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# Sociological *discourse*

*Safety In Schools With A Review Of The Importance Of A Systemic Approach To The Development Of Students Safety Culture*

*Criminal Offense Of Domestic Violence – Detection, Clarification And Verification*

*Theoretical Conceptions Of Social Work In Preschool Institutions With A Focus On The Situation In B&H*

*Comparative Analysis Of Police Systems In France And Germany*

*Theoretical Deficiencies Of The Concept Of Dominant Battlefield In The Context Of Fragmented War Zones*

*Jovan Raskovic - The Silenced Voice Of Agreement And Reason In Serbo-Croatian Relations*

*Problem-Based Learning As A Constructivist Framework Of Early Mathematics Teaching: An Analysis Of Students' Attitudes*

*Economic Consequences Of The Ukrainian War For Western Balkan Countries*

*From The Philosophy Of Lying Towards The Sociology Of (Scientific) Knowledge*



# SOCIOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

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## EDITORIAL

### **We are building a bridge between the academic community and the general public**

Dear readers,

Before you is the new 26th issue of the journal *Sociological Discourse* in which we present nine papers variously categorized according to the criterion of scientific contribution to the problems that the authors have addressed. This issue represents not only a collection of scientific papers, but also a testimony to the continuity of scientific thinking in times of great social upheavals and challenges. The papers are multidisciplinary in character with the well-known thesis that differences are wealth and not a handicap. In their papers, the authors treat various practical and theoretical phenomena such as: school safety, domestic violence, problems of social work in preschool institutions, analysis of police systems, challenges of war zones, (dis)agreement in Serbian-Croatian relations, warfare and economy, modern challenges and reflections on philosophical conceptions of God, and a book review of “*Philosophy of Lies*”. It is precisely this thematic diversity that testifies to the complexity of contemporary society and the need for a holistic approach in understanding social phenomena.

In the era of information oversaturation and rapid social changes, the role of scientific research becomes fundamental for understanding complex social processes. Scientific research represents a systematic approach to discovering truth, understanding cause-and-effect relationships, and formulating laws that govern social and natural phenomena. What makes science special is its methodology – rigorous procedures for testing hypotheses, empirical verification, and constant readiness to question existing knowledge. Sociological research, such as that presented in this issue, offers us tools for deconstructing social reality. Through the analysis of school safety, for example, we not only identify concrete threats and challenges, but also understand deeper structural problems that generate insecurity in educational institutions. Research on domestic violence reveals hidden mechanisms of power and domination that perpetuate cycles of abuse through generations.

Scientific research has transformative power – it not only describes reality, but provides the basis for its change. When researchers analyze problems of

social work in preschool institutions, they offer not only a diagnosis of the situation, but also guidelines for improving practice. This approach makes science socially engaged and relevant to the daily lives of citizens. Publishing scientific results represents an ethical obligation of every researcher. Science that remains closed in laboratories or offices does not fulfill its social function. Dissemination of knowledge through scientific journals, conferences, and other forms of communication enables critical verification of results, exchange of ideas, and cumulative advancement of knowledge.

The journal *Sociological Discourse*, through its issues, builds a bridge between the academic community and the broader public. By publishing papers on the analysis of police systems or challenges of war zones, the journal contributes to informing decision-makers and citizens about key issues of security and social stability. This kind of transparency in scientific work is a prerequisite for a democratic society based on knowledge. The principle of open science, which implies free access to scientific publications and data, is of particular importance. In times when knowledge is increasingly commercialized, journals like *Sociological Discourse* that enable free access to their content preserve science as a public good available to all. Original scientific contributions represent the core of scientific progress. Each of the nine papers in this issue offers a unique perspective on the treated problems. Originality is reflected not only in the choice of topics that have not been previously researched, but also in new methodological approaches, theoretical frameworks, or interpretations of existing phenomena.

Originality in science requires courage – the courage to question established paradigms, to ask uncomfortable questions, and to go against the mainstream. The book review of “Philosophy of Lies” in this issue reminds us of the importance of critical thinking about fundamental concepts of truth and untruth in a society increasingly characterized by information manipulation. In the context of global polarization and erosion of trust in institutions, the scientific community has a special responsibility to be the guardian of objectivity and rationality. The peer review process that all papers in *Sociological Discourse* undergo ensures the quality and reliability of published research. This quality control mechanism, although not perfect, represents the best available system for maintaining scientific standards. However, the scientific community faces numerous challenges. Pressure for quantity of publications often comes at the expense of quality. Commercialization of higher education and research creates conflicts of interest that can threaten objectivity. Politicization of science, especially in social sciences, represents a constant threat to research integrity.

In a globally divided world and polarization of interests, international law and the international legal order have been undermined, as well as the

sovereignty of almost all states. They have transferred part of their sovereignty to international institutions and organizations which, unfortunately, at this historical moment are increasingly losing authority and influence for the needs of peace. This context makes sociological research even more important, as it can help in understanding the roots of current crises and possible ways to overcome them. Authoritarian populism, autocratic rule are increasingly on the rise, and human rights, freedoms, democracy, and all modern achievements of civilization are being undermined. Scientific analysis of these phenomena, such as offered by the papers in this issue, helps us recognize patterns and mechanisms through which democracy collapses and authoritarianism strengthens. Research on warfare and economy reveals how military conflicts are instrumentalized for economic goals, while analyses of police systems show how security apparatus can be misused for political purposes.

Politics, as philosophers have emphasized throughout history, has become drama, a bloodthirsty struggle for power and authority for the purpose of abuse, instead of having ethics built into its foundations. Political elites have lost their sense for the people and in Machiavellian goals misuse the police and security sector to preserve power and maintain groups and individuals in power. This is precisely why independent scientific research of these phenomena is of crucial importance for maintaining democratic discourse and civilian control of government.

Sociology, as the science of society, has a unique position to analyze and interpret complex social processes. The papers in this issue show how sociological perspective can illuminate different aspects of social reality – from the micro level of family relations to the macro level of international relations. The sense for homo sapiens has been lost, and the material is favored while the postulates of the envisioned modern, legal, democratic state are being destroyed. Sociological research can help in renewing humanistic values by showing how dehumanization leads to social disintegration. Analysis of problems in preschool institutions, for example, points to the importance of early social development for forming empathetic and socially responsible citizens.

The complexity of contemporary social problems requires an interdisciplinary approach. The papers in this issue successfully combine insights from sociology, political science, law, economics, and other disciplines. This approach enables a more complete understanding of phenomena that cannot be adequately explained from the perspective of only one discipline. Interdisciplinarity also encourages innovation in research. When concepts and methods from different disciplines are combined, new insights often emerge that would remain hidden within disciplinary boundaries. Digitalization is transforming the way science is produced and distributed. Online journals like Sociological Discourse enable faster flow of information and wider availability of scientific

results. However, this transformation also brings challenges – from problems of quality verification to questions of sustainability of scientific publishing financing.

The future of scientific publishing probably lies in hybrid models that combine the advantages of traditional peer review processes with the possibilities offered by new technologies. Preprint servers, open reviews, and post-publication discussions are increasingly becoming part of the scientific ecosystem. The trend of deinstitutionalization in all states must be stopped, so institutions and their bearers should manage and govern, not political parties and individuals – leaders with autocratic, tyrannical, despotic, and other patterns and styles of behavior. The scientific community has a key role in this process through the production of knowledge that demystifies the processes of power and enables citizens to participate informedly in democratic processes.

This issue of Sociological Discourse represents a contribution to that goal. Through rigorous analysis of different aspects of social reality, the authors help in building a society based on knowledge, critical thinking, and humanistic values. We invite readers to approach the presented papers critically, to use them as a basis for further research and social action. Science is not a luxury but a necessity for a functional and just society. In times when truth is relativized and facts are disputed, scientific research and publishing represent bulwarks of rationality. The journal Sociological Discourse, through this and future issues, continues its mission of contributing to the scientific and social community.

With respect and in hope that the presented papers will inspire new research and contribute to a better understanding of our society,

Editor-in-chief

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**SAFETY IN SCHOOLS WITH A REVIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE  
OF A SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
STUDENTS SAFETY CULTURE**

**Summary:** *Increasingly frequent verbal and physical violence, the use of cold and firearms, bomb threats, alcoholism, smoking, drug use, abuse of modern technologies, various TikTok and similar challenges are just some of the deviant (pathological) behaviors of young people that require a planned and systematic approach to the concept of protection and safety of students, teachers and other school staff. This includes the implementation of certain security measures in schools, assessment of threat risks, installation of security systems, or adequate physical and technical protection. In order for student protection to be as efficient as possible, it is also necessary to adequately acquire and develop knowledge and skills about security. With the aim of raising the level of security culture in the primary and secondary education system in the Republic of Srpska, some time ago, the subject "Humanity and security" was introduced as an experimental subject in some primary and secondary schools. The paper, among other things, points out the importance of developing students security culture and the need to create adequate teaching content appropriate to our security and educational needs. We believe that these contents would contribute to more effective protection of students and reduction of deviant behavior.*

**Keywords:** *security, school, students, systemic approach.*

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## **Introduction**

Recent years, schools have often become places of physical and verbal confrontations, violence of various types and forms, misuse of modern technologies or, better said, the projection of our social reality onto this particular locality. Why is this so and what contributes to this is one of the questions asked by many, both teachers, parents, students themselves and the wider social community. Is this contributed by increasingly available media content that abounds in violence, a collapsed value system, insufficient commitment to children and students, or is it something else? When something happens at school, especially negative, it is breaking news and occupies our public for days, all the details of such events and their actors are analyzed, the school system and security system are reviewed, short-term and long-term solutions are offered and then, as usual, everything is forgotten until a new case occurs.

One of the studies related to school threat assessments (School Threat Assessment, NTAC) stated that it is difficult to determine a specific profile of the student attacker, neither would an attempt to profile him help to reduce violence in schools. Students can commit violence regardless of social status, gender, academic performance, or family life. Counteracting these negative effects requires a multidisciplinary approach and appropriate teamwork between school staff, education authorities, parents, and experts in the field of security and psychology. Violence against young people, or their endangerment, is far more dangerous than is often thought, and can negatively affect their mental and emotional development. It most often manifests itself through poor communication with teachers and peers, conformity, verbal and physical violence, social exclusion, monitoring negative and destructive content on the Internet and social networks, drug addiction, prostitution or equivalent.

There is no absolute security, but it must be continuously built and developed. Security in schools, or the protection of school institutions, must be given adequate attention both through physical and technical protection measures and through the development of the concept of education for safety. It is not enough to have a school guard or police officer, school duty, record the entrances and exits of visitors, lock the front door during working hours, a video surveillance system, a fire protection system, mechanical protection and the like; it is also necessary to actively involve and encourage students to participate in school safety. Students need to understand the importance of implementing security measures and be their active participants, recognize threats to themselves or others and inform the authorities (school police officers, psychologists, pedagogues, teachers, parents) about them and, if nec-

essary, ask for help from them, participate in the development of protocols and plans for dealing with emergency situations, but also be trained for such action. This also includes the permanent development of students security culture and the creation of adequate teaching content appropriate to our security and educational needs. Safety culture should become a subject that the school community must adopt as a mandatory subject, and not just as a set of procedures and rules on how students and teaching staff should act in the event of undesirable events.

The concepts of security education, which can also be presented in the form of security culture, have reached an advanced stage in various countries and are mainly aimed at developing security awareness among young people for the benefit of society, through the preparation of a conscious and educated generation with built-in security immunity. The importance of security education lies in the possibility that students, through these programs, learn the importance of protecting individuals and communities in the fight against various dangers - from crimes and deviant behavior to natural disasters and disasters caused by technical accidents and hazards. (Stanarević, 2021:12).

In the context of school safety, the main goal of a safety culture, in the simplest terms, would be to teach students to live safely. Educating students in a safety culture should develop awareness of dangers and teach them patterns of behavior and action in safety - relevant situations. A safety culture in the educational process would develop students life skills, i.e. the skills of avoiding risky behaviors, minimizing consequences and surviving when they find themselves in high - risk situations, including providing assistance to others. Safety culture in the context of schools does not only apply to students. The subjects of a safety culture in schools are, in addition to students, also teaching staff, non - teaching staff, parents and guardians. (Lalić, Lipovac, 2024:60).

In the Republic of Srpska, as part of measures focused on preventing peer violence and raising the level of safety culture, the experimental subject “Humanity and safety” was introduced. The contents defined by the optional program “Humanity and safety” are designed in such a way that children develop empathy, friendship, and non-violent communication, and the ultimate goal is a more humane and safer society. Whether the offered concept of experimental teaching is acceptable and effective will be known only after a certain period of time has passed, necessary for gaining appropriate experience, or after a quality evaluation. In the following text, we will also point out certain models of safety education that are already being applied in certain countries, and whose individual contents could be incorporated into the existing curriculum and adapted to our educational and safety needs.

## Humanity and safety

Developing life skills in students, tolerance, managing emotions, creating critical thinking are just some of the topics that are studied from the 2023/24 school year as part of the new subject “Humanity and safety”. This is an optional subject, which will not be assessed, and which was introduced into the school system of the Republic of Srpska as a part of measures focused on preventing peer violence, after the mass murders in the Belgrade school “Vladislav Ribnikar”. The subject was experimentally introduced in 20 elementary schools and 20 secondary schools, in the final grades of elementary schools and the first grades of secondary schools. The aim of this subject is:

- developing intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities and life skills in students (realistic self - image, self - esteem, recognition of own and others emotions, management of emotions and relationships, empathetic and assertive communication, tolerance, respect, appreciation, critical thinking, personal and social responsibility and productivity, cooperation, friendship, spirituality, etc.) with the aim of humanizing relationships in school and society;
- developing the abilities and skills of adequate emotional - social forms of behavior and reactions of students in order to create a safe school and wider social environment (both physical and virtual);
- developing the ability to identify current topics/problems in the school community and society, and to solve problems constructively and acceptably.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1: Content of the program for optional classes in elementary school:  
Humanity and safety

Teaching areas and topics	Number of lessons during the year
<b>Area 1: Humanity</b> Topic 1: A realistic self - image – a more humane society Topic 2: Empathy and humanity Topic 3: Nonviolent communication and friendship	30
<b>Area 2: Safety in school and community</b> Topic 1: School and community as a safe environment Topic 2: Family - a safe haven Topic 3: Security in the virtual environment	
<b>Area 3: Humanity and safety in action</b> Topic 1: Being humane and safe	

Source: Republic Pedagogical Institute of Republic of Srpska

<sup>3</sup> Curriculum for optional classes in elementary school: Humanity and safety, RPZRS

Since the 2024/25 school year, new, or amended, curricula for the optional subject “Humanity and safety” have been in effect for the first, second, third and fourth grades of secondary schools, or the seventh, eighth and ninth grades of primary schools. The novelty is that all interested students will have the opportunity to study this optional subject and thus additionally contribute to the prevention of violence in schools.

Figure 2: Content of the program for optional classes in high school:  
Humanity and safety

Teaching areas and topics	Number of lessons during the year
<b>Area 1: Humanity</b> Topic 1: A realistic self - image – a more humane society Topic 2: Empathy in the service of nonviolent communication and friendship Topic 3: I am socially responsible	30
<b>Area 2: Safety in school and community</b> Topic 1: School and community as a safe environment Topic 2: Life in the virtual world	
<b>Area 3: Humanity and safety in action</b> Topic 1: Volunteerism Topic 2: Humanity and safety as a lifestyle	

Source: Republic Pedagogical Institute of Republic of Srpska

The curriculum of this subject, with amendments and supplements, in a significant segment, follows current security issues and helps develop the ability to spot problems in the school and wider environment, and proactively resolve conflicts. Although significant progress has been made in education for security in the school system of the Republic of Srpska, increasingly frequent incidents in schools and the social environment require continuous renewal of certain thematic units related to individual security issues. This is primarily due to their topicality, dynamism and content. In this segment, it is desirable to continue with periodic education by police officers, or members of law enforcement agencies. We believe that it should also be considered that the subject “Humanity and security” should be taught as a mandatory subject in upper grades of primary school and all grades of secondary school, instead of being optional.

## **Safety education – comparative experiences**

When we look at elementary and secondary education systems in terms of safety in the wider area, we can see that most countries do not have an adequate curriculum that would have as its primary goal educating students about self - protection as well as the protection of others. The American system has adapted its education to modern life and thus pays attention to safety in several ways. Many public schools in the United States have taken steps in recent years to tighten security, including equipping schools with entrance detection, video surveillance, developing active preparedness plans and employing law enforcement officers to patrol the school. However, school safety protocols vary greatly depending on the type of school, location and other factors. (Joel I. Klein and Condoleezza Rice, 2012)

Almost all schools restricted entry by controlling access to buildings during school lessons with measures such as locking doors (97%), or requiring visitors to sign in and wear a badge (98%). About three- quarters (73%) had classrooms equipped with locks so that the doors could be locked from the inside. (Schaeffer, 2022) The use of panic buttons is very common in schools, allowing for a quick response in the event of a threat and access control that provides a safer environment for students.

In the Hungarian education system, a series of incidents faced by students and teaching staff have necessitated the engagement of non - pedagogical persons, who are responsible for creating a safe atmosphere in schools, namely school guards. There are many specific school safety programs available: for example, school interviews with the police. Also, almost all children and teenagers in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools have been undergoing first aid training for the last two years. The Hungarian education system works on awareness education, which begins with preparing children to know how to manage disasters, which is a priority in preparing young people and educating them in self - protection. For this reason, a system of community service has been established in which high school students preparing for their final exams are organizedly engaged in activities for the benefit of the local community through theoretical and practical knowledge in various organizations. A special role is played by the National Directorate for Disaster Management of the Ministry of the Interior, which teaches students about the specialties of civil protection, fire rescue, industrial safety, as well as educating them on what to do for others or for themselves in the event of a crisis. Youth competitions in disaster management are regularly held for primary and secondary school students. Hungary is also considering introducing some kind of training in sec-

ondary schools aimed at military training and preparedness of young people. (Organisation of the education system and of its structure, n.d.)

The Russian education system also deserves due attention, as it has been continuously introducing changes to school curricula in terms of safety in the past few years. The subject “Fundamentals of safe living” (Russian: Основы безопасности жизнедеятельности) introduced into primary and secondary general education institutions in 1991 as a mandatory subject. In forming and updating the curriculum of this subject, new challenges and threats in the natural, technogenic, social and information spheres are taken into account. The concept of this subject in educational institutions of the Russian Federation refers to the security of the individual, society and the state in the global modern historical process. The subject is oriented towards the practice and importance of using modern information technologies (Институт развития образования Омской области – ИРООО, 2018). This subject should enable the development of a basic level of security culture, i.e. to enable students to: recognize threats, avoid danger, neutralize conflict situations, resolve complex social issues and behave correctly in emergency situations. This should contribute to the protection of the life and health of students, the formation of the necessary volitional and moral qualities, which provides opportunities for effective socialization, successful adaptation in the modern environment and contributes to preventive measures in the field of security. (Radojević, 2021:126).

The system of primary and secondary education in the Republic of Poland is similar to the education system currently in Republic of Srpska. Compulsory education starting at the age of seven is guaranteed by the Constitution, as the highest legal act of the country. In addition to the regular general education subjects that students study, special attention is paid to preparing for emergencies at school that represent important events with serious consequences for the lives and health of students, teachers and school staff (e.g. flood, fire, construction disaster, epidemic, terrorist attack, etc.). In Poland, one of the subjects taught in schools (primary and secondary) is safety education (Polish: bezpieczeństwo); it focuses on improving human existence by preserving universal values (such as peace, freedom, social progress, equal rights, human dignity) and minimizing threats to human health and the environment. Institutional support and implementation of safety education fall within the competence of primary, secondary and higher education. An important fact is that in Poland it is a school subject, which was introduced on September 1, 2009, lasting one hour per week throughout the entire cycle of education in secondary schools. Also, since September 1, 2012, it has been in force with the same

duration in upper secondary schools. The educational objectives of this subject include: understanding the essence of state security; training students to act in situations of emergency threats (disasters and mass accidents); developing basic first aid skills and shaping individual and social attitudes conducive to health. (Agnieszka, 2019)

In the Republic of Serbia, one of the most similar education systems currently exists in the Republic of Srpska. In terms of security, an optional subject "Basics of the defense system of the Republic of Serbia" is implemented for students in the final grades of high schools. The aim of this subject is to prepare and acquire knowledge and skills for the needs of a state of emergency and war in the country. The subject includes several thematic units, divided into IV groups:

- Group I Topics – Place, role and tasks of the Serbian Army in the security and defense system of the Republic of Serbia; Military obligation in the Republic of Serbia; Work and material obligation in the Republic of Serbia; Voluntary military service;
- Group II Topics – How to become a professional military person; How to become a senior officer (officer and non - commissioned officer) of the Serbian Army; The importance of physical fitness for military service;
- Group III Topics – Surveillance and Intelligence Service; Forms of unarmed resistance; Chemical and biological weapons and incendiary devices; Civil protection;
- Group IV Topics – Tactical - technical assemblies. (Materijali za realizaciju časova Osnovni sistema odbrane Republike Srbije)

Also, for students from the fifth to eighth grades of primary school, the elective subject "Virtues and values" has been introduced as part of the optional teaching activities (OTA) from the 2023/2024 school year, as part of the existing offer of these programs. The OTA is scheduled for one lesson per week in the class schedule, and until then, older primary school students could choose one activity, out of at least three that each school is required to offer. In order for a student to have the opportunity to choose "Virtues and Values" as a life compass, it is first necessary for the school to offer this OTA, which means that it will not be mandatory in the offer of every primary school or mandatory for all primary school students. Optional teaching activities were introduced in the 2017/2018 school year, instead of the optional subjects that were abolished. The school could independently design OTA programs or use the old elective subject programs. After four years of implementation, in 2021. it was determined that there are schools that need support for this segment of teaching, which is why, at the request of the Ministry of Education, the Institute for

the Improvement of Education (IIE) prepared two groups of programs – one intended for students in fifth and sixth grades, and the other for seventh and eighth grades. The first group includes Exercise to health, Life skills and media literacy, and the second includes Entrepreneurship, My environment and art. As stated in the program, the goal of the subject “Virtues and values” as a life compass is “to strengthen the personal development of students and encourage the development of values and virtues as the main supports and guides in life for the benefit of the individual and society, as well as the development of social skills important for prosperity, physical and mental health and life in an atmosphere of mutual respect and care for each other. The topics that will be discussed in the lessons are divided into four units: life values, human virtues, social skills and charity, and within each of them, key concepts of the content are given. (Zavod za unapređivanje obrazovanja i vaspitanja Republike Srbije).

Looking at the described education systems, it can be concluded that the mentioned countries have recognized the importance of educating students in terms of developing a security culture and the need for continuous education for security with greater or lesser practical engagement of students. We believe that practical training of students is a very important component, especially in emergency/crisis situations such as fires, earthquakes, epidemics, floods, bombings and hostage incidents, but also in recognizing immediate security threats to oneself or others. Therefore, we believe that it is necessary to foresee a certain number of lessons in the “Humanity and security” curriculum for practical training and training of students on the topic of responding to problematic situations.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, we have tried to point out that in recent years, schools have often become places of physical and verbal confrontations, violence of various types and forms, misuse of modern technologies, bomb threats, various TikTok and similar challenges, or, better said, the projection of that part of our ugly reality onto this particular micro - locality. Why is this so and what contributes to this is one of the questions asked by many. Is this contributed by increasingly available media content that abounds in violence, a collapsed value system, insufficient commitment to children and students, or is it something else entirely? When a tragic event related to a school or students occurs, it is breaking news and captures the public’s attention for days, all the details of such events and their actors are analyzed, the school system and security system are reviewed, short - term and long - term solu-

tions are offered, and then, as usual, everything is forgotten until a new tragic case occurs. In order for school security to be at a satisfactory level, it is necessary, first of all, to take a series of preventive measures, such as hiring a school guard or police officer, constant duty, visiting the external and internal areas of the school, locking the entrance doors, recording the entry and exit of visitors, installing and monitoring a video surveillance system, a fire protection system, and the like. Students should understand the importance of implementing preventive/security measures and be their active participants, recognize security threats to themselves or others and inform the authorities (school police officers, psychologists, pedagogues, teachers, parents) about them, but, if necessary, request a certain form of assistance from them, participate in the development of protocols and plans for dealing with emergency/crisis situations, and be trained for such action. This also includes the permanent development of students security culture and the creation of adequate teaching content appropriate to them but also to our security and educational needs. These two segments should complement each other and be functionally connected through theoretical and practical teaching. By introducing the subject "Humanity and safety" into the school system of the Republic of Srpska, a significant step forward has been made in educating young people for safety, developing their abilities and skills adequate to the emotional - social form of behavior and reaction. The priority task is to create a safe emotional, school, and broader social environment. Although some progress has been made in developing the safety culture of students, increasingly frequent incidents in schools and the social environment require the continuous renewal of certain thematic units related to individual safety issues. This is primarily due to their topicality, dynamism, and content. In this regard, we believe that it should be considered that the subject "Humanity and safety" should be considered as a mandatory subject in the upper grades of elementary school and all grades of secondary school instead of an optional one. In the future, it should also be considered to introduce a special position of professional associate/coordinator for safety in schools. This could be a person with a university degree in safety who would also teach classes and other content in the field of safety, but would also be in charge of it.

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**CRIMINAL OFFENSE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE –  
DETECTION, CLARIFICATION AND VERIFICATION**

*Abstract: In this research study we are dealing with the following criminal offense: domestic violence, as well as its detection, clarification and verification. This is the topic which deals with the current situation that draws the attention of both local and global public, taking into consideration the fact that we are dealing with compromising the family as a unit, which represents the primary social group. The aim of this paperwork is to draw attention to the means of action which the Police uses to acquire evidence materials when it comes to the felonies mentioned above, as well as to shed light on the difficulties which arise as obstacles in this process. In this research study we have shown statistics data of the Department of Analytics of The Republic of Srpska Ministry of The Interior which are related to the number of committed criminal offenses regarding domestic violence in family communities, as well as the number of prosecutor orders to dismiss and withhold investigations for the time period 2021 to 2023, which could serve as the indicator of the realistic situation of this negative phenomenon in The Republic of Srpska.*

**Key words:** *criminal offense, domestic violence, detection, clarification, verification.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, domestic violence is increasing drastically and it represents one of the biggest challenges that our current society is faced with, it is also acknowledged as a public health issue and high priority area of social acting (Fernández-González et. al., 2018:1). The main reason for this condition is based in the degradation of the family as a unit, considering that its influence is decreasing and that it no longer represents the basic foundation of a “healthy” society. This can be seen in the multiple researches which have shown that the relations between its members are often characterized by all forms of abuse and violence. Although we are discussing a criminal offense which endangers both physical and psychological integrity of an individual, there is an array of misunderstandings which prevent us from understanding the level of seriousness which domestic violence represents, some of them being: such actions rarely leave consequences to the children ( unless they are the victims); they are caused by alcoholism, drug abuse and stress; the victims deserve to be treated in a bad manner; the perpetrator acts in a state of decreased level of consciousness and therefore he is not responsible for it; violence is most common among the poor, it happens to people from certain social, economic and cultural groups; most of these acts represent isolated incidents; leaving that family community brings salvation; in addition- certain forms of counseling represent the best means to solve the problem (Ignjatovic, 2010:107-108). These types of attitudes are misleading because we are talking about one very specific felony which requires a deeper analysis and a more serious approach when it comes to its prevention.

Domestic violence is a global issue which outgrows cultural, geographical, religious, social and economic boundaries, and it represents violation of human rights. For example, violence against women deprives women of their rights to participate fully in social and economic life. That fact causes numerous physical and mental health issues and in some cases it leads to death (Idris et. al., 2018:199; Pickover et al., 2017:96 ).

Namely, this criminal offense draws attention of multiple governmental and non-governmental organizations lately, as well as the attention of human rights activists, legislative bodies, social services etc. This clearly shows us that this represents such form of criminal offense described as extremely complicated and dependent on multiple factors. This behavior appears and exists in all countries, and it is not related to the degree of socio-economical progress. The manners in which the countries themselves react to this negative social phenomenon are different and they depend on a number of factors. Besides,

the cultural and traditional norms, as the most significant factors that influence the choice of type and manner in which the country reacts, carry the specific characteristics of this form of violence which stems from a special and close relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. It is the situation where, first of all, the persons involved were, or still are in most cases in a close emotional relationship. The present common ground is based on the fact that one's family is a private business of each individual, and that the issues which arise in it should be solved between its members. The standpoint mentioned above leads to victim's refusal to witness against the perpetrator, which later disables or slows down the inadmissibility. Furthermore, the situation becomes more complicated due to taking financial and material care of the children, the feelings of shame and humiliation, and often victim's own fears, her financial dependency, the fear of public opinion etc. (Markovic, 2007:209-210).

In relation to that, it can clearly be seen that clarification and verification of the criminal offense: domestic violence is a very complicated assignment when we take into consideration the fact that the prosecutors are facing multiple number of issues right at the beginning.

### **THE TERM “DOMESTIC VIOLENCE”**

Speaking of domestic violence we are referring to the violence against partners (spouses or unmarried partners), children and elderly people (Markovic, 2018:67). The violence can be manifested in different ways: as physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, economical and spiritual violence. Physical violence manifests itself by hitting, kicking, pushing, slapping, hair pulling, inflicting bodily injuries (beating) etc. Sexual violence implies every sexual activity without consent: sexual teasing, unwanted comments, unwanted sexual suggestions, forcing someone to participate in or watch pornographic content, unwanted touching, painful and humiliating sexual act, forced sexual intercourse, rape and incest. Psychological violence refers to various forms of psychological maltreatment, verbal harassment, threats of using force, coercion to maintain a relationship and other forms of sexual coercions, imposing certain rules of behavior, isolation and control of the victim, humiliation and mocking in the family or public situations, continual verbal harassment based on personal traits, which are contributing to permanent and constant feelings of personal insecurity, undermining, mocking etc. One specific form of domestic violence is emotional violence which reflects itself as a long-term and permanent lack of love and affection, for example refusal, or to describe it more precisely - neglecting emotional needs of a family or family community

member. Economic violence implies restricting material means, conditioning financial support, disabling mutual sources of income etc. Spiritual violence refers to systemic mocking or destroying religious or cultural beliefs which endangers peacefulness of a family or family community member (Markovic, 2007:210-211; Markovic, 2018:66-67; Sukeri & Man, 2017:477). According to the data provided by The Republic of Srpska Ministry of the Interior during the pandemic period caused by Corona virus (COVID-19) which lasted since March 2020 until May 2023, the number of domestic violence cases in families and family communities has been doubled (Vrucinic, 2024). In the same study (Vrucinic, 2024) it is stated that the predictions based on the model of regression show that the value of domestic violence frequency is not decreasing but it neither surpasses the level reached in 2023, comparing it to years 2024 and 2025.

According to the definition of World Health Organization, violence amongst partners includes all behaviors in the framework of a partnership which causes physical, psychological or sexual injuries to one of the partners in that relationship. If the abuse is continuously repeated in one single relationship, such phenomenon is often called maltreatment (Krug et al., 2002:5). Domestic violence can occur in a form of a threat or use of physical, psychological and/or emotional violence; respectively any kind of violence against another person with intention of causing harm or applying control and power over them. The perpetrator belongs to the “domestic surroundings” of the victim: intimate partner, husband, ex intimate partner, family member, a friend or acquaintance. We consider friends or acquaintances of the family to be certain people who have a friendly relationship with the victim and who they often meet in the household surroundings. It is not crucial if the victim actually lives in the same household as the perpetrator or not when it comes to defining domestic violence; the term domestic violence is defined by the closeness of relations between the perpetrator and the abused victim. The most common victims of these criminal offenses are women, although men can be victims as well, but in that case the violence is usually psychological, where their mental health suffers due to the impact of such conditions (Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015:3). However, domestic violence most commonly affects women due to the culture of patriarchy, which affects their social and economic position in the society (Tsegay, & Teceleberhan, 2025:892). Different studies have estimated that between 10 and 35% of women experience domestic violence at one point in their lives (Flury, Nyberg, & Riecher-Rössler, 2010:24). For a longer period of time it has been stated that the violence against women has been the main obstacle for the equality, safety and women’s right to practice basic

human rights and freedom. This has been perceived as the universal issue of every country and it is present in all societies regardless of age, social class, education, income, religion, ethnicity or culture (Kisa, Gunor & Kisa, 2021:549). Most commonly in the attempts of justifying and explaining wife abuse two social perspectives are being used: the theory of resources and the theory of a relative resources. They suggest that the level of resources is the primary factor of wife abuse. Namely, that means that married men who have and can offer a small amount of resources (the theory of resources), or less amount of resources than their wives possess (the theory of relative resources) have a larger probability of using violence than those who are rich in resources. They utilize violence as a form of compensation for the lack of resources. Certain authors conceptualise violence as a form of resource similar to the material resource form. Therefore, violence or the threat of violence can be used as means of achieving obedience and submission and in that way they are compensating for the lack of material goods. Taking this into consideration, it is assumed that the smallest probability exists among those husbands with the largest amounts of material resources to be using violence, because their material resources are already providing them the obedience and submission of their partners. Violence or the threat of violence serve as an alternative to material resources as the foundation of power. Therefore, this theory leads us to the prediction that those husbands with the lower social status are more likely to use violence than those husbands with a higher social ranking. The theory of resources is supported by numerous studies which indicate that men with lower incomes, prestige and education are more likely to abuse their wives (Atkinson, Greenstein, & Lang, 2005:1137-1138).

Women abused by their intimate male partners have been reporting an abundance of physical and psychological consequences. A wide spectrum of health dangers comes as the result of direct violence against women or its long-term effects on her. There we can include injuries, death, as well as sexual, reproductive, mental and physical health issues (Afifi et al., 2011:613). It is well known that women who were exposed to domestic violence belong to a high-risk group when it comes to attempts of committing suicide (Kavak et al., 2018:574). Besides that, women suffer economic consequences as well. For example, some of them are financially dependent on their partners and can be faced with various obstacles if they abandon them. In that case, women are most likely to be left without roof over their heads and basic existential means (Baker, Cook, & Norris, 2003:754-755).

