call for re-examination remains. The future of India does not lie in homogeneity but in embracing complexity – not in cornering a single principle of nationhood, but in building dynamic pluralism as the foundation of new national cohesion. If the southern population gains the impression of political marginalization, louder demands for constitutional restructuring could arise, leading to deeper decentralization of power and broader authority for individual states, and if these demands are ignored, there is a risk that some more radical voices in the south may openly advocate the idea of political separation (Tharoor 2025). *Hic iacet lepus*.

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ДВЕ ИНДИЈЕ: ФЕДЕРАЛИЗАМ, РЕГИОНАЛИЗАЦИЈА И ИЗБОРИ 2024. ГОДИНЕ

Резиме

Овај рад истражује дубоке друштвене, културне и политичке поделе између северне и јужне Индије, са посебним освртом на њихов утицај на резултате парламентарних избора 2024. године. Полазећи од хипотезе да се подела Индије на север и југ – заснована на језичким, религијским, економским и културним разликама – директно одражава на политичку динамику, у раду се анализира како су се те разлике институционализовале кроз партијски систем и регионално политичко организовање. Север, у којем доминира хинду-националистичка Баратија џаната партија, супротстављена је југу, широм кога јачају регионалне странке и либералнији политички дискурс, што доприноси дубљем развоју двопартијског односно двокоалиционог система и продубљивању политичке поларизације. У раду се такође разматра и историјски контекст односно утицај колонијализма, религијских и културних идентитета, као и економске диспропорције која подупире регионалне тензије. Истраживање показује да се федерални оквир Индије суочава са изазовима који потичу из растуће политичке и културно-идентитетске поларизације, што у коначном оставља далекосежне последице по стабилност и интеграцију државе.

Кључне речи: Индија, политичка поларизација, регионализам, федерализам, Баратија џаната партија, парламентарни избори

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YUGOSLAVIA-INDIA DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IN THE 1950s[***]

Abstract

The origins of Yugoslav–Indian relations may be traced to the very inception of India's independence. Although diplomatic relations were officially established on December 5, 1948, India did not accredit an ambassador to Yugoslavia until 1954. During the years 1950 and 1951, Yugoslavia, India, and Ecuador held non-permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council, and throughout this period, Yugoslavia and India consistently adopted aligned positions on a broad spectrum of international political matters, thereby laying a firm foundation for the subsequent deepening of their bilateral political engagement. The Non-Aligned Policy in Yugoslavia emerged due to the lack of cooperation with Western countries, but also due to the 1948 Cominform Resolution, which marked the breakdown of relations with the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries. In establishing the principles that Yugoslavia applied when defining its foreign policy strategy, significant influence came from the theoretical

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concepts and practices of the Indian independence movement, the oldest anti-colonial movement in the world. Tito's visit to India and Burma in late 1954 and early 1955 was of great importance for strengthening cooperation, further emphasized by the fact that Tito was the first head of a European state to visit India after it gained independence. Following Broz's visit to India and Burma in late 1954 and early 1955, economic cooperation between the two countries intensified. In July 1956, Nehru visited Yugoslavia once again, and during their meeting on the Brijuni Islands, Tito, Egyptian President Nasser, and Nehru adopted the Brijuni Declaration. However, the first international event that put Yugoslav-Indian relations to the test was the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, India, Josip Broz Tito, Jawaharlal Nehru, non-aligned policy, Non-Aligned Movement, active neutrality, peaceful coexistence, Security Council, United Nations

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Independence Act was proclaimed on August 15, 1947. Its adoption was preceded by negotiations with the Indian National Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, who would later become the country's first Prime Minister. As a result, British India was partitioned into two independent states: India and Pakistan.

Relations between Yugoslavia and India can be traced back to India's independence. Diplomatic ties between the two countries were established on December 5, 1948 (Bogetić 2006, 156). However, while Yugoslavia promptly sent an ambassador to India following the establishment of diplomatic relations, the Indian government did not appoint its representative, citing a lack of suitable personnel and insufficient financial resources. As a result, it was not until 1952 that the Indian ambassador in Rome presented his credentials, thereby also serving as the ambassador to Yugoslavia on a non-residential basis.

However, two years later, India appointed an ambassador to Yugoslavia. During the presentation of credentials, the Indian ambassador stated in his welcoming speech that "our methods are uniquely distinct in economic, social, and political aspects, which makes them valuable on a global scale" (Crnobrnja 2016, 58).

The primary reason for the six-year absence of a diplomatic representative in Yugoslavia appears to have stemmed from the conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, because the Indian leadership sought to maintain strong political ties with the Soviets while also ensuring that the economic assistance received from the "first socialist country" remained unaffected. However, following the death of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, relations between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia began to improve, so this shift in their bilateral relations also contributed to strengthening ties between Yugoslavia and India. According to Bogetić, "The year 1954 truly marked a significant turning point in Yugoslav-Indian relations" (Bogetić 2006, 157).

JOINT ACTION IN THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

At the plenary session of the United Nations General Assembly held on October 20, 1949, Yugoslavia, India, and Ecuador were elected as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council in the second round of voting, securing a two-thirds majority with 39 votes, their term lasted from January 1, 1950, to December 31, 1951 (Jovanović 1990, 42–43). As non-permanent members of the Security Council, Yugoslavia and India adopted shared positions on a wide range of international political issues; this cooperative approach within the United Nations laid the foundation for further strengthening their political relations. According to Jovanović, "During this early period of preparations for the Non-Aligned Movement, the FPRY had its first and most significant alignment with India" (Jovanović 1985, 50).

During this period, international tensions escalated, with the most significant conflict being the Korean War. The war saw the involvement of the United States on the side of the Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of China supporting North Korea. However, without aligning with either side, Yugoslavia, India, and Egypt formed a "compact minority", adopting a shared "perspective on key political issues, including the Korean conflict. Their stance was more moderate than that of the United States and was considered more objective in addressing the interests of both parties in the conflict" (Jovanović 1985, 127).

Regarding the Palestinian issue, Yugoslavia, India, and Iran advocated for the "Federal State Plan" as a framework for determining Palestine's legal and political status (Jovanović 1985, 114). The alignment of Yugoslavia's and India's foreign policy positions was also evident when Yugoslavia supported the Indian delegation's proposal to recognize the People's Republic of China as the legitimate representative of the Chinese people within the United Nations (Jovanović 1985, 195–196).

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND THE BEGINNING OF THE NON-ALIGNED POLICY

The policy of non-alignment in Yugoslavia emerged due to the country's lack of cooperation with Western nations, which stemmed from its initial alignment with the Eastern Bloc in the period immediately following World War II. However, after the 1948 Cominform Resolution, relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union – and, by extension, other socialist countries – deteriorated, prompting Yugoslavia to pursue a non-aligned course. According to Bogetić, "the origins of this doctrine and foreign policy orientation can be traced to Yugoslavia's complex international position during the transition between the 1950s and 1960s. At that time, due to its non-bloc stance, Yugoslavia found itself in conflict with both the East and the West. For the first time, officials in both Moscow and Washington reached a rare consensus. Namely, both sides equated Tito's foreign policy strategy with neutrality, frequently labeling it as 'Yugoslav neutrality.' Both viewed this policy as 'immoral,' 'opportunistic,' 'short-sighted,' and even as 'a type of new social disease'" (Bogetić 2013, 33).

Yugoslavia's foreign policy orientation was not directed toward either the Eastern or Western Bloc. According to Bogetić, "rejected by both East and West, by America and Europe, Yugoslavia once again found itself searching for a new foreign policy strategy and a way out of this complex and dangerous situation" (Bogetić 2013, 34). With no viable prospects for cooperation with either bloc, Yugoslavia had no choice but to establish relations with African and Asian countries. Since none of these nations individually represented a significant political, economic, or military force, only through stronger cooperation with many Asian and African countries could a credible political grouping emerge on the international stage. However, for the newly independent states of Asia and Africa, such an alliance needed not to form a unified third bloc in international relations,

which would become institutionalized and directly opposed to the existing military-political alliances.

The principles that Yugoslavia applied in shaping its foreign policy strategy were significantly influenced by the theoretical concepts and practices of India's independence movement, the world's oldest anti-colonial movement. As early as 1920, the Indian National Congress formulated a Foreign Policy Resolution, which was later amended in 1939 (Bogetić, 2006, 44). Bogetić states, "the foundation of India's foreign policy was not merely based on abstract principles and ideals. Its core was shaped by the philosophy and culture of the ancient civilization to which the country belonged" (Bogetić 2006, 44). The final version of this foreign policy resolution was adopted in December 1948 during the Congress Party session in Jaipur (Bogetić 2006, 44).

When examining the perspectives on international politics and foreign policy issues adopted by the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and India, it is essential to consider the theoretical principles underpinning their actions. One of the first individuals to advocate for cooperation with Asian and African countries was Josip Đerđa. According to Dedijer, "In 1951, after returning from India, he stated during a session of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Collegium that the best way to break Yugoslavia's isolation was to build alliances with newly independent former colonial states, particularly with India" (Dedijer 1984, 554).

On February 18, 1952, during a speech at the Second Party Conference of the Guards Division, Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito first introduced the concept of "active neutrality" and outlined its principles: 1) combating all forms of aggressive war and spheres of influence politics; 2) opposing all forms of interference in the internal affairs of individual countries and preventing progressive liberation movements from being turned into instruments of great powers; 3) maintaining good neighborly relations; 4) promoting comprehensive peaceful economic, political, and cultural cooperation, as well as democratic international relations based on equality and understanding (Jovanović 1985, 52).

According to Gudac and Đorđević, "the first example of the application of the principle of coexistence is the agreement concluded between China and India in 1954, which addresses the issue of Tibet" (Gudac i Đorđević 2000, 140). The concept of active neutrality encompasses four of the five principles of peaceful coexistence outlined in the aforementioned agreement between the People's Republic of China and India, known as Panch Sheel. This agreement expressed the commitment

of both states to respect territorial integrity and sovereignty, the principle of non-intervention, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and the achievement of equality and mutual benefit. Although the term peaceful coexistence is not explicitly mentioned when listing the principles of active neutrality, Yugoslavia embraced its essence by committing to non-alignment with either of the two opposing military-political blocs and establishing cooperation on equal terms with all countries, regardless of their socio-political systems and economic relations (Jovanović 1985, 52).

According to Gudac and Đorđević, "this policy is anti-bloc, as blocs divide nations and states. Coexistence enables cooperation among peoples, with each country required to respect the integrity, sovereignty, independence, social system, and equality of other nations" (Gudac i Đorđević 2000, 140). On December 18, 1962, the United Nations General Assembly proposed the codification of the fundamental principles of coexistence, which were later adopted in a special declaration in 1970 (Gudac i Đorđević 2000, 140).

According to Dedijer, "at the end of 1954, Tito, along with Ranković and Koča Popović, visited India and Burma. This trip was of great historical significance" (Dedijer 1984, 554). The importance of establishing cooperation with Yugoslavia is underscored by the fact that Josip Broz Tito was the first head of a European state invited to visit India after the Asian nation gained independence. It marked the first visit by a European leader to India, which did not have a colonial connotation. Regarding Broz's visit to India and Burma, Dragan Bogetić states: "Tito's visit to India and Burma in late 1954 and early 1955, countries that already had a developed and politically articulated doctrine of coexistence, represented a turning point for the final definition of the new Yugoslav strategy and for the subsequent formulation of a broad platform for the institutionalization of multilateral action by non-aligned states within the Non-Aligned Movement" (Bogetić 2006, 43). A similar viewpoint is shared by Jovan Čavoški, who emphasizes: "Moreover, this was a historical moment when socialist Yugoslavia finally ceased to be an aligned country, as it had previously been within the Soviet Bloc, or a semi-aligned country in its close cooperation with the US and NATO in the early 1950s, by then, it had become an authentically non-aligned country, fully committed to a non-bloc policy and prioritizing cooperation with all, as it was popular to say at the time, non-aligned nations worldwide, especially those in Asia, and later in Africa" (Čavoški 2023, 217–218).

In this context, the speech of Yugoslav President Tito in the Indian Parliament on December 21, 1954, drew special attention. Highlighting the similarities between the foreign policy principles of Yugoslavia and India, Broz spoke about the principle of peaceful coexistence, the bloc division of the world, and the importance of non-alignment with either of the two blocs in international relations, but he also expressed the need for coordinated action in the foreign policy of Yugoslavia and the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa. According to his perspective, there are "four fundamental negative elements that are the causes of all the ills that humanity fears and worries about today, which appear not only unnecessary but also absurd to all progressive people. These are: first, inequality among states and nations; second, interference in the internal affairs of others, often perpetrated by the largest and most developed countries; third, the division of the world into spheres of interest and blocs; and fourth, colonialism. Until these four elements are eliminated from practice in international relations, humanity will not be free from fear for its fate" (Bogetić 2006, 44).

During his visit to India, the President of Yugoslavia was ceremoniously welcomed in all the places he visited (New Delhi, Shimla, Lucknow, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Mysore), where mass gatherings were organized. However, Broz's aspiration to establish closer relations based on the principles of peaceful coexistence encountered a cautious attitude from his Indian hosts, who believed it was more natural for their country to connect with other nations on the Asian continent rather than to pursue stronger political, economic, military, and cultural cooperation with distant European countries.

While newly independent states did not look favorably upon establishing ties with Western countries, particularly former colonial powers, there was no reservation about forming significant economic, political, and military relations with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Additionally, India refused to confront major world powers unless Indian national interests were directly threatened. Therefore, Yugoslavia faced the challenge of bringing new Asian and African countries closer to the principles of peaceful coexistence, which did not involve aligning with either of the two existing political, military, and economic blocs.

On the other hand, Tito explained to Nehru the reasons for the establishment, nature of the alliance, and his country's involvement in the Balkan Pact, which it had established with Greece and Turkey. Since

Greece and Turkey were members of NATO, it was necessary to clarify Yugoslavia's stance toward the Western military alliance During his visit to Brioni, when meeting with Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, the Chairperson of the United Nations General Assembly and Nehru's sister, who extended a personal invitation to the Yugoslav president to visit India, Broz spoke about the Balkan Pact, "justifying it by Yugoslavia's security interests and the urgent need to stabilize the situation in the region" (Čavoški 2023, 226). Thus, Tito's explanation emphasized that the character of this alliance was defensive rather than aggressive.

However, it should be emphasized that neither India nor Yugoslavia strictly adhered to the policy of non-alignment with either of the two opposing military-political blocs. While Yugoslavia moved closer to the West after the Informbiro Resolution in 1948, India engaged in intensive political and economic cooperation with the USSR (Bogetić 2006, 158).

In October 1954, diplomatic relations were established between Yugoslavia and China, which contributed to improving the reputation of the Yugoslav state in Asian countries that Broz intended to visit. Tito's visit to India and Burma, which followed closely, promoted the non-aligned stance of states emerging from the decolonization processes in Africa and Asia, while also highlighting the potential for the development of a wide range of economic, financial, trade, political, military, and cultural forms of cooperation. Western powers viewed the Yugoslav president's visit to India and Burma in light of the improving relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, which distanced newly established states from Western countries and weakened their political, economic, and cultural ties with former colonizers. The distancing of Asian and African countries from former colonial powers implied a weakening of the defense capabilities of the military alliance of Western states, NATO. Thus, neither of the two opposing blocs looked favorably upon the policy of non-alignment. According to Bogetić, "the logic of blocs did not allow for a positive treatment of non-aligned policies, but at least conditions were created for its recognition as a respectable international option" (Bogetić 2006, 52).

As the non-aligned policy did not embody a neutral stance of a group of states with a regional character,[1] Indonesian President Sukarno

[1] It is undeniable that there were regional influences on the Non-Aligned Movement. According to Damian, "When considering the regional influences on the policy and movement of non-alignment, especially those manifested through regional institutions, the connections are referred to not only from the perspective of the genesis of these two phenomena in contemporary international relations but also

advocated for a non-aligned policy that implied a universal and active approach to abstaining from any military, political, or economic bloc. According to Štrbac, "In the universalism of international solidarity and within the framework of the UN-established international legitimacy, the peoples of numerous countries saw the most secure foundation and guarantee of their independence, as well as the opportunity for equal participation in international affairs" (Štrbac 1988, 103). In this context, Bogdan Crnobrnja, then Secretary-General to President Josip Broz, spoke about Tito's understanding of the idea of universality and non-alignment during the 1961 Belgrade Conference: "Starting from the premise that non-engagement is neither a tactic nor a temporary condition, but rather an objective necessity of the modern world, our position at the conference was shaped accordingly. Nations should not be classified as good or evil (black and white). Non-engagement should not be viewed as merely a regional movement. Efforts must be made to ensure its most universal character, with special attention given to strengthening cooperation among non-aligned countries. Supporters of a non-bloc policy exist everywhere. We should not reject them; on the contrary, we must do everything possible to increase their numbers. Our work should facilitate newly independent states in adopting a non-bloc policy more easily. We must assist them in this endeavor" (Crnobrnja 2016, 86).

COOPERATION BETWEEN YUGOSLAVIA AND INDIA AFTER 1954

After Tito visited India in 1954, Nehru visited Yugoslavia the following year. At the end of this visit, a joint declaration was signed in Brioni on June 6, in which both sides agreed that they were already guided by the same principles in international politics, and Yugoslavia and India continued to align their views on significant issues in foreign policy relations, which was particularly evident through their actions within the United Nations.

In July 1956, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Yugoslavia again and held meetings in Brioni with Yugoslav President

within the realm of their common interests and goals (which may be identical, only partially overlapping, or coinciding), additionally, the connections in the development of their political platforms, as well as in the area of their specific activities, are examined" (Damian, 1988, 215).

Josip Broz Tito and Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, where they discussed the most important issues of international politics. As a result of these discussions, a joint document known as the Brioni Declaration was adopted. According to Bogetić, "In domestic and foreign literature, this meeting is marked as a historical turning point and a key event within the initiatives of non-aligned states for the creation of the non-aligned movement. It is noted that this was the first meeting of the three future leaders of the non-aligned movement, at which the first multilateral document of the non-aligned was adopted" (Bogetić 2006, 159).

However, the first international event that tested Yugoslav-Indian relations was the situation in Hungary in 1956, known as the Hungarian Revolution, which lasted from October 23 to November 10 of that year and was brutally suppressed by Soviet military forces. According to Tripković, "although Tito and Yugoslavia were not directly accused, Soviet leaders believed that part of the 'guilt' for the political developments in these countries lay with the 'Yugoslav example.' It was assessed that the attitude towards Tito and the Yugoslav party needed to be 'set in the right place,' so in addition to the message conveyed at the meeting with representatives of the socialist bloc countries, the Presidium of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union sent a secret letter to party members in early July regarding the talks between delegations from the USSR and the People's Republic of Yugoslavia. The letter stated that there were still many ideological differences between the two parties, stemming from the delusions of the Yugoslav communists and the economic dependence of Yugoslavia on the West" (Tripković 2013, 34). The events in Hungary thus further strained relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, which also influenced India's cautious stance regarding the events in Hungary and Yugoslav perspectives on the Hungarian Revolution, fearing that deviating from neutral positions could worsen their relations with the USSR.

According to Tripković, "In the summer of 1956, the ideological differences between Belgrade and Moscow became increasingly pronounced and visible, as well as the dissatisfaction of the Soviet side due to the failure to bind Tito more closely to the socialist bloc and to neutralize the Yugoslav example in the eyes of the countries of the socialist camp" (Tripković 2013, 36). Therefore, the deterioration of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union was followed by great interest not only in India but also in other countries in Asia and Africa, which also paid special attention to the newly developed circumstances

between the two socialist states. To avoid various interpretations that were already emerging in the public of those countries, President Tito visited seven Asian and African countries from December 1958 to March 1959, which did not belong to either of the two blocs – Indonesia, Burma, Ceylon, Sudan, India, Ethiopia, and Egypt. In all these countries, he discussed three groups of issues with the heads of state or governments: on the internal matters of the host countries; on current international issues; and on the improvement of bilateral relations (Bogetić 2006, 314).

Broz spent six days in India from January 13 to 18, 1959. During this period, he spent two days in New Delhi and had two discussions with Nehru. During these discussions, Nehru posed a series of questions to Tito on international politics, to which the Yugoslav president patiently responded. Both sides agreed that China was pursuing a hegemonic policy, which would lead to a deterioration of relations with the Soviet Union; however, they did not share agreement regarding Nasser's aspirations for unification with Iraq, which the Indian president viewed as a potential source of regional instability. There were also disagreements regarding the so-called Berlin crisis, as India did not share Yugoslav views in support of the Soviets, who had issued an ultimatum to the Western allies to transfer access routes to West Berlin to East Germany if they did not declare Berlin a "free city" within six months (Bogetić 2006, 322–324).

It is noticeable that Nehru exhibited restraint during Broz's visit concerning issues that could lead to regional conflicts. The Yugoslav president also had informal contacts with Indian leaders during his visits to other Indian cities, such as Hyderabad, Madurai, and Madras.

ESTABLISHMENT OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN YUGOSLAVIA AND INDIA

Following Tito's visit to India and Burma at the end of 1954 and the beginning of 1955, economic cooperation intensified. Access to Asian and African markets allowed Yugoslavia to sell industrial products that would have faced challenges in the more competitive Western markets. Additionally, trade through clearing arrangements helped reduce the country's foreign currency outflow.

The first agreement between India and Yugoslavia was signed on December 29, 1948, but there were significant difficulties in its

implementation. A new trade agreement was signed four years later, on July 24, 1953. However, a turning point in the development of trade relations between India and Yugoslavia occurred in 1956, when exports to India increased by as much as 15 times, rising from $254,000 to $3,875,593, while imports from India more than doubled, rising from $384,000 to $898,000 (Bogetić 2006, 162). While Yugoslavia exported steel, industrial rails, steel sheets, electrolytic zinc, and aluminum rods to India, over 90 percent of the imports from India to Yugoslavia consisted of iron ore (Bogetić 2006, 163). Direct shipping was also established between Yugoslav and Indian ports, and on March 31, 1956, a new trade agreement was signed, which was set to remain in effect until 1960 (Bogetić 2006, 162).

However, two significant problems existed in the trade relations between Yugoslavia and India. The first issue was the substantial imbalance between exports and imports, as Yugoslav imports from India covered only one-fifth of the exports from Yugoslavia to this Asian country. The second problem was related to the structure of exports. Although the export of finished machinery and electrical products, for which the Yugoslav economy could not find buyers in the Western market, increased 15 times in 1957, it still remained relatively small. Overall, Yugoslav exports to India grew by 11 percent that year, amounting to $4,306,556 (Bogetić 2006, 163–164). Processed industrial products accounted for 85 percent of Yugoslav exports to India, while 96 percent of Indian exports to Yugoslavia consisted of iron and manganese ores (Bogetić 2006, 164).

However, due to the significant imbalance between Yugoslav exports to India and imports from India to Yugoslavia, the Indian side could no longer pay for goods in British pounds. This was communicated to the Yugoslav economic delegation that visited India in September 1957. Starting in early 1958, the Indian side began to pay for items imported from Yugoslavia in rupees, as a result, it was necessary to establish a balanced trade system by reducing the export of those products from Yugoslavia to India that could be sold abroad for dollars, while simultaneously increasing the number of products imported from India to Yugoslavia, which included coffee, tea, sugar, spices, and leather.

Nevertheless, despite the significant increase in trade cooperation with non-aligned countries, Yugoslavia's most important trading partners remained European states and the United States. Throughout the existence of the Non-Aligned Movement, the share of European

countries and the USA accounted for 78 percent, while the participation of developing countries was only 20 percent (Bogetić 2013, 37). On the other hand, in 1962, developing countries exported as much as 71.5 percent of their total exports to developed states, 22% went to other developing countries, and only 4.4 percent was exported to Eastern European countries (Stanovnik 1988, 313).

CONCLUSION

The cooperation between Yugoslavia and India emerged in the period following the end of World War II, when both countries found themselves in a specific international position. While Yugoslavia belonged to the Eastern, communist bloc after the war, the Cominform Resolution of June 28, 1948, separated socialist Yugoslavia from the "first socialist country," the Soviet Union, resulting in the cessation of all economic, political, and military relations with both the Soviets and other socialist states.

Since India had just entered international relations, striving to avoid alignment with either the military-political bloc centered around the United States and NATO or the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, it was not in its interest to confront either side. In contrast, Yugoslavia, having exited the Soviet Bloc, formed the Balkan Pact in 1953 together with Greece and Turkey, both members of the NATO alliance. Due to Greece and Turkey's membership in this Western military alliance, Tito explained to Nehru that the nature of this pact was defensive, rather than a military force aimed at conquering other countries.

The significance of the cooperation between Yugoslavia and India in the 1950s stemmed from the fact that Yugoslavia was the only European country pursuing a policy of non-alignment, while India had the largest population among the states that later founded the Non-Aligned Movement.

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ОДНОС ЈУГОСЛАВИЈЕ И ИНДИЈЕ ПЕДЕСЕТИХ ГОДИНА XX ВЕКА[***]

Резиме

Југославија и Индија су успоставили дипломатске односе након стицања индијске независности. Дипломатски односи између две државе успостављени су 5. децембра 1948. године, али је Индија тек 1954. године у Југославију послала амбасадора. Југославија, Индија и Еквадор су током 1950. и 1951. године биле несталне чланице Савета безбедности Уједињених нација и у том периоду Југославија и Индија су заузимале заједничке ставове по читавом низу питања међународне политике, што је представљао основу за даље проширивање политичких односа. Политика несврстаности у Југославији настала је као последица одсуства сарадње са западним земљама, али и због Резолуције Информбироа од 1948. године која је значила прекид сарадње са Совјетским Савезом и другим земљама Источног блока. У успостављању начела која је Југославија примењивала приликом дефинисања стратегије своје спољне политике значајну улогу су имали теоријски концепти и праксе индијског покрета за стицање независности, као најстаријег антиколонијалног покрета на свету. Титова посета Индији и Бурми крајем 1954. и почетком 1955. година била је од великог значаја за јачање сарадње, а о њеном значају говори и чињеница да је Тито био први шеф неке европске државе, који је посетио Индију након што је стекла независност. Након Брозове посете Индији и Бурми,

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с краја 1954. и почетка 1955. године, интензивира се и економска сарадња две земље. Нехру је јула 1956. године поново посетио Југославију и на Брионима су Тито, египатски председник Насер и Нехру усвојили Брионску декларацију. Међутим, први међународни догађај који је ставио на пробу југословенско-индијске односе је Мађарска револуција из 1956. године.