Lately, more attention has been brought to violence against children. In this part we are focusing on the cruel and humiliating forms of punishment,

neglect, sexual abuse, murders, and other forms of violence. World Health Organization has adopted a unique definition according to which abusing or molesting children includes all forms of physical and/or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or reckless acting, as well as commercial or other types of exploitation, which lead to real or potential decline of a child's health, endangering life, development and dignity by misusing family or guardianship relations of trust and power. Presented as following we have highlighted four specific types of actions performed, those are: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect (Krug et al., 2002:59-60; Markovic, 2018:73-74). The research has shown that the children can be influenced both by direct and indirect victimisation. Namely, studies have also shown that many children of those women who were beaten were also direct victims of the perpetrator, enduring physical, psychological or sexual abuse by the same perpetrator who molested their mothers. Besides the direct victimization, in most cases of domestic violence, the children are exposed to indirect victimization as well as by observing the violence (Fernández-González et al., 2018:2). Various forms of violent behaviors towards the children, either psychological or physical forms of violence, have a large impact on the latter psychological personality development, and the process of their socialization. The researches have shown that such children later in life become aggressive towards their environment, their peers but also towards the adults. In most cases many of the children who performed sexual felony against another child have previously been the victims of sexual abuse. Also, in addition, it can not be concluded that the children who are the victims of any type of violence will necessarily become the perpetrators of the same types of felonies against others (Игњатовић, 1998:210; Марковић, 2007:213).

Also, nowadays more and more people are speaking up openly about the violence against elderly people. According to the definition of the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, this type of abuse represents one-time or repetitive actions or a failure to act, which appears in any kind of relations where trust is expected, therefore causing damage or distress to the elder person. In this case we observe physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, financial or material abuse, as well as sexual abuse. The perpetrators of these criminal offenses are subjects who take care of the elders, often their closest relatives (Krug et al., 2002:126-127; Markovic, 2018:77-78).

From all of the above it can clearly be concluded that domestic violence represents an extremely serious criminal offense which should be treated with special attention.

## **THE DETECTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

The criminal offense of domestic violence can be discovered in various ways, some of them being: by actions of Interior Affairs Department, open public speaking, reports of victims and other witnesses, self-reporting, anonymous and pseudonymous report, reports coming from the state or other institutions (education system, health system, public information system (media), non-governmental organizations etc.)

Police officers collect notifications on a daily basis, and that represents a meaningful mode of acquiring information and control if the criminal offense has already happened. With the aim of collecting information on the executed criminal offenses and the perpetrators of domestic violence, the Police force most often uses the informants (friends and acquaintance connections), that is, the subjects who voluntarily, without any personal interests or gain, occasionally provide the data on such events (Simonovic & Pena, 2010:25; Djurdjevic & Radovic, 2015:427).

Speaking publicly, is a very meaningful way of detecting that a certain subject is being a victim of domestic violence. It often happens that the rumors spread among people, for example, that certain person beats his wife or that a specific family is neglecting their child etc. (Simonovic, 2004:27).

The reports of the victims are one of the most reliable ways of finding out if the deed of domestic violence has been committed. That does not have to mean that all of those reports are true because we can run into situations when the victim files false reports in order to damage the reputation of the subject which she makes the accusations against (Simonovic & Pena, 2010:30). Although, to report this felony is not a simple matter for the victims who decide to take that step after numerous failed attempts to put an end to the violence. Even in these situations only a small number of victims turns to the Police, regardless if they feel that their lives are in danger (Blaney, 2010:354-355).

Criminal offense- domestic violence is reported often by the citizens who have noticed it when it was occurring, and they appear on the court as witnesses. Here, we are most likely to see the acquaintances and neighbors of the family members in whose household the act of domestic violence had happened, and in many cases also we can see the relatives of the victim and other family members (Simonovic, 2004:27; Markovic, 2018:423). However, when these criminal offenses occur, usually there is a lack of witnesses, which specifically stands out when we observe the fact that this type of violence, as the name itself suggests, most often happens in the family circle – family house, or apartment, and it is more rare in public places (Mirkov, 2019:636).

It can also happen that these criminal offenses get discovered on the basis of the report of the perpetrator himself. Valid self-reports in this case most commonly are filed by the subjects who have done the felony acting on the impulse, in a delicate situation, under the influence of alcohol (this is committed under the conditions of a strong psychological pressure and remorse), in other words, this is done by those subjects who have committed this felony led by certain insufficient psychological sense of control and therefore they are prepared to face the charges for their actions (Zarkovic, 2009:40).

Anonymous and pseudonymous reports also represent one way of detecting this criminal offense. It occurs in some cases that the violence is reported via internet – email, letter, etc. (Markovic, 2018:449). These types of valid reports are made by the citizens who are afraid of perpetrator's vengeance, and those reports make a compromise between the desire of the citizen to reveal this felony and, at the same time, to avoid exposing themselves at the court as the witness (Simonovic & Pena, 2010:29).

Also, the reports of the state, and other institutional subjects (educational system, health system, media, non-governmental organizations etc.) represent a significant source of information regarding the felony mentioned above. Teachers and professors, as well as teams of experts in educational institutions can find out that the child has been directly exposed to violence or that it has been a witness of domestic violence during the conversation. In both cases mentioned, in cooperation with other institutions (Police, Social Services Center etc.), the reaction has to be immediate in order to put an end to the violence, to protect the victim of the violence, and to face the perpetrator with the law and criminal charges (Markovic, 2018:428). Health workers and associates play the key role in recognizing and discovering all forms and types of violence. That is understandable because the violence victims start to show more and more often different forms of health concerns, including body injuries as well, so for that reason they approach health institutions for help and treatment (World Health Organization, 2014:15). Aside from all the things mentioned above, they play an important role in recognizing and revealing children abuse and neglect, because they are among the first ones to whom a child, parents and experts in other areas come for help in situations when the child is ill or hurt, and when it shows difficulties in behavior or when the family is in crisis (Radosavljev-Kiricanski et al., 2009-119). Nowadays, when we are speaking of violence, public information sources (the media) play a significant part. The main role of the media should be highlighting the current issues in the society. Especially considering the fact that during informing the public they can more or less directly point out to certain criminal activities, in this

case to domestic violence (Zarkovic, 2009:42). In the same manner, non-governmental institutions have a large influence in revealing domestic violence. They have specialized teams which offer psychological and legal support to the victims of domestic violence, but they also have places where victims who decide to leave the molester can be moved into. Also, they offer their services to violence victims in the media and point out to the support which will be offered to them if they decide to report the violence. This type of support is very important in order for the victim to take certain steps towards making legal acts against the perpetrator (Markovic, 2018:439). After the revelation of the criminal offense – domestic violence, the legal steps are taken to clarify and prove it, and that represents a very complicated assignment.

### **CLARIFICATION AND VERIFICATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

A highly complex and complicated assignment put in front of the members of the Legal Department is to clarify and verify the criminal offense of domestic violence. The Police officers, in the range of their authorities and respecting legal procedures as well as the basic principles of science and their profession, have to conduct all the activities in order to successfully clarify and verify these criminal offenses. If the report of domestic violence has been submitted, the Police officer is expected to: perform the arrest and file legal prosecutions as the means of Police response to domestic violence; conduct the necessary measures of protection, offer protection and assistance for adults and children (victims of domestic violence); improve the security of the staff who conducts legally approved reactions to the domestic violence incidents, secure support and assistance to the victims or to the witnesses of the domestic violence; cooperate with the community aiming to prevent further abuse and molestation; and to perform a thorough investigation during which it is important that the arrest has a positive effect (IACP – National Law Enforcement Policy Center, 2006:1). When the domestic violence is reported, the Police is obligated to act on an urgent basis, respecting the law of promptness and operability. In that way the repetition of this offense in the future can be prevented (Zarkovic, 2009:16; Jovicic & Setka, 2023:37). In case when the victim reports the event it is necessary to take primary action measures in order for the perpetrator to be arrested and evidence to be acquired. Immediately, it is necessary for the victim to be questioned in order to gather the essential data on the committed act, and furthermore to offer the essential health assistance as well as to provide clothes inspection and body check-up by the doctors of forensic

medicine, in case if the body integrity of the victim has been compromised. It is necessary to provide the hearing of the witnesses (if there are any) who have seen or were present during the act of the criminal offense. Speaking of the same, if traces or objects can be found in the place of the felony, it is necessary to secure and process the crime scene. After that, it is necessary to question the suspect, examine the body and clothes in order to acquire and secure relevant evidence, as well as draw the blood from the suspect in order to check if he is under the influence of alcohol. During the informative hearing of the victim, special attention should be paid to its psychological state and attempt should be made not to additionally traumatize the victim. It is essential to obtain the atmosphere of trust with the victim and help her to overcome the fear so as to state all the facts, and in the same time to be sensible and thorough during the verification of the testimony and its comparison with the rest of the evidence (Simonovic, 2004:575). Taking into consideration all of the above it is desirable that the person who conducts the hearing is of the same gender as the victim.

If the victim happens to be a child, the conversation should be led by a police officer who has acquired special knowledge in the area of children's rights, youth delinquency and legal protection of minor subjects. In the same way, the Police officers should provide the presence of an expert representer in guardianship instead of parents, foster parents or legal guardians to the minors during the procedure, taking into consideration that this is the safest way to provide objective and truthful testimony without the external impact, especially in cases where violence between parents preceded, or if the child was exposed to the domestic violence (Markovic, 2018:475)<sup>3</sup>.

Complete facts should be collected from the victim regarding the circumstances under which the criminal offense had happened: the previous relations between the perpetrator and the victim (the behavior of the perpetrator towards the victim, behavior of the victim towards the perpetrator, material situation etc.), the contact (the situation) which preceded the felony (the course of conversation, psychological state of the victim and the perpetrator, the impact of alcohol etc.); the description of domestic violence crime scene and changes which have occurred there during the act of felony (on that basis specific crime scene evidence are searched for and the clothes and footwear of the perpetrator are inspected as well); detailed description of the perpetrator's actions during the act of felony (threats, pressing down on the ground, kicking, choking, etc.); acquiring the testimony about the victim's resistance in order to create the versions that

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3 It is about the subjects who possess the certificate for working with minors who are victims or perpetrators of the criminal offense

could provide possible evidence on the body and clothes of the perpetrator, as well as finding witnesses (for example, during the defense the victim has ripped a part of the perpetrator's clothes, pulled a button, scratched the perpetrator's face, etc., to determine if the victim has screamed and from which places that could have been heard etc.); the behavior of the perpetrator after the felony has been committed (if he stayed at home, if he showed remorse or not, if he had gone somewhere, ran away etc.); the behavior of the victim and actions that followed after the felony has been committed (if she had reported the felony immediately after it happened, if she consulted the doctor, to whom did she confide in after the event has taken place etc.) (Simonovic & Pena, 2010:600-601). If in the crime scene of the domestic violence material changes can be found, occurred during the act of felony, the inspection of the crime scene is necessary. Before that, following the arrival at the crime scene the Police officers need to avoid parking the police vehicle in front of the object where the violence has occurred; to identify themselves as Police officials, to explain their presence, to contact all of the tenants in the building, all of the potential witnesses, the victim and the perpetrator; to remove the suspect from the crime scene if necessary, to estimate the injuries, to provide emergency aid and, if necessary, call an ambulance, to separate the tenants and the witnesses from the victim and the perpetrator and conduct an informative questioning with them regarding the circumstances of the deed itself. Breaking into an object is allowed only in cases when the safety of the victim has been compromised (IACP – National Law Enforcement Policy Center, 2006:4).

If the violence is happening in the moment when the police arrives, primary assignment of the Police officers is to stop it and to provide protection to the victim. In a situation such as that it is essential to pay attention that someone of the participants does not have access to firearms, close combat weapons or other objects which can cause injuries. There is a higher risk for that if the perpetrator is under the influence of alcohol or opioids. For that reason, if the legal conditions are satisfied, it is necessary to arrest the perpetrator (Markovic, 2018:453). After that, the members of the Police in uniforms, who have intervened on the basis of the reported domestic violence, after the closure of the intervention should proceed to take all of the measures for securing the crime scene as follows: to conduct a general overview of the crime scene without moving the objects in it, as well as to mark the space which covers the crime scene; to provide first aid to the injured subjects; to remove the direct danger of fire or explosion; to mark the crime scene using visible signs (tape, rope etc.); to block both closed and open space; to provide security measures for protection of the crime scene and save the evidence from destruction; to make

official notes, sketches, and if possible take photographs of all of the changes which took place in the crime scene, starting from the moment of the felony initiation until the arrival of the investigation team; to start a search for the perpetrator in case there are indications that he could run away; and to detect, find and separate the citizens who can provide significant information regarding the criminal offense (Simonovic, 2004:297-299).

After that, the team for inspection arrives to the crime scene and starts the inspecting process. The manner of performing the inspection when it comes to this criminal offense has no specific characteristics when compared to the inspection of other criminal offenses related to harming one's life or body. Namely, this act of investigation has a very important influence on the process and outcome of the legal act. The inspection can discover illogicalities and contradictions in case of the false report. The existence of the traces of blood, hairs (pulled out hair), shattered and broken objects (light bulbs, lamps, mirror, dishes, furniture etc.), injuries (bruises, scratch marks, tears, cuts, stabs, projectile traces etc.) requires inspection to be performed. The object of the investigation can be a place or an item, as well as the subjects (people). The most common place of domestic violence occurrence is an apartment or a house where both the victim and the perpetrator live in. The investigation team will estimate the actual situation in the crime scene, find, provoke and fix the evidence, find the objects, separate and neatly pack all of the evidence which will serve as a successful process of the legal actions. The Criminal technician will beforehand make a Croquis drawing and insert all of the relevant facts from the crime scene in it (UNDP, 2021:37; Zarkovic, 2009:227). When speaking of investigation of the subject, that specifically refers to the investigation of the perpetrator and the victim. It is always necessary to conduct it if physical or sexual violence has occurred. The investigation is conducted when the evidence is searched on the face, which points out to previously mentioned criminal act or existence of close contact between the perpetrator and the victim, or contact of a specific subject with the crime scene or with means/weapons used during the felony, in other words it points out to injuries stemming from the act of domestic violence. The investigation is performed in the following way: the dirt under the fingernails and from the earlobe of the felony perpetrator is extracted, and on its basis his presence can be determined at the crime scene, as well as his participation in the act of this felony. For example, under the fingernails of the domestic violence perpetrator, most likely biological traces of victim's skin or fiber traces can be found which usually come from the victim's clothes. The victim also leaves behind traces of defense on the perpetrator (bruises, scratch marks on the body etc.). In relation to that, it is necessary that the investigation of the people involved is performed in a health institution

at the same time as providing medical aid after the criminal offense had taken place. In this way, we are able to acquire useful material evidence in the form of doctor's report on the injuries ( medical records, and doctor's opinion) and the investigation record (Simonovic & Pena, 2010:325; Markovic, 2018:471).

If it is considered that the suspect illegally possesses firearms, it is necessary to search the apartment and other rooms. During the search to acquire the evidence, objects and documents related to the purpose of the search will be temporarily taken away. If the perpetrator has the access to firearms due to his occupation and job ( military subject, security guard, etc.) or based on his hobbies (hunting), it is of utmost importance to notify the employer or the association in order to deny him the access to the weapons during the investigation. In the same manner, the search of the devices for automatic data running and the equipment where the data is saved or electronic records can be saved will be executed if the victim has stated that the molester has threatened her by messaging her via multiple apps, also the search will be conducted on mobile phones where the entire content of the phone can be extracted (text messages, viber messages, photos, videos etc.). Also, temporary confiscation of objects is an investigatory act which takes place when it comes to domestic violence. Namely, the objects which have to be confiscated (weapons, ammunition, etc.) or objects which can serve as evidence in criminal procedure (tools, phone, computer, devices, etc.) will be confiscated by the members of The Police and stored according to the laws of Criminal Procedures Act. The category of objects which can be temporarily confiscated are devices for automatic data processing, as well as the devices and equipment where electronic records are or can be saved, i.e. the security camera records (UNDP, 2021:34).

In addition to all of the stated above, during the act of domestic violence, experts evaluation is being conducted. Here, we have two types of expertise conducted, and those are the following: the evaluation of bodily injuries and the psychiatric evaluation. The evaluation of bodily injuries is conducted in order to estimate the exact classification of the type and severity, as well as the mechanism which has led to the injury of the victim during the act of the criminal offense. Psychiatric evaluation can be carried out on the victim as well as on the perpetrator of the felony. The expertise evaluation of the victim is most commonly executed on the basis of all of the collected information being confirmed with the exposure of the victim to the violence which has lasted for a long period of time, or, if the consequences are evident, or if the victim has tried to commit suicide, or if the victim consumes alcohol etc., regardless of how long has she been exposed to the violence. This conclusion and opinion represents the proof that the consequences have impacted mental health

of the victim and together with the other evidence can be related to causal connection with the behavior of the perpetrator. Namely, the victim's attempt to commit suicide, as well as its misuse of alcohol can be seen as indicators showing that the victim has been exposed to violence and that through these behaviors she is seeking help and an exit from the violent surroundings. The expert evaluation of the perpetrator is conducted in case of the suspicion that his accountability has been absent or diminished, thus it is assumed that the perpetrator has done the felony under the influence of alcohol or drug addiction in the moment of committing the felony, or he is incapable to be included in the procedure due to mental disorders (UNDP, 2021:38-39).

## THE RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH STUDIES

In the lines of the procedure for collecting data, the authors have sent a plea to the Analytics Department of The Republic of Srpska Ministry of the Interior to acquire the records related to the number committed criminal offenses of domestic violence in families and family communities for the time period from 2021 to 2023. In this paperwork one part of the records led by the Police that is related to the domestic violence has been analyzed, in a sense of The Rulebook on data and report content regarding domestic violence<sup>4</sup>. The subject of this paper, besides the analysis of the number of reports on committed criminal offenses of domestic violence and the number of reports following The Law of Protection against the Domestic Violence, is the analysis of number of court orders for cessation of the investigation (both current and previous time period).

Tabel 1. *The number of the submitted reports to the Head prosecutors (year 2021)*

The number of criminal offenses reports	731
The number of reports based on the Law of Protection against Domestic Violence	206
The number of court orders to cease the investigation	100
- The number of orders from the current time period	62
- The number of orders from the previous time period	38
The number of court orders not to conduct the investigation	56
- The number of orders from the current time period	45
- The number of orders from the previous time period	11

<sup>4</sup> Content Rulebook of registers and reports on domestic violence („The Official Gazette of The Republic of Srpska” No. 58/21)

In Table 1 we can clearly see that in the year 2021, 731 reports have been submitted based on the criminal offense of domestic violence, as well as 206 submitted reports based on The Law of Protection against Domestic Violence, furthermore, 100 court orders has been issued to cease the investigation, 62 from the current ongoing time period and 38 from the previous time period, as well as 56 court orders on stopping the investigation, 45 from the current time period and 11 from the previous time period.

Table 2 2. *The number of submitted reports to the Head prosecution (year 2022 )*

The number of reports on committed criminal offense	855
The number of reports on the basis of The Law of Protection against Domestic Violence	173
The number of court orders to cease the investigation	101
- The number of orders from the current time period	53
- The number of orders from the previous time period	48
The number of court orders not to conduct the investigation	63
- The number of orders from the current time period	42
- The number of orders from the previous time period	21

From the Table 2 it can clearly be seen that in the year of 2022, 855 reports on criminal offense of domestic violence have been filed, as well as 173 submitted reports on the basis of The Law against Domestic Violence, and additionally , 101 court orders have been filed to cease the investigation , 53 from the current time period and 48 from the previous time period, as well as 63 court orders not to conduct the investigation , 42 from the current time period and 21 from the previous time period.

Table 3. *The number of submitted reports to the Head prosecutors (year 2023)*

The number of reports on committed criminal offenses	1022
The number of reports on the basis of The Law on Protection against Domestic Violence	158
The number of court orders to cease the investigation	208
- The number of orders from the current time period	102
- The number of orders from the previous time period	106
The number of court orders not to conduct the investigation	105
- The number of orders from the current time period	66
- The number of orders from the previous time period	39

Table 3 clearly shows us that in the year 2023, 1022 reports on the act of domestic violence have been filed, as well as 158 reports filed on the basis of The Law for Protection against Domestic Violence, furthermore, 208 court orders have been submitted to cease the investigation, 102 from the current time period and 106 from the previous time period, and 105 court orders not to conduct the investigation, 66 from the current time period and 39 from the previous time period.

If we carefully observe the stated data we can clearly see that in the year 2021 the least amount of domestic violence reports has been filed, only the issue is, that number continues to increase significantly, reaching its peak in 2023. It is obvious that each year to follow the number of court orders to cease and not to conduct the investigation has been progressively increasing.

## CONCLUSION

Criminal offense- domestic violence as a negative social phenomenon, due to its damaging effects on the most vital values that one society possesses, first of all families, draws a large attention of both local and global public. No matter the socio-economic levels of progression, it occurs and exists in all of the social communities. It includes violence against the partner (spouses or extramarital partners), children and elderly people, and it manifests itself through different forms of abuse (physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, economic and spiritual violence).

There are different ways of revealing this criminal offense, such as: activities of the Department of Interior Affairs, public speaking, reports filed by the victims and other witnesses, self-reporting, anonymous and pseudonymous reports, reports of The State and of other institutional subjects (educational system, health system, public informing system (media), non-governmental organizations etc.). In certain cases it is very difficult to reveal this felony taking into consideration the fact that the victims are very reluctant to report the abuse, even in cases when they feel that their lives are in danger.

After the discovery and revealing the criminal offense of domestic violence, the Police is faced with a complex task, and that is to shed light and prove it. In order to successfully approach its revelation and confirmation, the Police previously has to conduct the arrest and legal prosecution as the means of Police response to domestic violence; to take the necessary precaution safety measures; to provide protection and help for both adults and children (victims of domestic violence); to improve the safety of the staff who conduct legal reactions to the domestic violence incidents; to secure the support and help to

the victims or witnesses of domestic violence; to cooperate with the community in order to reach the goal of preventing further abuse and mistreatment; to conduct a thorough investigation. Within the framework of shedding light and proving this criminal offense the Police conducts multiple investigatory procedures which are essential in order to properly acquire high quality evidence necessary for successfully completing the legal procedure. Investigation procedures which the Police most commonly uses, aiming to collect evidence for this felony are: the hearing of the victims, the hearing of witnesses, questioning of the suspect, crime scene investigation, searching warrants, temporarily confiscating objects, expert evaluation etc.

On the basis of the empirical research study results it is clearly visible that there is a high occurrence of the criminal offense mentioned above on the territory of The Republic of Srpska. Namely, in the year 2021 the smallest amount of reports have been filed related to committing the felony of domestic violence, however, each of the following year that number has been increasing significantly, reaching its highest point in 2023. Also, it is noticeable that through each of the following years the number of court orders to cease and not to conduct the investigation is increasing significantly as well.

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**THEORETICAL CONCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK IN  
PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS WITH A FOCUS ON THE  
SITUATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

**Abstract:** *Social work in preschool institutions plays a crucial role in promoting children's well-being, ensuring inclusion, and providing support to families in addressing social and emotional difficulties. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, social work in preschool institutions is regulated by legal frameworks; however, its implementation in practice is limited and unevenly distributed. This paper analyzes the current state of social work in preschool institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, compares it with regional practices, and offers recommendations for improving its application. Grounded in theoretical frameworks of social work, this study draws upon Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, which emphasizes the multilayered environmental influences on child development, resilience theory, which focuses on the mechanisms enabling children and families to adapt to stressful situations, and systems theory, which highlights the importance of an integrated approach in social work. Furthermore, social capital theory provides insight into the role of social workers in building support networks, while critical and anti-discriminatory theory underscores the importance of social work in reducing social inequalities and advocating for inclusive policies. The analysis reveals that social work in preschool institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains underdeveloped, with a limited number of professionals and an inadequate legal framework. A comparative examination with regional countries highlights the need for systemic reforms, enhanced*

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*interdisciplinary cooperation, and the permanent employment of social workers in preschool institutions.*

**Keywords:** *social work theories, preschool institutions, social work, and multidisciplinary approach.*

## Introduction

Preschool education represents a fundamental stage in every child's development, as it is during this period that essential cognitive, emotional, and social skills are formed (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Social work in preschool institutions serves as a key instrument in addressing challenges such as poverty, discrimination, family crises, and other social difficulties. According to ecological development theory, a child exists within a complex system of interconnected contexts—from the family and preschool institution to the broader social community—necessitating an understanding of how each of these levels influences child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Early childhood development shapes cognitive, emotional, and social abilities and significantly affects a child's future integration into society. In this context, social work in preschool institutions becomes a crucial tool for tackling issues such as poverty, discrimination, family crises, and other social difficulties. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the legal framework governing preschool institutions includes social work activities, yet in practice, this component is often neglected or insufficiently developed. From the perspective of resilience theory, institutional support in early childhood can play a pivotal role in strengthening children's capacity to overcome social barriers and adverse circumstances (Masten & Reed, 2002). This raises the question of how well-equipped preschool institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina are for implementing social work and to what extent social work professionals are involved in the daily work with children and families. One of the key aspects of social work in preschool education is the identification of risk factors that may affect a child's development. According to UNICEF data (2020), children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, children from rural areas, and children from Roma communities face significantly greater obstacles in accessing quality preschool education. Social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986) can be employed to analyze how families' economic and social resources influence children's ability to fully benefit from preschool programs. Social workers, through collaboration with families and communities, can play a crucial role in overcoming these barriers, fostering greater inclusion, and ensuring equal access to education.

## **Methodological Framework of the Research**

This study applies a qualitative approach with an emphasis on descriptive-analytical and comparative analysis of available materials. Given the nature of the topic, the research is based on the analysis of secondary sources, including relevant legislative acts, reports from international organizations (such as UNICEF and UNESCO), as well as existing academic and professional literature in the fields of social work and educational policy. From a methodological standpoint, special attention is given to a comparative review of practices in the countries of the region (Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Slovenia), which enables the identification of institutional and normative differences, as well as potential directions for improving the model of social work within the preschool education system of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main methods used in the study are:

- Descriptive method, which examines the current situation and existing practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- Comparative method, which allows for a comparison with neighboring countries,
- Content analysis, applied to legal documents, strategies, and reports with the aim of identifying the structural and functional characteristics of the system.

### *Research Questions*

Based on the defined objectives, the research is guided by the following key questions:

- To what extent is social work integrated into preschool institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina?
- What are the main factors limiting the implementation of social work in this segment of education?
- How does the practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina differ from approaches in neighboring countries?
- How can theoretical concepts such as resilience and social capital be applied in the specific context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in addressing child and family poverty and social exclusion?

### *Implications and Recommendations*

Linking theoretical concepts with the real-world challenges in preschool education is essential for designing effective measures. For instance, the application of resilience theory enables the analysis and strengthening of the capacities of children from families affected by poverty or social exclusion. In this context, social workers in preschool institutions can play a crucial role in identifying risk factors, providing psychosocial support, and strengthening parenting competencies, thereby directly contributing to building resilience in children and their families. The research findings indicate a need for systemic reforms, including mandatory employment of social workers in preschool institutions, especially in rural areas. It is essential to enhance collaboration between preschools and social work centers through the development of cooperation protocols and continuous professional training for staff. It is also important to emphasize that the legislative framework does not represent the starting point, but rather a derivative step in shaping institutional practice – it is the result of prior needs assessment, public policy development, and empirical validation through pilot projects and strategies.

#### *Further recommendations include:*

- Amending and supplementing legal acts regulating preschool education in order to clearly define the role of the social worker,
- Establishing mechanisms for sustainable funding of social worker positions in educational institutions,
- Integrating social work into inclusive education strategies and national early childhood development plans.

These measures could significantly improve the quality of preschool education and support for at-risk children and families.

### **Social Work in Preschool Institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The legal framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while providing certain forms of support within preschool education, lacks precise guidelines for integrating social work into preschool institutions. According to the Law on Preschool Education of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013) and the Law on Preschool Education of the Republic of Srpska (2017), preschool institutions are expected to ensure conditions for the optimal development

of children through the support of a professional team. However, the role of social workers remains marginalized.

According to research conducted by Halilović (2020), only 12% of preschool institutions in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina employ a social worker, while in the Republic of Srpska, this percentage is even lower, around 8%. These figures indicate a significant lack of a systemic approach. Unlike pedagogues and psychologists, who are standardly included in preschool institutions, social workers are employed only sporadically, usually through projects funded by international organizations. This model is neither sustainable nor capable of addressing the complex needs of children and families. One of the key challenges in implementing social work in preschool education in Bosnia and Herzegovina lies in the uneven regional development. Rural areas are particularly affected by the lack of professional staff. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Srpska (2021), more than 70% of rural preschool institutions lack access to even basic psychological and pedagogical services, while social workers are practically nonexistent. This leaves a large number of children in socially vulnerable situations without adequate support. Another major issue is the lack of systemic coordination between preschool institutions and social work centers. Although social work centers are key actors in addressing family-related issues, their cooperation with preschool institutions is rarely structured. According to Halilović (2020), communication between these institutions typically occurs only in crisis situations, such as domestic violence or child neglect, while preventive work is virtually absent. Although legal frameworks provide a general structure for the functioning of preschool institutions, no explicit regulation mandates the compulsory employment of social workers in these institutions. As a result, the presence of social workers in preschool institutions depends on local policies, available resources, and awareness of their role. Detailed statistical data on the number of social workers employed in preschool institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not widely available. However, indications suggest that their presence is concentrated in larger urban centers, where resources and awareness of the importance of social work are at a higher level. Their involvement is most often the result of collaboration between preschool institutions and non-governmental organizations or international institutions. The capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, leads in the implementation of programs that incorporate social workers into preschool institutions. For instance, the project "Inclusion through Early Development", implemented in collaboration with UNICEF, facilitated the engagement of social workers in preschools working with children from vulnerable groups. This program has proven suc-

cessful in increasing social inclusion and providing support to families, particularly those from marginalized communities. However, the employment of social workers in Sarajevo remains dependent on project-based funding rather than institutional resources. In contrast, in Banja Luka, social workers are not typically part of preschool institution staff. Nonetheless, there are individual cases of engagement through projects funded by international organizations. A notable example includes private preschool institutions that employ social workers to provide additional support to children with developmental difficulties.

Despite these efforts, systemic integration of social workers into preschool education has not been achieved. When analyzing other major cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is evident that social workers are primarily involved through short-term projects. While these projects are beneficial, the lack of permanent solutions remains a challenge. Social work in preschool institutions has the potential to significantly improve the quality of preschool education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in the areas of inclusion and support for vulnerable groups.

### **Social Work in Preschool Institutions - A Theoretical Perspective**

The development of social work in preschool institutions can be analyzed through various theoretical frameworks of social work, which provide a deeper understanding of the relationships between the child, family, education system, and broader social community. Through ecological systems theory, resilience theory, systems theory, social capital theory, attachment theory, and critical social work theory, it is possible to examine how social workers contribute to improving inclusive education, preventing social issues, and strengthening parental competencies.

#### *Ecological Systems Theory and Its Impact on Preschool Education*

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) provides a framework for understanding how different levels of the social environment influence child development. This theory identifies multiple levels of influence:

- Microsystem – the family, preschool institution, peers, and closest social interactions that directly affect the child.
- Mesosystem – the relationships between different microsystems, such as

interactions between parents and preschool institutions.

- Exosystem – the broader social context, including parents' workplaces, local communities, and social welfare institutions.
- Macrosystem – social norms, laws, and economic conditions that shape the environment in which the child grows.
- Chronosystem – temporal changes that influence child development, including social transformations or family transitions.

In the context of preschool education, ecological systems theory emphasizes the importance of synergy between the family, preschool institution, and the social welfare system. Sustainable development theory enables the consideration of each child's development individually, within the broader context of the various social environments from which the child originates, thereby further supporting individualized and inclusive educational processes (Šindić, 2021). According to UNICEF (2020), children from disadvantaged family environments often lack equal support in early development, placing them at a disadvantage compared to their peers. Social workers in preschool institutions can operate at the mesosystem level by improving communication between parents and preschools, and at the exosystem level by advocating for stronger institutional connections between preschools and social work centers. In doing so, they further contribute to individualized approaches within the educational framework of the institution.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, practice shows that the links between these systems are weak, and strengthening multi-sectoral collaboration based on the ecological model could significantly enhance the inclusivity and quality of preschool education in the country.

#### *Resilience Theory and the Role of Social Workers in Supporting Children*

Resilience theory (Masten & Reed, 2002) highlights the importance of protective factors that enable children to cope with stressful situations and develop positive adaptive strategies. Resilience does not develop in isolation; rather, it results from a combination of a child's individual characteristics and support from their environment, including the family, preschool institution, and broader community. Social workers in preschool institutions play a key role in strengthening children's resilience through:

- Working with families – helping parents develop positive parenting strategies.
- Providing emotional support – working with children to mitigate the ef-

fects of family problems or socio-economic challenges.

- Strengthening preschool support systems – involving children in early intervention programs and multidisciplinary collaboration.

According to UNICEF (2020), in Bosnia and Herzegovina, children from poor families are often exposed to multiple stress factors, including food insecurity, family conflicts, and inadequate housing conditions. Interventions by social workers can significantly contribute to the development of protective factors and facilitate better adaptation to the educational system. The application of resilience theory in Bosnia and Herzegovina requires the development of systematic and long-term support programs that do not rely solely on temporary projects or crisis-based responses. In the preschool context, this means that social workers should be present not only in cases where problems have already been identified, but also in the daily lives of children, in order to build relationships of trust, recognize vulnerabilities, and empower children through consistent emotional support. Resilience is most effectively developed when support is embedded in everyday routines, rather than being exceptional and episodic.