Кључне речи: Југославија, Индија, Јосип Броз Тито, Џавахарлал Нехру, политика несврстаности, Покрет несврстаних, активна неутралност, мирољубива коегзистенција, Савет безбедности, Уједињене нације

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Revisiting the State of Nature: Hobbes in Contemporary Perspective

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HOBBES' ACCOUNT OF LIFE IN THE STATE OF NATURE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS**

Abstract

In an infamous paragraph in his *magnum opus*, *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes describes what he perceives to be the miserable condition of humankind in the state of nature, concluding that human life in this state is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes 1996, 84). To properly understand the relevance and implications of this claim, we shall first examine how the concept of a state of nature came to be. Then, we shall look at the specificities of Hobbes' own account, pointing out certain generally neglected details. Afterward, we will analyze what some of Hobbes' critics had to say on the issue, and how he either preemptively defended his claims or could have responded to them, based on his theory. Finally, we shall examine what might be the most complex

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and intriguing topic related to this subject: namely, how a defense of natural rights as inalienable could be constructed upon a foundation of a chaotic state of nature driven by scarcity and conflict.

Keywords: state of nature, state of war, natural rights, Hobbes, *Leviathan*

INTRODUCTION

In his own time, Hobbes must have seemed implacable as a political philosopher: unlike the earlier Renaissance republican theorists, such as Machiavelli and Guicciardini or the later Enlightenment proponents of democracy, such as Voltaire or Montesquieu, both of whom could trace the origin of their ideas to the Classical period, the social contract theory that was originated by Hobbes was uniquely a product of the various circumstances of 17th century England. The implicit issues of illegitimacy of feudalism and social estates aside, its unique foundation marks it as a theoretical concept that could only have emerged after the European discovery of America. This is because, despite the astounding theoretical contributions of the Classical period, its authors, such as Plato (Plato 2004) and Aristotle (Aristotle 1998) simply had no basis to formulate a social contract theory upon: with the societies of the 'barbarian' peoples that surrounded ancient Rome and Greece having been far too similar to the 'civilized' ones for a fundamental, systemic difference to be recognized, Greek and Roman theorists simply assumed the institutions of the neighboring peoples to be essentially similar to their own. This is largely because the kingships of the Greeks and Romans that preceded their republics had kingship-based constitutions, very similar to, say, those of the Gauls, or the Germanians.

The position they took was understandably intuitive at the time but became untenable with the European discovery of the New World: the Spanish chronicles that described native societies made it absolutely clear that their institutions were on a fundamentally different plane from those of early modern European states (Locke 2003, 144). Precisely what these institutions were and how they functioned was, at the time, still beyond even the boundaries of imagination; however, the fact that there was, indeed, a fundamental difference could no longer be denied. Locke even went so far as to say that "In the beginning, all the world was America" (Canessa and Picq 2024, 65). Thus, with the assumption that a

sequence of social development had to be similar in some fundamental respects for all peoples of the human family, the social contract theorists hypothesized that the state as we know it did not exist since the inception of humankind in any part of the world but rather came into being at some point (Przybylinski 2023, 18). What primarily distinguished the societies of the New World was a kinship-based organization, as opposed to a territorial one, as well as a lack of permanent functions of civil government (Locke 2003, 144).

Although this point might seem trivial nowadays, it was, at the time, nothing short of revolutionary in the social sciences: before this time, the doctrine of the divine right of kings, derived from the Old Testament, held that the state was as old as humankind itself, having been founded upon Adam and Eve's exile from Heaven (Locke 2003, 16). Though this position is contradicted by countless discoveries made in a number of social sciences since that time, it could hardly be questioned before the European discovery of America.[1] This was because the origin of the state in most cases coincided with the introduction of written records, which meant that previous ages fell into myths and legends that could be interpreted in several different ways, which brought about the assumption of a state-like character of ancient systems.

The discovery of stateless societies, however, shook this doctrine to its core: John Locke's critique of Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* in his first treatise of government was, perhaps, one of the earliest examples of the gradual replacement of the divine right of kings by the social contract theory (Zorzi 2019, 183). That the process was indeed gradual is well illustrated by Christopher Betts' observation that in 1762, most Europeans still believed that kings had a divine right to rule, and further, that of those who embraced the social contract theory, the majority still preferred monarchy as a form of government (Betts 1994, xii). Nevertheless, the discovery of stateless societies made it clear that the state had to have originated at some point in time, with the clear implication being that a significant portion of human existence was spent under fundamentally different circumstances. For lack of knowledge of the actual social conditions among the peoples of the New World, the nature of these circumstances was, at the time,

[1] Notwithstanding the immense authority that the church at the time still enjoyed in civil matters, arguments against this position could hardly be made on a factual basis due to a lack of knowledge in crucial aspects of the gradual development of social institutions.

a subject of pure speculation that varied with the opinions of theorists who expressed them. However, a common denominator connected them – the state of nature.

HOBBES' STATE OF NATURE

Unlike Locke, who dedicates the first of his *Two Treatises of Government* to overthrowing the "false principles and foundations" of Sir Robert Filmer and his followers (Locke 2003, 1), Hobbes – curiously – deals with the subject of epistemology in the first part of his *magnum opus*, *Leviathan*, examining how knowledge and beliefs are formed, as well as how to categorize their different aspects. He then proceeds to the subject of politics, claiming, first, that nature has made men relatively equal, and second, that from this equality of ability proceeds the hope of obtaining equal ends (Hobbes 1996, 82) inevitably leads to diffidence and then war (83). "Hereby it is manifest," Hobbes concludes, "that during the time they live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man" (84).

Hobbes specifies that, due to this constant enmity, there is no industry, culture, or knowledge in the state of nature (Hobbes 1996, 84); and since there is no common power to distinguish between right and wrong, or determine propriety or dominion, everything is his who can take and keep it (85). The result is well summed up by his (in)famous quote: human life in the state of nature is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (84). The Latin phrase *homo homini lupus est*, commonly associated with this description, actually never makes an appearance in *Leviathan*: Hobbes, in fact, uses it in another work, *De Cive*, where he quotes Plautus' *Asinaria* in order to describe the relationship between different political communities and, more specifically, their leaders (Hobbes 1998, 3). Hobbes, however, also points out that the state of war, as he describes it, has never existed; instead, the clearest glimpse into this is given to us by the societies of Native Americans,[2] civil wars, and the relationship between kings (Hobbes 1996, 85).

[2] The assumption that Native Americans lived, in Hobbes' words, "without a common power to keep them all in owe" illustrates the immense ignorance that pervaded the social sciences at the time. The absence of a state in the modern sense was obvious, but the actual system in place was beyond the pale of imagination. A gradual increase in knowledge on this subject is well illustrated by contrasting Hobbes

To better understand Hobbes' bleak account of the state of nature, we must carefully examine his understanding of human nature: in this regard, it's interesting to begin by pointing out that he was highly critical of Aristotle's famous description of man as *zoon politikon3* (Aristotle 1998, 5). Hobbes argues that, though this axiom is very widely accepted, it is nevertheless false: "the error proceeds from a superficial view of human nature" (Hobbes 1998, 22). He later claims that the famous deeds and works of Greek and Roman authors (4) became such not by reason, but by grandeur, and that a major cause of the dissolution of commonwealths is the misguided attempt to imitate Greeks and Romans (Hobbes 1996, 217).

Although he rejects Aristotle's premise that men are social by nature, a proposition also shared by Kant, despite the latter's commitment to the categorical imperative as the foundational principle of morality (Kant 2006, 165), Hobbes also points out that humans aren't evil by nature, but, as they are born animals, their nature sometimes makes them act against their duty (Hobbes 1998, 11).[4] In this context, Hobbes notes that all men are born unfit for society since, as infants, they get angry if they don't get everything they want (11), and further, that many people remain so later in life due to lack of training or mental illness (25). "Therefore", he concludes, "man is made fit for Society not by nature, but by training" (25).

Based on this premise, Hobbes argues that men need society to *live* as infants and need it to *live well* as adults; however, he points out that civil societies are not mere gatherings, since they require good faith and agreements for their making (Hobbes 1998, 24). This point implies that 'mere gatherings' are the pinnacle of human association in the state of nature, and, further, that, being coincidental and temporary, they lack the necessary conditions to establish lasting rights upon. Hobbes' argument here reveals an ignorance of tribal systems based upon the bonds of

with Locke, who specifically refers to the Spanish chrnonicler Jose de Acosta in briefly describing the social conditions of several Native American peoples (Locke 2003, 144). In order to prove that the state hadn't existed since the inception of humankind, he notes that these peoples lived in "troops" and elected their "captains" as they pleased, and further, that these leaders had absolute authority in war, but very little in peace (147).

3 *Zoon politikon* stands for *political animal* in ancient Greek.

4 The fact that Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859 makes Hobbes' observation far ahead of its time, and particularly bold, considering the church's immense influence at the time.

consanguinity, which have reigned in human societies worldwide for thousands of years before the establishment of states (Morgan 1877, 388). However, on its own merit, and in the context of Hobbes' theory, the claim that there could have been no social basis for rights before the creation of states meant that the right and law of nature operated in the anterior condition.

In Hobbes' own definition, the right of nature, *ius naturale*, "is the liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life", whereas the law of nature, *lex naturalis*, "is a percept, or general rule, found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do, that, which is destructive of his own life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same" (Hobbes 1996, 86). As we can see, the principles that function as necessary natural substitutes for state-enacted rights and laws are based on reason and self-preservation, which gives them a fundamentally rational, existential character. Neither entirely political nor entirely moral, they tread the fine line between the two, their only purpose being the perpetuation of human life. We shall later see precisely how these principles figure into Hobbes' theory of rights.

As for the state of nature itself, its exact character and circumstances remain somewhat vague: on the one hand, Hobbes claims in *Leviathan* that it is a state of war of every man against every man; on the other, he implies in *De Cive* that temporary 'gatherings' of people can occur in it. In yet another instance, he establishes that it has never truly existed and that certain instances of disunity and strife merely offer glimpses into it. What, then, is the state of nature? A good answer to this question is provided by John Simmons in reference to Locke's theory: Simmons regards Locke's state of nature as a *normative* condition as opposed to an *empirical* one (Simmons 1989, 451). Since Locke offers specific examples of the state of nature (Locke 2003, 144), this isn't precisely an inarguable interpretation; however, it is entirely serviceable in this context, since the puzzle of Hobbes' state of nature can only be resolved by specifying it as a normative condition. The reason we may specify Hobbes' state of nature as a normative condition, as opposed to an empirical one, is because its essence isn't in perpetual war, but rather in perpetual inclination thereto, for lack of an assurance to the contrary, due to the non-existence of a commonly-recognized power that would regulate interpersonal relations.

This is further supported by a rather obscure paragraph in the *Leviathan* that preemptively addresses some of the critiques that were laid against Hobbes' theory: in it, he specifies that, rather than referring to constant interpersonal fighting, the state of war that he describes ought to be understood as a condition of permanent insecurity. "For as the nature of foul weather, lieth not in a shower or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many days together", Hobbes writes, "so the nature of war, consisted not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary" (Hobbes 1996, 84). The problem with the state of nature, therefore, isn't in the fact that people are actively fighting one another in it, but that, due to the fact that they have no higher authority to appeal to, they can never obtain the kind of stability that only permanent security under an established state could enable.

NASTY, BRUTISH, AND SHORT

Upon its very inception, Hobbes' theory was subjected to extreme scrutiny and harsh criticism, which has continued, with some intermissions, throughout the centuries that followed. Charles Tarlton observes that there have been attempts to "liberalize" Hobbes' "despotical" doctrine, and reminds us that Hobbes' entire theory was centered around justifying the arbitrary power of the absolute sovereign (Tarlton 2001, 589–590). In the final part of this paper, we shall look at certain key features of Hobbes' theory that run contrary to this observation. For now, though, let us review the reactions of his immediate philosophical successors and how Hobbes addressed the issues they took with his doctrine in advance.

The primary critique directed against Hobbes' conception of the state of nature from within the social contract theory was formulated by Locke. However, in order to understand the foundations of this critique, we must first look at some of the implications that Hobbes draws from his conception. Namely, because he equivocates the state of nature with that of war, he views its transcendence as an absolute necessity, thus imposing only the bare minimum of conditions upon the social contract and the creation of the state. Famously, unlike Locke (Locke 2003, 142) and Rousseau (Rousseau 1994, 54), who view a unanimous vote as a necessary condition of the future legitimacy of all public decisions, Hobbes merely insists on a majority vote when forming the social contract (Hobbes 1996, 115).

This, of course, directly relates to his view of the state of nature, and his understanding of human nature: scarcity is a key component of the former and a reluctance to cooperate – of the latter. The combination of the two factors – while not resulting in actual constant warfare – nevertheless creates a condition in which there can never be any stability, development or progress, a condition in which the most favorable possibility is that of a temporary stalemate – or, to paraphrase Hobbes' above-mentioned metaphor, an interlude between two showers of rain (Hobbes 1996, 84). With this in mind, then, it becomes clear why Locke and Rousseau were so vehemently opposed to Hobbes' conception – but their critiques may have led them to a harsher judgement of Hobbes than may have been justified.

In his famous rebuttal of Hobbes' view of the state of nature and the lax standards for forming the social contract that it necessitates, Locke writes: "To ask how you may be guarded from harm, or injury, on the side where the strongest hand is to do it, is presently the voice of faction and rebellion: as if when men quitting the state of nature entered into society, they agreed that all of them but one should be under the restraint of laws, but that he should still retain all the liberty of the state of nature, increased with power, and made licentuous by impunity. This is to think that all men are so foolish, that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done them by pole-cats, or foxes; but are content, nay think it safety, to be devoured by lions" (Locke 2003, 140).

To give proper context here, it is necessary to point out that Locke actually prefers the state of nature to absolutism (Locke 2003, 105).[5] Since he views it as a state of relative plenty and (limited) cooperation, despite the same essential insecurity that proceeds from a lack of common power, there is a philosophical rift on this issue between Locke and Hobbes that cannot be abridged. Nonetheless, Hobbes was apparently aware that critics would take issue with his views when he wrote the following: "Let him [that has not well weighed these things] therefore consider with himself ... what opinion he has of his fellow-subjects, when he rides armed; of his fellow citizens, when he locks his doors; and of his children, and servants, when he locks his chests. Does he not

[5] Hobbes is widely viewed as a proponent of absolutism (Tarlton 2001), and while there is a strong case to be made in favor of this thesis, there are also issues to be taken with it, and we will delve deeper into these toward the end of this, and in the next chapter.

there as much accuse humankind by his actions as I do by my words?" (Hobbes 1996, 84).

"But", he proceeds to explain, "neither of us accuse man's nature in it" (Hobbes 1996, 85): this is because, neither our passions or inclinations, or the vices that proceed therefrom, are in and of themselves a sin, until a law is enacted that prohibits them which, in turn, requires that there be a sovereign that would enact it. And the creation of that sovereign is, in Hobbes' view, man's only salvation from the "nasty, brutish, and short" life in the state of nature. This brings us neatly along to Rousseau's critique of Hobbes.

Namely, Rousseau puts Hobbes in the same proverbial basket as Hugo Grotius, claiming that, between the opinions that any one man belongs to the human race, and that the human race belongs to one man, the two would lean toward the latter (Rousseau 1994, 47). This 'blame' can be pinned on Hobbes' comment toward the end of the *Leviathan*, that the primary cause of the dissolution of commonwealths is their imperfect foundation, which is primarily reducible to a lack of absolute and arbitrary legislative power (Hobbes 1996, 470). As we'll see in the final chapter, this statement is problematic based on the foundations of his own theory.

For now, though, with regard to Rousseau's critique, it is imperative to distinguish between Hobbes' *favoring of absolutism* and his *definition of sovereignty as absolute*. On that point, we will see that he and Rousseau are actually in complete agreement and that both theorists – one favoring monarchy and the other democracy – simultaneously oppose *feudalism*. Namely, Hobbes points out that, in order for the social state to be maintainable in the long term, sovereignty must be absolute and indivisible (Hobbes 1996, 116, 120). This is regardless of the state's constitution and is equally applicable to monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, even though, as Hobbes points out, a popular assembly may seem absurd as a sovereign (121).

Things get interesting as we look further into Rousseau's theory, where sovereignty is not only defined as absolute and indivisible, but also untransferable (Rousseau 1994, 63–65). Referring to his concept of the General will, Rousseau stipulates that it is only expressed in laws, and that all lesser governmental acts are merely their application (64). We see, then, that, though Hobbes and Rousseau are polar opposites when it comes to the kind of government they favor, their understanding of sovereignty is practically identical: this is a uniquely modern political idea

that arose in response to the comparatively chaotic social circumstances of feudalism, in which the diffusion of power between monarchs and various estates of landed nobility caused significant internal strife.

WHENCE NATURAL RIGHTS?

With Hobbes' understanding of the state of nature being what it is, the question of natural rights and their inalienable character inevitably arises. In this chapter, we shall take a look at whether fundamental rights can be reconciled with a pessimistic understanding of the state of nature and the favoring of absolutism that proceeds therefrom. On the surface, it would appear that absolutism runs contrary to inalienable rights, and, further, that a state of nature which is characterized by scarcity and a tendency toward conflict cannot act as their foundation. This is where the beautiful complexity of Hobbes' political theory emerges.

Namely, recall how Hobbes wrote that *ius naturale* "is the liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life" (Hobbes 1996, 86). This contrasts the normative condition of the state of nature, in which, due to a lack of common power that would establish laws, "every man has a right to every thing; even to one another's body" (87). Now, if every man has the right to every thing, *even to another's body*, how can each man also have the right to his own preservation? Both of these rights are natural inasmuch as they originate from the normative conditions of the state of nature (, a lack of common power that would enact laws), but they appear to be mutually exclusive. The question plainly is: how can I exercise my right to protect my life, if it has the same normative value as your right to kill me?

To resolve this dilemma, we must look to the crucial distinction between *natural* rights, and *fundamental* or *inalienable* rights. In order to get a better understanding of the latter, we shall reproduce Hobbes' paragraph on the issue: "Whensoever a man transferreth his right, or renounceth it; it is either in consideration of some right reciprocally transferred to himself; or some other good he hopeth for thereby ... the motive, and end for which this renouncing, and transferring of right is introduced, is nothing else but the security of a man's person, in his life, and in the means of so preserving life, as not to be weary of it. And therefore if a man by words, or other signs, seem to despoil himself of the end, for which those signs were intended; he is not to be understood

as if he meant it, or that it was his will; but that he was ignorant of how such words and actions were to be interpreted" (Hobbes 1996, 88–89).

Let us proceed to unpack this paragraph carefully: firstly, it is evident that Hobbes directly ties inalienable rights to a person's fundamental interests – hence, their inalienable character is derived from the fact that the 'goods' they refer to are, in one way or another, necessary for a person's self-preservation. This is well illustrated by the exact words that Hobbes uses: "life, and the means of so preserving life, as not to be weary of it" (Hobbes 1996, 88) – this simultaneously represents the first-ever formulation of inalienable rights, since it not only refers to the right to life, but also to rights to liberty and property, however rudimentary the wording may be.

Namely, we know this because Hobbes later clarifies that no covenant can be made which obliges us *not to* defend ourselves from force, be it death, injury, or imprisonment, since men necessarily choose the lesser evil, which is *danger* of death in resisting, rather than the greater, which is *certainty* of death in not resisting (Hobbes 1996, 93). Since a covenant that effectively obliges one to abandon or transfer the rights to life and liberty is null and void by default, this makes it clear that these rights are inalienable in Hobbes; this leaves us with the interesting question of the right to property, which is quite prominent in Locke (Shanks 2019, 311). Although Hobbes barely touches upon it, his definition of fundamental rights also implies that it is inalienable, albeit in a narrow, minimalistic context.

To understand precisely what Hobbes comprehends by this minimalistically-defined right to property, let's go back to that interesting formulation, "life, and the means of so preserving life, as not to be weary of it" (Hobbes 1996, 88): the means of preserving life here implicitly refer to food, drink, medicine and lodging – the basic material necessities of life. This interpretation is further supported by Hobbes' view that stealing during famine is legitimate (Hobbes 1996, 200).[6] Obviously, his conception of fundamental rights isn't quite as sophisticated as Locke's, and the two significantly part ways both on the source and the extent of

[6] Keith Thomas notes that, at the time, this wasn't a purely academic issue, since the tailors of Hobbes' home town were reduced to pilfering (petty theft) in the early seventeenth century (Thomas 1963, 225). Charity is a significant counterbalance to property in Locke (Udi 2015), while Hobbes believes that people should not be left to its uncertainty (Hobbes 1996, 230).

the property right;[7] nevertheless, we see that Hobbes has expressed an earlier, more rudimentary, but essentially no less comprehensive view of fundamental rights.

This ultimately brings us back to the distinction between natural and inalienable rights that we opened this chapter with, and the question we posed: how can I exercise my right to protect my life if it has the same normative value as your right to kill me? By now, the answer should be clear. Hobbes defines a contract as a mutual transferring of rights (Hobbes 1996, 89). At the same time, though, he specifies that certain rights, such as the rights to life, liberty, and property, cannot be transferred under any circumstances (93). The implication is that any other rights outside of those can be transferred, and foremost among these is the right to the arbitrary use of force, which Hobbes describes as the "right to every thing; even to another's body" (87).

Since the goal of the social contract is to create a common power among men, which would enact laws and solve disputes, therefore standing supreme in relation to the power of any single man, the abandonment of the right to the arbitrary use of force (which is natural in the sense that it stems from the normative circumstances of the state of nature), and the transfer of the right to the use of force to the sovereign (except in self-defense and other niche cases) is absolutely essential. So much so, in fact, that the social contract could not even be conceived of without the abandonment and transfer of this right. However, the enactment of the social contract in Hobbes comes with its own set of problems, which, finally, brings us to one of the most complex issues in Hobbes' political thought – the seeming rift between inalienable rights and the power of the absolute sovereign.

Namely, the question that we tackle here, in the last, is: how can fundamental rights coexist with absolute sovereignty? To begin, we first need to remember that Hobbes holds a corporatist view of the state, in the sense that he perceives it as an artificial man, with the sovereignty being the soul, the magistrates – the joints, etc. (Hobbes 1996, 7). Following on

[7] This is because Locke derives the right to property from the right to liberty, and places as its only limit that there be *enough and as good* resources left for other people to claim by their labor (Locke 2003, 112) – the so-called *Lockean proviso* (Waldron 2005, 89). Hobbes, on the other hand, derives it from the right to life, limits it by the means necessary to one's preservation, and distinguishes it from the *right to ownership*, the extent of which he ultimately leaves in the hands of the state (Thomas 1963, 164).

from that, he sees peace and stability as good health, unrest and revolt as disease, and civil war as death. Toward the conclusion of the *Leviathan's* discussion of civil government, Hobbes states that the usual cause of the collapse of states is their imperfect foundation, which is mainly reducible to a lack of absolute and arbitrary legislative power (470).

In fact, some authors (e.g., Ward) go so far as to claim that, since the sovereign has made no covenant with the subjects, he can do no injustice (Ward 2020, 826). Now, despite keeping Hobbes' corporatist interpretation of the state in mind, the issue we are dealing with is laid bare here: on the one hand, the rights to life, liberty, and property are inalienable; on the other, absolute and arbitrary legislative power is, in most cases, necessary for the state's preservation. One is inalienable, the other is necessary, but their coexistence is contradictory. Hobbes was apparently aware of this, since he pointed out that the sovereign's right to the life and death of his subjects is consistent with their rights and liberties (Hobbes 1996, 141). While this acknowledges the contradiction, it does not solve it.

However, in discussing the *true* freedoms of subjects, Hobbes states that a man, even if *justly* condemned, cannot be expected to submit to execution, torture, or admission of guilt without the assurance of pardon, or perform any kind of dangerous or dishonorable duty, *unless his refusal frustrates the end for which sovereignty was ordained* (Hobbes 1996, 144–145). This ought to be emphasized as Hobbes' definitive statement on inalienable rights, since it, at least partially, resolves the aforementioned contradiction: fundamental rights can coexist with the absolute (though not necessarily arbitrary) power of the sovereign because regardless of said power, his subjects retain the right to disobey and even resist him in a wide variety of cases, except those where their disobedience or resistance would call into question the survival of the state. In ordinary cases, the subject would have the right to do what the sovereign hasn't prohibited, or abstain from what he hasn't commanded (Sorell 2021).

In addition, Hobbes points out that a man has no right to resist the 'sword of the state' in defense of another; however, those who oppose the sovereign can unite against the state for their own preservation; this right, however, doesn't apply to those who were pardoned for their crimes (Hobbes 1996, 145). This is consistent with the crucial characteristic of individuality of natural rights – that is, the fact that they apply to individuals and not groups of people, and, hence, while states

can constitutionally recognize them for all people, each individual is empowered only to defend from the encroachment upon his rights alone (Matić 2024, 103). However, Hobbes' complex position on the issue of collective defense of rights has engendered debates that pertain even to the topic of the right to secession (Ward 2017).

Hobbes' 'solution' of the contradiction of coexistence between inalienable rights and the absolute power of the sovereign, however, opens up another problem: namely, while we may well have the right to resist execution, imprisonment, torture, etc. *alone*, the question plainly is – what good does the right to resist the 'sword of the state' alone actually do one? Sure enough, we can struggle while being taken to the gallows, or thrown in prison, but we will be hung/imprisoned all the same. In fact, Hobbes was well aware of this, since, when he said that men choose the danger of death in resisting instead of certainty in not resisting, he also pointed out that this is why prisoners are escorted by armed guards (Hobbes 1996, 93).

This, then, opens up a topic that would merit its own separate examination: namely, might there be an ontological distinction between individual rights as seen in Hobbes and those in, for example, Locke? Could it be that, while Locke sees rights as binding legal provisions (after the formation of the social contract), Hobbes sees them as perhaps no more than psychological principles? A kind of survival instinct given a slightly more sophisticated form? Or could it be that, despite these contradictions and their solutions that produce yet more contradictions, there is, indeed, an interpretation of Hobbes that elevates his views above Tarleton's condemnation of "despotical doctrine"?

CONCLUSION

As the progenitor of the social contract theory, we owe to Hobbes the pre-scientific, philosophical discovery that the state hadn't existed forever. At the same time, however, his theory came with the inevitable problems and contradictions that usually plague the first attempts to address any serious philosophical or scientific issue. However, the apparent contradiction between his view of inalienable rights and absolute sovereignty notwithstanding, his distinctly pessimistic, negative view of the state of nature remains one of the concepts he is most famous for. For that reason, we could go so far as to say that one of the main points of Hobbes' theory isn't that the state hadn't existed since the

inception of humankind, but that its creation was essential wherever and whenever it did not exist, to supplant the horrific alternative – a state in which there is no progress, culture, or industry, a state in which human life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes 1996, 84).

The creation of the state, however, inevitably brought along its own set of problems, not the least of which is the fact that the effectively boundless freedom of the state of nature, flawed though it may be, came to be replaced by absolute sovereignty, which inherently carried with it the danger of fundamental rights being abridged. Seeing as one of the goals of the social contract theory was to find the balance between replacing the chaotic conditions of the state of nature with the stability of society, while also ensuring that essential natural rights don't fall by the wayside as a result of that transition, Hobbes strove to demonstrate the compatibility of absolute sovereignty with the rights and freedoms of subjects. He presented an intriguing argument that nonetheless leaves some confusion about whether inalienable rights in his view function as legal principles that guarantee certain freedoms, or rather as psychological precepts that merely drive us toward specific actions and behaviors.