#### *Systems Theory and the Need for a Multidisciplinary Approach*

Systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968) emphasizes that social problems cannot be solved in isolation but require cooperation between different sectors—education, social welfare, health, and justice. In the context of preschool institutions, this means that social workers must be part of a broader professional team that includes pedagogues, psychologists, and healthcare professionals. However, research indicates that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this collaboration is often weak, and preschools and social work centers communicate only in crisis situations instead of developing preventive programs. Research into practices within preschool institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from the perspective of educators, indicates the need to strengthen multidisciplinary teamwork among various professionals, including social workers, whose absence is notably pronounced (Šindić, 2019). The lack of social workers in preschools often prevents timely identification and intervention in cases of family risk, poverty, or child neglect, which can have long-term negative consequences for children's development and social inclusion. Systems theory suggests that, in the absence of clearly established protocols for inter-institutional cooperation, the responsibility for children's well-being remains fragmented and often insufficiently effective. In practice, this means that social workers must

have access to educational, health, and judicial data systems and information in order to respond preventively rather than merely reactively. Models of integrated early childhood services, successfully implemented in Nordic countries, can serve as a reference point for reforming intersectoral collaboration in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Introducing social workers into preschool settings would improve the quality of educational processes and contribute to the prevention of social exclusion in early childhood.

#### *Social Capital Theory and the Role of Social Workers in Strengthening Communities*

Social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000) highlights the importance of social networks and resources that enable individuals to achieve better social integration. In preschool institutions, social workers can play a crucial role in empowering children through:

- Connecting families with available resources – ensuring access to social benefits, healthcare, and support programs.
- Organizing parent support groups – providing education and facilitating experience-sharing among parents.
- Promoting joint activities for children and parents – strengthening family relationships and fostering a sense of community.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to UNICEF (2020), parents from economically disadvantaged families are often unaware of available support programs, which further exacerbates their social and economic hardships. This situation contributes to the intergenerational transmission of poverty, as children from marginalized backgrounds do not have access to the same quality of educational and developmental opportunities as their peers from more affluent environments. Social workers play a key role in mitigating these inequalities by actively engaging families with local resources, educational programs, and support networks. Such actions provide a concrete operationalization of social capital, wherein social workers act as intermediaries in the distribution and access to social resources, thereby creating a support network that directly impacts the developmental potential of children. Bourdieu (1986) emphasizes that social capital is the accumulation of actual or potential resources that stem from networks of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, which, in the context of preschool institutions, can be manifested through community support, educational initiatives, and parental participation. In this context, the ap-

plication of findings derived from the Heckman curve is particularly significant. This model clearly demonstrates that economic returns on investments in early childhood development—especially in education and social support during the preschool years—are substantially higher than those made in later stages of life (Heckman, 2006). According to Heckman (2008), early childhood interventions have the potential to significantly reduce social inequalities and improve life outcomes for children from impoverished families. Investment in early development enhances not only cognitive abilities but also social and emotional skills that are crucial for long-term labor market integration. When Heckman's theory is integrated with the theory of social capital, it becomes evident that effective early childhood interventions depend not only on financial investment but also on social connectedness and access to resources made possible by a strong network of social capital. Putnam (2000) highlights the importance of “bridging” and “bonding” social capital, which can act as a catalyst for the effective use of developmental programs. Heckman's findings further confirm that such early engagement is not only socially beneficial but also economically efficient. Thus, the development of social capital through social workers' interventions constitutes a foundational strategy for achieving the long-term benefits described by the Heckman curve. Neglecting this stage of development may lead to increased social costs in the future, including a greater need for remediation, welfare support, and corrective interventions. Therefore, it is recommended that social protection strategies and educational policies be grounded in the principles advocated by the Heckman curve, which is particularly relevant for children from impoverished backgrounds, as high-quality early programs can reduce educational and developmental disparities that are difficult to overcome later in life. In line with social capital theory, social workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina should play an active role in mobilizing local communities, strengthening parental networks, and fostering collective responsibility for child well-being. This involves organizing workshops, joint activities, and fieldwork in local communities characterized by high unemployment rates and low educational attainment. These efforts not only reduce the isolation of families but also increase trust in institutions that provide support. Such processes are essential for breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. In this regard, social capital not only provides a framework for understanding access to resources, but also represents a concrete mechanism through which the effects of early interventions—as anticipated by Heckman's model—can be maximized.

### *Attachment Theory and the Importance of Social Workers in Early Childhood Development*

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) emphasizes that emotional bonds with primary caregivers are crucial for a child's development. Children raised in unstable family environments often develop insecure attachment patterns, which can negatively impact their social and emotional adjustment. Social workers in preschool institutions can identify children showing signs of insecure attachment and provide additional support through:

- Working with parents on developing positive parenting strategies.
- Providing individual support to children through counseling and group activities.
- Collaborating with educators to ensure stable emotional support in preschool settings.

In the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where many parents are exposed to economic pressures, migration, or the consequences of family traumas stemming from the post-conflict period, the stability of family relationships is often compromised. This can hinder children's emotional bonding with their primary caregivers, particularly in families living in poverty, violence, or parental neglect. When integrated into preschool institutions, social workers can play a crucial role in the early identification of insecure attachment patterns in children and in the development of targeted interventions involving the family, preschool, and professional services. The application of attachment theory in this context enables the development of preventive measures that do not wait for problems to manifest through behavior, but instead act proactively to strengthen a child's emotional security. As a result, the risk of later developmental difficulties, behavioral issues, and even school failure is reduced. In this way, the theory becomes a foundation for practical models of work that connect the individual needs of the child with the structural capacities of the support system.

### *Critical Theory and the Anti-Discriminatory Approach in Social Work*

Critical theory (Dominelli, 2002) argues that social inequalities stem from structural factors that marginalize certain groups. In preschool education, this means that children from poor families and minority communities often face institutional barriers that hinder their access to quality education. Social workers can act as advocates for children's rights by:

- Working on reforms in education policies.
- Fighting discrimination in preschool institutions.
- Connecting marginalized families with the social welfare system.

In the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the application of critical theory requires the active recognition and deconstruction of institutional practices that perpetuate inequality—such as unequal funding of preschool institutions, discriminatory attitudes toward the Roma population, and limited access to free programs for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. In this context, social workers must take on the role of advocates and educators, working to dismantle stereotypes within the educational system. Special attention must be paid to children who do not speak the majority language or who come from rural and institutionally neglected communities, where the chances for quality early childhood development are significantly reduced.

### *Sustainable Development Theory*

The theory of sustainable development implies a balanced approach to economic growth, social justice, and environmental preservation, taking into account the needs of both present and future generations. Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). In the context of early childhood education, sustainability entails empowering children to develop an awareness of community, interconnectedness, and personal responsibility (UNESCO, 2017). The importance of education for sustainability is recognized precisely in the need to begin such education as early as possible (Lepičnik & Šindić, 2025). Social sustainability, in particular, which pertains to equity, inclusion, and the strengthening of social bonds, should be actively promoted by preschools through everyday relationships and activities. However, it has been observed that social sustainability is less frequently promoted through cooperation with the local community (Šindić & Lepičnik Vodopivec, 2025), where greater involvement of social workers could positively influence the implementation of participatory activities and foster stronger connections with the surrounding environment. In the Bosnian context, the concept of social sustainability is still not systematically integrated into early childhood education policies. While some preschools implement projects related to environmental sustainability, aspects of social equity, participation, and intergenerational solidarity often remain marginalized. The role of the social worker here is to ensure that the values of sustainability are not reduced to symbolic

activities, but are reflected in everyday practices—such as involving parents in decision-making processes, creating spaces for children’s voices, and connecting educational institutions with local non-governmental and humanitarian sectors. In this way, a true “culture of sustainability” is built, rather than merely fulfilling formal educational objectives.

Analyzing various theoretical frameworks highlights the crucial role of social work in providing support to children, families, and educational institutions. Ecological systems theory emphasizes the importance of connecting different support systems, while resilience theory underlines the significance of early intervention for children from high-risk environments. Systems theory demonstrates the necessity of a multidisciplinary approach, while social capital theory highlights that social inclusion and opportunities for children can be enhanced through active engagement by social workers. Critical theory further emphasizes the necessity of combating social inequalities through the advocacy of systemic change, while the theory of sustainable development provides a foundation for interventions aimed at building a more inclusive, empathetic, and sustainable society. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where social work in preschool education remains underdeveloped, applying these theoretical concepts could help create a more efficient and inclusive support system for children and families.

### **The Importance of Social Work in Preschool Institutions**

Social work in preschool institutions plays a crucial role in supporting children and their families, particularly in the context of early childhood development, the prevention of social problems, and the promotion of inclusive education. Preschool education serves as the foundation for a child’s overall development, as it lays the groundwork for future academic success and general well-being. The role of social workers in this process is reflected in their support for children, families, and professional staff in overcoming social and psychosocial barriers that may impact a child’s development.

#### *Psychosocial Development of the Child and the Role of the Social Worker*

The preschool period is a time of intense emotional, cognitive, and social development. During this stage, children acquire fundamental skills such as communication, problem-solving, and peer relationships. However, children growing up in disadvantaged social conditions often face challenges that may hinder their development. Social workers possess specific competencies that

enable them to recognize early risk factors, such as neglect or economic deprivation, and take action to prevent negative consequences. They assist children and families in developing resources and capacities to overcome these challenges. Research indicates that social workers play a pivotal role in supporting children from low-income families by facilitating their access to education and essential resources (Kecman, 2021).

### *Inclusive Education and Social Work*

One of the fundamental principles of modern preschool education is inclusion, ensuring equal access to education for all children, regardless of their individual differences. Children with developmental disabilities, as well as those from marginalized groups, are often excluded from the education system or do not receive the same quality of education as their peers. Social workers play a key role in promoting inclusion, as they are trained to work with children from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. Their role in inclusive education involves assisting families in overcoming barriers to preschool enrollment and collaborating with professional teams to develop individualized educational plans. For instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, social workers participate in support programs for Roma children, facilitating their access to education and providing assistance to their families (UNICEF, 2020). Through such initiatives, social workers contribute to reducing social exclusion and fostering an inclusive environment within preschool institutions.

### *Working with Families and Strengthening Parental Competencies*

The family is central to a child's life, and the quality of relationships within the family significantly influences the child's development. It serves as the primary support system, and the quality of parenting has a profound impact on a child's well-being (Kecman, 2021). Attachment theory emphasizes the importance of stable and secure relationships between children and their primary caregivers, which play a crucial role in emotional and social development. Social workers in preschool institutions recognize the need to support families, particularly those facing challenges such as poverty, unemployment, or difficulties in parenting.

One of the primary tasks of social workers in working with families is enhancing parental competencies. This includes educating parents about the importance of early stimulation, positive parenting, and emotional support for their children. Additionally, social workers provide counseling services to

parents struggling with issues related to discipline, communication with their children, or other aspects of parenting (Marušić, 2018). Through their work with families, social workers help create a stable and supportive environment for children. For example, UNICEF research has shown that families who received social work support during the preschool years were better equipped to meet their children's needs, positively influencing their overall development (UNICEF, 2019).

#### *Prevention of Developmental Problems*

A key objective of social work in preschool settings is the prevention of developmental problems. This involves identifying children at risk of developmental delays and designing and implementing support programs. Social workers frequently collaborate with other professionals, such as pedagogues, psychologists, and medical practitioners, to assess children's needs and provide appropriate support. For instance, children exhibiting signs of developmental delays may receive additional assistance through individualized or group programs designed by expert teams in collaboration with social workers (Kecman, 2021). The role of social workers in preventing developmental problems is particularly significant in the context of working with children from disadvantaged social backgrounds. These children are often exposed to multiple risk factors, including poverty, poor health conditions, and a lack of adequate parental support. Social workers help mitigate these risks by empowering families, ensuring access to essential resources, and providing direct support to children.

#### *Promoting Social Justice and Equal Opportunities*

One of the fundamental aspects of social work in preschool institutions is the promotion of social justice and equal opportunities for all children. This involves efforts to reduce disparities in access to education and provide additional support to children from marginalized groups. Social workers in preschool institutions often encounter challenges such as discrimination, stigmatization, and social exclusion. Their role is to ensure that all children have equal opportunities for development and learning, regardless of their social, economic, or cultural background. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, social workers are involved in programs that support children from Roma communities, enabling them to access education and integrate into the wider society (UNICEF, 2020).

### *Collaboration with Other Professionals*

Effective social work in preschool institutions requires close collaboration with other professionals, including pedagogues, psychologists, speech therapists, and medical staff. This interdisciplinary approach ensures a comprehensive response to children's emotional, cognitive, and social needs. Social workers play a crucial role in coordinating teamwork, ensuring that all aspects of a child's well-being are recognized and addressed appropriately.

The significance of social work in preschool institutions lies in its role in supporting children, families, and communities in creating an inclusive, supportive, and safe developmental environment. Social workers are essential in identifying and preventing problems, promoting inclusion, working with families, and collaborating with other professionals. Although social work in preschool education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not yet systematically regulated, examples of good practice demonstrate that social workers can significantly contribute to the quality of preschool education.

## **The State of Social Work in Preschool Institutions Across the Region and Comparison with Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Social work in preschool institutions assumes different roles and levels of development across the countries of the region, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Slovenia. These differences primarily stem from specific legislative frameworks, societal needs, and the level of investment in the education system and social protection. This analysis provides an overview of the state of social work in preschool education in the region, with a detailed comparison to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### *Social Work in Preschool Institutions in Serbia*

In Serbia, social work in preschool education is legally regulated through the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System (2020), which recognizes the need for a multidisciplinary approach in working with children. Social workers are part of expert teams in preschool institutions and are engaged in prevention, early intervention, and inclusion efforts. According to data from the Institute for the Improvement of Education and Upbringing of Serbia, social workers are employed in approximately 20% of preschool institutions, which is significantly higher than in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kecman, 2021). A particular focus in Serbia is placed on working with families from socially

vulnerable communities, as well as on the inclusion of children with developmental disabilities. A notable example of best practice is the “Education for All” program, which provides support to Roma children and their families through the engagement of social workers. Compared to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia demonstrates a higher level of integration of social workers into the preschool system, although there is still considerable room for improvement, especially in rural areas.

#### *Social Work in Preschool Institutions in Croatia*

Croatia stands out with a well-developed system of social work in preschool education, integrated into the broader framework of social policy. According to the Law on Preschool Education and Upbringing (2013), preschool institutions in Croatia are required to have expert teams that include pedagogues, psychologists, and social workers. This model enables a comprehensive approach to working with children, with a particular focus on inclusion and early intervention. One of Croatia’s key programs is “Step by Step”, which promotes inclusion in preschool education. Social workers in this program play a crucial role in supporting children from marginalized communities and in empowering parents. Unlike Bosnia and Herzegovina, where social workers are not systematically integrated into all preschool institutions, Croatia has made progress in this area, resulting in a higher level of inclusion and better support for families.

#### *Social Work in Preschool Institutions in Montenegro*

Social work in preschool institutions in Montenegro is regulated by the Law on Preschool Education and Upbringing (2010). Although the role of social workers in this system is still relatively modest, recent years have seen progress in integrating social workers into the preschool system, particularly through early intervention programs. According to the Montenegrin Ministry of Education, social workers are employed in approximately 15% of preschool institutions, which is slightly higher than in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Ministry of Education of Montenegro, 2020). One of the key challenges in Montenegro is the lack of personnel in rural areas, a problem shared with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The unequal availability of social work services across different regions remains a significant obstacle to achieving a comprehensive and effective system.

*Social Work in Preschool Institutions in North Macedonia*

In North Macedonia, social work in preschool institutions is still underdeveloped. Although the Law on Preschool Education (2004) acknowledges the importance of a multidisciplinary approach, social workers are rarely employed in preschool institutions. According to the Ministry of Education and Science of North Macedonia, social workers are present in less than 10% of preschool institutions, a situation similar to that in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Ministry of Education and Science of North Macedonia, 2020). The main challenges in North Macedonia include high poverty rates and the limited availability of preschool education in rural areas. Compared to Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia faces greater difficulties in terms of resources and institutional support, further complicating the integration of social workers into the preschool system.

*Social Work in Preschool Institutions in Slovenia*

Slovenia stands out as a regional leader in the integration of social work into the preschool system. According to the Law on Preschool Education and Upbringing (1996), every preschool institution is required to have an expert team that includes a social worker. Slovenia has developed a comprehensive approach to social work, encompassing work with children, families, and the local community. One example of best practice is the “Friends of Children” program, which focuses on the integration of migrant children into preschool institutions. Compared to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia has a significantly more developed system of social work in preschool education, which is the result of long-term investment in the educational and social sectors.

A comparative analysis clearly shows that countries with better-defined legislative frameworks and higher investment in social work within preschool education achieve better results in inclusion and the prevention of social problems among children. When comparing the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina with other countries in the region, it is evident that Bosnia and Herzegovina lags behind in the integration of social workers into the preschool system. While countries such as Slovenia and Croatia have developed inclusive models, Bosnia and Herzegovina faces numerous challenges, including a lack of legal regulations, financial resources, and qualified professionals. One of the main issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the unequal availability of social workers in preschool institutions. While some cantons and municipalities have recognized the importance of social work in preschool education, many rural communities lack access to these services. On the other hand, countries in the

region, such as Slovenia and Croatia, have demonstrated that ensuring equal access to social services is possible through systematic regulation and investment in professional staff. In conclusion, social work in preschool institutions is not only a matter of professional practice but also a social responsibility. Bosnia and Herzegovina has the opportunity to enhance its preschool social work system to contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and fair society, where every child will have equal opportunities for development and success. By adopting best practices from the region and investing in social work, Bosnia and Herzegovina can significantly improve its preschool education system, ensuring that social work becomes a standardized and essential component of early childhood development.

### **Challenges and Recommendations for the Improvement of Social Work in Preschool Institutions**

Social work in preschool institutions faces numerous challenges that affect the quality and accessibility of services for children, parents, and the community. It is crucial to analyze each of these challenges and, more importantly, propose solutions that can contribute to the advancement of social work in preschool institutions, taking into account the specificities of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as experiences from countries in the region. The main challenges of the social work profession in preschool institutions are as follows:

- Lack of a legal framework – One of the primary challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the inadequate legal framework regulating social work in preschool education. Although laws on preschool education and social protection recognize the importance of an interdisciplinary approach, the role of social workers is neither clearly defined nor systematically regulated (Kecman, 2021). As a result, many preschool institutions do not recognize the need to employ social workers, while existing professionals face ambiguous job descriptions and limited resources.

- Shortage of personnel and resources – Social workers in preschool settings often work under conditions of staff shortages and limited resources. According to UNICEF data (2020), only 10% of preschool institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina employ social workers, highlighting a severe lack of personnel. The situation is particularly difficult in rural areas, where access to professional support is even more limited.

- Weak collaboration with parents and the community – Another challenge is the insufficient cooperation between social workers, parents, and the local community. Social workers often lack the opportunity to actively partic-

ipate in family support programs, limiting their ability to address issues such as poverty and domestic violence. Additionally, parents are often not well-informed about the role of social workers, which can lead to a lack of trust and cooperation (UNICEF, 2020).

- Uneven practices across different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina – Bosnia and Herzegovina faces the issue of inconsistent practices in social work within preschool institutions, largely due to the country's complex administrative structure. While some cantons and municipalities have recognized the importance of social work, others have neglected this area, leaving children and families without the necessary support (Kecman, 2021).

Based on the aforementioned challenges, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance social work in preschool institutions:

- Development and implementation of a legal framework – The first step toward improving social work in preschool education is adopting legislation that clearly defines the role of social workers within preschool institutions. This law should mandate that preschools employ social workers as part of multidisciplinary teams, with precisely defined responsibilities and duties.

- Increased investment in human resources and infrastructure – Another crucial step is increasing investment in human resources and infrastructure within preschool institutions. This includes hiring additional social workers, particularly in rural areas where their services are most needed. Additionally, it is essential to provide adequate working conditions and resources, including spaces for individual and group work with children and parents.

- Strengthening collaboration with parents and the community – Social workers should be actively involved in family support programs to improve cooperation between preschool institutions and parents. This includes organizing workshops, counseling sessions, and educational programs for parents, as well as collaborating with local NGOs and social protection institutions. For instance, Slovenia and Croatia have developed successful parenting support programs that could serve as a model for Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNICEF, 2020).

- Promoting social work in preschool education – To raise awareness about the importance of social work in preschool institutions, it is necessary to conduct public information campaigns targeting parents, educators, and policymakers.

The challenges facing social work in preschool institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not insurmountable. With appropriate legal reforms, increased investment, and stronger collaboration between preschools, parents, and the community, it is possible to develop a system that supports the overall development of children and contributes to reducing social inequalities.

## **Conclusion**

Social work in preschool institutions plays a crucial role in ensuring comprehensive support for children, families, and the community. However, its full potential in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains underutilized. The analysis shows that Bosnia and Herzegovina has a fragmented and underdeveloped system of social work in preschool education, mainly due to the country's complex political and administrative structure, inconsistent practices, and insufficient resources. Despite these challenges, there is room for improvement through legal reforms, increased investment in human resources, and continuous education and professional development of social workers. A comparative analysis with countries in the region, such as Slovenia and Croatia, demonstrates that these countries have more advanced systems where the role of social workers in preschool institutions is clearly defined and legally regulated.

The findings of this research highlight that social work in preschool institutions is a key element in creating an inclusive, fair, and efficient support system for children and families. With appropriate reforms, Bosnia and Herzegovina has the potential to build a system that ensures equal access to quality services for all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status or place of residence. Based on theoretical and empirical data, it can be concluded that social work in preschool institutions should not be viewed in isolation but rather as part of a broader social protection and educational policy framework.

Theories of social work emphasize that early childhood is a critical period for interventions that can significantly improve children's long-term social outcomes. Without systemic reforms and an increase in the capacity of social workers in preschool institutions, Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to lag behind regional countries in terms of inclusion and social support. Therefore, it is imperative that future educational and social policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina recognize the importance of social work in preschool institutions and ensure sustainable support for its implementation.

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## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLICE SYSTEMS IN FRANCE AND GERMANY

**Abstract:** *The functionality of the police system is important for all countries in the world. Primarily, states strive to establish a more functional police system that will successfully provide citizens with security services. What the model of the police system in a country will look like is a reflection of numerous factors - historical and current, subjective and objective, legal and customary, formal and material, external and internal. Taking everything into account, it can be said that one of the most important factors is the territorial organization of the state. The police system of a modern state should be organized according to a model that will enable adequate protection of the state and its citizens from all challenges, risks and threats. In this paper, we will try to look at the way in which the police systems of France and Germany are organized, one of which is very simple and the other is complex. For this purpose, a methodological framework was applied in the form of a study of the existing scientific and professional literature, as well as an analysis of research papers dealing with issues of genesis and comparative analysis of the model of police systems of a modern state. Content analysis methods, historical method and comparative method will be used in the work. Based on the aforementioned methodological basis, the paper will present the basic characteristics of the police systems of two large European, neighboring countries, with rich traditions of police development and police science. After that, their police systems will*

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*be analyzed using a comparative method, with the aim of seeing the similarities and differences, that is, the advantages and disadvantages of each model.*

**Keywords:** *police, organization, system, state, security.*

## INTRODUCTION

The police system is an integral part of the security system, and the security system is itself a part of a larger system - national and even global. Precisely because of this, the theory of systems (but also the theory of security systems) provides a philosophical and intellectual basis for the scientific study of police systems. In the simplest terms, a system is a set of different elements that function as a harmonious whole to achieve a specific goal. The concept of a system includes the following elements: the set goal for which the system exists, forces and means to achieve the goal, the structure of the system elements through which individual activities are realized, a set of activities for the achievement of the goal and the function of the structural elements for the achievement of the goal (Kekovic, 2009; Young & Leweson, 2014). Therefore, we can define the security system as “an organized social system through which society organizes the function of protecting its vital values for the general progress and development of society” (Kekovic, 2009:139). It implies a built and organized set of subsystems that have a defined scope of work and apply general and special methods of security science. The peculiarity of the security system is reflected in the fact that its subsystems are organized as systems, because each has special strengths, means, methods, rules and work norms. Precisely one of those subsystems, which represents a separate system in itself, is the police system. At the same time, it is about the “most practical” branch of security (public security) - which implies the most direct relations between the police and citizens and the community (Jovicic & Setka, 2020). Therefore, the relationship between the security system and the police system is hierarchical, where the police system is a subsystem of the state security system.

There are many different models of police systems in the world, and it would certainly be wrong to claim that there are two identical, or even similar, models. There are numerous factors that influence the formation and development of the police system of a country - political arrangement, relations between citizens and the government structure, territorial division of the country, security conditions, historical, cultural, economic, social factors and

others. In this paper, we will try to present the basic characteristics of the police systems of two large European countries with rich traditions of police and police science - France and Germany. After that, we will make a comparative analysis of the police systems of these two countries, and try to point out similarities and differences, advantages and disadvantages.

## THE GENESYS OF THE TERM POLICE AND THE POLICE SYSTEM

Although the first outlines of the police organization and function are visible in the epoch of the original human communities, the origin of the police, as a structured organization, is linked to the old century and the origin of the state and private property (Roberg et al, 2004; Gacinovic, 2015). In general, the concept of the police is inextricably linked with the concept of the state. This thesis is best supported by the fact that, etymologically, the word “police<sup>3</sup>” comes from the term “*polis*” (Greek: city, city-state). Namely, the entire state activity of the Greek city - state, i.e. the polis, excluding the judiciary and the army, was simply denoted by one name - *politeia*, police (Milosavljevic, 1997; Jovicic, 2023).

After the Dark Ages, during the era of absolutist monarchies, conditions were created for the development and shaping of the police in an organizational sense, primarily thanks to the development of cameralism<sup>4</sup>. Cameralists, as representatives of the modern state economy of that time, had an interest in the police being well organized and, as such, being an instrument of the government to ensure the greatest possible inflow into the state budget (Lisken & Denninger, 1992). In this period, a state was considered to be well-ordered only when it engaged in such a police (*un état bien policé*) that ensured the population’s safety, well-being and even perfection (Spektorski, 2000).

The broadly defined notion of police, in the sense of the entire administrative function of the state, was in use until the end of the 18th century in France, Germany and some other countries. After the bourgeois revolution, the idea of popular sovereignty won, as the source and justification of state power<sup>5</sup>. By shaping this principle in the process of building a modern state, the concepts of modern police and police system were gradually built. Before, the police de-

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3 *Police* in French, *polizei* in German

4 Cameralism (German: *Kameralismus*) is a political discipline that, above all, represented the care of “well-organized police” (Subošić, 2013).

5 Police state has been historically replaced by the legal state.

noted almost the entire state administration, with a dual function - to take care of the internal security of the state and society (protective function), but also to enable social progress and the well-being of the population<sup>6</sup>. In the course of the 19th century, there was a differentiation of these functions and the professionalization of the work of the administration, which was subordinated to legal and political control. Numerous tasks of an administrative nature are excluded from police competence and are entrusted to special departments, while at the same time, the concept of police is reduced to the function of eliminating internal threats in the state, i.e. the tasks of maintaining public order and peace and suppressing crime<sup>7</sup> (Gacinovic, 2015; Subošić, 2017; Jovicic & Setka, 2023). Of course, the function of the police has its sub-functions, which today represent elements of the police system of a modern state and which include numerous specificities characteristic of different countries. Such differentiation of the police function, but also of the organization, is a consequence of the action of numerous factors or “numerous compromises between conflicting principles and ideas” (Kunic, 2008). Namely, it is a very dynamic area of state administration subject to frequent changes, conditioned by increased security risks, national reform projects and platforms for the fight against crime (Franulovic et al, 2011). Due to the dynamics of changes that are a constant phenomenon in this segment of state administration, we will focus our consideration of the police systems of the modern state on the examples of France and Germany. Before that, we will try to give a definition of the police system and present some basic models of police systems that appear in the world.

Bearing in mind the function of the police, as well as the postulates of the general theory of the system and the theory of the security system, the police system, in the end, can be defined as a specific and dynamic subsystem of the state security system, with established mutual relations of its parts, organized for the efficient performance of public security and other tasks internal affairs, i.e. the performance of police functions - criminal, misdemeanor, administrative, normative and social. The function of the police system includes goals (eg protection of society from crime) and tasks (traffic control and regulation,

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6 The phrase “internal affairs”, which, in many countries, is still used today to denote the police department, is precisely a relic of this time when, under the term police, the entire activity of the state administration, except for the judiciary and the army, was subsumed.

7 Dr Dane Subošić tries to define the police from a genetic point of view, stating that the police represent “a unity of function and structure that arose, survived and developed for the purpose of maintaining internal order in the human community and security protection of the order of government in society” (Subošić, 2013:17)

maintenance of public order and peace, administrative and legal tasks, etc.). It is achieved by special forces (police officers and police units) using special means (police powers). An important feature of the police system is the monopoly of physical coercion, which is exclusively entrusted to the police by the state.

Finally, it is necessary to emphasize that the police system is a broader concept than the term “police organization”. The police organization is only a part of the integral police system. It is completely irrelevant whether the police system consists of several police agencies that are independent in their work within a state, because it is seen as a single entity in a state. Of course, this does not mean that all police agencies in a country should be subordinated to only one center. How functional a police system will be, depends on its proper organization, functioning and cooperation within it - between its constituent parts - police agencies (Setka, 2016).

## THE MODELS OF POLICE SYSTEMS

Every sovereign state has the right to organize the police in a way that suits its needs and socio-political circumstances. Namely, the position, role and organization of the police are regularly the result of the action of certain factors that have their own specificities in every society (Milosavljevic, 1997). The basic condition for the functioning and development of police organizations in the modern environment is the construction and existence of an adequate model that will have a satisfactory level of flexibility (Cvetkovic, 2010). Such a model should enable a timely and effective reaction to modern security challenges, risks and threats, with the most rational use of state resources. There is a wide range of police system models in the world, each of which has specific characteristics that make it possible to distinguish it from the police system of any other country. Therefore, there are no two completely identical police systems. Every police system is determined by the conditions in which it was built and in which it evolves. At the same time, the most essential “condition” and starting point for the functional organization of the police is the state of security in the country. An important role is played by factors such as the size and number of inhabitants, the length and characteristics of the state border, and a number of cultural, economic, social, political and other circumstances in which internal affairs authorities operate. The most important internal factors that determine the organization of the police (police system) are: strategies, guidelines, goals of the police, jobs and tasks of the police, and organizational resources available to the police (Puseljc & Jelenski, 2007; Franulovic et al,

2011). The organizational models according to which we distinguish individual police systems are the result of the process of differentiation of the state administration.

In order to get structural division of police systems we can combine classifications made by Raymond B. Fosdick and R.I. Mawby into three basic models of police systems: continental, English (Anglo-Saxon) and colonial (Milosavljevic, 1997).

The continental model is characteristic of almost all European countries except the United Kingdom. Professor Bogoljub Milosavljevic (1997) states as the basic general characteristics of the continental model: the existence of a national police that is managed from one center, the absence of competing competences, the distinction between two standard national police organizations - the national police and the national gendarmerie, the division into administrative and judicial police, the absence of autonomous police forces below the central level, etc. These characteristics are an expression of strong state traditions, but also legal traditions based on the Euro-continental legal system. A striking example of the continental model of the police system is the police system of France.

The Anglo-Saxon model can be found in the UK, USA, Canada and Australia. Its main characteristic is the decentralization of the police. A key role is played by local police organizations that are under the influence of local self-government bodies. In addition, a certain degree of coordination is possible from the national level. If there are national police forces, efforts are made to ensure that their role is set in such a way as not to undermine the autonomy of the local police. This model is a reflection of Anglo-Saxon law.

When we talk about the colonial model of the police system, we are referring to the police systems of countries that in the past were colonies of European colonial powers, primarily England. The colonial powers tried to establish police systems in their colonies that would serve to protect their interests. Milosavljević (1997) states the following characteristics of the colonial model: responsibility of the police exclusively to the colonial authorities and measuring its success according to the goals of those authorities, centralized structure and militarization, mandatory personal weapons, life in barracks and barracks, exclusion of local personnel from the police force completely or only with management positions, etc. It is important to emphasize that the colonial model is a part of history, but also that some of the listed characteristics have remained even today in the former colonies.

Some authors add the so-called Asian model to this division. Its main representative is Japan. Although the Japanese police operate under the super-

vision of the national government, the integration of the Japanese police into the local community is an important feature of their work. Police officers are expected to visit families in their charge, and citizens are used to being monitored by local police officers (Franulovic et al, 2011). Japan truly represents a unique example in the world of how the police should treat the community within which they perform their functions.

## THE POLICE SYSTEM OF FRANCE

France is the cradle of modern police, and its police system is considered the first modern police system built in the world. Most other European countries (as well as some non-European ones) take over the basic organization of the police precisely from France. In the 18th century, in France, the first police constitution (*Premier livre de matiers*) was adopted, and Cardinal Richelieu centralized the police and significantly increased its composition. Also, the science of police is developing in this country, that is, the study of the organization and work of the police in a scientific sense<sup>8</sup>. After the French revolution in 1789, police powers are entrusted to city authorities (police commissioners were elected persons), while the National Guard battalions ensure public order. The Ministry of General Police was established in 1796, and the National Gendarmerie was also established. Then, in the 19th century, there was a functional division into the judicial police, in charge of criminal investigations, and the general administrative police, whose responsibility is to maintain the security of order, public order and public health. Also, there is the formation of special administrative police for certain administrative branches (medical, maritime, industry and trade police) (Gacinovic, 2015). The functional division of the French police into judicial and administrative has been maintained even today.

The police system of France today represents a typical example of a coordinated centralized model of police organization. Such a model, by the way, is characterized by the existence of two or more police organizations/agencies whose jurisdiction extends over the entire state territory and between which there is coordination (Gacinovic, 2012). The same (in general outline) was established in France after the reforms of 1966 and 1967, with two police agencies - the National Police (*Police nationale*) and the National Gendarmerie (*Gendarmerie nationale*). The third organizational form, which serves as a sup-

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<sup>8</sup> The first manual of police science, in 1705, was written by the assistant chief of the Paris police, Police Commissioner Nicolas de La Mare.

plementary element of the police system, is represented by the municipal and rural voluntary (communal) police (*Police Municipale*) (Jovicic & Setka, 2018).