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ХОБСОВО СХВАТАЊЕ ЖИВОТА У ПРИРОДНОМ СТАЊУ И ЊЕГОВЕ ИМПЛИКАЦИЈЕ**

Резиме

У озлоглашеном параграфу у свом *magnum opus*-у, *Левијатану*, Томас Хобс описује оно што сматра бедним условима човечанства у природном стању, закључујући да је људски живот у овом стању „самотан, сиромашан, ужасан, бруталан и кратак" (Hobbes 1996, 84). Овај опис природног стања, не само да је у оштром контрасту наспрам Локовог и Русоовог схватања, него успоставља и наизглед неодржив темељ за неке од правних концепата које ће Хобс касније извести. Да бисмо разумели релевантност и импликације ове тврдње, најпре ћемо истражити како је концепт природног стања уопште настао. Затим ћемо размотрити специфичности Хобсовог описа овог стања, указујући на одређене детаље који често бивају занемарени. Овде се пре свега истиче чињеница да се он не везује нужно за константно стање рата, већ за околности у којима су мир и сарадња дугорочно неодрживи, с обзиром на непостојање заједнички препознатог ауторитета међу људима. Након тога ћемо анализирати шта су неки од Хобсових критичара имали да кажу по овом питању и како је он превентивно бранио своје тврдње, односно како би могао да одговори на критике на основу своје теорије. Хобс је био свестан суровости стања које описује и чињенице да ће такав опит наићи на оштру критику и баш због тога је на основу животних примера покушао да илуструје да су његова уверења, ма колико контроверзна, истовремено интуитивнија и раширенија него што бисмо можда претпоставили. Напокон, истражићемо нешто што би могло бити најкомплексније и најинтригантније питање везано

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за ову тему: наиме, како одбрана природних права као неотуђивих може бити изграђена на темељу хаотичног природног стања које карактеришу оскудица и конфликт.

Кључне речи: природно стање, ратно стање, природна права, Хобс, *Левијатан*

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THE ENERGY FACTOR AMID MODERN GEOPOLITICAL RISKS: ENSURING RUSSIA'S NATIONAL AND STATE SECURITY**

Russia is among the global leaders in hydrocarbon reserves, energy production volumes, and the development and application of nuclear energy technologies.

The International Energy Agency (IEA), under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has highlighted the growing demand for an evolving level of energy security. According to the Doctor of Economics, Professor, and Head of Sector at IMEMO RAS, Vladislav Stepanovich Zagashvili (*Владислав Степанович Загашвили*), diversification is a crucial risk management tool for ensuring economic security in the context of fluctuating global energy market prices. He notes that the extractive sector creates 12% of the added value in manufacturing and transportation and storage enterprises. However,

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structural transformation under external financial, technological, and internal demographic constraints and risks is challenging. The primary condition for the success of such a strategy is creating a favorable business environment and overcoming the isolation in which Russia has found itself on the international stage (Загашвили 2016, 52–60).

The foundation of Russia's energy infrastructure is generally understood to rest upon three principal elements: the Unified Energy System, the Unified Gas Supply System, and an extensive network of trunk pipelines for the transport of oil and petroleum products, which collectively constitute one of the longest pipeline systems in the world. Russia ranks second globally (after the United States of America [USA]) regarding the number of natural zones it spans. Its territory stretches 4,500 km from north to south. It includes 10 climatic zones: tundra, taiga, mixed and broadleaf forests, steppe, desert, subtropics, the subarctic zone in the northern latitudes, the Arctic zone with extreme cold, permafrost, and deserts (Хромов 2020).

The role of energy and international energy policy in modern geopolitical realities has been thoroughly explored in the works of Professor Stanislav Zakharovich Zhiznin (*Станислав Захарович Жизнин*), of the International Institute of Energy Policy and Diplomacy at Moscow State Institute of International Relations MGIMO (MGIMO) and Gubkin Russian State University of Oil and Gas, and President of the Center for Energy Diplomacy and Geopolitics, Doctor of Economics (Жизнин 2006). Zhiznin is a leading Russian expert on international energy security, geopolitics, and energy economics (Жизнин 2010).

His works examine key issues such as the modernization of Russia's fuel and energy complex (FEC) and the multilateral international dimensions of this modernization. Zhiznin emphasizes that modernization must involve the development of public-private partnerships and international cooperation, with consideration of foreign experience. He explores the resource and technological aspects of global energy diplomacy through the lens of national energy security as a component of a state's foreign policy.

Analyzing Russia's energy policy, Zhiznin interprets it within the context of realistically understanding Russia's place in global energy geopolitics and geo-economics, which he sees as defining factors of international energy diplomacy. He considers Russia's national energy security at the regional and global levels through multiple influencing factors.

Delving into core processes in global energy, the scholar evaluates Russia's potential in international energy markets and explores the geopolitical motives behind its energy diplomacy. He reaffirms that partnership development and international cooperation are necessary during modernization. The national energy security perspective, as part of a country's diplomacy, remains central to his analysis.

Zhiznin also examines Russia's practical relations with major players in global energy policy at both the regional and international levels. In his most recognized work, "Russia's Energy Diplomacy: Economy, Politics, Practice," he details the tools of modern energy diplomacy and the international operations of leading oil giants. He convincingly argues that in contemporary international relations – laden with risks to national sovereignty and trade in oil and gas resources – Russia's sustainable geopolitical status heavily depends on the effectiveness of its diplomatic efforts (Жизнин 2010, 8–21).

In considering Russia's role in global energy geopolitics, Zhiznin notes that "energy geopolitics" is often used in scholarly practice in conjunction with geo-economics, though it lacks a precise definition. He proposes that the term should encompass not only geographic factors tied to energy but also issues of development and transport of energy resources, including expanding pipeline routes. Geopolitical factors increasingly influence the global energy sector (Жизнин 2006, 640).

The overarching issue of multifaceted national security has remained consistently relevant and at the forefront of the Russian state's agenda.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia experienced a geopolitical crisis, facing the risk of becoming a regional power with limited international capabilities and the real prospect of turning into a raw materials appendage – not only of the West but also of the East.

Since March 2022, the United States has imposed a total ban on the supply of all energy carriers (except nuclear fuel) from Russia – oil, gas, and coal – to set an example for other countries. The sanctions on Russian oil exports have caused deficiencies in the countries implementing the restrictions. Under the conditions of geopolitical transformation, Russia's oil industry was reoriented toward the Asian market in response to European anti-Russian sanctions. Unlike the gas sector, which has more complex infrastructure, the shipment and receipt of oil and petroleum products are more straightforward. Russia

did not experience a significant decrease in exports due to the technical restrictions imposed by sanctions.

From 2022 to 2023, the largest market for Russian oil transported by sea became India, with trade relations actively developing. Russia also succeeded in establishing a parallel import system with China, which remains the most significant partner for pipeline-delivered oil. The United States – previously the largest consumer of Russian petroleum products until 2022 – was surpassed by Turkey in 2024. Much Russian oil purchased through the Turkish market is re-exported to European Union countries. According to a leading expert of the National Security Foundation of the Russian Federation Igor V. Yushkov (*Игорь В. Юшков*), "despite claims regarding different origins of petroleum products, the formal volumes of purchase and sale match" (Юшков 2024, 18–32).

Russian oil and petroleum products are also supplied to the Middle East and African countries. Analysts note that "although Arab countries are producers themselves, some – such as Libya – purchase Russian petroleum products for their domestic markets, while exporting their oil and products at higher prices" (Юшков 2024, 27).

The Russian Federation is developing and consistently implementing a geostrategic model of energy sovereignty within the context of a comprehensive system of Eurasian cooperation and integration through formats such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), BRICS, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Шарипов 2016, 197–204).

In the monograph by Sergey V. Biryukov (*Сергей Владимирович Бирюков*), Geopolitical Potential for the Development of Russia's Energy Sector and Its Energy Security Issues, published in 2002, the author explores the theory of global energy challenges and sustainable societal development, geopolitical aspects of the energy sector's potential, and issues of ensuring Russia's energy security. At the start of the 2000s, Russia's foreign economic and foreign policy activities were aimed at seeking strategic partners in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, Europe, and Asia. To ensure stability on the Eurasian continent, integration processes were activated to form a Eurasian energy space (Бирюков 2002, 228).

In 2013, the Institute for Energy Strategy prepared a collective work on the strategy for the development of Russia's energy sector, spanning 798 pages (Бушуев *и др.* 2013). Three years later, in 2016,

a collective monograph was published by a team directly involved in drafting the Energy Strategy of Russia for the Period up to 2035 (developed between 2013 and 2015). The monograph substantiates Russia's energy policy for the foreseeable future. It provides forecasts for the development of the fuel and energy complex, as well as general plans for the development of individual energy sectors:

"As of today, Russia provides about 10% of the world's primary energy production and holds leading positions in oil, gas, and coal extraction, as well as supplying energy resources to international markets. Russia possesses the world's largest reserves of fossil fuels, though a significant portion remains to be explored. Successful development of the energy complex's geological exploration and processing sectors, combined with a balanced foreign energy policy, enables Russia to strengthen its position in global fossil fuel markets" (Бушуев *и др.* 2016, 53).

The energy sector is a key economic, social, and political industry for many countries. National security depends on the condition of the fuel and energy complex, which is why state authorities place special emphasis on energy security issues. The Russian FEC remains under particularly close attention from the government due to the deepening energy interdependence of countries and the internationalization and globalization of energy (Жизнин 2010, 3).

In 2009, the Russian Federal Law No. 261-FZ on Energy Conservation and Increasing Energy Efficiency came into force. Issues of the Russian FEC are included in the agenda of the Commission under the President of the Russian Federation for Modernization and Technological Development of the Economy.

These issues were discussed during the meeting of the Russian Security Council on December 13, 2010, titled On the Status and Measures to Ensure the Energy Security of the Russian Federation, where a decision was made to draft the Energy Security Doctrine and to develop measures for the modernization of the country's FEC. Two weeks later, on December 27, 2010, the Russian government approved the State Program for Energy Conservation and Energy Efficiency until 2020.

On January 30, 2012, in the article *We Need a New Economy*, Russian President Vladimir Putin (*Владимир Путин*) emphasized that Russia's economy must become efficient, with high labor productivity and low energy intensity. In addition to a modern fuel and energy complex, other competitive sectors would be developed. The goal was

that by 2020, the share of high-tech and knowledge-based industries in GDP should increase by 1.5 times, and high-tech exports should double (Путин 2012).

The Energy Security Concept of Russia has been developed, reflecting the country's stance on "green energy" and its role in international relations. The green energy concept is based on transitioning to a carbon-free economy, utilizing natural renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, water, geothermal, and others, and is supported by collective international commitments. It must be acknowledged that climate change represents a global challenge that requires coordinated efforts beyond national borders.

By Presidential Decree No. 216 of May 13, 2019, the *Energy Security Doctrine* of the Russian Federation was adopted to replace the outdated doctrine from November 29, 2012. The new doctrine identifies domestic, socio-political, manufactured, environmental, foreign economic, and foreign political threats. It formulates a set of measures and key tasks to ensure the country's and its regions' security.

A foreign policy challenge to energy security is the intensification of international efforts to implement climate policy and accelerate the transition to a "green economy."

Article 10 of the *Energy Security Doctrine* affirms that the Russian Federation expresses support for global initiatives to address climate change and signals its willingness to cooperate internationally in this field. Nevertheless, the document underscores that Russia's engagement in international climate governance is conditional, being pursued only insofar as such policies are compatible with its national interests – namely, the enhancement of citizens' quality of life, the protection of the environment, and the sustainable management of natural resources. "Russia considers it unacceptable to approach climate change and environmental protection from a biased perspective, to infringe on the interests of energy-producing states, or to deliberately ignore such sustainable development aspects as universal energy access and the development of clean hydrocarbon energy technologies" (*Гарант.ру* 2019).

Among the external economic factors influencing energy security are several notable developments: the gradual shift of the global economic growth center toward the Asia-Pacific region; a deceleration in the overall expansion of energy demand accompanied by changes in its structure, partly resulting from the replacement of petroleum products

with alternative energy sources, advances in energy conservation, and improvements in energy efficiency; the broadening of the worldwide hydrocarbon resource base; intensifying competition among energy-exporting states; the steady increase in liquefied natural gas (LNG) production; and the growing proportion of renewable energy within the global energy balance. The production and use of green energy help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants, and mitigate the negative impact on the environment and climate change. Through the European Green Deal, the EU and the US have declared their commitment to actively developing "green" energy, aiming to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. On December 12, 2015, the Paris Agreement was adopted, marking the beginning of the transition to a low-carbon world and a carbon-free economy. Traditional energy sources such as oil, coal, and gas are major contributors to environmental pollution and climate change. A global shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources – i.e., to a low- or zero-carbon economy in line with the Paris Agreement – could be realized by the mid-21st century (*RIA* 2019).

As of February 2023, 194 countries, including the Russian Federation, had joined the Paris Climate Agreement. This issue has not gone unnoticed in Russian historiography and has been the subject of research by several prominent scholars. Russian researchers have developed their perspective on "energy geopolitics – the green path." Russia has always emphasized its commitment to the values of environmental and climate agendas and, at the current stage, actively participates in implementing global climate policy. However, throughout the evolution of international climate policy – especially in recent times – Russia, as a key actor on the international stage and the world's largest exporter of natural gas, has faced resistance from unfriendly nations. While major global players such as the EU and the US are moving swiftly toward green energy development, Russia has been less eager to completely shift its focus away from traditional hydrocarbon exports.