After the reforms, the philosophy of police work in France was changing. In 1977, the then Minister of Justice of France, Alain Peyrefitte, submitted a report in which he underlined the existence of fear of crime in the country, as well as the state of neglect of the National Police patrols. In this document, the minister promotes the improvement of patrol activities, the establishment of police stations at the neighborhood level, as well as police training focused on community policing. Such conclusions were supported in another report, published in 1982, by several French mayors, who advocated a partnership in local security between the state, municipalities and local actors. This led to the creation of Communal Councils for Crime Prevention in 1983 and foot-patrol experiments in various parts of the country but not to a coherent nationwide police doctrine yet (Zagrodzki, 2017).

After the unexpected victory of the Socialist Party in France, in the parliamentary elections of 1997, the newly appointed Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, emphasized the police work in the neighborhood, that is, the community (French: *police de proximité*) as a priority. The general philosophy of the reform was to create a service-oriented policing strategy focused on everyday crime and disorder. The reform included only the National Police, and each police district had to be reorganized, in terms of opening new police stations, strengthening foot patrols and creating closer ties with the local community. However, this concept soon faced the numerous obstacles it had to face: organizational resistance from police officers who saw it as a “soft” approach to crime, financial and human resources necessary to create extra patrol units and police stations, and lack of time due to political constraints, so it was soon replaced by a new concept - goal-oriented police work (French: *culture du résultat*) (Zagrodzki, 2017).

The new work strategy of the French police was made official in 2002 by the Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy. The new minister insisted on statistics - the number of detected criminal acts and arrests, insisting at the same time on strengthening criminal investigative capacities. The most symbolic illustration of that shift was when he declared in front of the media that “the job of the police is not to play rugby with the kids, but to investigate, to intervene and to arrest” (Zagrodzki, 2017:49). The last significant reform of the police in France was carried out in 2008, and its aim was to harmonize with the norms of the European Union. Primarily, there was an insistence on changing the role of the National Gendarmerie, in the sense of reducing the competence for military matters, and more clearly defining it according to police affairs (Jo-

vicic & Setka, 2018). The goals and statistics-based approach to policing was maintained until 2012, when Sarkozy's presidency ended.

The third, the most moderate concept of police work in France, came to life after the election of Socialist François Hollande as President in 2012. Hollande, as candidate, had promised to restore the philosophy of "police de proximité" through a less ambitious program called "Zones de Sécurité Prioritaires" (ZSP, Prioritized Security Zones): instead of being enforced throughout the country, which was made difficult anyway by the budgetary situation of the French state, it concerned 80 neighbourhoods or areas, which received additional resources and reinforced coordination between national law-enforcement agencies (the reform concerned both PN and GN, even though the vast majority of prioritized zones were in PN jurisdiction) and local stakeholders. Nevertheless, those efforts were hindered to a large extent by the terrorist attacks that took place in 2015, which led the government to neglect ZSPs and to reallocate resources to intelligence and anti-terrorist units (Zagrodzki, 2017).

President Emmanuel Macron was elected in May 2017, on a platform that included a shift towards a more service-oriented police strategy – the approach called "*Police de Sécurité du Quotidien*."<sup>9</sup> Two objectives are pursued. The first one is creating a balanced approach between a tough-on-crime philosophy, as the project aims at making the criminal justice system efficient, especially when it comes to punishing minor crime, and service-oriented police force, with neighborhood patrols and increased cooperation with the public in a series of targeted areas. The second one is better equipping a police force that has complained recently about their work conditions (Zagrodzki, 2017).

The basic police organization in France is, therefore, the National Police, responsible for policing in urban areas (with over 20,000 inhabitants). This service is characterized by a strictly centralized structure, with several tightly connected organizational levels. The national police is directly managed by the government, i.e. the Ministry of the Interior, through the *Director General* (Bayley, 1985; Milosavljevic, 1997). The territorial organization of the police overlaps with the territorial division of the state into administrative areas. The headquarters of the National Police is in Paris, and in each department, there are units headed by the prefect of the department, who has his assistant, along with the head of the criminal police, the head of the administrative police and the head of the intelligence department (Gacinovic, 2012; Jovicic & Setka, 2018).

The *Gendarmerie Nationale* is traditionally responsible for rural and suburban areas of France, that is, places with less than 20,000 inhabitants (18 re-

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9 English: Daily Safety Policing

gions, formerly 27, and 7 military regions), as well as for protection of border areas (Bayley, 1985). The Gendarmerie is managed by a director who, for part of the work, is responsible to the Minister of the Interior, while for another part of the work, he is responsible to the Minister of Defense. Generally, the Gendarmerie, within its local jurisdiction, is responsible for performing the following jobs and tasks: conducting criminal investigations, maintaining and establishing public order and peace at public meetings and demonstrations, performing police work at sea, securing airports, nuclear facilities and military installations, providing assistance to the French armed forces in their operations on French soil and carrying out part of the work related to the security of the highest officials of France and ceremonies of state importance. Also, the *Gendarmerie Nationale* is responsible for counter-intelligence operations, identification and neutralization of threats from terrorism, nuclear, biological and chemical risks, and ballistic or cyber-attacks, etc (Jovicic & Setka, 2018).

Public safety and national security revolve around two national law-enforcement agencies: the Police nationale (PN) and the Gendarmerie Nationale (GN). Their coordination is based on identical work methods, information procedures and joint tasks. The procedures and work of the Gendarmerie and the National Police are prescribed by the Law on Criminal Procedure, which both police organizations adhere to, and the by-laws do not significantly change the legally prescribed procedures and centralized management of both organizations. Both agencies are under the hierarchal authority of the Minister of Interior<sup>10</sup>, in what can be qualified as a centralized system. On top of those two national agencies, there are 3 900 municipal police forces in the country, with a jurisdiction for minor crime and some traffic violations and very limited investigative powers (Gacinovic, 2012; Zagrodzki, 2017). These police organizations are financed from the budgets of municipalities (communes) and are accountable to mayors for their work. Therefore, they are responsible for the territories of villages and smaller towns. Their role is primarily preventive (Jovicic & Setka, 2018).

## THE POLICE SYSTEM OF GERMANY

The Federal Republic of Germany, like France, has a long and significant police tradition. In this country, in the 18th century, the entire science of the police was developed – *Polizeiwissenschaft*. The most famous author from

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10 The Gendarmerie used to be under the authority of the Minister of Defence until 2009. Gendarmes remain military personnel nevertheless and may be deployed in external operations under the command of the Ministry of Defence (Zagrodzki, 2017).

that time, who studied the police, was Professor **Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi**. In 1756, he published the “Principles of Police Science” (*Grundsätze der Polizeywissenschaft*). Among other things, Professor Gottlob von Justi writes about the establishment of public order and the performance of police work, with the application of appropriate measures of an operational nature. Also, in the general Prussian land law from 1794, the police is defined as a service that takes care of maintaining public peace, security and order, as well as eliminating danger that threatens the public or individuals. It is inevitable for this area of expertise to mention Austrian professor **Joseph Freiherr von Sonnenfels**, the author of the “Principles of Police” (*Grundsätze der Polizei*, 1765). The work is based on the science of the police, and the author believes that its fundamental task is learning to maintain internal security. Among the authors who, when studying the philosophy of the state, touched on the organization of the police, we can count **Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel** himself. He viewed the police much more broadly than what the police actually represent in a modern state. According to Hegel, the police encompassed the entire area of administrative action of the state in the area of civil society. Here we can already notice his diametrically opposed attitude in relation to liberal conceptions that reduced the state apparatus, and thus the police system, to the negative function of a “night watchman” (Maslesa, 1999).

The first organized police forces in Germany date back to the early nineteenth century, when some German kingdoms “rewrote” Napoleon’s idea of establishing a national gendarmerie in France. However, the real impetus for the creation of the police system of the German state was given by the February Revolution in 1848. The unification of Germany was completed after the German-French war and the defeat of France in 1870/71 (Maslesa, 1999). What is certainly worth mentioning is the highly developed statistical monitoring of crime in Germany, which began at the time of the First World War and continued in the period between the two world wars. The results for 1936, 1937 and 1938 were published in the annual statistical reports of the Reich Criminal Police Directorate (*Reichskriminalpolizei*), and excerpts were also published in the journal of criminology of the time – *Kriminalistik* (BKA, 2019). After World War II, the German police were under Allied supervision. With the adoption of the new German constitution in 1949 and the establishment of 11 states in the early 1950s in West Germany, these states established their own police forces. During that time, a single, central police force was established in East Germany (Feltes et al, 2013).

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, each of the 16 German states established their own police forces, with federal po-

lice agencies in place. The police system of the new, united Germany began to adapt to the new environment. In the 1990s, the concept of victim protection became popular in the German police. After legal, political and social debate, the German police developed a new victimological approach. Victims of burglary, rape or robbery are no longer treated only as witnesses, as evidence, but their interests in criminal proceedings, the fears they face, as well as measures to protect against secondary victimization and possible repetition of the criminal offense to their detriment, are taken into account. which is especially true for victims of domestic violence. After the 9/11 events, German police directed its strengths towards fight against terrorism. Legislation on the control of transnational crime, money laundering and illegal migration has been redesigned to form the core of the anti-terrorist action of German police agencies (Feltés et al, 2013).

Today, Germany is a constitutional federal republic, composed of 16 provinces - republics (federal units), which are divided into 313 districts and 116 autonomous cities. According to the German constitution, the police is part of the executive power, and each federal unit has special basic police services which, in individual republics, are adapted to its particularities and needs (Milosevic & Dostic, 2009). This is the main reason why there is no single strategy or philosophy for policing in Germany: each state and even each local community can decide its own way of ensuring law enforcement, preventing or fighting crime and whether, for example, and how to implement strategies like community policing. Therefore, the police system of Germany belongs to coordinated decentralized police systems. Its complexity is due to the existence of special federal police forces and provincial police forces. The characteristic that makes this police system decentralized is reflected in the fact that the real police power is in the hands of the provinces, while the jurisdiction of the federal police organizations covers narrower areas - the area of protection of the order established by the constitution, interprovincial and international crime. The police system of Germany, according to the territorial principle, is organized on three levels: federal, provincial and local (Frevel & Kuschewski, 2009; Jovicic & Setka, 2018).

At the federal level, there is the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, as well as the Permanent Council of Ministers of the Interior. All issues of importance to the federal state (protection of constitutional order and internal security, terrorism, crime with an interprovincial element, international police cooperation, etc.) are under the jurisdiction of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, which is headed by a federal minister. The following federal police agencies function within the Federal Ministry: Federal

Police (*Bundespolizei*), Federal Criminal Police (*BKA*), Federal Public Service, Federal IT Service, Federal Civil Protection Service and Federal Sports Police. With the aim of preserving unity between all elements of the police system, the Permanent Council of Ministers of the Interior was established at the federal level. This body, in addition to the federal minister as chairman, consists of ministers from each member country (province), who cooperate on a voluntary basis (Jovicic & Setka, 2018).

The **Federal Criminal Police** (*Bundeskriminalamt – BKA*) has the task of coordinating the fight against crime at the national and international level. It is headquartered in Wiesbaden, Hesse, and maintains major branch offices in Berlin and Meckenheim near Bonn. All official communication between the German police and police agencies of other countries takes place through the BKA. BKA conducts investigations of the most serious forms of crime in accordance with the law or whenever it is entrusted with the jurisdiction by the public prosecutor's office, due to the importance of the criminal offense in question. The BKA is also responsible for the protection of members of the constitutional bodies of the Federal Republic of Germany and is responsible for investigations of a large number of cases in the field of international organized crime, terrorism and extremism, for financial investigations, forensic examinations and expert opinions, etc. In addition, the BKA is responsible for the general and development of the methods of police action, and for the crime prevention strategy (Feltes et al, 2013; Jovicic & Setka, 2018).

The **Federal Police** (*Bundespolizei – BPOL*) is, in fact, the former German Border Protection Force (*BGS*), which existed until the 2005 police reforms. It operates, like the BKA, under the direction of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, and is responsible for: protection of the state border and border zone, railway and airport security, security of certain persons and facilities, environmental security, performing police work during emergency situations; participation in police missions organized by international organizations, etc. This police agency also includes the popular counter-terrorism unit “**GSG 9**”, which is in charge of anti-terrorist security of airports, important persons and facilities, as well as security of diplomatic and consular missions (Jovicic & Setka, 2018).

Ordinary police forces, meanwhile, are under the administration of the individual German states and are known as the *Landespolizei*. All state police forces in the Federal Republic of Germany are subordinate to their respective Land (State) Minister of the Interior. They are, in most cases, immediately subordinate to the interior ministries are the regional police headquarters (*Prä-*

*sidium*)<sup>11</sup>. Each province is free to organize its police in accordance with its specificities and needs, to define the concepts of police training and the like. The structural organization in the provinces varies considerably, and even the concept of organization is not consistent (Frevel & Kuschewski, 2009). However, we can say that all provincial police usually consist of the uniformed police, criminal police, river police, traffic police and special police units. The local level of police organization in Germany is made up of local police structures, which are mainly formed to perform the simplest police tasks, receive reports from citizens, provide information to citizens, perform communal tasks under the jurisdiction of cities and municipalities, and more (Jovicic & Setka, 2018). An important segment of the work of the local uniformed police in Germany is the so-called *district policing*. It is the German version of community policing that positively affects the general feeling of security, as well as the relationship between the police and citizens, through the presence of police officers in the field and the establishment of trusted contacts. “District police officers” should ensure close and confidential contacts with citizens and the community. In some cities and communities, this led to the so-called security partnerships between the police and representatives of civil organizations, businesses, private and state institutions. The focus of such partnerships are also social problems in the respective district – city (Feltes et al, 2013).

When it comes to complex police systems, such as the police system of Germany, it is very important to explain the mutual relations of the parts of the system. In this sense, there is no subordination and no established line of command between federal and provincial police authorities. Therefore, the Federal Minister does not have the ability to issue directives to provincial ministers of the interior. Federal agencies can assist provincial police forces in carrying out certain tasks, but only if assistance is requested. In such cases, federal police forces are subordinated to provincial police agencies and work under their command. Also, for the sake of example, the Federal Criminal Police can perform tasks within its jurisdiction in the territories of the provinces and in situations where they do not require its assistance, but they must inform the provincial police about all the measures and actions undertaken<sup>12</sup>. Likewise, a police officer of a given province is usually not allowed to cross the (unmarked)

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11 The basic organizational unit outside the headquarters of the provincial Ministry of the Interior

12 After a series of murders committed by a rogue group of right-wing extremists in 2011, which remained unsolved for years, there was talk in Germany about the lack of cooperation between the federal and state police (Feltes et al, 2013).

border into another (German) state-province, except in an emergency (Feltes et al, 2013; Jovicic & Setka, 2018).

Finally, in addition to the complexity of the police system in Germany, we can say that the “uniformity” (standardization and harmonization) of police work in this country has been ensured, thanks to the following three elements: important aspects of the internal security of the Federal Republic of Germany are agreed upon and coordinated at the meetings of the Permanent Council of Ministers of the Interior; criminal law, criminal procedure law and traffic safety law are passed at the federal level and apply to all provincial police forces; the training of senior management personnel of all German police forces is carried out at the German Police University in Münster, whereby a basic understanding of police activity and management is harmonized. With these connecting elements, a kind of “unity in diversity” evolved in Germany (Frevel & Kuschewski, 2009:53-54).

## **INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLICE SYSTEMS OF FRANCE AND GERMANY**

We have already emphasized that each country organizes its police system in a way that suits its needs, and that there are certainly no two identical police system models in the world. Each has its own specifics, its advantages and its disadvantages. In this part of the work, we will deal with the comparison of the police systems of France and Germany, bearing in mind that the former is highly centralized and coordinated, and the latter is decentralized and coordinated. Centralized police systems are such systems where the police organization, that is, the organizations that make it up, are managed by a single central authority. This can also be said in the way that such police systems imply that essentially police power is concentrated at the central level of a police system. An example of such a police system is the police system of France. In the case of decentralized police systems, administrative-territorial units of the state have a certain management influence on police organizations. The strength of that influence is measured by the degree of decentralization. Decentralization can be moderate, which means that police organizations are coordinated from the top, or extreme, which means that there is no coordination at the top of the state apparatus (Setka & Djukic, 2018). We have seen that the German police system is an example of a moderately decentralized police system.

The police system of France was created as a product of a strong “police tradition” in this country, but also of the continuity of French statehood from the bourgeois revolution to the present. Many features of the French police,

which date from the very beginnings of its development, have been retained even today (e.g. the strict division into administrative and judicial police or the survival of the gendarmerie founded by Napoleon himself). Also, the integrity of the French territory created a high degree of centralization of the French police system. On the other hand, the territory and statehood of Germany have no such continuity, and its police system also changed in accordance with historical factors. Decentralization, as its main feature, is the result of the division of the German state into several provinces, the number of which has varied throughout history. Certainly, the continuity of the development of the German police was interrupted by the coming to power of Adolf Hitler and the creation of the Third Reich, i.e. Nazi Germany and, therefore, the Gestapo. After that, the division of Germany into western and eastern parts and the centralization of the police in East Germany, in contrast to the West, led to an uneven development and a different legacy of police doctrine on the two sides of the Berlin Wall. Therefore, we can conclude that the police system of France is set on strong historical foundations, which makes it more stable.

One of the most significant differences between the police systems of France and Germany is reflected in the fact that in Germany there is no police agency that, like the National Gendarmerie in France, would be partially subordinated to the Department of Defense. Unlike France, Germany has completely removed all elements of militarism from its police system. Although the French Gendarmerie is only partially subordinated to the Minister of Defense, the discipline and manner of command are military, which can have a negative impact on the development of public security affairs and undermine citizens' trust in such an organization.

For every country, the method of achieving and the effectiveness of international police cooperation is very important. National security, to a large extent, depends on the exchange of information with the security services of other countries. When it comes to the German police system, we have seen that all forms of international police cooperation in Germany are realized through the Federal Criminal Police. Therefore, regional police agencies do not have the possibility of making direct contacts and exchanging information with the police authorities of other states. All contacts of this kind are made through an intermediary, which is the BKA, that is, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community. Of course, this slows down international police cooperation and reduces the efficiency and speed of exchange of operational information. On the other hand, France does not have this kind of problem, because its police system is centralized and, therefore, much more suitable for the exchange of information and cooperation at the international level.

Some of the advantages of the French police system, compared to the German police system, are certainly greater rationality, efficiency and economy. Generally speaking, these are the advantages of a centralized system over a decentralized one (Puseljic & Jelenski, 2007). Also, the advantages of the French police are reflected in the clearly defined jurisdiction and line of responsibility, thus avoiding conflicts of jurisdiction and responsibility between police units or officers. There is a much higher probability of a negative or positive conflict of jurisdiction in the German system, both between provincial police forces and between a specific provincial police agency and the federal police. We have seen that the policeman of a given province is not allowed to cross the imaginary administrative line between two (German) states, i.e. provinces, except in cases of emergency. Also, the federal police have an obligation to inform the police authorities of the local competent province about their activities in their area of responsibility. In France, on the other hand, there are no such problems. In addition to the above, the police system of France benefits in relation to: the development of specialist services (for certain forms of crime or for certain police tasks), the use of technical means (especially in emergency cases, when the approval of the minister is required for this), with professional training (which is uniform), as well as with the introduction of a unique system of promotion and reward for police officers. All these benefits are much more difficult to achieve within a decentralized police system (such as the German one), where differences and inequalities can appear (eg between the salaries of police officers from different police agencies, between the systems of promotion, training and education, etc.).

In addition to the advantages that centralized police systems have, there are also disadvantages. Thus, the police system of France, in relation to the police system of Germany, has certain shortcomings. These include insufficient responsibility of the police towards the public, but also an excessive concentration of power at the top of the police system and in the hands of the body that is superior to the police (the government), and, in this connection, the danger of possible abuses of the police, i.e. the use of the police for goals that are not in nothing to do with the scope of police work. In addition to this, the weakness of the French system is the weak detection of the specific needs of local communities and, accordingly, the inadequate deployment of the police service (Puseljic & Jelenski, 2007). More generally, the massive use of identity checks by French police, predominantly on ethnic minorities, is a result of a dominant policing style and culture that emphasize on street arrests and territory control, with a more adversarial rather than consensual mindset and a multiplicity of specialized anticrime patrol units with a proactive and aggressive mandate as opposed to Germany for instance, where neighborhood and problem-solv-

ing policing are central in public safety strategies (Zagrodzki 2017).

The advantages and disadvantages of the police system of Germany, as a decentralized police system, are actually the opposite of the disadvantages, that is, the advantages of the police system of France, as a decentralized police system. Therefore, the advantages of the German system are reflected in better adaptation to the real needs of citizens and local communities, greater responsibility of the police towards the public and less danger of misuse of the police for non-public purposes. Likewise, according to the views of some authors, decentralized police systems are considered to have fewer problems with systemic corruption. For example, corruption within the German police can hardly go beyond local boundaries. As Puseljic and Jelenski (2007) claim: "Corruption can be endemic, but it rarely affects the top of the pyramid in the police organization." On the other hand, in centralized police systems, local police are protected from corruption because all power is concentrated at the top of the police pyramid. As for the shortcomings of Germany's police system, it is less efficient, more expensive, more irrational, more fragmented, less unified, etc., compared to the French model.

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## THEORETICAL DEFICIENCIES OF THE CONCEPT OF DOMINANT BATTLEFIELD IN THE CONTEXT OF FRAGMENTED WAR ZONES

**Abstract:** *The article critically analyzes the conceptual paradox of the dominant battlefield in contemporary conflicts, demonstrating the unsustainability of traditional doctrine of monocentric battlefields in conditions of fragmented war zones. Multidimensional fragmentation of conflict - geographical, technological, and socio-political - creates an operational environment in which hierarchical prioritization of battlefields becomes not only tactically inefficient but also strategically counterproductive. As an innovative theoretical contribution, the work proposes a model of “fluid hotspots” that conceptualizes conflict space as a complex adaptive system with polycentric, temporal hotspots of strategic importance, introducing original concepts such as Distributed adaptive synchronization, Modular operational packages, and Dynamic multi-domain operations. Methodologically, the research is based on comparative analysis of contemporary conflicts, critical re-examination of established military doctrines, and systematic consideration of transformative factors in contemporary warfare, with integration of relevant theoretical and empirical insights from strategic studies. The aim of the article is to formulate a comprehensive theoretical framework that will enable more efficient understanding and operational action in fragmented conflicts of the 21st century, bridging the gap between traditional military theory and the complex reality of contemporary warfare.*

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**Keywords:** *fragmented battlefields, fluid hotspots, network-centric warfare, multi-domain conflict theory, strategic adaptability*

## **1. CONCEPTUAL PARADOX OF DOMINANT BATTLEFIELD: CRITIQUE OF MONOLITHIC APPROACH TO CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS**

The doctrine of dominant battlefield, as a fundamental element of military theory, traditionally assumes the existence of a central zone of conflict where decisive operations are concentrated and the main bulk of combat power is applied. Such a conception, rooted in the Clausewitzian principle of center of gravity (*Schwerpunkt*), has historically shaped military campaigns through identification of key locations, directions of attack, and decisive points that lead to strategic victory. However, contemporary armed conflicts, especially those after the Cold War, fundamentally challenge the validity of this monolithic approach, creating a deep conceptual paradox between theory and practice. Fragmentation of battlefields, asymmetric warfare, and hybrid threats have transformed the nature of conflict to the point where conventional doctrine of dominant battlefield becomes operationally inadequate, and often strategically counterproductive. General Martin Dempsey (*Martin Dempsey*), 18th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. Armed Forces (2011-2015), recognized this paradox through his analysis of contemporary security challenges. During his speeches at Harvard in 2012, Dempsey pointed out that contemporary conflicts do not possess clear fronts nor have clearly defined centers of gravity that could be targets of concentrated application of combat power, marking this as the security paradox of our time (Dempsey, 2012). This observation fundamentally questions the long-standing assumption of military theory that wars can be won through identification and attack of the dominant battlefield or strategic center of gravity of the opposing side. Instead, contemporary conflicts are characterized by dispersion, fragmentation, and simultaneous operations in multiple domains - land, air, sea, cyberspace, and information environment - creating a complex operational environment that does not conform to traditional concepts of dominant battlefield.

The doctrine of dominant battlefield has its historical roots in Prussian, and later German warfare, especially through the concept of *Schwerpunkt* (center of gravity), which implied concentration of forces at decisive points of the battlefield. Karl von Clausewitz defined the center of gravity as „the hub of all power and movement on which everything depends... the point against which all energies should be directed” (Clausewitz, 1976:595-596). The

same idea later evolved through the operational doctrine of *Blitzkrieg* in World War II, the American concept of AirLand Battle (*AirLand Battle*) during the Cold War, and the theory of “shock and awe” (*Shock and Awe*) from the early 21st century. However, all these concepts share a common assumption about the existence of an identifiable, coherent, and dominant battlefield that can be decisive for the outcome of war.

Experiences from contemporary conflicts testify to a deep discrepancy between this doctrinal assumption and operational reality. During Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, coalition forces achieved rapid and decisive victory on the conventional battlefield, capturing Baghdad within three weeks. However, this tactical victory on the alleged dominant battlefield did not lead to strategic victory - instead, the conflict transformed into a prolonged counterinsurgency war that lasted more than eight years. General H. R. McMaster (*H. R. McMaster*), through his analysis of contemporary conflicts, rightfully noted that focusing exclusively on conventional operations led to neglect of the complexity of conflicts that cannot be resolved solely through domination on the traditional battlefield (McMaster, 2008:23). Such discrepancy between tactical success and strategic failure illustrates the inadequacy of monolithic conception of battlefield in the context of contemporary conflicts. The counterinsurgency war in Afghanistan (2001-2021) provides an additional example of this paradox. Despite enormous firepower and technological superiority of NATO forces, operations on what was traditionally considered the dominant battlefield - physical terrain and enemy forces - failed to achieve decisive victory. General Stanley McChrystal (*Stanley McChrystal*), through his reflection on experiences from Afghanistan, summarized this dilemma: „We realized that there is no single battlefield, but a multitude of micro-battlefields, where success is not measured by seizing territory or inflicting casualties, but by gaining the trust of the local population and delegitimizing the enemy narrative” (McChrystal, 2013:103). Such observation points to a fundamental change in the nature of conflict, where traditional understanding of dominant battlefield as physical space gives way to more complex understanding of multidimensional struggle in which informational, psychological, and political factors play equally important, if not more important roles than kinetic operations.

Hybrid warfare, as demonstrated by Russia during the annexation of Crimea in 2014, further complicates the concept of dominant battlefield. Through a combination of special operations, information warfare, cyber attacks, economic pressures, and conventional military threats, Russia achieved its strategic goals without the need for traditional massive application of military force on a conventional battlefield. General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the

General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, articulated this approach through his famous doctrine: „The rules of war have fundamentally changed. The role of non-military means in achieving political and strategic goals has grown and in many cases exceeded the effectiveness of conventional weapons” (Gerasimov, 2013:2). Such observation points to a transformative change in understanding contemporary conflicts, where the center of gravity of operations shifts from traditional physical battlefield to “gray zones” where kinetic and non-kinetic operations intertwine.

The concept of Network-Centric Warfare (*Network-Centric Warfare*) further challenges traditional understanding of dominant battlefield. Admiral Arthur Cebrowski (*Arthur Cebrowski*), one of the main architects of U.S. Armed Forces transformation and pioneer of network-centric warfare theory, noted that „in the network-centric operational concept, advantage is not in massive concentration of forces at a decisive point, but in superior information position and ability to command and control dispersed forces with greater speed and precision” (Cebrowski & Garstka, 1998:35). This shift of focus from mass concentration of forces to information superiority fundamentally changes the nature of combat space, making the traditional concept of dominant battlefield obsolete. Cebrowski further emphasized that network-centric warfare represents a fundamental shift from what we call platform-centric warfare to what we call network-centric warfare, which implicitly implies abandoning traditional conception of centralized battlefields in favor of distributed, interconnected operational nodes.

Dispersed operations, as a response to increased lethality of contemporary weapons systems, also contribute to battlefield fragmentation. Instead of concentrating forces on traditional dominant battlefield, contemporary armed forces incline toward dispersion to avoid detection and reduce effects of precision long-range weapons systems. General Mark Milley (*Mark Milley*), through his analysis of future character of warfare, predicted that „future conflicts will be characterized by extremely dispersed formations of operational units over vast spaces. There will no longer be a continuous front, nor clearly identified main battlefield” (Milley, 2016:56). Such prediction points to a fundamental break with Clausewitzian principles of concentration of forces at decisive points, further questioning the validity of the concept of dominant battlefield.

The proliferation of technologies that enable “A2/AD warfare” (*Anti-Access/Area Denial* - anti-access/area denial) creates an additional challenge to monolithic conception of battlefield. These technologies, which include long-range air defense systems, anti-ship missiles, electronic warfare, and cyber

capabilities, enable even relatively weaker actors to contest the superiority of stronger opponents, neutralizing the traditional advantage of concentration of combat power. The development of these capabilities fundamentally changes the character of potential conflicts, creating multiple layers of contestation that make the traditional concept of decisive battlefield practically inoperable. Information operations and cyber warfare represent perhaps the most radical challenge to the concept of dominant battlefield, as these forms of conflict take place in domains that do not conform to traditional spatial-temporal limitations of physical battlefield. General Keith Alexander (*Keith Alexander*), former director of the U.S. National Security Agency and commander of Cyber Command, emphasized that „the cyber domain represents a new battlefield that knows no geographical boundaries, where conflicts take place at the speed of light, and where victory is not measured by seizing territory” (Alexander, 2010:122). Such revolutionary change in the nature of conflict fundamentally undermines the assumption of the existence of one-dimensional, coherent, and dominant battlefield that can be decisive for the outcome of war.

The paradox of dominant battlefield has significant implications for military theory and practice. First, it questions the traditional approach to operation planning that focuses on identification of main effort (*Hauptschwerpunkt*) and supporting efforts. In a fragmented operational environment, strict hierarchical subordination of efforts can be counterproductive, as secondary efforts can often have strategic significance that exceeds their nominal classification. Second, it requires reconceptualization of doctrine of force employment, moving away from rigid linear formations toward adaptive network structures that can operate effectively in dispersed, fragmented environment. Third, it imposes the need for new approaches to measuring success in operations, where traditional metric indicators such as seized territory or casualties inflicted give way to more complex assessments of systemic effects. In the absence of clearly defined dominant battlefield, strategy, operations, and tactics must evolve toward holistic, systemic approach to conflict that transcends monolithic conception of centralized clash of military forces. Instead of focusing on individual dominant battlefield, military planners must develop capacities for simultaneous action in multiple domains and through multiple lines of operations, recognizing the interdependence of different elements of warfare - from kinetic actions, through information operations, to diplomatic and economic measures. Flexibility, adaptability, and capacity for decentralized decision-making become key requirements for military forces operating in fragmented operational environment. This does not mean complete abandonment of principles of concentration of forces, but their sophisticated rein-

terpretation in the context of network-centric operations where concentration can be achieved through coordinated action of dispersed elements, and not only through physical grouping of forces in one place.

The conceptual paradox of dominant battlefield is not only an academic issue, but has deep practical implications for conducting contemporary conflicts. Insisting on obsolete monolithic conception of battlefield can lead to strategic myopia, tactical rigidity, and operational inefficiency. Recognizing the complex, fragmented nature of contemporary conflicts represents the first step toward developing more efficient approaches to warfare that transcend limitations of traditional military theory. This does not mean complete rejection of classical principles of warfare, but their reinterpretation and adaptation in the context of radically transformed nature of conflict. Only through such evolutionary approach to military theory can we overcome the conceptual paradox of dominant battlefield and develop doctrinal frameworks that adequately reflect the complexity of contemporary warfare.

## **2. FRAGMENTATION OF WAR ZONES AS A MULTIDIMENSIONAL PHENOMENON**

Contemporary armed conflicts fundamentally differ from classical wars in degrees of complexity, unpredictability, and fragmentation of operational environment. Traditional conception of war, founded on Clausewitzian principles, assumed relatively homogeneous battlefield with clear front lines, identified centers of gravity, and distinctive separation between combat zone and rear area. However, wars of the 21st century - from Iraq and Syria, through Ukraine, to low-intensity conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa - demonstrate pronounced fragmentation that manifests through geographical dispersion of combat actions, technological heterogeneity of employed means, and socio-political complexity of actors. Fragmentation is not only a tactical or operational phenomenon, but fundamentally strategic challenge that requires thorough re-examination of conventional military thinking and doctrinal adaptation.

Geographical fragmentation of war zones implies transformation of traditional, linear battlefield into a mosaic of unconnected or loosely connected zones of conflict that spread through different types of terrain and operational environments. General Robert Scales (*Robert Scales*), through his analysis of transformation of contemporary warfare, recognized the significance of this transformation when he noted that „contemporary operations no longer follow conventional front lines, but take place in branched, unconnected zones of conflict that can be separated by hundreds of kilometers, but still represent

parts of the same strategic conflict” (Scales, 2016:45). This observation points to a fundamental change in spatial conception of combat actions, where traditional doctrine of linear front becomes inadequate for understanding and conducting contemporary operations. Instead of continuous front, contemporary conflicts are characterized by polycentric hotspots of violence, with simultaneous operations in urban centers, rural areas, mountainous regions, and desert terrains. Heterogeneity of terrain requires adaptable formations, specific tactics adapted to different operational environments, and sophisticated planning that transcends traditional sectoral division of responsibilities. Such fragmentation creates significant challenges for command and control, as traditional hierarchical models often cannot efficiently coordinate operations through geographically dispersed and operationally different zones of conflict.