According to Russian scholars, the energy sector will become increasingly diversified and adaptable to rapidly changing conditions. Nevertheless, the overall development trend will point toward transitioning from "fuel-based" energy to an "electric world," the most convenient and efficient form of energy consumption. As energy sources evolve, resource globalization and competition for hydrocarbon energy will give way to regionalization and self-sufficiency among leading energy-importing countries. It is unrealistic to expect the world to fully

transition from the hydrocarbon era to one dominated solely by green energy. A more likely scenario, according to Russian experts, is one of diversified development, in which all economically, technologically, and ecologically viable forms of energy – both traditional and non-traditional hydrocarbons, renewables, biofuels, etc. – will be used for electricity generation, which serves as the final energy source for all consumer categories (Бушуев *и др.* 2016, 90).

In this context, it is deemed necessary to strengthen cooperation with friendly countries within such international organizations as the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), BRICS, and the SCO, which share Russia's stance on climate change issues and support its efforts to develop mutually beneficial strategies for using traditional energy sources amid the energy transition. Russia advocates for international climate initiatives that are advantageous to all parties and for minimizing the negative consequences of the global climate agenda (Серёгина 2023, 116).

Regarding whether nuclear energy can be considered "green," the European Commission classified nuclear power as such. It permitted the construction of nuclear power plants until 2045, stipulating that nuclear reactors must meet high safety standards. According to experts, current global leaders in green energy development include China, Denmark, Kenya, India, and Iceland. China is universally acknowledged as the global leader in investments in clean energy technologies. China, the United States, India, Japan, Russia, and Canada are the top electricity producers. Primary hydropower resources are held by Brazil, Canada, Sweden, and Norway, which together account for over 75% of the world's hydroelectric generation.

In foreign historiography, a recognized expert in resource geopolitics is Michael T. Klare, professor of peace and world security studies at Hampshire College (Massachusetts, USA), national security correspondent for *The Nation* magazine, and author of fourteen international energy policy and security books. He argues that a new chapter has begun in international politics, in which government control over energy resources becomes a central concern. Klare urges the need for coordinated plans and rational approaches to resource usage. It is hard to disagree with his view – international cooperation is the only path to survival. In today's radically changed world, Klare writes that Russia has "transformed from a battered loser of the Cold War into an arrogant broker of Eurasian energy" (Klare 2008). At the same time, the United

States is now forced to compete with the emerging power of "Chindia". As a unique resource for modern industrial society, oil remains the source of 40% of the world's energy supply and 98% of transport energy. The oil market remains the most critical and influential, with intense competition for dominant positions (Klare 2008).

On the topic of energy geopolitics, the work of French scholar Jean-Pierre Favennec is regarded in historiography as a "comprehensive treatise on the geopolitical influence of energy," offering insights into the political, economic, and social complexities of energy supply and its impact on national governments and NGOs. In his monograph Geopolitics of Energy, Favennec presents an overview of global energy markets through a geopolitical lens. He shares his assessments of the political dimensions of energy in various world regions. Energy is becoming a key issue in geopolitics, generating conflicts between countries and becoming a significant topic on the international political agenda, thereby gaining strategic significance in the historical evolution of the energy market. Favennec's book offers valuable information on energy markets, energy security challenges in the global economy, and future problems facing competing regions (Favennec 2009).

The important role of the Russian Federation in ensuring Serbia's energy security and its position as a guarantor of the country's energy stability amid the crisis engulfing Europe was highlighted during a meeting with Russian Ambassador to Belgrade Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko (*Александар Боцан-Харченко*). Thanks to Russia, "despite the energy crisis affecting all of Europe, Serbian citizens can count on uninterrupted supplies of all petroleum products," stated Serbia's Minister of Mining and Energy, Dubravka Đedović-Handanović. "The Russian Federation is our key energy partner, and in these difficult times, the importance of constructing the Balkan Stream gas pipeline has become evident – it contributes to Serbia's energy stability and security. We have ensured a stable gas supply for both citizens and the economy, and together with our Russian partners, we have commissioned the Pančevo thermal power plant (TE-TO), the country's first combined-cycle power plant for producing electricity and heat from natural gas, one of the cleanest fuel types" (*TACC* 2023).

According to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Srpska, Radovan Višković, "if Europe seeks the well-being of its citizens, it must begin a dialogue with Russia and resolve the issue of energy supplies from Russia for the benefit not only of the current, but also of future

generations. Europe cannot stabilize its future without Russian energy resources" (*TACC* 2024).

In an exclusive interview with the publication About Serbia in Russian, Serbian politician and Doctor of Technical Sciences Miroslav Parović (*Мирослав Паровић*) spoke about the challenges facing Serbia's energy sector. He believes the "green transition" policy is being imposed on Belgrade. At the same time, Serbia's Minister of Mining and Energy, Dubravka Đedović-Handanović, is "dreaming of the American dream," and "the Chinese are preparing for a proxy war with the U.S. on Serbian territory." He believes the "green transition" should be viewed from two angles: the energy profession and politics. Serbia must transition to so-called "green technologies," given that its accessible coal reserves – currently the primary source of electricity generation – are running out. The "green transition," he argues, is a competition between great powers for dominance in technologies and energy sources. On this basis, the strongest alliances are formed, as it is difficult to turn away from a country that supplies you with strategic goods (Басенков 2023).

The legal framework of Serbia – EU energy relations is discussed by Serbian legal scholars Dragan Divljak and Bojan Nešić. The energy sector is strategic in all countries and affects positive economic and social development. Achieving optimal goals in this area is impossible today without international cooperation and the establishment of bilateral and regional agreements between states. In early December 2015, the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Energy Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia until 2030. The strategy emphasizes that "the development of legal norms in Serbia's energy sector must move toward alignment with European Union legislation and practical implementation of its goals and regulations, with forecasts outlined up to 2030" (Дивљак и Нешић 2018, 91).

In March 2023, Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić, commenting on the sanctions policy of Western countries – which, despite the imposed measures, managed to increase trade with Russia – stated that trade turnover between Russia and Serbia had declined. However, in the long run, "the resilience of energy cooperation between Moscow and Belgrade is highly likely to remain unshakable" (*Georgia Today* 2023). "Even if Belgrade ultimately decides to impose sanctions against Moscow, the energy sector, due to the high level of interdependence between Serbian and Russian businesses (even considering growing logistical challenges), is highly likely to remain unaffected" (*Georgia Today* 2023).

In 2003, the government of the Russian Federation approved the energy strategy of Russia for 2020, and in 2019, Presidential Decree No. 216 dated May 13 introduced the energy security doctrine of the Russian Federation to ensure energy security. The legal basis of the Doctrine includes the Constitution, federal laws, and legal acts of the President and the Government of the Russian Federation. The Decree of President Vladimir V. Putin dated May 13, 2019, states that "Russia's full-scale participation in ensuring international energy security is hindered by restrictive measures introduced by several foreign states against the oil and gas sectors of its energy complex, as well as opposition by some foreign states and international organizations to energy projects involving the Russian Federation" (*Гарант.ру* 2019).

The role of economic and scientific-technical security, as well as international energy policy, remains in sharp focus for the leadership of the Russian state and consistently stays on the agenda of central government bodies. Long-term programs are developed and periodically updated, including: the Environmental Doctrine of the Russian Federation, approved by the Government's order on August 31, 2002; the Energy Strategy of Russia until 2030, approved on November 13, 2009; the Energy Security Doctrine, by Presidential Decree dated May 13, 2019; and the Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2035, approved by Government Order on June 9, 2020 (*Гарант.ру* 2019).

The revised Energy Security Doctrine functions as a key strategic planning instrument within the Russian Federation. Its primary purpose is safeguarding national security by providing a framework for addressing energy-related challenges. To guarantee sustainable economic development, strengthen sovereignty, and ensure state security, openness to the world, fair competition, high efficiency, and technological advancement, President Putin signed a decree on May 7, 2024, titled On the National Development Goals of the Russian Federation for the Period Until 2030 and the Long-Term Perspective Until 2036. The preamble outlines target indicators and tasks that define the achievement of national goals.

Among the 11 key goals, paragraph 5 includes "Environmental Well-being." By 2030, it envisions creating a circular economy that ensures 100% sorting of annually generated municipal solid waste, burial of no more than 50% of such waste, and inclusion of at least 25% of production and consumption waste in the economic cycle as secondary resources. By 2036, the goal is to halve emissions of hazardous pollutants

with the most significant adverse environmental and health impacts in cities with high or very high levels of air pollution. Furthermore, by 2030, at least 50 hazardous environmental damage sites will be eliminated, and by 2036, at least 50% of Class I and II hazardous waste will be processed or neutralized (*Гарант.ру* 2019).

The issue of "green energy" and its role in international relations is also reflected in Russia's Energy Security Concept. It states that the Russian Federation is ready to cooperate in this and other areas with all states and supports international efforts to combat climate change. However, it underscores that Russia's full-scale participation in ensuring international energy security is obstructed by restrictive measures introduced by several foreign states against its energy sector's oil and gas industries and opposition from these states and international organizations to energy projects involving Russia.

The role of Russia's energy resources in the European economy is beyond doubt: coal, oil, and gas account for about 80% of global energy production. In 2022, Russian natural gas comprised 33% of total gas imports, oil – 23%, and coal provided 30% of Europe's imports. Last year, Russia accounted for around 19% of Europe's gas supply (Gross and Stelzenmuller 2024). There has been a noted increase in the share of renewable sources in global electricity production, which reached 14% in 2022 due to the commissioning of solar and wind power plants. Of this growth, 72% was attributable to solar energy. However, fossil fuel consumption as a percentage of primary energy remained at 82% (*WTC Moscow* 2023).

Improving energy efficiency and significantly reducing the energy intensity of the Russian economy are among the main priorities of the Energy Strategy of Russia until 2030, as well as of the country's broader economic and scientific-technical policy. Russia contributes significantly to global energy security as one of the leading suppliers of energy resources to European and Asian markets. At the same time, Russia does not yet play a prominent role in the technological segment of European and Asian energy security. The country's fuel and energy complex and related industries require replacing outdated and worn-out equipment, which demands enormous investments and access to modern energy technologies.

To initiate a process of technological modernization across all sectors of Russia's FEC, effective mechanisms for public-private partnerships and the development of international cooperation are

essential. The success of this process will significantly impact the domestic economic situation and the stability of Russia's foreign economic and geopolitical positions. Accordingly, providing foreign policy support for the modernization of Russia's FEC should become one of the priorities of Russia's energy diplomacy (Жизнин 2006).

The long-term goals for developing Russia's economy include improving its international production specialization, particularly since the Asian countries with expanding economic ties tend to be consumers, rather than producers, of advanced technologies. The economic sanctions imposed by the EU and the U.S. since 2014 have hurt Russian exports, particularly in the oil and gas sector. To mitigate the effects of these sanctions and safeguard the economy, Russia is shifting toward domestic equipment and technology production across all sectors. This process requires both time and investment. Russia's active efforts to diversify its economy are expected to minimize future risks (*TACC* 2016).

Based on its national interests, resources, and intellectual potential, Russia strives for sustainable development and contributes significantly to ensuring international energy security.

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EURASIAN REALIGNMENT: CENTRAL ASIA AS A KEY PLAYER IN EUROPEAN ENERGY SECURITY**

INTRODUCTION

Hydrocarbon energy resources like oil and gas have shaped global power dynamics. Their immense influence on geopolitics and economics has made them virtually synonymous with power. Since their discovery and widespread use, these resources have been intricately linked to national strategies, international relations, and the struggle for dominance. Historically, control over oil and gas has been a decisive factor in wars and territorial expansion. For instance, the European colonial era was partly fuelled by the search for these resources. Beyond military and territorial gains, oil and gas have become indispensable to modern life. The transition from coal to these fuels in the early 20th century marked the beginning of the "Hydrocarbon Age," a period characterised by rapid societal development.

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and unrest in the Red Sea due to Israel-Palestine have disrupted supply chains and escalated geopolitical tension among the major global powers. Interruptions, disruptions, and congestion along the traditional routes have resulted in unprecedented

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energy and food shortages, impacting the European Union's (EU) energy-import-driven economies. However, the EU has not been passive in the face of these challenges. It has taken proactive steps to establish resilient, reliable, and, most importantly, diversified supply chains and sustainable transportation connections. This diversification and sustainability are vital to mitigating disruptions and shortages, demonstrating the EU's commitment to ensuring European energy security.

With their vast hydrocarbon resources and strategic locations, the Caucasus and Central Asia have emerged as pivotal players in the EU's quest for energy security. Europe's heavy reliance on Russian energy imports has become a significant vulnerability, particularly in the face of geopolitical tensions. The continent proactively seeks alternative energy sources to strengthen security and reduce dependence on a single supplier. Central Asia presents an attractive opportunity with its abundant natural gas and oil resources. The Russian aggression on Ukraine has forced Central Asian Countries to rethink their security dependence on Moscow. Moscow, after 2022, is now seen as a threat to sovereignty, stability, territorial integrity, and security. In Kazakhstan, the majority of people now blame Russia for the ongoing war. Similarly, in Kyrgyzstan, among younger generations, the sentiment is identical: more people blame Russia for the war in Ukraine and far fewer blame the US. The prolonged disturbances have also prevented European goods from reaching Central Asia via Russia and cut Central Asia's direct access to European markets. These geopolitical contestations, geoeconomic challenges, and security dilemmas have necessitated the EU and Central Asia reassess their foreign policy, particularly concerning strategic autonomy, sovereignty, safety, and stability in greater Eurasia.