The conflict in Ukraine, begun in 2014, is an illustrative example of this geographical fragmentation. Hostilities did not follow conventional logic of continuous front, but manifested through distinctive, geographically separated hotspots - from urban conflicts in Donetsk and Luhansk, through rural operations in the Donbas region, to hybrid actions in Crimea. Spatial ramification of conflict creates significant challenges for command and control, logistical support, and coordination of operations. As noted by General Philip Breedlove (*Philip Breedlove*), former Supreme Allied Commander Europe NATO, „fragmented battlefield requires decentralized command structure capable of autonomous decision-making at tactical level, while simultaneously maintaining strategic coherence” (Breedlove, 2018:112). The tension between tactical autonomy and strategic coherence represents one of key challenges for military formations operating in geographically fragmented war zones. Urbanization of conflict further contributes to geographical fragmentation, creating complex micro-environments in which operations of different character and intensity simultaneously take place. Operation *Iraqi Freedom* in Falujah in 2004 and the battle for Mosul 2016-2017 demonstrated how urban warfare creates fragmented battlefield where conventional combat operations, counterterrorism actions, and stabilization activities can take place in parallel within the same urban environment, often at distances of only a few hundred meters. General Petraeus, through his analysis of urban operations in Iraq, emphasized that „urban environment represents the ultimate fragmented battlefield, where key decision can take place in one building or city block, while a few streets away completely different dynamics of conflict unfold” (Petraeus, 2010:74). Such micro-fragmentation of battlefield requires extremely high degree of situational awareness, precise intelligence support, and ability for rapid transitions between different modalities of combat actions. Geographical frag-

mentation often leads to situations where different types of operations - from high-intensity kinetic actions to humanitarian activities - take place simultaneously in spatially close but operationally separate zones. Spatial proximity of different conflict modalities requires sophisticated coordination and de-escalation mechanisms to avoid unwanted incidents that can escalate the situation or compromise the mission in one zone due to activities in another.

Technological fragmentation represents another key dimension of contemporary warfare, manifesting through heterogeneous nature of combat systems and means applied in the same conflict. Today's wars witness simultaneous use of most sophisticated weapons systems and primitive improvised means, creating asymmetric operational environments in which conventional military formations face unconventional opponents. Admiral William McRaven (*William McRaven*), former commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, noted that „technological asymmetry in contemporary conflicts creates situations where most advanced combat platforms can face rudimentary, but tactically efficient improvised explosive devices or commercial drones modified for combat use” (McRaven, 2013:92). Technological heterogeneity requires adaptable tactics and doctrine that can respond to a wide spectrum of threats of different technological levels. Proliferation of precision weapons and electronic warfare systems further complicates technological fragmentation of battlefield. Contemporary conflicts are characterized by use of high-precision weapons systems with long range that can project lethal power over great distances, creating situations where physical proximity to enemy forces is no longer necessary for combat efficiency. Simultaneously, electronic warfare systems enable degradation of enemy command-information networks without kinetic action, creating new domain of conflict that overlaps with traditional physical battlefield. Technological fragmentation creates complex operational dilemmas for military planners. On one hand, it is necessary to maintain technological advantage through investments in most advanced weapons systems and equipment. On the other hand, capability must be developed for efficient action against relatively primitive, but innovative and adaptable opponents who use commercially available technologies in unexpected ways.

Cyber operations represent perhaps the most radical aspect of technological fragmentation of war zones, creating virtual dimension of conflict that takes place parallel to physical conflicts, but follows different logic, tempo, and rules of engagement. The cyber weapon *Stuxnet* attack on Iranian nuclear facilities (discovered in 2010) demonstrated how operations in cyber domain can take place parallel to diplomatic, economic, and intelligence activities, creating multidimensional conflict without formal declaration of war or kinetic

actions. General Keith Alexander (*Keith Alexander*), former director of U.S. National Security Agency, noted that „cyber domain creates new war space that does not submit to traditional geographical, temporal, or physical limitations, enabling simultaneous operations that fragment traditional conception of unified battlefield” (Alexander, 2014:128). Such observation points to fundamental transformation of war space that requires reconfiguration of traditional concepts of command and control, intelligence support, and operational planning. Cyber domain not only adds new dimension to conflict, but also transforms the way all other domains are used, creating complex interdependencies that make traditional linear conception of battlefield inadequate.

Socio-political fragmentation of conflict manifests through proliferation of actors involved in contemporary hostilities. Unlike traditional interstate conflicts with clearly defined sides, contemporary conflicts are characterized by multiple actors of different degrees of organization, legitimacy, and capacity - from regular military formations, through paramilitary groups, private military companies, terrorist organizations, criminal networks, to local militias and individual fighters. Heterogeneity of actors creates complex operational environment in which it is difficult to identify clear friend-enemy lines and apply conventional approaches to targeting and neutralization of enemy forces. The Syrian civil war (2011-) represents paradigmatic example of this socio-political fragmentation, with more than a thousand different armed groups that participated in the conflict, creating complex network of alliances, rivalries, and temporary coalitions that constantly changed during the course of conflict. General Joseph Votel (*Joseph Votel*), former commander of U.S. Central Command, described this situation as „kaleidoscopic battlefield where identities, affiliations, and goals of actors constantly change, creating operational environment of exceptional complexity that requires sophisticated understanding of local socio-political dynamics” (Votel, 2016:67). The observation emphasizes the need for integration of sociopolitical analysis into military planning and operations, which represents significant departure from traditional focus on physical aspects of conflict.

Socio-political fragmentation often results in situations where different actors have fundamentally different goals, motivations, and methods of action, making traditional approaches to negotiation and diplomatic resolution of conflicts extremely complex. Some actors may be motivated by ideological beliefs, others by economic interests, third by local politics or personal ambitions, creating complex calculation for all who attempt to understand or influence conflict dynamics. Information operations and perception management represent additional aspect of socio-political fragmentation of contemporary

conflicts. Through strategic communication, propaganda, disinformation, and manipulation of social media, different actors create competing narratives about conflict, creating information environment that further fragments understanding of conflict among local population, international public, and participants themselves. As emphasized by General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, „information space opens wide asymmetric possibilities for reducing combat potential of the enemy, creating front that permeates entire territory of enemy state and fragments traditional understanding of battlefield” (Gerasimov, 2013:3). Such observation points to growing significance of information dimension of conflict and its potential to fundamentally transform traditional conceptions of warfare.

Multidimensional fragmentation of contemporary war zones has deep implications for military theory and practice. First, it requires reconceptualization of doctrine that will transcend traditional linear conception of battlefield and develop holistic approach to multi-domain operations. Transformation must take into account the fact that contemporary conflicts take place simultaneously through multiple domains and that effects in one domain can have unpredictable consequences in other domains. Second, it imposes the need for transformation of command-control structures from hierarchical to network models that can more efficiently function in fragmented operational environment. Traditional hierarchical models, designed for linear warfare, are often too slow and inflexible for needs of coordinating operations through fragmented zones of conflict. Third, it implies necessity of developing forces capable of adaptable operations in different operational contexts - from high-intensity conventional conflicts, through counterinsurgency operations, to cyber actions and information warfare. Flexibility requires not only technical capacities but also cultural adaptation that traditional organization often finds difficult to accept. Training and education of military professionals must adapt to respond to challenges of fragmented operational environment. Instead of focusing exclusively on conventional tactics and procedures, contemporary officers must develop competencies for understanding complex socio-political dynamics, adaptation to technological innovations, and efficient action in unpredictable, chaotic situations. General Mattis, former U.S. Secretary of Defense, emphasized that „contemporary warfare requires soldier-scholars capable of understanding complexity of fragmented conflict zones and adapting their operational approaches to specific context” (Mattis, 2018:49). Such observation emphasizes the significance of cognitive flexibility and contextual intelligence as key competencies for military leaders of the 21st century.

For efficient action in fragmented operational environment, military organizations must develop new approaches to intelligence preparation of battlefield that transcend traditional focus on military aspects of situation and incorporate comprehensive analysis of geographical, technological, social, political, economic, and informational factors. This requires interdisciplinary approach that integrates military knowledge with expertise from other domains - from social sciences, through computer science, to communication studies. Only through such holistic approach is it possible to create adequate understanding of complex, fragmented nature of contemporary conflicts and develop efficient strategies for their resolution. Planning operations in fragmented war zones requires fundamentally different approach from traditional linear planning. Instead of rigid, sequential plans, contemporary operations require adaptable frameworks that enable flexibility and adaptation to changing circumstances. The concept of "mission command" (*Mission Command*), based on decentralized decision-making and clear understanding of commander's intent, becomes especially relevant in fragmented operational environment where centralized control can be inefficient or impossible. Through clear communication of strategic goals and operational parameters, while simultaneously delegating tactical decisions to subordinate commanders, it is possible to maintain coherence of operations despite battlefield fragmentation. Fragmentation of war zones requires integrated inter-agency and international approach to conflict management. No military organization, however capable, can independently address the complexity of contemporary fragmented conflicts. Instead, it is necessary to develop efficient coordination mechanisms between military, diplomatic, developmental, economic, and other elements of national power, as well as with allied and partner nations, international organizations, and local actors. Only through such comprehensive approach is it possible to effectively navigate through complexity of multidimensional fragmentation of contemporary conflicts and develop sustainable solutions for their stabilization and resolution.

### **3. IMPOSSIBILITY OF HIERARCHICAL PRIORITIZATION OF BATTLEFIELDS IN NETWORK-CENTRIC CONFLICTS**

Traditional military doctrine, founded on linear concepts and hierarchical prioritization of battlefields, shows increasing deficiencies in contemporary operational environment. Throughout the history of warfare, military strategists have sought to identify key points, sectors, and directions that would be decisive for campaign outcome, directing majority of resources, forces, and

attention to those “dominant battlefields”. However, the emergence of Network-Centric Warfare (*Network-Centric Warfare*) radically transforms the nature of conflict, creating complex operational environment in which traditional concept of hierarchical prioritization of battlefields is not only inefficient but also potentially counterproductive. Network-centric conflict, unlike industrial era warfare, is characterized by dispersed operations, simultaneous engagement in multiple domains, decentralized decision-making, and complex interdependencies that make every point of system potentially critical for overall outcome.

Admiral Arthur Cebrowski, one of the main architects of U.S. Armed Forces transformation and director of *Force Transformation* at the Pentagon (2001-2005), precisely identified this transition when he stated that „in network-centric warfare, advantage is not in concentration of mass at traditional decisive points, but in system’s ability to generate and maintain higher operational speed, greater precision, and self-synchronization through distributed network of sensors, decision-makers, and effectors” (Cebrowski & Garstka, 1998:34). Such fundamental shift of focus from geographical concentration to systemic synergy represents radical break with Clausewitzian principles of center of gravity and decisive point that have shaped military thinking for centuries. Instead of clearly defined, hierarchical “main effort” and “supporting efforts”, network-centric conflict is characterized by fluid, adaptive operations where secondary efforts can suddenly become crucial due to complex interdependencies within the system. Cebrowski further elaborated that network-centric warfare results from fundamental changes in American society and business, especially through co-evolution of economy, information technologies, and business processes and organizations; these changes are connected with three key themes: shift of focus from platform to network, shift from viewing actors as independent to viewing them as parts of continuously adapting ecosystem, and significance of speed of command as the most important factor in successful operations (Cebrowski & Garstka, 1998:28-35). Dynamic nature of network-centric conflicts undermines traditional logic of prioritization. In conventional conflicts, commanders could with relative certainty identify key points and directions on battlefield, enabling hierarchical allocation of resources. However, speed of changes in network-centric conflicts, combined with nonlinear nature of information systems, makes such prioritization extremely difficult, if not impossible. As noted by General McChrystal, through his reflection on transformation of Joint Special Operations Command in Iraq: „In network-centric environment, battlefield is everything that affects the network - and that is practically everything. There is no clear hierarchy of importance

between physical, informational, and cognitive domains, but only complex interplay that requires simultaneous engagement through all domains” (McChrystal, 2015:153). This observation points to fundamental impossibility of isolating individual aspects of network-centric conflict and their hierarchical ranking by importance, which represents significant challenge for traditional approaches to operational planning.

Multi-domain character of contemporary operations further complicates prioritization of battlefields. Instead of focusing on one dominant physical domain (land, air, or sea), contemporary conflicts are characterized by simultaneous operations through physical and non-physical domains - land, air, sea, space, cyberspace, and information environment - creating multidimensional space of conflict that cannot be easily divided into discrete, hierarchically organized components. General Mark Milley, as Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, stated: „We can no longer speak of dominant battlefield and supporting efforts in traditional sense. Contemporary multi-domain conflict requires simultaneous engagement through all domains, considering that influence in one domain can have nonlinear, disproportionate effects in other domains” (Milley, 2018:5). Inter-domain interdependence makes hierarchical prioritization potentially dangerous, as neglecting one domain can create systemic vulnerabilities that opponent can exploit, regardless of concentration of forces in other domains. Multi-domain nature of conflict requires development of new conceptual frameworks that can encompass complex interactions between different domains. Traditional approach that treated different domains as separate entities with clearly defined boundaries becomes inadequate when effects in one domain can have immediate and far-reaching consequences in other domains. For example, cyber attack on communication systems can simultaneously affect land operations, aviation missions, and logistical support, creating cascading effects that propagate through entire operational system.

Systemic nature of network-centric conflicts transforms traditional understanding of strategic center of gravity. Instead of focusing on identification and attack of individual critical points, network-centric warfare requires understanding opponent as complex adaptive system with distributed nodes and redundant capacities. As noted by Colonel John Warden (*John Warden*), creator of *five rings* theory: „Contemporary systems rarely have one critical point whose destruction would lead to systemic collapse. Instead, they are often designed with distributed architecture that can survive loss of individual components; this requires parallel, simultaneous attack on multiple systemic elements, not sequential prioritization of targets” (Warden, 1995:89). This observation points to need for fundamentally different approach to operation

planning, which recognizes that in network-centric conflict, strategic success often does not result from concentration on individual “dominant” battlefield, but from ability to simultaneously act through different points of enemy system, creating cumulative effects that exceed sum of individual actions.

Information superiority, as key element of network-centric warfare, further complicates traditional hierarchical prioritization of battlefields. In industrial era warfare, physical presence and material advantage were decisive factors for establishing domination on battlefield. However, in information age, ability to collect, process, and distribute information can be equally important, if not more important than physical concentration of forces. Admiral William Owens (*William Owens*), former Vice Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, emphasizes: „In network-centric war, battlefield of knowledge often precedes and shapes physical battlefield. Information superiority can be decisive even without traditional material advantage, if it enables faster, more precise, and more effective application of force” (Owens, 2001:67). Such shift of emphasis from physical mass to information superiority represents fundamental challenge for traditional hierarchical prioritization, as information domain does not conform to same limitations as physical domains and cannot be easily divided into discrete, geographically defined sectors of greater or lesser priority. Information superiority enables what Cebrowski and Garstka call “self-synchronization” - ability of distributed forces to coordinate their actions without explicit commands from higher level of command. Self-synchronization is enabled by high level of knowledge about own forces, enemy forces, and all relevant elements of operational environment and it transcends loss of combat power inherent in traditional hierarchical synchronization characteristic of conventional doctrine and converts combat from stepwise functions into continuum of high speed.

Decentralization of command and control, as necessary response to complexity of network-centric conflicts, further complicates hierarchical prioritization of battlefields. In traditional, centralized model, higher commands could determine priorities and distribute resources according to hierarchy of importance of different sectors. However, speed and complexity of contemporary operations often require delegation of authority to lower levels, creating situation where tactical commanders have significant autonomy in decision-making. General Petraeus, analyzing experiences from Iraq and Afghanistan, noted: „In distributed operations, experience has taught us that it is impossible to centrally determine what is ‘main’ and what is ‘supporting’ battlefield. Instead, we must enable local commanders to recognize and exploit tactical opportunities that can have strategic significance, often without time

for consultations with higher levels of command” (Petraeus, 2010:92). This described decentralization of decision-making creates operational environment where priorities are not necessarily determined hierarchically from above, but emergently, through interaction of different actors at tactical level, which represents significant departure from traditional model of centralized priority determination. Decentralization also requires new type of leadership that Cebrowski describes as transition from “chess master” mentality to “gardener” approach, where leaders create conditions for success and enable subordinates to make autonomous decisions within clearly defined goals and constraints. Such approach is fundamentally different from traditional hierarchical control and requires high level of trust, training, and shared understanding of mission goals.

Asymmetric nature of contemporary conflicts further undermines concept of hierarchical prioritization of battlefields. Unlike symmetric conflicts between states with similar military organizations and doctrines, today’s conflicts often involve non-state actors, hybrid threats, and asymmetric tactics that do not respect conventional battlefield parameters. Asymmetry often results in situation where opponent can avoid our “priority” zones and operate in domains or geographical areas traditionally considered secondary. General Mattis, former U.S. Secretary of Defense, stated: „Asymmetric opponent does not accept our prioritization of battlefields. He will deliberately seek our blind spots, avoid our strengths, and attack where we are most vulnerable, often in domains or geographical areas we have not designated as priority” (Mattis, 2019:112). Such dynamics make traditional hierarchical prioritization potentially counterproductive, as it can lead to concentration of resources in areas where opponent decides not to engage significant forces, simultaneously neglecting zones he identifies as his priority targets. Asymmetric opponents often show exceptional ability of adaptation and innovation, using commercially available technologies in unpredictable ways or exploiting vulnerabilities in our systems that we have not recognized. Unpredictability makes traditional approaches to prioritization, which rely on relatively stable assumptions about opponent and operational environment, *largely ineffective*.

Technological complexity of contemporary weapons systems and equipment creates additional challenge for hierarchical prioritization of battlefields. Highly sophisticated platforms, such as electronic warfare systems, missile defense, or cyber weapons, often have operational effects that transcend traditional boundaries of sectors or domains. „Overlapping geometry of firepower” creates situation where effect of one weapons system can manifest far beyond its nominal area of operation. As noted by Dr. Robert Latham (*Robert Latham*),

director of International Security Institute, „contemporary precision weapons, electronic warfare systems, and cyber capacities create overlapping zones of influence that do not follow traditional sectoral logic of battlefields. System located in one geographical area can project effects over great distances, creating operational environment where geographical prioritization is often inadequate” (Latham, 2020:74). This observation points to need for new conceptual framework that transcends traditional, geographically defined understanding of battlefield and recognizes fluid, non-hierarchical nature of contemporary zones of conflict.

Implications of impossibility of hierarchical prioritization of battlefields are significant for military theory and practice. First, they require fundamental re-examination of traditional approaches to operational planning that rely on clear distinction between main and supporting efforts. Instead of rigid hierarchy of priorities, contemporary planning must recognize complex interdependencies of different elements of operational environment and develop flexible, adaptive plans that can respond to emergent opportunities and threats. This requires transition from linear to nonlinear planning, which recognizes that in complex systems, small events can have disproportionate effects, and critical points can rapidly evolve during operation. Second, this impossibility of hierarchical prioritization requires new approaches to resource allocation. Instead of concentrating majority of means on “priority” direction, contemporary operations often require distributed allocation that enables simultaneous action in different domains and geographical areas. This does not mean equal distribution of resources everywhere - which would be inefficient - but development of adaptive allocation mechanisms that can rapidly redirect means in response to evolving situation. This can include formation of reserves with high mobility, development of modular capacities that can be rapidly regrouped, and investments in command and control systems that enable rapid redistribution of resources in response to changing priorities. Third, impossibility of hierarchical prioritization of battlefields requires transformation of education and training systems for military leaders. Traditional military education often focused on developing analytical abilities for identifying key points and proper allocation of resources according to hierarchy of priorities. However, network-centric conflicts require development of cognitive abilities for understanding complex systems, recognizing emergent patterns, and adaptation to unpredictable situations. This includes greater emphasis on systems thinking, complexity theory, and understanding nonlinear dynamics - skills that traditionally have not been central in military education. Only through such transformation of education can we develop leaders capable of effectively function-

ing in operational environment where traditional hierarchical prioritization of battlefields is no longer possible.

In practical sense, impossibility of hierarchical prioritization of battlefields requires development of new operational concepts that recognize distributed, non-hierarchical nature of network-centric conflicts. One such approach is concept of “distributed lethality” (*Distributed Lethality*), which emphasizes dispersion of combat platforms to create complex network of overlapping zones of influence, increasing system resilience and creating dilemma for opponent. Another approach is *multi-domain operation* (*Multi-Domain Operations*), which emphasizes synergistic action through different physical and non-physical domains, creating effects that are greater than sum of individual actions. Such approaches represent attempts to overcome limitations of traditional, hierarchical understanding of battlefield and develop operational approaches adapted to realities of network-centric warfare.

#### **4. TOWARD MODEL OF FLUID HOTSPOTS: NEW THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING DISTRIBUTION OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE IN FRAGMENTED CONFLICTS**

Contemporary armed conflicts show increasing deviations from traditional concepts of battlefield, requiring fundamental re-examination of doctrine of dominant battlefield and development of new theoretical frameworks that can more adequately explain dynamics of distribution of strategic importance in fragmented conflicts. Model of fluid hotspots represents theoretical breakthrough that seeks to overcome limitations of conventional understanding of battlefield through recognition of dynamic, systemic, and inter-domain nature of contemporary conflicts. Instead of static, geographically defined dominant battlefield characteristic of industrial wars, this model proposes concept of polycentric, fluid hotspots that emerge, evolve, and dissipate through complex interactions of different dimensions of conflict - kinetic, informational, cyber, economic, and cognitive (Knežević, 2025).

Unlike traditional understanding of battlefield as clearly defined geographical zone, model of fluid hotspots conceptualizes conflict space as complex adaptive system with multiple interdependent hotspots of different strategic importance. As emphasized by General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation: „Rules of warfare have fundamentally changed. Focus of applied methods of conflict has shifted toward wide use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian,

and other non-military measures, which are applied in coordination with protest potential of local population. All this is supplemented by covert military measures, including information operations and actions of special operations forces" (Gerasimov, 2013:24). The observation points to fundamental transformation of nature of conflict, where traditional understanding of battlefield as primarily military phenomenon gives way to more complex understanding of hotspots as points of convergence of different dimensions of power.

#### **4.1. Key characteristics of fluid hotspots model**

Key characteristic of fluid hotspots model is temporality - strategic importance of specific hotspots is not constant, but variable that fluctuates during course of conflict. This described dynamics creates fundamentally different operational environment from traditional battlefield with relatively stable zones of priority. General David Petraeus (*David Petraeus*) articulated this dynamics by noting that contemporary conflicts are characterized by temporal oscillations of strategic importance of different hotspots, creating operational environment where secondary hotspot can „suddenly become primary, and dominant hotspot can rapidly lose strategic relevance due to changes in other domains" (Petraeus, 2018:52). Temporality requires development of adaptable operational approaches that can rapidly respond to changes in strategic importance of different hotspots, which represents significant departure from traditional, linear operation planning.

Model of fluid hotspots recognizes holistic, inter-domain nature of contemporary conflicts, where strategic importance is not determined exclusively through prism of physical, kinetic domain, but through complex interaction of different dimensions. General Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, emphasized that „future conflicts will not be fought through domination in individual physical domain, but through synergistic integration of effectors through multiple domains - land, sea, air, space, cyberspace, and information environment - creating multidimensional hotspots that do not conform to traditional geographical categorization" (Milley, 2019:17). This described conceptualization represents fundamental departure from traditional understanding of strategic importance as primarily function of physical geography and force disposition, recognizing that in contemporary conflicts, informational, cognitive, and cyber domains can be equally decisive as physical ones.

Non-triviality of escalation-de-escalation dynamics represents another key characteristic of fluid hotspots model. Unlike relatively predictable escalation of conflict characteristic of conventional conflicts, fluid hotspots show

complex, often nonlinear patterns of escalation and de-escalation that can rapidly transform through cascading effects. Admiral James Stavridis (*James Stavridis*), former Supreme Allied Commander Europe NATO, noted that „fluid nature of contemporary hotspots creates situations where seemingly minor tactical actions can cause disproportionate strategic consequences, creating escalation dynamics that are difficult to predict through traditional analytical models” (Stavridis, 2016:87). Nonlinear dynamics requires sophisticated approaches to escalation management that transcend traditional escalation ladders and recognize complex, emergent nature of escalation processes in fragmented conflicts.

Model of fluid hotspots also recognizes *gravitational effect* - tendency of these hotspots to attract and absorb resources, attention, and energy of different actors, creating self-reinforcing dynamics that can transform initial strategic calculation. This indicated phenomenon often results in situation where secondary hotspots, through cumulative accumulation of resources and attention, can become strategically more significant than initially prioritized hotspots. Professor David Kilcullen, leading theorist of counterinsurgency warfare and advisor to General Petraeus during *Surge* in Iraq, described this phenomenon as “strategic gravitation” - situation where „certain hotspots, through complex interactions of different factors, develop gravitational attraction that fundamentally changes operational calculations and resource distribution, often in way that undermines initial strategic conception” (Kilcullen, 2020:142). Such phenomenon represents significant challenge for traditional approaches to strategic planning, which often assume relatively stable hierarchy of priorities during course of campaign.

## **4.2. Operationalization of fluid hotspots model**

Operationalization of fluid hotspots model requires fundamentally different approach to understanding, planning, and conducting operations. Instead of focusing on identification of static dominant battlefield, this model suggests development of dynamic, adaptable approaches that can recognize, track, and respond to evolving nature of strategically significant hotspots. This includes development of advanced systems for monitoring and analysis that can identify emergent patterns, recognize potential cascading effects, and predict transformations in strategic importance of different hotspots. Development of specialized methodology for identification and assessment of fluid hotspots is proposed, based on complex analysis of multi-domain indicators. Such methodology, which we can call *Analysis of strategic hotspot dynamics* (ASHD),

would integrate traditional military indicators (force disposition, combat actions, logistics) with indicators from other domains - communication patterns, cyber activities, economic parameters, political rhetoric, and social dynamics. Through sophisticated analysis of these multi-domain data, ASHD would enable recognition of emergent patterns and identification of hotspots of potential strategic importance before their significance becomes obvious through traditional metrics.

For implementation of fluid hotspots model, development of new operational concept is proposed - *Distributed adaptive synchronization* (DAS). This concept would combine elements of network-centric warfare and mission command, creating operational approach that enables decentralized adaptation to emergent hotspots while simultaneously maintaining strategic coherence. Through clear articulation of commander's intent, combined with distributed situational awareness and decentralized authority for decision-making, DAS would enable tactical units to autonomously react to changes in strategic importance of different hotspots, without need for constant micromanagement from higher levels of command. Technologically, operationalization of fluid hotspots model requires development of advanced command and control systems that can process and visualize complex, multi-domain data in way that enables intuitive understanding of distribution of strategic importance. General Stanley McChrystal, analyzing experiences from Afghanistan, identified need for „systems that can recognize and display emergent patterns in seemingly chaotic operational environment, transforming enormous amounts of data into understandable visualizations that enable commanders to recognize strategically significant hotspots in real time” (McChrystal, 2015:207). This described observation points to need for development of sophisticated analytical tools that transcend traditional, static representations of battlefield and enable dynamic visualization of evolution of strategic importance of different hotspots.

In practical application, fluid hotspots model requires development of innovative approaches to force disposition that transcend traditional logic of concentration on dominant battlefield. Instead of massive concentration, this model suggests development of distributed, modular formations with high degree of mobility and adaptability, capable of rapid reconfiguration and re-direction of effort in response to changes in strategic importance of different hotspots. This includes development of concepts such as *distributed lethality* and *swarm warfare* that enable dispersion of combat power while simultaneously maintaining ability for rapid concentration of effectors on emergent hotspots.

### 4.3. Modular operational packages

We articulate *concept of modular operational packages* (MOP) - adaptable configurations of forces that integrate different capabilities (kinetic, informational, cyber, logistical) into cohesive operational modules that can be rapidly deployed in response to emergent hotspots. Unlike traditional joint forces, MOP would be designed with inherent adaptability, enabling rapid re-configuration and adaptation to different operational contexts. This described modularity would enable efficient action in fragmented conflicts, where different hotspots can require fundamentally different combinations of capabilities and approaches. Modular operational packages should possess several key characteristics. First, *interoperability* - ability for different modules to be combined and recombined according to needs of specific hotspot. Second, *scalability* - possibility of expanding or reducing capabilities according to intensity and complexity of hotspot. Third, *autonomy* - ability for independent functioning for certain time without constant support from central resources. Fourth, *adaptability* - possibility of adaptation to different types of operational environments through reconfiguration of internal structure and procedures.

Educationally, fluid hotspots model requires transformation of process of education and training of military commanders, from traditional focus on linear planning and hierarchical prioritization toward development of cognitive abilities for understanding complex systems, pattern recognition, and adaptation to unpredictable situations. General James Mattis (*James Mattis*), former U.S. Secretary of Defense, emphasized that „contemporary operational environment requires development of commanders who can think systemically, recognize emergent patterns in seemingly chaotic environment, and adapt their approaches in way that recognizes fluid distribution of strategic importance through different hotspots” (Mattis, 2019:134). This described transformation of education includes greater emphasis on complexity theory, systems thinking, and understanding nonlinear dynamics, which represents significant departure from traditional military educational paradigms. New approach to military education must include interdisciplinary elements from areas of systems analysis, game theory, behavioral sciences, and complex adaptive systems. Officers must develop abilities for working with large amounts of data from different sources, understanding probabilistic assessments, and managing uncertainty as inherent element of operational environment.

In context of measures of success, fluid hotspots model requires development of more sophisticated approaches to measuring operational effectiveness that transcend traditional, linear metrics such as seized territory or casualties

inflicted. Instead, this model suggests development of multidimensional, dynamic metrics that can track evolution of influence through different domains of conflict and recognize systemic effects that can be indicative of transformations in strategic importance of different hotspots. This includes development of indicators that quantify informational, psychological, and social effects of operations, recognizing that in fragmented conflicts, these non-traditional effects can be equally important as traditional, physical results. New measures must be capable of capturing nonlinear effects, cascading consequences, and emergent patterns that characterize fluid hotspots. This can include metrics such as “speed of adaptation” of enemy, “coherence of network effects”, “information dominance” in specific domains, or “resilience of systemic capabilities”.

#### 4.4. Doctrinal implementation

Doctrinal implementation of fluid hotspots model requires development of innovative operational concept - *Dynamic multi-domain operations* (DMO). Such concept would integrate elements of multi-domain operations, distributed lethality, and network-centric warfare, creating doctrinal framework adapted to complexity of fragmented conflicts. Unlike traditional doctrine that assumes relatively stable hierarchy of priorities, DMO would explicitly recognize fluid nature of strategically significant hotspots and develop methodologies for adaptive planning and conduct of operations in such environment. This includes development of concept of *strategic agility* - ability for rapid reconfiguration of effort and resources in response to emergent hotspots, without loss of coherence of overall campaign. Dynamic multi-domain operations should include several key components. *Continuous hotspot mapping* through advanced analytical tools that enable tracking evolution of strategic importance in real time. *Flexible resource allocation* through modular structures that can be rapidly regrouped according to needs. *Decentralized execution* that enables tactical commanders to autonomously react to emergent opportunities within broader strategic parameters. *Adaptive quality control* that enables rapid correction of approaches based on feedback from operational environment.

Strategic level implementation of fluid hotspots model requires fundamental re-examination of traditional approaches to strategy formulation. Instead of linear process model that assumes relatively stable strategic priorities, this model suggests development of adaptive, iterative approaches that can evolve in response to changing nature of strategically significant hotspots. Professor Lawrence Freedman (*Lawrence Freedman*), leading strategic theorist, stated that „in fragmented conflicts, strategy is not deterministic plan

but adaptive process that must constantly evolve in response to emergent patterns and transformations in strategic importance of different hotspots” (Freedman, 2017:291). Such conceptualization of strategy as evolutionary process represents significant departure from traditional strategic paradigms that dominated military thinking during industrial era. Strategic approach to fluid hotspots must include mechanisms for continuous strategic learning, where *lessons learned* from operational level are rapidly integrated into strategic framework. This requires development of “learning organizations” that can rapidly adapt their procedures and approaches based on new information and experiences.

Model of fluid hotspots recognizes fundamental uncertainty inherent in fragmented conflicts - uncertainty that cannot be eliminated through improved intelligence activity or more advanced analytical methodologies, but must be explicitly incorporated into operational approaches. This described concept requires development of concept of *robust adaptability* - ability for efficient functioning despite fundamental uncertainty through development of systems and procedures that are inherently adaptable and resistant to unforeseen transformations in operational environment. Instead of attempts to eliminate uncertainty through more detailed planning, this approach explicitly recognizes uncertainty as inherent characteristic of fragmented conflicts and develops models of operation that can function efficiently despite that uncertainty.

Robust adaptability implies development of “anti-fragile” capacities - systems that not only survive stress and chaos, but become stronger through exposure to uncertainty and volatility. This includes distributed command structures, redundant communication systems, and culture of continuous experimentation and learning. Model of fluid hotspots also implies need for new approaches to international cooperation and coalition warfare. Fluid nature of hotspots often means that strategic importance can rapidly shift across national boundaries or between different spheres of responsibility, requiring sophisticated coordination between different national and international actors. This includes development of flexible agreements on division of responsibilities, mechanisms for rapid transfer of resources, and protocols for real-time coordination that can function despite different national procedures and constraints. Model of fluid hotspots represents significant theoretical breakthrough in understanding contemporary conflicts, offering conceptual framework that better reflects complex, dynamic, and fragmented nature of contemporary warfare. Through recognition of temporality, inter-domain nature, nonlinearity, and “gravitational effect” of strategic hotspots, this model enables

more sophisticated understanding of distribution of strategic importance in fragmented conflicts and development of more efficient approaches to planning and conducting operations in such environment. Although it requires significant transformations in doctrine, organization, technology, and education, this model offers path toward more efficient operational approaches that can more adequately respond to challenges of contemporary warfare. Through further development and operationalization of concept of fluid hotspots, it is possible to bridge gap between traditional military theory and complex reality of fragmented conflicts of 21st century.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Conceptual paradox of dominant battlefield represents fundamental challenge for contemporary military theory and practice, requiring thorough re-examination of traditional doctrines and development of new theoretical frameworks. Analysis has shown that fragmentation of war zones - through geographical, technological, and socio-political dimensions - creates operational environment in which classical concept of dominant battlefield becomes operationally inadequate. In network-centric conflicts, impossibility of hierarchical prioritization of battlefields manifests through fluidity of operational space, inter-domain dependencies, and nonlinear dynamics that nullify traditional logic of centralized center of gravity.