Consequently, countries across Eurasia have been compelled to explore alternative and more resilient connectivity corridors to facilitate new trade routes and sustainable transport methods. The paper examines the evolving dynamics of recent trends in EU-Central Asia relations in the context of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and disruptions. It explains how the EU Central Asia can emerge as a key player in European energy security and what needs to be done to curtail infrastructure gaps.

EU-CENTRAL ASIA ENERGY RELATIONS

Soon after the breakup of the former Soviet Union in 1991, five Central Asian Republics (CARs) – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan – had to deal with their lack of governance structures and economic issues like Inflation and low GDP. However, these newly independent states possess abundant hydrocarbon resources, which hold immense potential for the future of European energy security. Kazakhstan is ranked 12th in the world for oil reserves and has significant gas resources. Additionally, Kazakhstan holds the second-largest uranium reserves, and Uzbekistan ranks fifth in uranium production. Turkmenistan has the fourth-largest gas reserves globally, with 13.4 trillion cubic meters and 20 billion tons of oil. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have significant hydropower potential.

The EU's policy towards Central Asia began modestly, focusing on cultural ties and energy cooperation. The slow progress was due to the lack of direct security challenges from Central Asian countries. The Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) program aimed to aid in the political and economic transformation of the newly independent countries. However, most funding went to transnational projects benefiting Ukraine and Russia. Despite this, TACIS contributed to poverty alleviation and institution-building in Central Asia. Other EU initiatives included programs for energy cooperation, infrastructure development, and partnership and cooperation agreements (PCA) at the bilateral level. These agreements aimed to enhance trade, economic relations, and political dialogue while emphasising compliance with EU regulations and standards, human rights, and the rule of law.

The EU's primary objective regarding Central Asia was to diversify energy resources, reducing reliance on Russia due to concerns about its reliability, particularly after the crises of 2006 and 2009 (Kramer 2009). The INOGATE initiative was launched in 1995 to achieve energy security goals, focusing on energy cooperation between the EU, CARs, and the Caucasus. This involved a meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan, in December 2006, where energy ministers discussed implementing the ' Baku Initiative – 2004.' The Baku Initiative – 2004 was a significant step in energy cooperation, as it emphasised energy supply security and compliance with EU and international energy market standards. Furthermore, the EU engaged in bilateral dialogues with CA countries such as Turkmenistan (gas), Kazakhstan (oil and gas), and Azerbaijan for energy supplies. "This

led to high-profile EU officials visiting these countries for energy deals. In 2007, Russian President Putin convinced Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to support Moscow's plan for constructing a gas pipeline from these two countries along the Caspian shore to Russia rather than towards the South Caucasus, which was favoured by the EU" (Dave 2008). Moscow's strategic move was to keep a monopoly over the EU's energy security.

"The Southern Corridor pipeline project (Nabucco) was a high priority for the EU, aiming to reduce dependence on Russia. The project involved private firms backed by political and financial support from the EU to transport gas from Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan to the EU. Turkmen gas was planned to be delivered through a sub-sea Caspian extension to the new Baku–Tbilisi Erzerum (BTE). It will be further connected to a major European gas junction" (Dave 2008).

However, the EU cancelled the Nabucco and reduced its length from the original 3,900 km to 1,300 km because of disagreements and divergences within the participating states and finances within the EU (Weiss 2013). Additionally, alternative gas sources, like liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments from the Middle East, were preferred (Jozwiak and Recknagel 2013). Furthermore, countries' increased shale and liquified gas production decreased the EU's natural gas demand. Moscow also responded to Nabucco with the construction of the North Stream pipeline and started exporting gas to Germany in 2011. Russia began working on a stream gas pipeline to maintain its monopoly over the EU's energy supplies in 2012 (Dave 2008).

RUSSIA PREFERRED CHINA OVER THE EU IN CENTRAL ASIA

Russia adamantly considered CARs its "backyard" and was determined to prevent the countries from developing close ties with the US and Europe. The primary goal was to control regional energy politics, maintain a monopoly over Europe's energy supplies, and block the European Union from accessing Central Asia's extensive hydrocarbon reserves (Kaczmarski 2019). Russia struggled economically in the post-Soviet era, forcing it to create a "division of influence" with China over the region through 'cooperative hegemony' (Pedersen 2002, 677– 696). Moscow and Beijing established the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2001 as part of their cooperative hegemony. It has become a key platform for defence and security cooperation for both countries in the region.

China has also invested heavily in the hydrocarbon sector of CARs in the last three decades. China has constructed cross-country pipelines connecting Central Asia to Xinjiang to import gas from Turkmenistan and gas and oil from Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries. President Xi Jinping has prioritised investments in Central Asia since taking office. China's involvement in the Central Asian oil and gas sector dates back to 1997, when a $9 billion deal was signed with Kazakhstan and the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC). Since then, CNPC has been a significant investor in the oil and gas sector of Central Asian countries, facilitating the entry of other Chinese state-owned and private firms in the energy sector. Following the 1997 deal, CNPC secured exploration licenses for various fields in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The 3,666 km-long Central Asia-China gas pipeline, which starts from Gedaim on the Uzbekistan/Turkmenistan border and offloads gas at Xinjiang, was completed for US$7.3 billion (Wani 2020). The pipeline transported 4.38 billion cubic meters of natural gas to China, and its capacity was increased to 36.3 billion cubic meters in 2017 (Putz 2018). China has become a major importer of the region's hydrocarbon energy resources after Moscow curtailed its gas imports from Turkmenistan in 2017 (Lelyveld 2018). Additionally, Beijing has invested over US$45 billion in Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector (Kumenov and Liu 2022). In 2021, Turkmenistan supplied 34 bcm (Business Turkmenistan 2022) of natural gas to China, and gas imports from that country were valued at US$9.2 billion (Sarymbetova and Bayramli 2023). China imports 30 percent of its natural gas through pipelines connecting Shanghai and Beijing with the region.

GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS AND REALIGNMENT FOR THE EU'S ENERGY SECURITY

The EU s influence over the region's hydrocarbon resources remained minimal compared to China and Russia. The growing influence forced the EU to reassess its policy towards Central Asia. In 2019, the EU started the "New Opportunities for a Stronger Partnership" initiative, focusing on comprehensive, sustainable, and rule-based connectivity for regional integration (European Council 2019). Central Asian countries also prioritised strategic autonomy in connectivity, trade, and security for independent foreign policy (Wani 2022). The Ukraine War and harsher sanctions on Russia imposed by the EU and the USA led to a severe

energy crisis in Europe. Also, sanctions against Russia have led cargo companies to abandon the Northern Corridor, resulting in a 51 percent decrease in westbound shipping volumes and a 44 percent decrease in eastbound shipping volumes in 2023 (Zhang and Dumont 2023).

The sanctions compliance issues forced the EU to look for other regional energy suppliers, mainly Central Asia and the Caucasus. The rising demand for alternative energy supplies forced the EU to start a more vigorous policy and strategic reach out to Central Asia. In October 2022, the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, attended a high-level meeting with heads of state of Central Asian countries in Astana (European Council 2022). The leaders stressed the importance of developing a regional vision and cooperation to develop sustainable connectivity between the EU and Central Asia in line with the EU Global Gateway initiative. In June 2023, the leaders held their second regional high-level meeting and reviewed the EU-Central Asia cooperation. Since 2022, the number of high-level visits to the region by EU officials, including the High Representative, multiple commissioners, and the defence, foreign, and prime ministers of EU countries such as Germany, France, and Italy, has doubled (Wani 2023).

As CARs became crucial partners for the EU regarding connectivity, energy, and resource diversification, an Investors Forum for EU-Central Transport Connectivity under the Global Gateway was held in Brussels in January 2024 (European Commission 2024). The Global Gateway initiative, launched in 2021 with a budget of US$450 billion until 2027, aims to shape global governance and secure the EU's geoeconomic and geopolitical interests in a contesting multipolar world (European Commission 2024). International and EU financial institutions supported the EU-Central Asia forum. They pledged to invest US$11 billion in sustainable connectivity and the development of the Middle Corridor, also known as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Corridor (TITR).

Initiated in 2014, the TITR, a multimodal connectivity route consisting of rail lines and seaports, is gaining traction among CARs, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Europe, and Türkiye (Wani and Vesterbye 2023). In March 2022, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Kazakhstan jointly issued a statement emphasising the importance of advancing the TITR as an alternative route over Eurasia for trade and connectivity (Avdaliani 2023). The TITR passes through Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, and the South Caucasus and is the fastest and shortest reliable route despite

comprising over 4,250 km of rail lines and 500 km of seaway (Ozat and Nelson 2023). In September 2017, the fully modernised Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway opened, providing a rail link to Türkiye and Europe (Hampel-Milagrosa et al. 2020). The TITR is 2000 km shorter than Russia's Northern Corridor, making it an ideal solution to sanction-compliance issues (Wani 2024a).

In September 2023, the President of the United States, Joe Biden, met with the Presidents of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan for the first-ever C5+1 summit on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City (The White House 2023). The United States reaffirmed its support for the region's security, enhanced economic resilience, and supported sustainable development. The US also supported the development of TITR, energy infrastructure, and transport networks. The US president suggested that the "Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGI) will evaluate opportunities to scale infrastructure investments to accelerate economic development and energy security" (The White House 2023). Thus, it marked a pivotal step towards realising the security of resilient and reliable routes. In addition, much of the stress was placed on regional economic integration and development, which needs to be oriented towards Europe rather than Russia or China.

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and Asthana also joined hands to develop and modernise Kazakhstan's mining sector. Under the agreement, EBRD and Kazakhstan will cooperate to ensure better governance, transparency, and regulation of the critical mineral sector in line with global standards. The EBRD has planned to increase investments in the crucial raw materials prerequisite for green transition, such as solar panels, lithium-ion, and electric car batteries, for sustainable economic development (Usov 2024).

INCREASED ENERGY IMPORTS, BUT RUSSIA STILL HAS THE UPPER HAND

Until the third quarter of 2022, Russia had been the EU's primary oil supplier for decades, accounting for approximately 25 percent of its hydrocarbons and serving as Germany's largest energy supplier. Since 2022, the EU has been forced to work hard for new, resilient, reliable, and sustainable alternative energy supplies. Kazakhstan's oil exports to the EU, which account for eight percent, increased by nearly 900

percent between 2000 and 2021 (Nakhale 2023). Kazakhstan supplies an approximately 8 percent share of the EU's oil imports, which increased to 10.9 percent in the first quarter of 2024. Today, Kazakhstan has become the largest oil exporter in the EU after the USA and Norway (Eurostat 2024).

Then again, Kazakh oil is mainly exported through the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), and around two-thirds of the oil crosses Russia before reaching the market. The CPC links Kazakh oil fields with the Russian port of Novorossiysk in the Black Sea and is forwarded to EU markets. The Russian government has a 24 percent stake in the CPC, with other Russian companies like Lukoil and Rosneft also having stakes. Though using Russian infrastructure and pipelines is not subject to sanctions, it still exposes Moscow's influence on Kazakh oil going to Europe. In 2022, the President of Kazakhstan stated that the country is prepared to utilise its hydrocarbon resources to help stabilise the global and European markets. However, within two days, a Russian court issued an order to suspend CPC operations for 30 days due to concerns about oil spill management (Nakhale 2023). Kazakhstan has attempted to transport oil via the Middle Corridor to Baku for further export to the EU through the Baku– Tbilisi– Ceyhan pipeline. This involves multiple transhipment steps, resulting in significant delays and technical difficulties compared to CPC. Kazakhstan aims to increase oil deliveries via the Middle Corridor route to 1.5 million tonnes, 1.4 times the amount in 2023 (Kumenov 2024).

In 2023, Kazakhstan produced 1.8 million barrels daily, two percent of the global output. It plans to ramp up production to 2 million barrels daily by 2024. The growth will pump more oil into the Western market. The EU is already a primary buyer of Kazakh oil and gas, accounting for US$32 billion in total exports to the bloc in 2022. With mineral products, oil, gas, and uranium represent 90 percent of Kazak exports to the EU, and there is room to increase (European Commission 2024). Kazakhstan has attempted to transport oil via the Middle Corridor to Baku for further export to the EU through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. This involves multiple transhipment steps, resulting in significant delays and technical difficulties compared to CPC. Kazakhstan aims to increase oil deliveries via the Middle Corridor route to 1.5 million tonnes, 1.4 times the amount in 2023 (Kumenov 2024).

Similarly, there are enormous gas reserves in the Central Asian countries of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus.

The EU is trying to get more supplies from these countries after the Russia–Ukraine war. In 2022, the EU signed a deal with Azerbaijan to increase gas imports from the Southern Gas Corridor. The Corridor consists of four projects: South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP), the Shah Deniz natural gas condensate field (SD1), the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline ("TANAP"), and the Trans Adriatic Pipeline ("TAP"). The total length of the newly constructed SCPX, TANAP, and TAP pipelines is more than 3,2oo km, and SD1 production capacity is increasing from 11 bcma to 16 bcma.

While the volume is insufficient to replace Russian gas supplies, the agreement is still considered strategic. Azerbaijan and the European Commission made a significant stride by signing a deal to double the natural gas exports to Europe by 2027. Turkmenistan's gas was transferred to Azerbaijan through a swap agreement with Iran in 2021. Despite the US ambassador to Turkmenistan saying a "swap through Iran does not violate sanctions", Baku and Ashgabat could not reach an agreement on gas pricing for 2024, leading to the discontinuation of the arrangement (Huseynov 2024). In 2023, the revenue from this corridor amounted to US$3.1 billion, with an increase of 15.7 percent compared to 2022. In the first quarter of 2024, Azerbaijan exports 7.7 percent of the total natural gas imports of the EU, and there is room to increase (Eurostat 2024).

With its vast gas reserves, Turkmenistan can be a viable option for the EU. It has around 13.4 trillion cubic meters of gas and 20 billion tons of oil and has the fourth-largest gas reserves globally (Olcott 2013). The 2008 Memorandum of Understanding governs the energy cooperation between the EU and Turkmenistan. Following the Russia-Ukraine war, the EU is trying to gain access to Turkmenistan' s gas and oil resources. They are working on a new gas deal as the EU and Turkmenistan want diversification for reliable and resilient energy supply chains under the 2014 agreement. In November 2014, Turkmenistan signed a contract with Turkey to deliver its gas through the Trans-Anatolian gas pipeline. This pipeline will receive gas from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz field in the Caspian Sea. In 2021, Trans Caspian Resources launched its project for the Trans-Caspian Interconnector, a smaller gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan. It will supply between 10 and 12 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually upon completion (European Parliament 2024).

Though Turkmenistan has considered a Trans-Caspian gas pipeline to Azerbaijan for decades, it has forwarded it to the EU, and Türkiye, Iran, and Russia have opposed the proposed pipeline. In May 2024, Azerbaijan and Türkiye struck a significant agreement to transfer natural gas from Turkmenistan. However, Azerbaijan supports the export of gas from Turkmenistan to Europe. Baku is ready to provide technical resources and access to the Sangachal terminal, but does not want to finance the pipeline.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION

The Nabucco pipeline was initially estimated to transport around 13 bcm to the EU's gas hub at Baumgarten, Austria. Azerbaijan only provided 10 bcm, and most of the gas was on the other side of the Caspian Sea, particularly in Turkmenistan. The EU mainly sponsored the Nabucco West and the Trans-Adriatic pipeline, and there were cracks in EU members' cooperation on this strategic gas pipeline. Many individual countries signed agreements with the Russian South Stream project and thus prioritised the Russian ventures of pipelines for energy supply. Additionally, the EU failed diplomatically to persuade Azerbaijan and other potential gas exporters like Turkmenistan to sell to European clients (Thomas 2023). Russia also safeguarded its dominant EU energy market by pressurising most Central Asian countries to support Gazprom's South Stream pipeline, a rival to Nabucco, to bring Russian gas to Eastern and Southern Europe (Reuters 2014). Even countries like Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan were concerned about geopolitical and security considerations. Given the Russian impact on the region's geopolitics, these countries were wary of the effects if they made the pipelines towards Europe without the assertive support of the United States and the EU (Wani 2024b).

With the constant new investment by the EU under the Global Gateway Initiative on TITR and the strategic support of the USA, Central Asian countries are increasing their energy exports to Europe. The TITR allows for the transportation of various energy resources, aiding the EU's green transition and facilitating the transport of critical minerals to European markets. Despite progress, significant investments are still required to develop the infrastructure for efficient energy transportation, especially in gas and oil pipelines across the Caspian Sea. Investments in

these pipelines will facilitate more energy flows towards Europe, as the EU's emphasis on the Green Deal on energy diversification can create a more favourable environment for Central Asian exports.

The region faces intraregional disputes, border demarcation issues, and political instability. Central Asia has border disagreements and territorial disputes. Efforts have been made to resolve these conflicts, but permanent solutions are needed for economic and regional integration. The relationship between Azerbaijan and Armenia has been strained since 1991. Both countries attempt to establish a peace treaty, but issues such as enclaves, border delimitation, and transport links remain unresolved. The meeting was part of the USA's efforts to prevent further conflict between the two countries. Normalising relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan through a peace agreement would create new regional opportunities for energy connectivity (Wani 2024c).

Finally, following the Russia–Ukraine war, Central Asian countries seek new security, economic partners, and connectivity routes. China has heavily invested in the region's oil and gas sector, with significant natural gas imports from Turkmenistan. The EU and the USA have limited regional options due to China's geoeconomic and geostrategic engagement. Russia and China have increased diplomatic visits and regional engagements to counter the influence of the EU and the USA in the region. Under such competition and influence, the EU needs a coherent rather than divergent policy towards energy diversification and greater integration with the area (Wani 2023).

CONCLUSION

The Eurasian realignment, with Central Asia as a key player, is a complex and dynamic process with far-reaching implications. While challenges persist, the potential benefits for Europe and Central Asia are substantial. This partnership can contribute to a more secure, stable, and sustainable global energy future by addressing the existing hurdles and building on the opportunities. However, the infrastructure gaps in constructing new pipelines must be addressed with the USA's strategic, economic, and tactical support. Last but not least, the EU has made significant strides in developing a unified external voice, but achieving complete coherence remains a formidable challenge. The EU needs to look at the energy resources from its perspective and not from the Central

Asian perspective. Central Asia will get new markets if the EU needs to diversify away from Russia; Europe has to come as one.

This presents a complex and multifaceted entity when it comes to foreign policy. While it has made significant strides in developing a unified external voice, achieving complete coherence remains a formidable challenge.

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Review

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GEOENERGETIC POLICY OF TURKEY

At the beginning of the 2000s, Turkey launched significant reforms to liberalize its energy market, aiming to increase competitiveness and efficiency. However, although the regulatory framework was improved by the laws adopted during this period, the effectiveness of these reforms was questionable. Critics argue that these measures often remained theoretical, while the actual functioning of the energy market reflected a gap between legislation and practice. Despite a relatively sound legislative framework, the reforms remained at the level of theory. State-owned enterprises (SOEs) play a key role, and addressing their challenges is essential for achieving a functional Turkish energy market.

Turkey's early legislation and regulatory frameworks laid the key foundations for the country's energy policy. The initial legal structures established in the early decades of the 20th century were aimed at attracting foreign investments while ensuring state control over key resources. These frameworks were essential in directing the energy production and distribution infrastructure development, influencing economic growth. As energy demands increased, regulations had to adapt to promote sustainable investments and address environmental issues.

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The historical development of Turkish energy policy was significantly shaped by the influence of foreign energy companies, which became crucial in the country's pursuit of energy security and economic growth. These companies attracted substantial foreign investments, enabling the transfer of technology and expertise vital for modernizing Turkey's energy infrastructure. As Turkey increasingly integrated into the global market, the implications of globalization and regional dynamics further complicated energy policy formation, affecting both local and international relations.

The consequences of the Second World War fundamentally restructured views on global energy security, which inevitably had its echo in Turkey. As European nations sought to recover from the war, there was a pronounced shift toward energy independence and diversification of energy sources. With the growing geopolitical tensions of the Cold War, Turkey recognized the need to secure reliable sources of energy to strengthen its national security and support economic growth.

Between 1950 and 1980, Turkey's energy policy marked a significant transition and liberalization, reflecting broader economic reforms (Hale 2013). After a severe balance-of-payments crisis, the Turkish government shifted from import-substitution strategies to an export-oriented approach to integrate the economy into global markets. At the same time, the Energy Market Regulatory Authority was established to oversee the liberalization of the energy sector – the restructuring aimed to create a competitive environment that could attract foreign investment and increase efficiency. However, the regulatory framework remained inadequate, burdened with widespread corruption and ineffective macroeconomic management.

The evolution of Turkey's energy policy increasingly emphasized the need to transition to a more diverse energy mix in response to domestic demands and international pressures. The earlier dependence on fossil fuels, particularly oil and natural gas – mostly from geopolitically sensitive regions – posed significant risks to energy security. Turkey initiated a strategic shift to mitigate these risks, including renewable energy sources like wind, solar, and hydropower. This diversification aligned with global trends, where countries sought to reduce the environmental impacts of fossil fuels while simultaneously addressing socio-economic demands for growth.

Introducing the private sector into Turkey's energy policy represents a significant shift in the country's approach to energy

management and economic sustainability. The liberalization and privatization of the energy sector took place in the 2000s, driven by the recognition that efficiency and investment could be improved through a dynamic market environment. Nevertheless, the success of these reforms was accompanied by numerous issues, and their practical implementation often resembled theoretical reforms with persistent inefficiencies. Therefore, addressing institutional barriers and ensuring regulatory mechanisms are essential for realizing the full potential of sustainable investments, which are crucial for the further development of Turkey's energy market.

The development of hydropower plants and coal resources has played a key role in shaping Turkey's energy policy throughout history. Given the limited reserves of fossil fuels, the strategic emphasis on hydropower emerged as a sustainable alternative to reduce dependence on imports. The government aimed to significantly increase the share of hydropower in electricity production, with ambitions to substantially raise this share by 2023. However, the interconnection between hydropower plants and coal resources reveals the challenges of balancing sustainable energy development with ongoing dependence on fossil fuels. As Turkey strives to reduce the use of fossil fuels, integrating diverse energy sources remains crucial for achieving energy security and addressing the adverse effects of climate change on existing production capacities (Kibaroğlu 2008).

The complexity of energy import dynamics plays a key role in shaping Turkey's energy security, significantly influencing its foreign policy and regional stability. The conflict in Ukraine further complicated energy security in Europe, forcing Turkey to explore alliances and partnerships with alternative suppliers from the Caspian region. Furthermore, Turkey's involvement in these energy projects has been affected by broader regional conflicts and power struggles in the Middle East and on the global level.

The period from 1980 to 2000 represented a significant phase of modernization and reform in the context of Turkey's energy policy. During this period, foreign direct investments (FDI) were key to strengthening the energy sector, enabling technology transfer and infrastructure development. Additionally, Turkey's aspiration to approach the European Union underlined its modernization efforts, as improvements in energy policy were considered essential for EU accession negotiations.

As Turkey sought to align its energy policies with EU standards, the emphasis shifted to sustainability and market efficiency, reflecting broader global trends in energy management (Hebda 2025). The expansion of natural gas infrastructure represented a key aspect of Turkey's energy policy, reflecting domestic needs and geopolitical ambitions.

Turkey's energy policy has undergone significant changes in the last two decades, aimed at modernization and sustainability amid growing regional and global challenges. Considerable effort has been invested to diversify energy sources, reduce dependence on fossil fuel imports, and improve domestic production, particularly renewable energy. This transition is evident through initiatives to harness Turkey's solar and wind resources, positioning the country as a potential energy hub for Europe, highlighted by projects connected with the Southern Gas Corridor. Furthermore, Turkey actively cooperates to align its policies with global energy efficiency standards and environmental responsibility, strengthening its policies through multilateral agreements. The future trajectory points to a more profound commitment to renewable energy resources and an increased focus on equitable access to energy.

The Turkish intelligence service also ensures Turkey's energy security (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı* – MIT). Thus, through information gathering, risk analysis, and support for the state's strategic energy interests, MIT contributes to the security of Turkey's energy structure. Above all, MIT also physically protects energy infrastructure, such as oil pipelines, gas pipelines, power plants, and distribution networks, from potential threats, eliminating terrorist attacks and virtual-hacker attacks on digital systems for managing energy resources.

Turkey increasingly uses energy policy as a means of geopolitical influence, particularly in its relations with the European Union, Russia, the Middle East, and the Caucasus (Perišić 2018). MIT plays a central role in this by analysing the strategic interests of other countries and their energy policies to secure Turkey's place within them. In their work, information is collected about oil and gas reserves in the region, geopolitical ambitions, and armed conflicts in the area, and based on this, Turkey's actions are planned as an indispensable transit route in energy transport.

Turkey's strategic location makes it a transit corridor for natural gas destined for Europe. The development of projects such as TANAP and TAP further reinforces Turkey's ambitions to become Europe's energy hub and thereby push aside the influence of competitors.

Expanding natural gas infrastructure is key to Turkey's energy policy, reflecting domestic needs and geopolitical ambitions. For this reason, the development of pipelines and LNG terminals is crucial. The mixture of natural resources, such as natural gas from the Caspian and Middle Eastern regions, shows how Turkey, with its position, enables the connection of supplier countries with energy-dependent markets in Europe, emphasizing its role in shaping energy security policies (Bilgin 2009).

In Turkey's geopolitical reality, the country's relations with neighboring states, especially Greece and Armenia, are marked by a complex combination of historical disagreements and contemporary political ambitions. Turkey's engagement with these states often reflects neo-Ottoman aspirations, articulated through President Erdoğan's policy, to restore regional influence reminiscent of the Ottoman Empire (Tanasković 2010). This strategy prioritizes military and economic determination over diplomatic negotiations, resulting in increased tensions, particularly in the Aegean Sea and the South Caucasus, where territorial disputes are prominent. Furthermore, Turkey's geopolitical maneuvers are not limited to its immediate neighbors but extend through the framework of emerging alliances, which aim to balance the interests of the European Union in the region. These relations emphasize the broader implications of Turkey's aspirations for regional dominance and stability (Davutoğlu 2014).

We may say that today's Turkey occupies a central place in Eurasia's geopolitical and geoenergetic circumstances. Relations with the EU, NATO, Russia, and neighboring countries in the Caucasus and the Middle East show that Turkey pursues a policy of balancing between major powers, emphasizing its own autonomy and geopolitical ambitions (Yergin 2011).

In conclusion, Turkey remains positioned to choose between two paths: to remain merely a transit route between East and West, or to build the status of a global energy mogul. By all indications, Turkey is choosing the latter path, ignoring criticisms of Pan-Turkism or Neo-Ottomanism, which are being implemented even in the field of energy security.

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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, Birchal 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;
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The manuscript should be prepared in the following manner:

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

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Name and surname of the second author**

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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:

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- 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.

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The text of the book review should be prepared following the guidelines of the research article preparation.

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