Model of fluid hotspots, proposed as alternative theoretical framework, recognizes polycentric, dynamic, and adaptive nature of contemporary conflicts, where strategic importance is not tied to static location, but to emergent points of convergence of different dimensions of conflict. Such model requires development of new operational concepts such as Distributed adaptive synchronization and Modular operational packages, which can respond to changing nature of strategically significant hotspots. Military leaders of 21st century must develop cognitive abilities for understanding complex systems and recognizing emergent patterns, abandoning traditional reliance on linear planning and hierarchical prioritization. Implementation of fluid hotspots model implies transformation in four key areas: doctrine, organization, technology, and education.

Contemporary conflicts require development of more sophisticated approaches to measuring operational effectiveness that transcend traditional metrics and recognize systemic effects through different domains. Accepting inherent uncertainty of fragmented conflicts imposes need for development of *robust adaptability* - ability for efficient functioning despite unpredictability

through adaptive systems and procedures. Fragmentation also requires integrated inter-agency and international approach to conflict management, as no organization can independently address complexity of contemporary fragmented conflicts. Development of efficient coordination mechanisms between different elements of national power, as well as with international partners, becomes critical for success in such environment. Operation planning must evolve from rigid, sequential plans toward adaptable frameworks that enable flexibility and adaptation to changing circumstances. Concept of “mission command” becomes especially relevant, enabling decentralized decision-making while maintaining strategic coherence.

Information superiority and cyber domains create new possibilities but also new vulnerabilities, requiring holistic approach to security that integrates physical and virtual aspects of conflict. Technological complexity of contemporary weapons systems creates overlapping zones of influence that do not follow traditional sectoral logic of battlefield. Asymmetric nature of contemporary conflicts enables even weaker opponents to challenge traditionally superior forces through innovative use of available technologies and tactics. Such dynamics makes traditional approaches to prioritization potentially counterproductive. Education of military professionals must adapt to prepare leaders for understanding interdisciplinary aspects of contemporary conflicts. Development of systems thinking, complexity theory, and abilities for managing uncertainty become key competencies. Implementation of new theoretical frameworks requires cultural change in military organizations, which can be one of greatest challenges. Traditional hierarchical structures and procedures must evolve toward more flexible, adaptable models of organization and functioning.

This presented theoretical breakthrough does not imply complete rejection of traditional principles of warfare, but their sophisticated reinterpretation and adaptation for needs of radically transformed nature of conflict. Principles such as concentration of forces, economy of force, and maintaining initiative remain relevant, but their application must be adapted to realities of fragmented, network-centric conflicts. Only through such fundamental transformation of military thinking is it possible to bridge gap between traditional military theory and complex reality of contemporary warfare, enabling development of more efficient approaches to planning and conducting operations in fragmented conflict zones of 21st century. Future of military theory lies in ability to adapt to this new reality, retaining what is eternally important from military traditions, while transforming what has become inadequate for contemporary challenges.

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**JOVAN RASKOVIC  
THE SILENCED VOICE OF AGREEMENT AND REASON  
IN SERBO-CROATIAN RELATIONS**

**Abstract:** *Jovan Raskovic was a significant scientific and political figure in the years preceding the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). He is best remembered for his advocacy for the rights of Serbs in Croatia and as a founder of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS). Raskovic attempted to secure Serbian (minority) rights in democratic and institutional manner, emphasizing moderation and dialogue as the primary means of his political action.*

*This paper explores the political and intellectual legacy of Jovan Raskovic, a prominent psychiatrist, academic, and political leader whose role during the dissolution of the SFRY remains both significant and often contested. Focusing on his efforts to prevent wider conflict between Serbs and Croats during the turbulent period of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the paper situates Raskovic within the broader context of post-communist transition, rising nationalism, and ethnic polarization in the former Yugoslavia.*

*Drawing on a range of historical, political, and other sources, the paper critically assesses claims that Raskovic contributed to the escalation of ethnic conflict. It argues instead that his political marginalization, brought about by hostile Croatian nationalism and the rise of more radical forces within the Serbian political sphere, undermined his vision and his efforts to secure peaceful coexistence. Through an analysis of his writings, public speeches, and available articles, this paper contends that Raskovic represents a suppressed voice of restraint whose failure to influence the course of events marks a missed opportunity for a more peaceful resolution to the Serb-Croat conflict. Ultimately, the study*

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*contributes to a nuanced understanding of Raskovic as both a product of his time and a potential alternative to the path that led to war.*

**Keywords:** *Jovan Raskovic, Yugoslav disintegration, Serbs in Croatia, human rights, peaceful resistance*

## Introduction

Jovan Raskovic was one of the central figures on the political scene of the SFRY during the 1980s and early 1990s. His political engagement intensified during the period of political changes in the SFRY, in the lead-up to and at the beginning of the conflict. As a Serbian political leader, he primarily advocated for the rights of Serbs in Croatia.

He was born in Knin, in an area where the Serbian Orthodox population lived, which profoundly influenced his attitude, both generally and politically. He graduated medicine at the University of Zagreb, specialized in psychiatry in the field of mental disorders and human behaviour and became a university professor.

During his education, Raskovic studied political and social movements in SFRY, a complex federation made up of several ethnic and religious groups with a history of unprecedented antagonisms and conflicts. This environment contributed to his growing interest in politics and social justice, particularly in minority rights.

The living word and memory about the atrocities committed against the Serbs during World War II, as well as a thorough psychiatric education, provided Raskovic with a strong base for shaping his role as an advocate for the rights of the Serbs in Croatia. His scientific background also strongly influenced his approach to understanding ethnic and social tensions and conflicts in the region.

During the 1980s, the situation in the SFRY became complicated due to economic challenges, the awakening of national consciousness and the consequent separatist aspirations of certain national communities within the Yugoslav federation. *“The issue of human, civil, and national rights was gaining sense and meanings that became increasingly difficult to relate to the value and normative aspects of Yugoslav socialist self-management”* (Roksandic D. 2011).

Deeply concerned about the discrimination and marginalization of Serbs under the nationalist regime of Franjo Tudjman and the Croatian Democratic Union – HDZ<sup>2</sup>, Raskovic gradually rose as an advocate of Serb rights,

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<sup>2</sup> HDZ was formed in 1989 as the first party in the former Yugoslavia with a clear national identity.

articulating and bringing forward the voice of significant part of Serbs in Croatia. Raskovic founded the SDS as a political response to new threats and growing political tensions, in February 1990. Its activities focussed on the protection of the political, cultural, economic and other rights of Serbs in Croatia, as well as on advocating for greater autonomy within the Croatian political system. Under Raskovic's leadership, SDS mobilizes the Serb community in Croatia, strengthening national cohesion and raising awareness of the coming dangers.

Tensions continued and culminated with the abolition of the constituent status of Serbs in Croatia and the declaration of Croatian independence in 1991. Soon, an armed conflict begins between Croatian paramilitary formations and Croatian and Serbian police forces. After the outbreak of conflict, Raskovic found himself aside of the main events while advocating for the use of a peaceful approach in the fight to preserve the rights of Serbs in Croatia. The key role was taken over by radical political forces who, in response to the unilateral and uncompromising behaviour of the new Croatian authorities, have started to gain growing support among the Serbian population.

With the intensification of the conflict and the escalation of political struggle and violence, in the middle of 1991, Raskovic's role has become unappreciated. His political activity started to become less acceptable to the extremists on both sides. His advocacy for a peaceful, compromising, institutional and political way of problem solving begun to enjoy less and less support, and the leading word was gradually taken over by the militaristic approach.

Jovan Raskovic's life was tragically cut short on July 28, 1992, under circumstances that have never been fully explained. News of his death was received as a tragedy by his supporters and has remained the subject of speculation and conspiracy theories to this day, although at the time it went relatively unnoticed by a public preoccupied with the ongoing war events in the territory of the SFRY.

### **Childhood and education**

Raskovic was born in Knin in a prominent family of Serbian intellectuals who suffered a traumatic experience during World War II, on July 5, 1929. Raskovic talks about this experience in his book "Crazy Land" (Raskovic J. 1990). To save themselves from the atrocities against the Serbs, which had been carried out by the authorities of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), the Raskovic family, like many other Serb families, was forced to flee from Sibenik in 1941, where Jovan's father Dusan worked as a lawyer. The family fled to the town of Kistanje near Knin which, at the time, was under Italian

administration. Jovan spent the war with the abbot Father Nikodim in a relatively peaceful environment in the Krka Monastery in Dalmatia. Still, he witnessed a plethora of Ustasha's crimes against Serbs that took place in the immediate vicinity.

After World War II, he passed the lower grades of high school in Zadar and Knin, and then moved to Zagreb, where he graduated in 1948. He graduated from the Faculty of Medicine in 1956, and passed the specialist exam in neuropsychiatry in 1962. He defended his doctoral dissertation at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Zagreb in 1975. In the professional field, he worked as the director of the General Hospital in Sibenik from 1959 to 1961, and then as the director of the medical centre. He participated in founding of and conducted neurophysiological research within the Institute for Clinical Neurophysiology of the Faculty of Medicine in Ljubljana<sup>3</sup>.

Raskovic worked as a professor at the universities in Ljubljana and Zagreb and as a visiting professor at many international universities, among others, in London, Houston and Rome. He was the director of the Centre for Scientific Research of the "St. Sava" Hospital in Belgrade, a member of the Croatian Medical Academy, as well as an honorary member of the Association of Psychiatrists of Italy and Czechoslovakia. At the end of 1988, he became a non-staff member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU). Raskovic is the author of more than a hundred medical publications, professional and scientific works, and several monographs. In addition to the book "Crazy Land", which depicts his political plans and preoccupations, a book of his texts "Soul and Freedom" was published posthumously in 1995.

Raskovic's Serbian origin combined with growing up during the whirlwind of war dominantly determined his future national and political attitudes. In his later works, he talks about the genocide against the Serbs during World War II in the Independent State of Croatia as the strongest element of the identity of the Serbian people, especially the Serbs in Krajina. In the paper "Crime and Guilt" published in the magazine "Srpska Zora", he looks at the non-acceptance of the genocide by the Croat Ustashes, and considers the conditions for the tolerable coexistence of these different collective characters. In his essay "On Epidal, Castrative and Rectal Character", he tries to interpret the collective psychological character of Serbs, Croats and Muslims (Bosniaks).

It can be said that Raskovic's academic and scientific career gave the final form to his political activism, which was at the same time national – Serbian,

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3 Source: Croatian encyclopedia, online edition (2013 - 2024) - <https://www.enciklopedija.hr/clanak/raskovic-jovan>

but also universal and cosmopolitan. Dobrica Cosic stated that Raskovic brought soul into soulless politics (Cosic D, "Srpsko pitanje" 2004, p. 15), and humanism into national ideology, while academic Matija Beckovic described him as a unique political value, saying that Serbian history will hardly be able to find in one man a more thorough, extensive, selfless, noble and respectable humanist and servant of the Serbian people.

### **Political carrier**

After a multi-decade period of "brotherhood and unity" which, among other things, was characterized by the inability to openly express national aspirations in the former SFRY, at the end of the 1980s, the national consciousness started to awaken, and the old antagonisms regained their manifest dimension. The multi-party system enabled the formation of political parties, which acquired a predominantly national character. Rather than gradually introducing the revived national consciousness into the democratic flows, political changes and the transition from a one-party to a multi-party system lead to the flaring of nationalism and the complication and radicalization of relations in the society.

On its way to independence from SFRY, in 1990 Croatia changed the constitution of 1974, according to which the Socialist Republic of Croatia was defined as "*the national state of the Croatian people, the state of the Serbian people in Croatia and the state of other peoples and nationalities living in it.*" "*The Republic of Croatia is established as a national state of the Croatian people and a state of members of other nations and minorities, who are its citizens: Serbs, Muslims, Slovenes, Czechs, Slovaks, Italians, Hungarians, Jews and others, who are guaranteed equality with citizens of the Croatian nationality and realization of national rights in accordance with the democratic norms of the OUN<sup>4</sup> and the countries of the free world.*"

"*The status of Serbs in Croatia de facto is reduced to minority, without changing the fundamental provision of the Croatian Constitution in this regard: first, violating the linguistic equality of Croats and Serbs in Croatia from 1974, i.e. excluding the Cyrillic alphabet from equal official use; secondly, excluding special provisions on the manner of decision-making in the Parliament, "when a proposal for an act or another issue of interest for the equality of peoples and nationalities is on the agenda of its councils"; third, redefining the "conditions" and "other issues of interest for the regional connecting of municipalities and for the establishment of communities of municipalities.*" (Roksandic D. 2011). From

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4 Organization of the United Nations

the nation who historically, together with the Croats, shaped this Country, the Serbs in Croatia were placed at the level of national minorities<sup>5</sup>.

As one of the most respected Serbs from Croatia, Raskovic decided to politically articulate the aspirations and fears of the Serbian people, and in 1990 he founded SDS and led it until his death. In his work "The Serbian Democratic Party, from its foundation to the constitution of the multi-party Parliament", Domagoj Knezevic writes about the context of the establishment of the SDS: „*The founding of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) in Knin heralded a new form of political organization for Croatian Serbs. The main initiator of the founding of this political option was the long-time head of neuropsychiatry and director of the Medical Center in Sibenik, Jovan Raskovic. According to the testimony of Borisav Jovic, Raskovic was encouraged to do this by his long-time friend, academician of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) and writer Dobrica Cosic. This friendship began in the early seventies at a round table on psychiatry in Belgrade, in which Raskovic participated. Through Cosic, Raskovic developed friendships with other SANU academics. Raskovic later claimed that his candidacy for a professorship at the Medical Faculty in Zagreb was rejected because of those associations, and he also became a person of interest of the Croatian State Security Service, probably along the lines of Serbian nationalism. At the founding session of the Democratic Party from Serbia, held in Belgrade on February 4, 1990, Raskovic and Cosic attended as guests.*” (Knezevic D, 2010).

Raskovic used his political involvement as a mean to defend the national interests and sovereignty of the Serbs in Croatia. He had no previous experience in politics, nor was his primary intention to gain power. He strived to lead an independent and responsible national politics excluding violent means as a way to achieve political goals, which is why he was also called the “Serbian Gandhi”.

In the first multi-party elections in Croatia, Serbs overwhelmingly chose the option of the reformed communists of Ivica Racan, within the party Union of Communists of Croatia - Party of Democratic Changes (SKH-SDP). Raskovic’s SDS entered the Croatian Parliament, but the tightening of relations between Croats and Serbs resulted in the withdrawal of its representatives from Croatian institutions. Raskovic was offered the position of vice-president of the Croatian government, but he refused it, saying that it cannot “*compensate for the equality of the Serbian people*” (Knezevic D, 2010).

The new Croatian politics was unreservedly attempting to reawaken the traumatic memories of the Serbs on the atrocities committed during World

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5 In 1997, the rights of the Serbs were further reduced by the adoption of the Constitutional Law on Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, thus completing the formal and material removal of the Serbs from Croatia.

War II, to force them to resist, to accuse them of disobedience and to draw them into the conflict. “*Ethno-nationalization of Croatian politics after the constitution of the multi-party Parliament significantly eased the up till then marginal influence of official Serbian politics among Serbs in Croatia, thereby inevitably accelerating their self-marginalization in Croatian politics*” (Roksandic D, 2011).

After unsuccessful attempts to restore Serbo-Croatian relations on a new basis by operating in a multi political party environment within the framework of SKH-SDP, Serbs in Croatia increasingly turned to the national option – SDS, led by doctor Raskovic. They accepted him as a leader, and he answered: “*I am not your leader, but a servant!*” Raskovic never behaved like a classic politician, admitting his own lack of political pragmatism. His insistence on non-violent politics and peaceful resolution of conflicts was a thorn in the side of the new Croatian authorities, for whom radicalization was a primary political interest and simultaneously a mean for independence and a solution to the Serbian question in Croatia. His politics also bothered the radical centres of power in Serbia, so they began to look for ways and coordinate efforts to remove him from the political scene.

Amid the radicalization of political relations, and under significant pressure, Raškovic moved to Belgrade in early 1992 in an effort to secure a safe livelihood for his family. Instead of continuing to base their political struggle on non-violent and democratic means, which Raskovic established and propagated through his political activism, the new Serbian political leaders allowed Serbs in Croatia to be drawn into an armed conflict.

At the given moment of global geopolitical changes which emerged with the fall of the “iron curtain”, the balance of forces on the ground was not suitable for solving the Serbian national question. Seeing an opportunity to get rid of the Serbs once and for all, something they failed to achieve during World War II, the new Croatian political leaders pushed for the war option, provoking the situation and gladly accepting the radicalization in which Krajina Serbs were eventually dragged under the patronage of political Belgrade. From a chronological distance, it is clear that this was a case irresponsible politics, not up to the historical challenge, and of politicians who were ready to gamble with the lives and destinies of hundreds of thousands of Serbs in Croatia.

### **They key achievements and contribution**

Even before his political career, Dr Jovan Raskovic was a well-known neuropsychiatrist, university professor, scientist and academic. He is the author of many professional and scientific publications in the area of human behaviour

and psychiatry, as well as texts in which he tries to penetrate into the background and get to the essence of antagonisms in the Balkans, primarily those between Serbs and Croats. His most important works include: *Narcissism* (1988), *Crime and Guilt* (1990), *Crazy Land* (1990) and *Depersonalization* (1991).

The renewed fear of atrocities of which the Serbs were massively exposed during World War II, in connection with the newly gained Croatian independence, the deprivation of constitutional rights and the growing anti-Serb politics in Croatia, put Raskovic in the centre of political events – in the position of the leader of the Serbs in Croatia. As a response to the turbulent events of the late 1980s and early 1990s, he used a scientific basis to shape his political views and founded the SDS in Croatia in 1990.

Under the conditions of increasing radicalization of relations in Croatia, through his political involvement, Raskovic articulated the voice, fears and wishes of the Serbian people, also striving to understand the Croatian side and constantly believing in a power of compromise. He was trying to bring the spirit of agreement and reason into the Serbo-Croatian relationship, which is why he was a unique example in both Serbian and Croatian politics. Over time, Raskovic's approach became a nuisance and a challenge, both for Croatian and Serbian extremists, so he was forced to withdraw from the political scene.

### **Challenges and controversies**

Raskovic's political activities are considered controversial by some due to his significant influence among the Serbs in Croatia and his political role in the events that preceded the start of the war in the former SFRY. Although he primarily advocated for the protection of the rights and greater autonomy of the Serbs in Croatia in the parts where they represented majority within the framework of the Croatian political system, critics accuse him of strengthening Serbian separatism in Croatia and consequently contributing to the growth of tensions and the start of armed conflict. Likewise, his more radical compatriots resent him for his efforts to conduct politics separate from the influence of Belgrade, as well as for his countless attempts to find a compromise with Croatian political leaders.

Raskovic's atypical openness and honesty was used against him at an opportune moment in an extremely compromising way. The meeting between Raskovic and the newly elected Croatian president Franjo Tudjman in Zagreb in 1990 was secretly recorded without Raskovic's knowledge. On that occasion, Raskovic told Tudjman not to provoke the Serbs, not to take away their rights and not to expel them from the Constitution, because the Serbs are a proud,

brave and crazy people who are ready to sacrifice and suffer. The recording was edited and presented in such a way that it looks as if Raskovic told Tudjman that Serbs are crazy people.

Also, the new Croatian authorities have indicted Raskovic for “*encouraging and organizing activities aimed at endangering the territorial integrity of the Republic of Croatia*”, demanding a fifteen-year prison sentence. On a personal and human level, Raskovic found it very difficult to accept the indictment, especially considering his sincere and constant peace-making efforts.

His death continues to cause controversies, primarily because of the circumstances, time and place. He died suddenly and prematurely in Belgrade in 1992, officially as a result of a heart attack, although there were no indications of his critical state of health<sup>6</sup>. Because of this, many supporters of his politics believe that he was actually the victim of an assassination by his political opponents. This controversy shaped his legacy as a political figure and Serbian leader. Debates about his role and the possible different outcome of events, had he lived longer, continue.

### **Political influence**

Profiling as the leader of the Serbs in Croatia in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Raskovic strived to articulate an autochthonous Serbian politics on the territory of Croatia, separated from external interests and influences, and in this way to ensure return for the revoked rights of the Serbs in Croatia. His political influence dates back to the establishment of the SDS in 1990 and extends to the role of a kind of national protector of the rights of Serbs in Croatia, but also in the wider area, outside the motherland of Serbia.

Given the fact that he represented a significant political figure during the years preceding the breakup of the SFRY, some authors attribute to him a role in the radicalization of relations and the dissolution of SFRY<sup>7</sup>, although it is

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6 Regarding the context of Raškovic’s death, his daughter Sanda says: “He had high blood pressure and (had suffered) some changes at his heart, but it absolutely did not endanger his life. With such a heart he could live for a long time. My father was killed by something else. That absurd accusation of a war crime was, I believe, the final straw. He simply could not bear that. He could not believe that human hatred, malice and blindness could be so strong. Well, he helped others all his life, as a man and a (medical) doctor. It is not hundreds, but thousands of people. And he never looked at who was of what religion and nationality and how deep his pocket was.” Source: Kesar, J. (2007) Feuilleton about Jovan Raskovic

7 Knezevic, Domagoj (2010) „The Serbian Democratic Party from its founding to the establishment of a multiparty Assembly“, pg. 21-22

possible to dispute the arguments that Raskovic through his political activities contributed to the escalation of the conflict and the breakup of the common state. Such a role can rather be attributed to his political opponents and successors in the SDS, who after his retirement from politics, and especially after his death in 1992, began to lead a more radical and rigid politics, which can be characterized as suicidal in the given circumstances.

There is a coincidence between the moment when Raskovic left the political scene and the commitment to the war option as the primary solution to political and national issues in the territory of the former SFRY. This kind of policy ultimately proved to be wrong for the Serbs, effectively leading them to military defeat and to the consequent exodus and complete political, cultural, economic and every other possible marginalization in the territory of modern Croatia.

Raskovic's political influence can be characterized as significant, not only among Serbs in Croatia, but also in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To this day, he keeps living indirectly through the reformed SDS in Republika Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina, to which formation Raskovic significantly contributed.

### **Comparative Reflections: Raskovic and His Political Contemporaries**

To understand Jovan Raskovic's political role and the uniqueness of his vision, it is important to compare his approach with other prominent figures from the same historical period. While Raskovic consistently emphasized non-violence, dialogue, and institutional struggle, many of his contemporaries in the Yugoslav political landscape pursued more radical, assertive, or even militarized strategies. Among the most notable political contrasts stand the figures of Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman, whose rise to power in Serbia and Croatia, respectively, coincide with Raskovic's political engagement.

*"While Raskovic sought compromise and peaceful coexistence between ethnic groups, Milosevic mobilized Serbian nationalism through mass rallies, emotional appeals, and control of state media"* (Bijelic J. 2010). Raskovic's psychiatry-informed belief in the psychological and historical trauma of the Serbian people, as elaborated in his book *Crazy Land* (1990), led him to advocate for healing and understanding. In contrast, Milosevic exploited these traumas to fuel national and political consolidation. While both recognized the historical suffering of Serbs, particularly during World War II, their responses to that history diverged radically: Raskovic aimed for reconciliation through dialogue and institutional action, while Milosevic often encouraged confrontation and division.

The contrast between Raskovic and Franjo Tuđman is equally sharp. Tuđman, a former member of (Yugoslav) Partisan movement and historian, became the face of the Croatian independence movement, while his leadership was marked by strong nationalist rhetoric, policies that marginalized Serbs, and an insistence on redefining Croatia as an ethnically Croatian state. Tuđman's political strategy was aggressive and unilateral, leaving little room for compromise. Raskovic, by contrast, repeatedly appealed for mutual respect and caution, warning that the deliberate exclusion of Serbs from the new Croatian identity would inevitably lead to unrest.

If viewed through an international lens, Raskovic's politics show some resemblance to global figures such as Mahatma Gandhi or Václav Havel, both of whom advocated for peaceful resistance and moral leadership in times of national turmoil. However, unlike Gandhi or Havel, Raskovic operated in an environment where his conciliatory tone was often perceived as weakness by both sides, and where armed conflict quickly overpowered dialogue. His voice, though reasoned and humane, struggled to break through the accelerating radicalization of the political context.

Ultimately, Raskovic's failure to preserve wide support, despite his moral clarity, speaks to the tragic conditions of the Yugoslav collapse, in which voices of moderation were drowned out by the more immediate pull of ethnic fear, historical grievance, and opportunistic power plays. His legacy, in contrast to many of his contemporaries, is one of restraint and ethical consistency, but also of missed potential for a more peaceful alternative.

### **Private life**

Jovan Raskovic was married to doctor Tanja Stipisic (of Croatian-Italian origin), whom he met while studying in Zagreb. Their daughter, Sanda Raskovic Ivic, was the ambassador of the Republic of Serbia in Italy (2008-2011) and the president of the Democratic Party of Serbia (2014-2016). Under strong pressure due to Raskovic's political activity, the Raskovic family was expelled from Croatia in 1991 to Belgrade, where it is still based today.

Even at the time of great political popularity, Raskovic's humane character dominated his role as a politician. As an excellent connoisseur of the history and mentality of the peoples who lived in the territory of the SFRY, Raskovic had a great reputation among his compatriots, while at the same time enjoying the respect of a part of the Croatian population, which is why many Krajina people called him "the Father".

The writer Momo Kapor spoke about Raskovic: „*His very appearance and character, which united the personality of a scientist of world renown, and at the*

*same time a good-natured village doctor, whose worn leather bag in itself instilled trust in patients, reminded of some ancient Slavic god. (...) No one noticed that year after year he was filled with that unspeakable pain from the injustices he had inflicted, until, filled to the last bit of his being, he was brought out without his will to be for a while the leader of that unfortunate nation. (...) He entered that arena for the sake of his people, sacrificed everything, lost everything and in the end, as the last robber and bandit, he was expelled from his native land.”* (Kesar J. 2007)

Raskovic built a special relationship with the Serbian Orthodox Church, which he considered the foundation of Serbian statehood, what may be linked with upbringing in a monastery. He considered SPC the foundation of Serbian statehood because it managed to preserve the Serbian identity during the Ottoman period, when the Serbian state did not exist. Speaking about the Serbian Orthodox Church, Raskovic stated: *“The Serbian people are returning to their church to the extent that they are becoming nationally aware. The injustice that the Serbian people, under the dictatorship of Bolshevism and the cult of personality, did to their church is enormous. The Serbian Orthodox Church has been an endlessly lonely being for the past fifty years. I don’t hesitate to say that she was the loneliest creature not only in this region, but perhaps on the whole planet”*.

Raskovic died in the special hospital in Belgrade “St. Sava”. He was buried in the Alley of meritorious citizens at Belgrade’s New Cemetery. After his death, his book of texts “Soul and Freedom” (1995) was published in Novi Sad. In his award-winning novel “Trifuneja” (third book), published by IP Matica srpska (2003), Stojan Berber also describes Raskovic.

As a sign of gratitude, the Health Center in Mrkonjic Grad, as well as streets in Prijedor, Trebinje, Bijeljina, Banja Luka, Novi Banovci and Smederevo, were named after Raskovic. The people of the village of Maricka under Kozara Mountain erected a bust of Raskovic at the place where he gave a speech in front of more than ten thousand people in August 1989.

## Conclusion

Raskovic’s legacy lives on through the memory of the leading contemporary fighter for the rights of Serbs in Croatia, regardless of his premature departure, as well as the controversies that continue to follow his political activity. His contribution to the development of Serbian political consciousness, numbed by decades of communism, and his consistent advocacy for the national rights of Serbs in Croatia, remain the most outstanding aspects of his biography.

Raskovic occupies a unique position in the historical narrative of the late 20th-century Balkans, a position that is not defined by success in the

traditional political sense, but by moral integrity, intellectual foresight, and an unwavering belief in nonviolence and peaceful coexistence. His legacy transcends immediate political consequences and resonates as a moral compass during turbulent and divisive period in the region's modern history.

The story of a man, a friend and a peacemaker, a sincere patriot, who did not fall into the trap of a militaristic approach to solving the Serbian national question at a very unfavourable historical moment, continues to live on in the collective memory. He continues to live on as a tradition about: "the Father of Krajina", "Serbian Gandhi" and "Servant of the People" who, even at the cost of his own political and even physical end, did not want to allow the Serbs to be drawn into the war conflict. This narrative, which speaks of the path not chosen, is a reminder of the human cost of silencing the voices of moderation and reconciliation in favour of radicalism and violence. Rašković's refusal to join extremist forces, even under enormous pressure, positions him as a political exception, which gives his figure a special moral authority in retrospect, as well as in perspective.

In the years after his death and through the war that continued to shape political and social relations in the region, Raskovic remains remembered as a symbol of resistance to oppression and injustice. Although his ideas did not prevent the escalation of conflict, nor did his political stance survive the pressure of rising nationalism and militarism, his vision provided a clear and compelling alternative. It was a vision founded on the principles of compromise and respect for distinct identities, values that were largely absent from the dominant political discourse of the period. While the majority pursued political maximalism, territorial expansion and sought to address issues through violent means, Raskovic championed dialogue, the protection of minority rights, and political participation, anticipating what would later be recognized as essential for fostering post-conflict trust and reconciliation.

With the defeat of his political vision, following the atrocities of World War II and the outcome of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the Serbian people from Croatia faced a new great tragedy on the threshold of the twenty-first century, being forced to abandon their historic lands to avoid physical extermination once again. The exodus of Serbs from Croatia, particularly during operations Flash and Storm, became the tragic final act of earlier persecutions and atrocities. In a broader context, the failure of Rašković's policy was not merely a personal defeat – it symbolized the retreat of reason in the face of nationalism and populism. His political downfall marked the silencing of all moderate voices, not only within the Serbian national body but across the former SFRY.

The uniqueness of Raskovic's intellectual background as a psychiatrist and professor further shaped the uniqueness of his political engagement, why he approached national identity not as a static or essentialist concept, but as a psychological and sociocultural construct shaped by history and collective memory. His writings and public speeches reveal a deep concern with the emotional and existential dimensions of identity politics, what many political actors of the time misuse for the purpose of escalating relations and spreading conflict in order to implement their own political agendas. In contrast to the rigid ethno-political frameworks that dominated Yugoslav dissolution, Raskovic advocated for a nuanced understanding of identity that allowed space for plurality and mutual recognition. His emphasis on dialogue was not merely rhetorical and tactical but grounded in his philosophical and ethical commitment to nonviolence. This commitment places him in a distinct category of people who sought to balance political action with moral responsibility, so that somewhat romantically, but not without grounds, Raskovic is compared with figures such as Mahatma Gandhi.

Of course, no assessment of Raskovic's legacy would be complete without acknowledging his limitations. While he possessed moral clarity and intellectual rigor, he often lacked the political pragmatism necessary to operate within turbulent and often hostile environment. His failure to galvanize sufficient political and institutional support ultimately rendered his political program vulnerable, regardless of the grassroots support he enjoyed from compatriots, as well as other citizens. His academic manner and cautious rhetoric were ill-suited to the media-driven, populist currents of the time. Furthermore, his insistence on negotiation and compromise was perceived by radical elements as weakness or betrayal. Even within the Serbian community, his moderate stance was met with suspicion and, at times, outright hostility. His political marginalization reflects a pattern that has recurred in various historical and geographical contexts and a wider trend in which conciliatory voices are deliberately drowned out during the periods of turmoil.

The importance of studying and remembering Raskovic may serve as a case study in the challenges faced by moderate politicians in polarized environments, while professional and scientific papers offer a valuable theoretical lens for understanding the intersection between trauma and identity. Future research on Raskovic could benefit from a comparative perspective, comparing his work with other leaders who sought nonviolent solutions in divided societies and turbulent times. Raskovic's psychiatric insights into group psychology and collective behaviour deserve further academic exploration, particularly in the fields of political psychology and conflict studies, while his legacy invites

to reconsider the role of emotion, collective memory, and interpersonal dynamics in shaping political outcomes.

Rašković's sincere advocacy for Serbs in Croatia to assert their rights within a democratic and pluralist framework stands in stark contrast to the unrealistic and opportunistic 'all or nothing' approach that ultimately prevailed. His legacy calls for a re-examination of entrenched binary narratives: defender or conqueror, protector or traitor, patriot or nationalist, victim or perpetrator, human or politician, resistance or occupation. The historical irony lies not only in the fact that his vision was rejected, but also in the fact that, in its absence, a tremendous human tragedy unfolded. This tragedy did not affect only one side; it destroyed communities across ethnic lines, leaving behind a bitter legacy of mistrust and fragmentation that future generations must challenge. It obliterated a specific local tradition and subculture of the Serbs from Croatia, which cannot be equated with the broader Serbian or Croatian national cultures. In this sense, Rašković's politics were not solely about the Serbs, but also about the very possibility of coexistence in a multi-ethnic society. His defeat is thus the defeat of a certain political ethos grounded in dialogue, legalism, and human dignity.

In the broader context of post-Yugoslav historiography, Raskovic remains a contentious but necessary figure, which will gain more and more significance over time. His insights into the consequences of psychological traumas rooted in past conflicts, and his efforts to articulate a framework for peaceful coexistence between Serbs and Croats, remained overshadowed by loud and aggressive nationalist discourses. In retrospect, however, they are gaining renewed relevance and becoming increasingly recognized, especially in the context of ongoing efforts toward regional reconciliation.

For Serbs who hail from the Serbian regions in modern-day Croatia, persists a deep and lasting regret for Raskovic's peaceful approach to the protection of Serbian rights and for his politics of compromise and agreement. Today, that sense of regret is intertwined with sorrow for a lost homeland. The regret for missed opportunities and lost positions is also felt by all those who embraced his vision of dialogue, understanding, and compromise. It is not merely mourning for a man and his fate, but for the road not taken, a road that might have led to a more just and humane resolution to the complex issues, serving the interest of all parties in the conflict.

Dr Jovan Raskovic, unfortunately, did not succeed in preventing the descent into war, nor did his political ideas survive the pressures of rising extremism. However, his life and work continue to offer an essential counterpoint to the dominant narratives of the Yugoslav conflicts. His commitment to peace,

intellectual depth, and moral courage render him a vital figure for any comprehensive understanding of the region's late 20th-century history. Remembering Raskovic today is not an exercise in nostalgia, but an invitation to critically engage with the past in order to envisage a better political future, one in which moderation is not dismissed as weakness, but recognized as a form of profound strength and deep wisdom.

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**PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING AS A CONSTRUCTIVIST  
FRAMEWORK OF EARLY MATHEMATICS TEACHING:  
AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDES**

**Abstract:** *In the early stages of mathematics education, the foundation for successful learning lies in the development of logical, critical, and mathematical thinking. Teaching mathematics effectively means fostering students' ability to think independently and creatively, to solve problems and reason analytically. This research explores the impact of a problem-based, constructivist-oriented teaching approach on students' attitudes towards mathematics.*

*The study compares the perceptions of students who experienced traditional instruction with those who participated in a problem-based learning program. The aim of the study is to determine whether younger primary school students who have mastered mathematical content through a problem-based learning approach develop more positive attitudes toward mathematics than those instructed through conventional teaching methods.*

*Using a Likert-type scale, student attitudes were assessed in terms of interest in mathematics content, perceptions of the teaching process, and the teacher's approach. The results indicate statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group, demonstrating that constructivist methods contribute not only to cognitive achievement but also to the formation of more positive emotional and motivational dispositions toward mathematics.*

*The findings support the integration of constructivist principles into early mathematics instruction as a means to enhance student*

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*engagement and promote a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. Recommendations include increasing the use of problem-based tasks and encouraging active, collaborative learning environments in which students construct knowledge meaningfully.*

**Keywords:** *early mathematics education, constructivism, problem-based learning, student attitudes, teaching approaches*

## **Introduction**

Mathematical contents are closely related to each other, so a misunderstanding of one part of the material can lead to a misunderstanding of all contents, which is why constant updating is required. The specificity of the early teaching of mathematics is reflected in its wide application, mathematical accuracy, logical rigor, and abstractness. A practical understanding of mathematics enables more successful and independent functioning. "The insistence on mathematical accuracy and logical rigor is reflected in the need for students to know, not only the facts in question, but also other elements on which these facts rely and from which they arise" (Sharma, 2001, p. 29). Mathematical content and activities should develop students' interest in mathematics. They also contribute to the development of logical thinking, the development of creative and critical thinking. Students should be motivated to overcome obstacles and find solutions to problems, i.e., to be creative. "Although creative inspiration is absolutely necessary, it is also important to understand that innovative ideas must also be practical" (Mouzas 2006, p. 1127).

From all of the above, it follows that effective early teaching of mathematics implies the active participation of students in the learning process with the aim of developing creativity, logical-mathematical thinking.

## **Early mathematics teaching**

The value of early mathematics lessons in the educational sense is the formation of the student's personality, the development of the desire for truthfulness, the development of creativity, critical reflection, and reasoning, as well as the assessment of problem solving, problem situations, and the development of thought processes. The thought process is a special type of process that is regulated by internal mutual relations created within that process. "The very process of thinking consists in the transformations that the problem situation goes through" (Kvaščev, 1980, p. 77). The most accepted explanation of the flow in solving problem tasks, according to Vilotijević (1999, p. 150), is the one in which

it is stated that it is a thought process consisting of four stages: a) getting to know the problem: the individual gets to know the elements of the problem, tries to understand their mutual connections and relationships; b) narrowing the problem: based on the analysis of the given data, the individual perceives what is given, what is the gap that needs to be filled, what is missing, he analyzes what is given taking into account the given and thus narrows down, concretizes the problems, vocalizes the difficulties and looks for a way to solve them; c) setting up a hypothesis: by analyzing the given, by observing and localizing the difficulties, the individual sets up a hypothesis for solving the problem; d) checking the hypothesis: when the hypothesis appears, the individual starts from the fact that it is correct and that he can fill in the gap in the given data; a hypothesis is a solution whose correctness needs to be verified.

Early mathematics teaching must be of high quality, interesting, dynamic, diverse, and constantly intellectually stimulating for students. Traditional ways of learning and teaching the content of early mathematics classes using different methods, forms, problems, logic, tasks of different levels of complexity, critical thinking and reflection is to awaken and encourage students to critically solve problem situations, constantly draw conclusions, connect teaching content and in this way nurture a critical review, instead of overloading and memorizing students with a large number of facts and tasks.

### **Theoretical starting point: constructivism in teaching**

Constructivism, as a modern pedagogical-psychological direction, implies that the student actively builds their knowledge in interaction with the environment, in accordance with previous experiences and thought structures. Instead of passively receiving ready-made information, the student is placed in the center of the teaching process and encouraged to investigate, discover, set hypotheses, and test them through their own activity.

Hanfstingl et al. (2022) defined assimilation as the process of absorbing new information within existing mental schemas, while they described accommodation as the change or formation of new schemas when the existing ones are not sufficient - this is precisely the process that Piaget considers crucial for cognitive development. Lev Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of the social context and the concept of the zone of proximal development - students learn most effectively with the help of a more competent associate (teacher or peers), with gradual control over learning (Margolis, 2020).

Bruner (1960) proposed a *spiral curriculum*, in which basic ideas are *revisited, gradually expanded* and added to higher levels, to achieve *intuitive grasp and con-*

*tinuous deepening* of knowledge, while Kosheleva and Villaverde (2018) confirmed this application in mathematics education through repetition and systematic expansion of content at higher levels of complexity. In other words, students learn more easily and deeply if they are introduced through a gradual spiral structure of learning, from the concrete to the abstract (Kosheleva & Villaverde, 2018).

In this research, exactly those principles were applied: the teaching is organized in such a way that it includes problem-based tasks, encourages critical thinking and reflection, and enables students to play an active role in building knowledge. According to this type of teaching, according to Savery and Duffy (1996), problem-based learning in early mathematics can be seen through the following three constructivist understandings:

1. The understanding of some content depends on the student's experience and activities in some context.

2. Learning is the result of cognitive tension and conflict because facing a problem is a stimulus for learning.

3. Knowledge needs to be verified through collaboration with other students to determine what an individual knows in relation to others.

A constructivist-based upbringing - educational process that uses the problem method implies that the child is placed in a problem situation, which causes cognitive dissonance, encourages curiosity, an investigative spirit, and motivation to solve problems, which is desirable from an early age (Šindić, 2018). In this context, problem-based learning appears as a natural application of constructivism: students face tasks without previously known solutions, and through thinking, analysis, and collaboration, they come to new insights.

### **Problem learning in early mathematics teaching**

In the 21st century, student creativity is one of the most important characteristics of successful students. Creativity has its roots in Latin terms meaning to create something new, to create something new, that is, it primarily refers to the ability to create and represents the characteristics that individuals should possess to create a new thought or material product. The modern word creativity-creation can represent "the power of creation, invention or production; artistic creation and participation in something useful or valuable" (Bognar & Solomanji, 2008, p. 69). It follows from this that creativity is a very important feature for creating new teaching models in the teaching process, and accordingly, innovative students.

"A creative student should think wisely, but at the same time be flexible and open to different alternatives" (Stevanović, 2003, p. 49). Therefore, the

creative process is the process of arriving at creative solutions, which can be achieved in elementary mathematics classes by motivating students to find a large number of solutions to a given problem. By applying these methods of finding solutions in creative, unusual, and different ways, students become more creative in the teaching process. This leads to the development of students' creative thinking, the teaching process becomes more creative, and the student and the environment in which the student resides, i.e., the school environment, becomes a more comfortable and positive place for the student's creative work, i.e., the student creatively acquires knowledge.

Problem solving is one of the highest forms of learning. Savery and Duffy (1996) believes that theory should be applied in practice, which will lead to building knowledge and skills and structuring problems. While solving a problem, the student is in a research position, in which he initiates creative thinking, which implies high levels of acquired knowledge and adopted skills. According to Horvat (2019), problem tasks should be a link between mathematical content and everyday life, and unfortunately, research shows that such tasks are insufficiently done in elementary school, because this form of work and learning requires enormous effort and commitment from both students and teachers. The teacher must be well prepared for the problem lesson. It is extremely important to take into account the relationship between the concrete and the abstract in the initial teaching of mathematics. "For the child to reach a higher level, he must first be exposed to concrete physical experiences and learn new discoveries over time, i.e., logical-mathematical experience" (Sharma, 2001, p. 66). That is why it is necessary to lead students to master mathematical content in a creative, creatively interesting way, and we achieve this by solving problem tasks and situations, by introducing tasks and content that will not be boring to them, that is, that will deepen critical thinking and reflection.

In any case, the learning of mathematics should begin with the introduction of problems that are adequate to the students' real situation (contextual problem). Yusof et al. (2012) explain that the problem-based learning model begins with an unstructured problem that has more than one answer. Hmelo Silver (2004), synthesizing studies on problem-based learning, observes that it leads to deeper, more flexible mental models and more permanent knowledge. Problem tasks place students in a research position in which their creative thinking is encouraged, opening up space for multiple solutions, different approaches, and personal reflection (Horvat, 2019; Savery & Duffy, 1996). Such approaches allow not only a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts but also a more pleasant emotional learning experience.

It is in this context that students' attitudes towards mathematics should be observed, which are often negative or at least reserved, especially when the teaching is based on mechanical learning, reproduction, and abstract tasks without a deeper meaning for the child. Starting from the understanding that attitude is the learned tendency of an individual to react positively or negatively to a certain concept, situation, object, or other person (Aiken, 1970), the attitude towards mathematics can be understood as a combination of emotional experience and beliefs that students develop in contact with mathematical content. In other words, if students perceive mathematics teaching as meaningful, challenging, yet accessible and creative, they are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards this subject.

Contemporary international research (Obeng, 2025; Gómez-Chacón et al., 2024; Zamir et al., 2023) indicates that constructivist approaches in teaching, among which problem-oriented teaching has a special place, contribute to the formation of more positive attitudes of students towards mathematics. Despite these findings, in the educational context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, such research is still few.

Bearing that in mind, the subject of this research examines the attitudes of fifth-grade elementary school students about mathematics, intending to determine whether the problem-based approach in teaching contributes to the development of more positive attitudes compared to the traditional approach.

### **Research methodology**

The research was carried out as a quantitative experimental study with parallel groups - experimental and control - to examine the effects of problem-oriented mathematics teaching and the attitudes of fifth-grade elementary school students. The aim of the study is to determine whether younger primary school students who have mastered mathematical content through a problem-based learning approach develop more positive attitudes toward mathematics than those instructed through conventional teaching methods.

The research design included a comparison of two groups of students who were exposed to different forms of teaching during one school semester.

Following the research objective, the following hypothesis was put forward:

*Fifth-grade students who learned mathematical content through a problem-based approach will show more positive attitudes toward mathematics compared to students who participated in traditional classes.*

The research sample consisted of 190 fifth-grade students, formed by a deliberate selection from two city elementary schools in Banja Luka - Elementary

School "Ivo Andrić" and Elementary School "Branko Ćopić". The schools were selected due to their similar pedagogical and socio-economic profile, thus ensuring basic comparability of the context. The sample was additionally standardized on the basis of previous school success in mathematics and the results of the knowledge test, which was applied before the start of the experiment, which increased the internal validity of the research.

The experimental group (N = 95) learned mathematics content through problem-oriented teaching during one school semester. Within the experiment, an innovative approach was applied that included different models of interactive and collaborative learning, and the teaching activities were problem-based, designed to encourage research thinking, logical reasoning, and active participation of students.

In the control group (N = 95), the teaching of mathematics was carried out in the traditional way - face-to-face, with the use of textbooks, teaching sheets, and reproductive work methods. During the experimental period, both groups studied the same teaching content, in the same number of lessons, within the regular curriculum.

The instruments used in all phases of the research were partially taken from existing validated research, while the other part of the instruments was developed independently, taking into account the age of the students and the goals of the study. The main instrument was a questionnaire with a Likert scale, which included several elements: students' attitudes towards mathematics, interest in learning, perception of teaching, and attitudes about the teacher's approach. The first scale measured the general attitude towards mathematics and contained 15 statements, with an acceptable level of reliability ( $\alpha = .65$ ). The second scale included students' attitudes about interest in learning, about the teaching itself and about the teacher's approach, with a high overall reliability ( $\alpha = .88$ ). The results were separately analyzed for three subdimensions: interest in learning elementary mathematics ( $\alpha = .69$ ), perception of teaching ( $\alpha = .79$ ) and assessment of the teacher's approach to teaching ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

The data were processed in the SPSS program, using descriptive statistics (arithmetic mean, standard deviation), the Kolmogorov-Smirn test for determining the normality of variable distributions, the *t*-test for independent samples (to examine the differences between the experimental and control groups), as well as one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) (to examine the connection between school and school success on student attitudes). The level of statistical significance was set at  $p < .05$ .

**Research results**

After the application of the experimental program, it was examined whether the students of younger school age who mastered the contents in the early mathematics lesson using a problem-based approach to learning will express more positive attitudes towards mathematics compared to the students of the control group who learned in the usual way in traditional teaching, that is, whether the students of the experimental group will achieve statistically more positive attitudes about interest in mathematics compared to the students of the control group. For this purpose, a Likert-type scale of *Student Attitudes on Mathematics* was applied. The normality of the distribution of variables was tested with the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, which confirmed the prerequisite for the application of parametric statistical procedures, including the *t*-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Table 1 shows the results determined at the end of the experiment.

Table 1. Students’ attitudes about mathematics in relation to the group

Group	N	M	SD	t	df	p
C	95	49.02	6.39	-2.10	188	.037*
E	95	51.29	8.38			

\* A statistically significant difference was determined at the level of .05

Based on the data shown in Table 1, it was observed that the attitudes of the students of the experimental group towards mathematics were more positive compared to the attitudes of the students of the control group. Students in the experimental group demonstrated a higher mean score ( $M = 51.29$ ;  $SD = 8.38$ ) compared to students in the control group, whose mean score was lower ( $M = 49.02$ ;  $SD = 6.28$ ). The average value of the attitude of the students of the experimental group was 3.42, while the average value of the students of the control group was 3.27.

A slightly positive attitude was recorded in both groups, given that the average value was higher than 3. The students of the experimental group showed a higher arithmetic average and more homogeneous attitudes about interest in mathematics compared to the students of the control group. Based on statistical indicators ( $t = -2.10$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .037$ ), a statistically significant difference was found between the attitudes about mathematics among the students of the control and experimental groups, at a significance level of .05.

However, it is important to note that students’ attitudes and beliefs are

slowly formed and consolidated, especially in younger school age. The duration of the experimental program, i.e., learning mathematical content through a problem-based approach, contributed to the achievement of a statistically significant difference.

The second task was to examine the differences in the attitudes of the students who participated in the experimental research on the characteristics of early mathematics classes: that is, on the students' interest in learning the content of early mathematics classes, on problem-based teaching, and on the teacher's approach to teaching. The results are presented and analyzed separately according to the parts of the applied *Scaler: Students' attitudes about interest in learning, about teaching, and about the teacher*. Table 2 shows the representation of students' views on interest in learning elementary mathematics classes in relation to the group.

Table 2. Students' interest in learning the content of early mathematics classes in relation to the group

Group	N	M	SD	t	df	p
C	95	35.08	7.15	-2.48	188	.014*
E	95	37.29	4.94			

\* A statistically significant difference was determined at the level of .05

The results of the application of the scale showed that after the implementation of the experimental program, the students of the experimental group showed a higher degree of interest in learning the content of the early mathematics lessons compared to the students of the control group. Among the students of the experimental group, a higher arithmetic mean ( $M = 37.29$ ) and greater homogeneity in attitudes, i.e. less dispersion ( $SD = 4.49$ ), was found, compared to the students of the control group, where the arithmetic mean was lower ( $M = 35.08$ ), and the dispersion was greater ( $SD = 7.15$ ).

Based on the average value of the attitude, which was 3.73 for the students of the experimental group and 3.51 for the students of the control group, it can be concluded that in both cases, slightly positive attitudes towards the learning of mathematical content were identified.

Based on the statistical indicators ( $t = -2.48$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .014$ ), a statistically significant difference was found between the attitudes of the students of the experimental and control groups regarding their interest in learning content from the early mathematics classes, at a significance level of .05.

Table 3 shows the results of students' attitudes regarding teaching in relation to the group.

Table 3. Students’ attitudes about mathematics teaching in relation to the group

Group	N	M	SD	t	df	p
K	95	39.09	6.00	-.29	188	.78
E	95	39.34	5.71			

Based on the data shown in the previous table, it was observed that the students of the experimental group had a slightly more positive attitude towards teaching compared to the students of the control group. The students of the experimental group evaluated problem-based teaching, and the students of the control group evaluated traditional teaching. Based on statistical indicators ( $t = -0.29$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .78$ ), it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference. However, this does not imply that problem teaching was not effective.

It was concluded that the students from both groups assessed the quality of teaching approximately similarly, which indicates that traditional teaching also has certain values. Based on the average attitude values, which were 3.91 for the control group and 3.93 for the experimental group, it was observed that the attitudes were slightly positive. These results indicated the need for additional educational activities for students, regardless of the type of teaching. Constantly encouraging and motivating students through various activities and procedures is necessary in the process of learning the content from the early mathematics classes.

Apart from the students’ interest in learning the contents of the early mathematics classes and the assessment of the implemented classes, the students’ attitude about the teacher’s approach in classes is also significant.

In the experimental group, the teachers applied the problem-based approach, while in the control group, they applied the traditional approach. Data on how the students of the control and experimental groups evaluated the teachers’ approaches are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Students’ attitudes about the teacher in relation to the group

Group	N	M	SD	t	Df	p
C	95	38.26	5.90	-2.05	188	.042*
E	95	39.94	5.34			

\*A statistically significant difference was determined at the level of .05

At the end of the school year, the students of the control and experimental groups evaluated the teacher’s approach in teaching similarly. In both cases, a slightly positive attitude was recorded, whereby the average value of the atti-

tude was 3.83 among students of the control group and 3.99 among students of the experimental group. Nevertheless, statistical indicators ( $t = -2.05$ ,  $df = 188$ ,  $p = .042$ ) indicated the existence of a statistically significant difference between students' attitudes about the teacher's approach, in favor of the experimental group, at the level of  $p = .05$ .

The attitude of the students about the teacher's approach is of particular importance because, in contrast to the assessment of teaching, it was precisely in this dimension that a statistically significant difference was shown in favor of the problem-based approach.

## **Discussion**

The results of the research show that the experimental program of problem-based learning has a positive impact on students' attitudes towards mathematics and on their interest in learning the content of early mathematics classes. Statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group ( $t = -2.10$ ;  $p < .05$  and  $t = -2.48$ ;  $p < .05$ ) confirm that the problem-based approach contributes not only to cognitive, but also to affective learning outcomes. Also, Obeng (2025) in his research in a secondary school context found that PBL has a positive effect on students' self-confidence and affective attitude towards mathematics. Also, Gómez-Chacón et al. (2024) confirms with his research that different approaches to constructivist-based teaching contribute to the improvement of attitudes towards mathematics in terms of the perceived usefulness of mathematics and self-knowledge regarding mathematical competences.

Interestingly, the perception of the teaching itself is not significantly different between the experimental and control groups. This finding indicates that students, even when exposed to different work methods, may have a similar overall experience of teaching. This may mean that even traditional teaching has certain values that students recognize and appreciate. The perception of teaching among students did not show significant differences between the groups, which confirms the conclusions of the research by Zamir et al. (2023) that students' attitudes about teaching do not only depend on the method of work, but also on additional factors such as motivation, self-confidence and the value that mathematics has for the student. Also, the factors that could influence the perception of teaching may be related to other factors such as the experience and perception of the teacher and the feeling of involvement.

The most notable positive effect of problem-based mathematics learning in our study was observed precisely in the way students assessed their teachers' approach ( $t = -2.05$ ;  $p < .05$ ), which indicates that the teacher's approach

is a key component in shaping students' affective attitudes towards mathematics. This result indicates that the problem-based approach not only affects the attitudes towards the subject, but also the way students perceive the teacher. Likely, greater interaction, the possibility of expressing opinions, and openness in work contribute to this experience.

Additionally, Cazzola (2018) points out that in the context of problem-based learning, the teacher's role is not to convey ready-made knowledge but to create opportunities for students to discover mathematical concepts through the research process, which encourages deeper understanding and greater emotional engagement of students. In accordance with Piaget's understanding that the child actively constructs knowledge through experience, problem tasks stimulate thought development through concrete situations, while Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social interaction and verbalization within the zone of proximal development, which is at the core of the problem-based approach. Boaler (1998) points out that students develop a more positive attitude towards mathematics when they have a sense of autonomy and when knowledge is connected to real contexts. Thus, the affective and cognitive components of learning become inseparable, and the teacher becomes a mediator and supporter, not an authority. The findings of this study point to the need to redefine the role of the teacher in modern mathematics teaching, from a passive transmitter of knowledge to an active designer of an environment for research, collaboration, and dialogue. Such practice also requires appropriate initial training, which Cazzola (2018) points out, calling for changes in the education programs of future teachers.

Taken as a whole, problem-based learning is an approach that improves both educational and upbringing outcomes. Its application is recommended, noting that it would be useful to conduct longitudinal studies to determine whether the positive effects are permanent and whether they persist in later grades.

One of the key limitations of this study is the duration of the experimental program, which was limited to one school semester. Although the results showed statistically significant differences in students' attitudes, it is possible that a longer period of implementation would allow for deeper and more stable formation of attitudes, as well as more lasting changes in learning.

## **Conclusion**

The results of the research indicate that problem-oriented teaching of mathematics, based on constructivist principles, contributes to the formation

of more positive attitudes of students of younger school age towards mathematics. Students who learned through problem tasks showed a greater interest in learning, a higher level of engagement, and a more positive perception of the teacher and the teaching process compared to students who were involved in traditional teaching.

Although not all differences were found to be statistically significant, the application of the constructivist approach in early mathematics teaching shows the potential for improving both educational and upbringing outcomes. Positive attitudes towards mathematics must be formed in this developmental period because they later influence the student's motivation, self-confidence, and success in mathematics.

It is recommended that early mathematics teachers apply problem tasks to a greater extent, encourage thought processes, and enable students to actively build their knowledge through research, collaboration, and reflection.

Introducing constructivist methods not only contributes to academic achievement but also shapes lasting attitudes towards learning as a meaningful and challenging process.

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## **ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE UKRAINIAN WAR FOR WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES**

**Abstract:** *This paper explores the multidimensional economic consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian war on Western Balkan countries (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, and Kosovo). Through analysis of available economic indicators, statistics, and relevant reports, it investigates how the conflict, which began in 2022, has changed economic flows, trade relations, energy policy, investment patterns, and economic development strategies in the region. Results show that Western Balkan countries have experienced significant disruptions in the energy sector, inflationary pressures, and changes in trade patterns. At the same time, the war has accelerated processes of energy diversification and integration with EU markets, creating new opportunities for economic repositioning. The paper points to different degrees of economic resilience among countries in the region, where states with more diversified economies and less dependence on Russian energy have shown greater stability. The conclusions suggest the need for further strengthening of regional economic cooperation, acceleration of EU integration, and development of strategies to increase economic resilience in the context of global geopolitical instabilities.*

**Keywords:** *Western Balkans, Russian-Ukrainian war, economic consequences, energy security, trade reorientation, European integration, economic resilience*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Russian-Ukrainian war, which began in February 2022, represents one of the most significant geopolitical events in Europe after the Cold War. This conflict, besides humanitarian and security implications, has caused far-reaching economic consequences that have been felt worldwide. Western Balkan countries, although geographically distant from the direct conflict, found themselves under significant economic pressure due to their specific geopolitical position, energy dependence, trade ties, and development challenges. The Western Balkans, a region encompassing Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Albania, is characterized by a unique position at the crossroads between East and West. These states, although on the path of European integration, maintain varying degrees of economic and political ties with Russia, which has made their economic situation particularly complex in the context of the war in Ukraine and consequent international sanctions against Russia.

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the economic consequences of the Ukrainian war on Western Balkan countries, exploring key sectors of the economy that have been affected, as well as strategies that countries in the region have applied to adapt to the new circumstances. Specific research objectives include:

1. Analysis of the war's impact on the energy sector and energy security of Western Balkan countries;
2. Assessment of changes in trade flows and patterns after the imposition of sanctions on Russia;
3. Investigation of inflationary pressures and disruptions in supply chains;
4. Evaluation of the impact on foreign direct investment and access to international financial markets;
5. Analysis of economic reorientation and impact on European integration processes.

The paper relies on a wide range of data, including economic indicators, trade statistics, energy analyses, reports from international financial institutions, and academic studies. Special attention is paid to comparative analysis, which provides insight into different degrees of economic resilience among countries in the region. Understanding the economic consequences of the Ukrainian war on the Western Balkans is of crucial importance for policy makers, investors, and the academic community. The research contributes to existing literature by providing a comprehensive framework for analyzing eco-

conomic challenges and opportunities that have emerged as a result of this significant geopolitical event.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Theoretical perspectives on the economic effects of regional conflicts**

The study of economic consequences of regional conflicts has a rich theoretical basis that relies on different economic schools of thought. According to the theory of economic interdependence (Keohane & Nye, 2012), increased economic connectivity reduces the risk of conflict, but at the same time increases the vulnerability of economies to geopolitical shocks. The theory of conflict economics (Collier, 2007) focuses on economic motivations and consequences of conflicts, emphasizing how wars create economic gains for certain actors, while causing damage to the wider economy. For understanding the consequences of the Ukrainian war on Western Balkan countries, the theory of center and periphery (Wallerstein, 2004) is particularly relevant, which explains how economic shocks in the center of the world system (in this case Europe) have disproportionate effects on the semi-periphery (Western Balkans). This theoretical perspective helps explain why relatively small economies of the Western Balkans are sensitive to geopolitical changes occurring outside their borders.

### **2.2. Empirical studies on the economic effects of the Ukrainian war**

Although the literature on the economic effects of the Ukrainian war on the global economy is rapidly growing, research specifically focusing on the Western Balkan region is still developing. According to the World Bank (2023), Western Balkan countries experienced an average decline in economic growth of 1.2% in 2022 as a direct result of the war, primarily due to disruptions in the energy sector and trade flows. Bartlett and Prica (2023) analyzed various channels through which the economic shock of the Ukrainian war was transmitted to the Western Balkans, identifying energy dependence, trade ties, and investment flows as key factors. Their study shows that countries with greater energy dependence on Russia, such as Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, were more

susceptible to negative economic effects. Research conducted by the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw, 2023) points to significant heterogeneity in economic consequences among countries in the region. According to this study, Albania showed the greatest economic resilience thanks to its lesser dependence on Russian energy and greater integration with European markets, while Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were most affected due to their energy dependence and stronger trade ties with Russia.

### **2.3. Literature on energy security and diversification**

Energy security represents a central aspect of the economic consequences of the Ukrainian war on the Western Balkans. Numerous studies (Kovačević, 2023; International Energy Agency, 2022) show that countries in the region face significant challenges in securing stable energy supply after disruptions in Russian deliveries. Kovačević (2023) analyzes how the war in Ukraine has accelerated processes of energy diversification in the Western Balkans, with increased investments in renewable energy sources and infrastructure for importing liquefied natural gas (LNG). However, the author emphasizes that the short-term costs of this transition represent a significant economic challenge for countries in the region.

### **2.4. Research on trade reorientation**

Literature on trade reorientation after geopolitical shocks (Gould, 2018) provides an important framework for understanding changes in trade patterns of Western Balkan countries. An OECD study (2023) shows that countries in the region significantly increased trade with the EU after the start of the war, while trade with Russia recorded a decline. Begović and Matković (2023) analyze how sanctions imposed on Russia have affected the export markets of Western Balkan countries, especially in the sectors of agriculture, metals, and textiles. Their research shows that countries with a more diversified export structure, such as North Macedonia, were more capable of redirecting their trade to alternative markets.

### **2.5. Gaps in existing literature**

Despite the growing number of studies on the economic effects of the Ukrainian war, there are significant gaps in the literature specifically related to the Western Balkans. Comprehensive analyses integrating different economic

dimensions (energy, trade, investments, financial markets) into one coherent framework are lacking. Also, literature examining long-term structural changes in the economies of the region as a result of the war is limited. This paper seeks to address these gaps by providing an integrated analysis of different economic dimensions, as well as an assessment of long-term structural changes arising from the Ukrainian war. Through a combination of quantitative economic indicators and qualitative policy analysis, the research contributes to a better understanding of the complex economic dynamics shaping the region in a period of geopolitical turbulence.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Research approach and design**

This research uses a mixed methodological approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the economic consequences of the Ukrainian war on Western Balkan countries. The research design is primarily exploratory-descriptive, with elements of comparative analysis that allows systematic comparison of economic effects among different countries in the region.

The research relies on a wide range of secondary data sources, including:

- Economic statistics and macroeconomic indicators from national statistical offices of Western Balkan countries
- Reports from international financial institutions (World Bank, IMF, EBRD)
- Trade statistics from UN COMTRADE and Eurostat databases
- Energy data from the International Energy Agency and national energy regulators
- Sectoral analyses and reports from relevant think tanks and research institutes
- Academic studies and scientific papers dealing with the economic effects of the Ukrainian war

To ensure data currency, focus is placed on sources published between February 2022 and March 2025, covering the period from the start of the war to the time of writing this paper.

### **3.2. Analytical framework**

The analytical framework of the research is structured around five key economic dimensions identified as most significant for understanding the overall economic consequences of the Ukrainian war on Western Balkan countries:

1. Energy security and transformation - analysis of changes in energy supply, prices, consumption, and investments in energy infrastructure
2. Trade flows and reorientation - assessment of changes in volume and structure of imports and exports, as well as changes in main trading partners
3. Inflation and macroeconomic stability - analysis of inflationary pressures, monetary policy measures, and overall macroeconomic stability
4. Investment flows and access to capital - assessment of changes in foreign direct investments, portfolio investments, and access to international financial markets
5. Structural economic changes and adaptation policies - analysis of long-term structural changes in the economies of the region and policies implemented by governments in response to new circumstances

For each of these dimensions, the research applies a comparative approach, analyzing similarities and differences among Western Balkan countries.

### **3.3. Data analysis**

For analysis of quantitative data, descriptive statistics, trend analyses, and comparative analyses were used. Specific analytical techniques include:

- Time series analysis for identifying changes in key economic indicators before and after the start of the war
- Correlation analysis for examining the relationship between energy dependence and economic performance
- Comparative analysis of economic indicators among countries in the region for identifying factors of resilience

Qualitative analysis of documents and policies was used to contextualize quantitative findings and deeper understanding of strategies applied by countries in the region in response to economic challenges. This analysis is focused on identifying key themes, patterns, and trends in economic policies and strategies of different countries.

### **3.4. Research limitations**

It is important to note several limitations of this research:

- Data availability represents a significant limitation, especially for the most recent period, where some economic indicators are available only as preliminary estimates;
- Isolating economic effects of the Ukrainian war from other factors (such as consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic or structural economic problems) presents a methodological challenge;
- Different systems of collecting and processing statistical data among countries in the region can make direct comparisons difficult;
- The rapidly changing nature of the geopolitical situation means that some findings of this research will require revision in light of future events.

Despite these limitations, the applied methodological approach allows for robust analysis of main economic trends and patterns that have emerged as a result of the Ukrainian war.

## **4. ENERGY SECURITY AND TRANSFORMATION**

### **4.1. Pre-war energy dependence of Western Balkan countries**

Before the Russian-Ukrainian war, the energy sector of Western Balkan countries was characterized by significant dependence on Russian energy sources, especially natural gas. According to data from the International Energy Agency (2022), dependence on Russian gas was most pronounced in Serbia (85%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (100%), while North Macedonia (60%) and Montenegro (also dependent through import of electricity from Serbia) had somewhat lesser but still significant dependence. Albania and Kosovo, on the other hand, had minimal direct dependence on Russian gas, relying primarily on hydropower and coal-fired power plants. This energy structure represented a significant economic vulnerability that became evident after the start of the war and imposition of sanctions on Russia. According to an EBRD study (2023), countries with higher rates of energy dependence on Russia experienced more significant economic disruptions in the first months of the war.

## **4.2. Supply disruptions and price shocks**

The Ukrainian war caused significant disruptions in energy supply throughout the Western Balkans. According to data from the Energy Community (2023), natural gas prices in the region rose by an average of 120% in the period from February 2022 to December 2022, while electricity prices on wholesale markets rose by 80% in the same period. Bosnia and Herzegovina was particularly affected, facing the risk of complete disruption of gas supply during the winter of 2022/2023. The government was forced to intervene through subsidies and emergency procurement of alternative energy sources, which significantly burdened public finances. According to a World Bank report (2023), energy subsidies reached 2.5% of Bosnia and Herzegovina's GDP in 2022, representing a significant fiscal challenge.

Serbia, despite traditionally close ties with Russia, also experienced significant supply disruptions. Although it did not directly support Western sanctions against Russia, indirect effects of financial restrictions and logistical challenges resulted in instability in supply and price increases. According to data from the Energy Agency of the Republic of Serbia (2023), retail prices of natural gas for industrial users rose by 110% between February 2022 and December 2023.

## **4.3. Energy diversification strategies**

The war in Ukraine acted as a catalyst for accelerating energy diversification throughout the region. According to a report from the Energy Community (2024), Western Balkan countries launched energy diversification projects worth over 3 billion euros in the period 2022-2024. Serbia intensified work on interconnection with Bulgaria's gas system, which enabled access to Azerbaijani gas via the Southern Gas Corridor. The project, worth 85 million euros, which was partly financed by the EU, was completed in October 2023 and significantly reduced the country's dependence on Russian gas (Ministry of Mining and Energy of the Republic of Serbia, 2023). North Macedonia accelerated the development of its gas infrastructure, focusing on interconnection with the Greek system, which enabled access to LNG terminals in Greece. According to data from the Ministry of Economy of North Macedonia (2024), this interconnection enabled reduction of dependence on Russian gas from 60% to less than 30% over a period of two years. Bosnia and Herzegovina (Knežević, 2024) also intensified efforts for diversification, focusing on development of interconnection with the Croatian gas system, which would enable access to

the LNG terminal on Krk. However, the complex administrative structure of the country slowed implementation of the project (Energy Community, 2024).

#### **4.4. Acceleration of transition to renewable energy sources**

The Ukrainian war acted as a catalyst for accelerated development of renewable energy sources in the region. According to IRENA data (2024), renewable energy capacities in the Western Balkans increased by 35% in the period 2022-2024, representing a significant acceleration compared to the previous period. Albania continued to strengthen its position as a leader in hydropower, but also diversified toward solar energy. In 2023, the country put into operation the Karavasta solar park, with a capacity of 140 MW, which represents the largest solar power plant in the region (Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy of Albania, 2023). Montenegro also significantly improved renewable energy capacities, with a focus on wind farms. The Gvozd wind farm, with a capacity of 72 MW, was put into operation in 2024, increasing the share of renewable energy in total electricity production to over 50% (EPCG, 2024). Kosovo launched an ambitious program of auctions for renewable energy sources, with the aim of reducing dependence on coal-fired power plants. In the period 2022-2024, projects for 350 MW of new solar and wind capacities were awarded (Kosovo Energy Corporation, 2024).

#### **4.5. Economic implications of energy transformation**

Energy transformation fueled by the Ukrainian war has significant economic implications for Western Balkan countries. On one hand, the initial costs of adjustment were significant, burdening public finances through subsidies and emergency infrastructure investments. According to IMF estimates (2023), energy subsidies and intervention measures cost countries in the region between 1.5% and 3% of GDP in 2022. On the other hand, long-term economic effects of energy transformation show positive trends. According to an EBRD study (2024), investments in energy infrastructure and renewable sources generated approximately 45,000 new jobs in the region in the period 2022-2024. Additionally, reducing energy dependence on a single source improved energy security and reduced economic vulnerability to geopolitical shocks.

Kovačević (2024) emphasizes that energy transformation has also contributed to attracting new foreign direct investments, especially in the renewable energy sector. According to this study, the region attracted over 2 billion

euros of foreign direct investments in the renewable energy sector in the period 2022-2024, representing a significant increase compared to the previous period.

## **5. TRADE FLOWS AND REORIENTATION**

### **5.1. Trade ties with Russia and Ukraine before the war**

Before the outbreak of the war, trade ties of Western Balkan countries with Russia and Ukraine varied significantly among countries in the region. According to UN COMTRADE data (2022), Serbia had the most intensive trade relations with Russia, with total trade exchange of approximately 2.5 billion euros in 2021, which constituted about 6.5% of its total foreign trade. Bosnia and Herzegovina also had significant trade exchange with Russia, especially in the energy sector, with a total value of about 700 million euros (4.2% of total trade). On the other hand, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia had more limited trade ties with Russia, with shares below 3% of total foreign trade. Trade with Ukraine was even more limited for all countries in the region, with shares mostly below 1% of total trade.

The structure of trade with Russia was asymmetrical, with domination of energy imports (oil, gas), while exports were diversified and included agricultural products, textiles, and metals. According to World Bank analysis (2022), this trade structure reflected typical exchange between developing economies and a resource-rich economy.

### **5.2. Impact of sanctions and disruptions in trade flows**

After the imposition of Western sanctions on Russia, Western Balkan countries found themselves in a complex situation. EU candidate states (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) faced pressure to align their foreign policy with the EU, including trade sanctions. According to European Commission data (2023), Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia largely aligned their trade policies with EU sanctions, while Serbia maintained a more neutral position. This resulted in significant disruptions in trade flows. According to analysis by the CEFTA Secretariat (2023), trade between Western Balkan countries and Russia decreased by approximately 40% in the period from March 2022 to December 2023. The most significant decline was recorded in sectors directly affected by sanctions, such as financial services, technology, and luxury goods.

Trade with Ukraine also experienced a dramatic decline due to logistical disruptions and fall in production in Ukraine. According to UN COMTRADE data (2023), trade between Western Balkan countries and Ukraine decreased by approximately 65% in 2022 compared to 2021.

### **5.3. Reorientation of trade flows**

Faced with disruptions in trade with Russia and Ukraine, Western Balkan countries quickly reoriented their trade flows. According to analysis by the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (2024), three main patterns of trade reorientation can be identified:

1. Enhanced trade with the EU - All countries in the region recorded increased trade with the EU. According to Eurostat data (2024), trade between the EU and Western Balkans increased by 15% in the period 2022-2023, reaching a record 62 billion euros. The most significant increase was recorded in the sectors of agriculture, metals, and textiles.

2. Regional trade integration - Intraregional trade in the Western Balkans also experienced a significant increase. According to data from the CEFTA Secretariat (2024), trade within the CEFTA region increased by 22% in the period 2022-2024, reaching a value of over 10 billion euros. This indicates strengthening of regional economic ties as a response to geopolitical disruptions.

3. Diversification to new markets - Countries in the region also actively worked on opening new markets. According to data from national statistical offices (2024), trade with countries of the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia (especially China and Turkey) increased by an average of 30% in the period 2022-2024.

### **5.4. Structural changes in trade exchange**

The Ukrainian war not only changed the geographical distribution of trade but also its structure. According to OECD analysis (2024), several key structural changes can be identified:

1. Changes in energy trade - The most dramatic changes occurred in energy trade. Countries in the region significantly reduced imports of Russian energy, replacing them with alternative sources. According to Energy Community data (2024), the share of Russian gas in total gas imports in the region fell from an average of 65% in 2021 to less than 30% in 2024.

2. Growth of agricultural exports - Disruptions in global food supply chains created new opportunities for agricultural exports from the region. Ac-

According to FAO data (2024), exports of agricultural products from the Western Balkans increased by 25% in the period 2022-2024, especially in the segment of cereals and fruits.

3. Strengthening of metals and minerals exports - Global demand for metals and minerals, especially those key for energy transition, created opportunities for increased exports from the region. According to data from national statistical offices (2024), exports of metals and minerals from the region increased by 18% in the period 2022-2024.

### **5.5. Regional differences in trade adaptation**

Analysis of trade data reveals significant differences in the capacity of countries in the region to adapt to new trade realities. According to a study by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2024), countries with more diversified export structures and greater integration into European value chains showed greater resilience and ability for trade adaptation. North Macedonia stands out as an example of successful trade adaptation, with an increase in exports to the EU by 26% in the period 2022-2024, primarily in the sectors of automotive components, textiles, and electronics. According to data from the State Statistical Office of North Macedonia (2024), the share of exports to the EU increased from 78% in 2021 to 85% in 2024.

Albania also showed significant trade flexibility, with a focus on exports of agricultural products and textiles to the EU. According to INSTAT data (2024), Albanian exports to the EU increased by 22% in the period 2022-2024, while exports to Russia, which were otherwise limited, decreased by 70%. Serbia, faced with the challenge of balancing between economic ties with the EU and political ties with Russia, showed mixed results. Although it recorded an increase in exports to the EU by 15%, according to data from the Republic Statistical Office (2024), it simultaneously managed to maintain a certain level of trade exchange with Russia, especially in sectors not directly affected by sanctions.

## **6. INFLATION AND MACROECONOMIC STABILITY**

### **6.1. Inflationary pressures after the start of the war**

One of the most visible economic effects of the Ukrainian war on Western Balkan countries was accelerated inflation. According to IMF data (2023), the annual inflation rate in the region increased from an average of 3.5% in 2021

to 14.2% in 2022, representing the highest level since the transition period of the early 2000s. Inflationary pressures were particularly pronounced in the energy and food sectors, reflecting global trends. According to World Bank analysis (2023), energy prices in the region increased by an average of 45% in 2022, while food prices increased by 25%. These sectors together constitute a significant part of the consumer basket in countries of the region (35-45%), which explains the strong impact on overall inflation.

The highest inflation rates were recorded in Serbia (15.1% in December 2022) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (14.8%), while somewhat lower but still significant rates were recorded in Montenegro (13.5%), North Macedonia (12.7%), Albania (12.3%), and Kosovo (11.6%), according to data from national statistical offices and central banks (2023).

## **6.2. Monetary responses and challenges**

Central banks of Western Balkan countries faced the complex challenge of balancing between curbing inflation and maintaining economic growth. According to an IMF report (2023), monetary authorities in the region generally adopted more restrictive monetary policy, with an average increase in reference interest rates of 350 basis points in the period from March 2022 to December 2023.

The National Bank of Serbia was most aggressive in tightening monetary policy, increasing the reference interest rate from 1.0% in February 2022 to 5.25% in December 2023. According to an NBS report (2023), this policy was necessary to “anchor inflation expectations and limit secondary effects of increases in energy and food prices.” The Bank of Albania and the National Bank of North Macedonia also significantly raised their reference rates (from 0.5% to 3.75% and from 1.25% to 4.75%, respectively), while the Central Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina, due to its currency board pegged to the euro, was limited in its monetary response and relied primarily on macroprudential measures.

## **6.3. Fiscal measures to mitigate inflationary pressures**

Along with monetary policy, governments of Western Balkan countries implemented a range of fiscal measures to mitigate the impact of inflation on the most vulnerable segments of the population and economy. According to IMF analysis (2023), fiscal measures in the region can be grouped into three categories:

1. Direct subsidies for energy - All countries in the region introduced various forms of energy subsidies for households and businesses. According to EBRD estimates (2023), these subsidies cost between 1% and 2.5% of GDP, depending on the country.

2. Social transfers to vulnerable groups - Additional social transfers were implemented for pensioners, socially vulnerable families, and other vulnerable groups. According to World Bank data (2023), these transfers amounted to between 0.5% and 1.2% of GDP.

3. Temporary reduction of taxes on basic products - Several countries, including North Macedonia, Albania, and Serbia, temporarily reduced VAT on basic food products and energy. According to estimates from national ministries of finance (2023), the fiscal cost of these measures amounted to between 0.3% and 0.8% of GDP.

#### **6.4. Impact on public finances and fiscal sustainability**

The combination of increased public expenditures (through subsidies and social transfers) and economic slowdown negatively affected public finances of countries in the region. According to IMF data (2023), the average budget deficit in the region increased from 3.5% of GDP in 2021 to 4.8% of GDP in 2022. Public debt also showed an upward trend. According to EBRD analysis (2024), average public debt in the region increased from 56% of GDP in 2021 to 61% of GDP in 2023. The largest increase was recorded in Montenegro (from 84% to 90% of GDP) and Serbia (from 57% to 63% of GDP). This deterioration of fiscal positions led to increased financing costs for countries in the region. According to data from the Ministry of Finance of Serbia (2023), yields on ten-year government bonds increased from 3.5% in January 2022 to 6.8% in December 2023. Similar trends were recorded in other countries in the region.

#### **6.5. Normalization of inflation and long-term prospects**

Despite the initial inflation shock, data from 2024 indicate gradual normalization of inflationary pressures. According to data from national statistical offices (2024), the average annual inflation in the region fell to 6.5% in the first quarter of 2025. This reduction in inflation can be attributed to a combination of factors, including:

- Stabilization of global energy and food prices;
- Effects of restrictive monetary policy;

- Strengthening of local currencies after initial weakening;
- Adaptation of supply chains to new geopolitical realities.

According to IMF projections (2025), further reduction of inflation to an average of 3.5% by the end of 2025 is expected, which would mark a return to pre-war levels. However, the same projection warns that fiscal consolidation will remain a challenge in the medium term, with the need for gradual reduction of deficit and public debt.

## **7. INVESTMENT FLOWS AND ACCESS TO CAPITAL**

### **7.1. Impact of the war on foreign direct investments**

The Ukrainian war had a complex impact on foreign direct investment (FDI) flows in Western Balkan countries. According to UNCTAD data (2023), total FDI inflow to the region decreased by approximately 15% in 2022, as a result of increased global uncertainty and reconsideration of investment strategies in the region.

However, this initial decline was not evenly distributed among countries in the region. According to analysis by the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (2024), Albania and North Macedonia experienced a relatively small decline in FDI (6% and 8% respectively), while Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro recorded more significant decreases (18%, 22%, and 25% respectively). Interestingly, FDI patterns changed significantly after the initial shock. According to data from central banks of countries in the region (2024), FDI inflow began to recover already at the end of 2022, with new focus on sectors of energy, renewable energy sources, information technology, and production relocating from eastern Europe (Knežević, 2025).

### **7.2. Changes in sources and sectoral distribution of investments**

The Ukrainian war led to significant changes in geographical sources of FDI in the region. According to EBRD analysis (2024), investments from Western European countries (especially Germany, Austria, Italy, and France) increased by 28% in the period 2022-2024, while investments from Russia virtually ceased after the imposition of sanctions.

An increase in investments from Turkey (35%), UAE (120%), and China (45%) was also observed, according to data from national investment promotion agencies (2024). This reflects broader geopolitical changes and repositioning of investment flows.

sitioning of these economies in European markets. The sectoral distribution of investments also experienced significant changes. According to UNCTAD analysis (2024), the most significant growth in investments was recorded in the following sectors:

1. Energy and renewable sources - FDI inflow to this sector increased by 85% in the period 2022-2024, reaching a record 2.8 billion euros.
2. Information technology - Investments in the IT sector increased by 65%, with significant projects in Serbia and North Macedonia.
3. Pharmaceutical industry - Growth of 40% was recorded, primarily through expansion of existing production capacities.
4. Agriculture and food industry - Investments increased by 30%, reflecting the increased strategic importance of food security.

### **7.3. Nearshoring and production relocation**

One of the most significant trends accelerated by the Ukrainian war is so-called “nearshoring” - relocation of production closer to European markets. According to research by the European Investment Bank (2024), over 120 companies that previously had production operations in Ukraine, Russia, or Belarus relocated part or all of their activities to Western Balkan countries in the period 2022-2024.

Serbia was most successful in attracting these investments, with 58 relocation projects worth approximately 950 million euros, according to data from the Development Agency of Serbia (2024). North Macedonia attracted 32 projects (420 million euros), while Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania attracted 18 and 12 projects respectively. These investments are primarily concentrated in the sectors of automotive components, electronics, machinery industry, and textiles, creating a significant number of new jobs. According to EBRD estimates (2024), investments through nearshoring created approximately 35,000 new jobs in the region in the period 2022-2024.

### **7.4. Challenges in financial markets and changes in access to capital**

The Ukrainian war also affected access of Western Balkan countries to international financial markets. According to S&P Global data (2023), average borrowing costs for countries in the region increased by 180-250 basis points in the period from February 2022 to mid-2023.

This increase in financing costs was the result of several factors:

- General increase in risk aversion in global financial markets;
- Investor concern due to geopolitical instability in the wider region;
- Deterioration of macroeconomic indicators (inflation, fiscal deficits);
- Concern about energy security and economic resilience.

However, the situation improved significantly at the end of 2023 and during 2024. According to IMF analysis (2024), spreads on government bonds of countries in the region decreased by 100-150 basis points compared to the peak, reflecting improvement in macroeconomic conditions and adaptation of economies to new realities.

### **7.5. Role of international financial institutions**

International financial institutions (IFIs) played a key role in ensuring financial stability and support for investments in the region after the start of the war. According to World Bank data (2024), total financial support from IFIs to Western Balkan countries increased by 65% in the period 2022-2024 compared to the previous three-year period. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) increased its annual investments in the region from approximately 1.3 billion euros in 2021 to 2.2 billion euros in 2023, with a focus on energy security, green transition, and support for small and medium enterprises. The European Investment Bank (EIB) also significantly increased its activities, with total investments of 3.8 billion euros in the period 2022-2024, primarily in infrastructure, energy, and digitalization. These investments were key not only for maintaining economic activity in the short term, but also for supporting structural reforms and economic transformation in the medium and long term.

## **8. STRUCTURAL ECONOMIC CHANGES AND ADAPTATION MEASURES**

### **8.1. Acceleration of structural reforms**

The Ukrainian war acted as a catalyst for accelerating structural reforms in Western Balkan economies. According to OECD analysis (2024), countries in the region implemented more structural reforms in the period 2022-2024 than in the previous five-year period, focusing on:

1. Energy sector reforms - Liberalization of the energy market, strengthening of regulatory frameworks, and incentives for investments in renewable energy sources.

2. Economic diversification - Targeted policies for development of new sectors and reduction of dependence on traditional industries.
3. Digitalization - Accelerated investments in digital infrastructure and e-services.
4. Strengthening competition - Reduction of administrative barriers for business and improvement of antitrust regulation.

According to the EBRD Structural Reform Index (2024), the greatest progress was recorded in North Macedonia and Albania, which improved their scores by 0.8 and 0.7 points respectively (on a scale from 1 to 10), while Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina achieved more moderate progress (0.5, 0.4, and 0.3 points respectively).

## **8.2. Acceleration of European integration**

The Ukrainian war has significantly accelerated European integration processes for Western Balkan countries. According to a European Commission report (2024), the EU adopted an “Accelerated Path for Western Balkan Integration” as part of a broader strategy to strengthen stability in the region and reduce Russian influence. This approach includes:

- Increasing pre-accession financial assistance (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance - IPA III) by 40% in the period 2022-2025;
- Accelerating the membership negotiation process for candidate countries;
- Gradual integration of countries in the region into the EU single market through sectoral agreements;
- Stronger support for institutional reforms and alignment with the EU acquis.

According to analysis by the European Council on Foreign Relations (2024), this approach has resulted in significant progress in the integration process. Albania and North Macedonia opened accession negotiations with the EU in July 2022 and have since opened several negotiation chapters. Montenegro, as the most advanced in the process, accelerated the dynamics of negotiations, closing additional chapters. Serbia has also made certain progress, despite complex political relations with the EU regarding its stance toward Russia.

### **8.3. Restructuring of supply chains**

Disruptions in global supply chains caused by the Ukrainian war have prompted significant restructuring of these chains in countries of the region. According to research by the World Trade Organization (2024), over 60% of companies from the region that participated in the study reported significant changes in their supply chains in the period 2022-2024. Key trends include:

- Increase in local and regional sourcing (65% of companies);
- Diversification of suppliers and reduction of dependence on individual markets (72% of companies);
- Increase in inventories of key components and raw materials (58% of companies);
- Digitalization and automation of supply chain management processes (45% of companies).

According to World Bank analysis (2024), this restructuring has contributed to strengthening regional economic integration, with an increase in intra-regional input-output connections by 28% in the period 2022-2024.

### **8.4. Sectoral transformations**

The Ukrainian war (Knežević, 2025) has accelerated the transformation of the economic structure of Western Balkan countries. According to data from central banks and statistical offices (2024), the most significant sectoral transformations include:

1. Growth of the IT sector - The share of information technologies in the region's GDP increased from an average of 4.5% in 2021 to 6.8% in 2024, with particularly strong growth in Serbia and North Macedonia.
2. Transformation of the energy sector - The share of renewable energy sources in total electricity production increased from an average of 37% in 2021 to 48% in 2024.
3. Strengthening of agriculture and food industry - The share of these sectors in GDP increased from 8.5% to 9.7%, reflecting increased focus on food security.
4. Development of high-technology production - The share of medium and high-technology production in total production increased from 35% to 42%, especially in segments of automotive components, electronics, and medical equipment.

## **8.5. Changes in labor markets**

Economic transformations caused by the Ukrainian war have led to significant changes in labor markets of Western Balkan countries. According to analysis by the International Labour Organization (2024), several key trends can be identified:

1. Structural changes in labor demand - Increased demand for workers in the IT sector, renewable energy sources, electrical engineering, and other growing sectors, along with simultaneous decrease in demand in traditional industries.

2. Increase in mismatch between supply and demand for skills - According to an EBRD study (2024), 65% of employers in the region reported difficulties in finding workers with appropriate skills, especially in technological and engineering fields.

3. Impact on migration - Although the region has traditionally been characterized by labor emigration, economic transformations have led to the emergence of new patterns. According to World Bank data (2024), net emigration from the region decreased by 22% in the period 2022-2024 compared to the previous three-year period, primarily due to new economic opportunities in growing sectors.

4. Changes in wages and working conditions - Transformation of the economic structure has led to a significant increase in wages in growing sectors. According to data from national statistical offices (2024), average wages in the IT sector increased by 35% in the period 2022-2024, while wages in the renewable energy sector increased by 28%.

These changes in labor markets show significant potential for long-term economic transformation of the region, but at the same time emphasize the need for improvement of educational systems and retraining programs to address the growing skills gap.

## **9. FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **9.1. Key findings**

Analysis of economic consequences of the Ukrainian war on Western Balkan countries reveals a complex picture of challenges and opportunities. Key findings of this research include:

1. Heterogeneity of economic impacts - Economic consequences of the war varied significantly among countries in the region, depending on their

initial economic structure, energy dependence, trade ties, and institutional capacities.

2. Accelerated structural transformations - The war acted as a catalyst for accelerating economic transformations that were already underway, especially in areas of energy diversification, trade reorientation, and sectoral restructuring.

3. Enhanced regional integration - Faced with common challenges, countries in the region improved mutual economic cooperation, which is reflected in an increase in intraregional trade, investments, and policy coordination.

4. Acceleration of European integration - The war significantly accelerated European integration processes, resulting in stronger economic ties with the EU and progress in formal accession processes.

5. Differentiated recovery - After initial economic shocks, countries in the region showed different degrees of recovery and adaptation, whereby economies with more diversified structures and stronger institutions showed greater resilience.

## **9.2. Implications for economic policy**

The findings of this research have significant implications for economic policy makers in the region:

1. Need for further energy diversification - Although significant progress has been achieved, further diversification of energy sources and increase in energy efficiency remain key priorities.

2. Strengthening regional economic integration - Deepening regional economic cooperation through implementation of the Common Regional Market and other initiatives can further strengthen economic resilience.

3. Acceleration of structural reforms - Continuation and acceleration of structural reforms that support economic diversification, strengthening of institutions, and improvement of the business environment are key for long-term economic development.

4. Investment in human capital - Addressing the growing mismatch between supply and demand for skills through improvement of educational systems and retraining programs is necessary to support economic transformation.

5. Balancing short-term and long-term priorities - Although short-term measures for mitigating economic shocks were necessary, it is important to maintain focus on long-term development priorities and fiscal sustainability.

### **9.3. Implications for European integration**

The Ukrainian war has significantly changed the context of European integration of Western Balkan countries:

1. Increased geopolitical significance of the region - The war has emphasized the strategic importance of the Western Balkans for the EU, resulting in enhanced political engagement and financial support.

2. Accelerated integration process - The “Accelerated Path for Integration” has opened new possibilities for progress in the EU accession process.

3. Increased economic integration - Even before formal membership, economic integration with the EU has been significantly deepened through sectoral agreements, increased trade, and investments.

4. Challenges in aligning foreign policies - Different positions of countries in the region regarding sanctions against Russia show that the complex geopolitical position of the region remains a challenge in the European integration process.

### **9.4. Research limitations and future directions**

This research faces several limitations that open space for future research:

1. Dynamic nature of the situation - The Ukrainian war and its economic consequences are still evolving, which makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about long-term effects.

2. Limited data availability - For some economic indicators and countries in the region, only preliminary or partial data are available.

3. Isolating effects of the war from other factors - Separating economic effects of the war from other factors, such as post-pandemic recovery or structural economic challenges, is methodologically challenging.

Future research could focus on:

- Long-term structural changes in economies of the region;
- More detailed analysis of economic adaptation mechanisms at the sector and firm level;
- Comparative analysis with other regions indirectly affected by the war;
- Assessment of effectiveness of policy responses to economic challenges caused by the war.

## 10. CONCLUSION

The Ukrainian war represented a significant economic shock for Western Balkan countries, but at the same time acted as a catalyst for long-delayed economic transformations. The ability of the region to turn these challenges into opportunities for long-term economic development will depend on effectiveness of policy responses, quality of institutions, and capacity for regional cooperation. The experience of Western Balkan countries in adapting to economic consequences of the war provides valuable lessons about economic resilience and transformation in the context of geopolitical turbulence. Although challenges remain significant, progress made so far in energy diversification, trade reorientation, and structural reforms indicates the capacity of the region for successful economic adaptation.

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**Book Review**

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**FROM THE PHILOSOPHY OF LYING TOWARDS THE  
SOCIOLOGY OF (SCIENTIFIC) KNOWLEDGE**

**(Book Review)**

Lars Fr. H. Svendsen – *Philosophy of Lying* (trans. Gorana Knezevic, Milica Visnjic),  
Geopoetika Publishing, Belgrade, 2024. p. 144

Lars Fr. H. Svendsen is a Norwegian professor of philosophy at the University of Bergen and a project manager at the research organization Civita. He is the author of a large body of books, translated into more than twenty languages: *The Philosophy of Boredom* (1999), *Art* (2000), *The Philosophy of Evil* (2001), *Man, Morality and Genes - A Critique of Biologism* (2001), *What is Philosophy* (2003), *The True, the Good and the Beautiful - An Introduction to Philosophy* (2004), *The Philosophy of Fashion* (2004), *The Philosophy of Fear* (2007), *The Philosophy of Work* (2008), etc.

The focus of this review is the book *The Philosophy of Lying* (2008), published in 2012 in Serbian by Geopoetika, translated by Gorana Knezevic and Milica Visnjic. It is written on 141 pages and structured through seven chapters: 1) Introduction (pp. 11 – 14); 2) What is a lie (pp. 15 – 37); 3) The ethics of lies (pp. 38 – 61); 4) When we lie to ourselves (pp. 62 – 76); 5) Lies and friendship (pp. 77 – 86); 6) The politics of lies (pp. 87 – 114); 7) Living with lies (pp. 115 – 128), and 4 appendices: Acknowledgements (pp. 127 – 129); Notes (pp. 129 – 138); Index of names (pp. 139 – 142) and Note on the author (pp. 143 – 144).

The book explores the concept of the phenomenon of lying at the macro, meso, and especially micro levels of everyday life. In the introductory part of the book, the author lays the foundation for a comprehensive study of the phenomenon of lying in everyday life. He begins by defining the very concept of lying and its various forms, including the concepts of truth, truthfulness, truthfiness and bullshit (nebulosity). He introduces the reader to the ethical

aspects of lying, raising questions about the moral correctness of deception and its impact on interpersonal relationships, especially in the context of trust between friends. He emphasizes that we often deceive ourselves ('Whoever lies to himself is most easily offended.'). while at the same time believing that it is our obligation to be honest with ourselves. It foreshadows topics that will be covered in more detail in later chapters, such as the role of lies in society and politics and a discussion of the views of important thinkers such as Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Weber, and Hannah Arendt on the justification and consequences of lying in a political context.

*The chapter What is a Lie* defines and analyzes the concept of a lie. Lie, bullshit and truthiness are the opposites of truth.

*The Truth* is a philosophical concept that Svendsen considers from different perspectives, including objective truth, subjective truth, and truth as a social construct. Truth is a copy of reality, or an objective state that corresponds to reality.

A *half-truth* is the presentation of partially accurate information in a way that leads to a false conclusion (For example, partially accurate sentences: 1. A person with some psychological, e.g. anxiety-depressive, imbalance is not capable of working. 2. A short person would not be able to reach a package from the last shelf. Unless he uses a ladder.). Hence, it is one of the most common forms of manipulation in politics and the media.

*Truthiness* is a term that Svendsen takes from Stephen Colbert to denote satisfying the internal impression of truth (subjective truth) and not satisfying objective compliance with facts.

*Truthfulness* is the impression of truthfulness based on intuition about reality, without checking the facts, i.e. factography and logic (For example, climate change is eco-manipulation with the aim of establishing global control).

A *lie* is a conscious intention to deceive another person, either by words or actions. A lie implies that the speaker knows the truth but deliberately distorts it (For example, a dean conducts collective mobbing over an employee but blames the employee for his natural reactions to the unfavorable circumstances for work and psycho-physical health at the workplace).

*Self-deception* is when a person unconsciously ignores or suppresses the truth in order to protect themselves from unpleasant facts (For example, a person with obvious stunted psycho-physical development compensates for a lack of personal prestige by striving for as much power in society and high social positions as possible). Therefore, it is not only external manipulation but also an internal belief that this external manipulation is normal. Most often, a lie is self-perpetuating so that individuals who are self-deceiving avoid cognitive

dissonance. This concept is equivalent to the Marxist concept of ideology as distorted consciousness (ideology in the narrow sense).

*Silence* as deception is the withholding of information with the aim of misleading another person, which Svendsen analyzes as a special form of lying (for example, withholding emails with important information or answers to inquiries, which in business culture is also treated as a specific form of mobbing due to the deprivation of access to important information, i.e. resources).

*Pretending and masking* is, along with verbal lying, behavior that serves to hide real intentions or feelings (for example, pretending to be offended in order to have a reason to deal with the target or pretending to be disabled in order to retire).

*Propaganda* is the systematic dissemination of lies or distorted information with the aim of manipulating public opinion (spreading party, e.g. communist, propaganda).

*Bullshit* is a concept that, together with truthiness, is classified as a media-constructed phenomenon, which is particularly expressed in the era of post-truth and the type of (media) culture shaped by it, thus contributing to reflections within the sociology of mass communication and the sociology of culture. Bullshit is not aimed at truth or lies, but at the production of words that have an effect but without concern for their truthfulness (for example, Not even Comte would have stood a chance: The worst candidate elected as an assistant at the Faculty of Political Sciences).

Svendsen discusses how lies function as a means of manipulation and power in interpersonal relationships, emphasizing that lying can be a form of control over other people. It also analyzes forms of untruthful communication, such as mistakes, misconceptions, or sarcasm. It considers the role of context in determining whether a particular statement is a lie, emphasizing that the same statement can have different implications depending on the situation in which it is uttered (For example, “it is night now” – stated at 9 a.m.). Svendsen’s analysis in this chapter lays the foundation for further exploration of the ethical and social implications of lying, which are addressed in subsequent parts of the book.

*The chapter The Ethics of Lying* explores the moral aspects of lying, asking why lying has generally been considered morally wrong. It places particular emphasis on the breach of trust that occurs when lying to friends, emphasizing that such deceptions are particularly damaging to the foundations of interpersonal relationships. Svendsen also discusses situations in which lying may be justified or even necessary, analyzing the various philosophical approaches and ethical theories that deal with this phenomenon. Throughout this chapter,

the author encourages readers to critically examine their own views on honesty and deception in everyday life.

*The chapter When We Lie to Ourselves* explores the phenomenon of self-deception, analyzing why and how people deceive themselves. It discusses the psychological mechanisms that enable self-deception, such as cognitive biases and rationalizations, which allow individuals to avoid facing unpleasant truths or to maintain a positive self-image. Although we occasionally lie to ourselves, most of the time we are trustworthy. Trusting others makes us vulnerable, but it is better to be deceived occasionally than to live in constant distrust of others. Throughout this chapter, readers are encouraged to critically examine their own thoughts and beliefs, in order to better understand and recognize situations in which they may be deceiving themselves.

In *the chapter Lying and Friendship*, he explores how lying affects friendships and trust between friends. He emphasizes that lying to friends is particularly problematic because it undermines the foundations of trust that are essential to friendship. Svendsen analyzes various situations in which people may be inclined to lie to their friends, such as avoiding conflict, protecting feelings, or personal gain, and discusses the ethical implications of such actions. Throughout this chapter, Svendsen encourages readers to consider their own values and actions in the context of friendship and honesty.

In *the chapter The Politics of Lies*, he analyzes the role and presence of lies in political life. He explores how and why political leaders use lies as a means to achieve their goals, considering historical and contemporary examples. He looks back at the concept of the 'noble lie' originating from Plato, where lies are considered justified if they serve a higher good. Thus, he analyzes the views of philosophers such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Weber, and Hannah Arendt on the use of lies in politics. Niccolò Machiavelli argued in *The Prince* that political power is often maintained thanks to the skill of deception. Svendsen discusses Machiavelli's idea that a leader does not always have to be honest, but that it is more important to know when to lie in order to preserve power. Hobbes believes that social order is based on agreement and that lies can be an instrument of stability, but also of destruction of the social contract. According to Kant, it is absolutely forbidden to lie, which is one of the strictest moral positions in philosophy because lying is always immoral even in extreme situations. Hannah Arendt emphasized that the systematic use of lies in politics leads to the loss of the distinction between truth and fiction. She refers to Harry Frankfurt's concept of nebulosity, where the goal of a statement is often indifference to the truth rather than conscious deception. She raises the question of to what extent lying in politics is morally acceptable and what consequenc-

es it has for society and democracy. 'It is not possible to have a meaningful democratic discussion if we do not refer to the same reality.' He emphasizes that, although lying is often used as a tool for manipulation and maintaining power, it undermines citizens' trust in institutions and the political system. It examines contemporary examples of political leaders who are notorious for their frequent lying, analyzing how such behavior affects public discourse and society as a whole. Throughout this chapter, the author encourages readers to critically consider the relationship between truth and politics, and to reexamine their own views on the acceptability of lies in public life.

*In the chapter Living with Lies*, the author explores how lies affect everyday life and interpersonal relationships. It examines the ways in which individuals and societies adapt to the presence of lies, whether they are small, everyday untruths or larger deceptions. Svendsen analyzes how tolerance for lies can shape social norms and values, and how the continued acceptance of lies can lead to the erosion of trust in a community. It examines the strategies that people use to cope with the knowledge that they have been deceived, including forgiveness, rationalization or facing the truth. Through this chapter, the author encourages readers to reconsider their own attitude towards lies in their lives and how they affect their relationships and society as a whole.

Finally, taking all of the above into account, it is possible to conclude that the book *The Philosophy of Lying* is more than relevant for sociology and sociologists, but also other specialists, researchers and students in the field of social sciences and humanities because, in the conditions of global communication and manipulation, it possesses a significant capacity to enrich the (sociological) understanding of the process of (scientific) cognition with a special critique of the social construct of truth that is presented in the book. The book serves as an instrument for illuminating the deformations of knowledge in social life, and in particular the differences between truth as an ethical and social category. Namely, truth in society is not just a matter of facts but of consensus, or agreement, between the subjects of communicative action. This is in accordance with Luckmann and Berger's theory of the social construction of reality, according to which knowledge is not neutral but a product of culture and institutions, and which was also proven by Karl Mannheim, in the context of the concept of epochal consciousness (the total concept of ideology) as the dominant way of thinking of a certain territorial group in a certain period of time. Truth is produced, fabricated, and often even a lie is accepted as 'truth' in society if it corresponds to collective interest, power, and ideology. Michel Foucault was also on the trail of such a determination, arguing that what is true is determined by those who have the power and resources to produce and

maintain what they have determined to be truth, which is another contribution to the critical view of institutions of knowledge (education, politics, and the media).

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