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Articles



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The role of Serbian Orthodox Church in preserving national identity during the times of contemporary political challenges

Abstract: Contemporary political events have affected both Serbia and the Serbian nation. In fact, just as in the past, especially during the 20th century, the Serbian nation was in the epicentre of global events and on the target of numerous geopolitical factors. For example, it is enough just to recall the events on the eve of World War 1 or the attack of the NATO alliance on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that occurred because of a desire to seize Kosovo and Metohija. On the other hand, in all these ordeals we have experienced and are still experiencing as a nation, the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) presents a unifying element of its own which, alongside many other tasks, also has the task to protect the national identity of Serbian people. For that reason, the SOC is often the target of individuals and organizations that more or less openly strive towards the political as well as religious destabilization of Serbian society, so that the principles of Christianity and morality could be marginalized and substituted with some other, different values.

Keywords: Christianity, Church, conciliarity, national identity

The geopolitical trials the Serbian nation is going through are the consequence of the fact that “the Serbian lands and Serbia were and have remained located in the space of the contact zone of conflicts and opposition of two Christian cultural, spiritual, as well as political tradition” (Despotović, 2019, p. 50). Chronologically speaking, this situation from the times of the early existence of the Serbian state

was further complicated during the Ottoman rule and then, with the passage of time, complications and various challenges were only multiplied in the periods of migration, of religious-political blindness caused by anti-theistic ideas... The Serbian nation as the one that mostly accepted the saving gospel word, the word about the resurrected Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, during its history was most

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often aware of the “background” of the attacks which were, more or less intensely, launched against it for the purpose of its destruction. By accepting crucified Christ, the Serbian nation accepted to take the road of persecution, martyrdom and all kinds of suffering. In fact, within One, Holy, Conciliary and Apostolic Church, the commandments of Christ have been and are constantly being preserved, his instructions to his disciples regarding how and in what way to re-establish the communion with God that our first parents had before the fall. At the same time, through necessary succession, Christ showed the apostles and the apostles showed to the priests of the Church the temptations to be experienced by those who believe in him, those who take the road of the feats with a clearly emphasized eschatological dimension. “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you” (John 15: 18–19). Therefore, the Serbian nation, just as other nations that accepted Orthodox Christianity, were duly encouraged by priests as their spiritual shepherds to stay on the true and only road of salvation. At the same time, the Serbian nation was clearly and unambiguously warned by its true shepherds about the challenges and traps to be encountered. For example, on the Day of Holy Emperor Constantin and Empress Jelena on 8th (i.e., 21st) May 1220/1221^[2]

(Slijepčević, 1991; Velimirović, 2026; Saint Sava, 2024; Bojović, Stošić, 2024), in “Sermon on the true faith” Serbian Saint Sava^[3] said very much regarding the persistence in virtuous Christian life.

First of all, this paternal sermon of the true spiritual shepherd such as Serbian Saint Sava invited and invites all of us not to give up in the feat of going on Christ’s Road. At the same time, “Sermon on the true faith” can also be seen as the beginning of what is called Saint Sava’s Christianity nowadays, particularly concerning the question: What is the content of Saint Sava’s Christianity and what has made it so important to the entire Serbian nation for centuries? In geopolitical terms, Saint Sava’s Christianity is the attitude about the priorities of Serbian national interests or, as stated by Professor Ljubiša Despotović, PhD, Saint Sava’s Christianity is “the main feature of Baptized Serbia... the healing spiritual blessing which has been flowing towards our salvation, even when we did not deserve it” (Despotović, 2019, p. 53). However, when we just mention Saint Sava’s Christianity, what should be taken into consideration is the unity of the church and the people. Namely, we should recall that both in the past and today, many decisions relevant for the future of the Serbian people were made at ecclesiastical and national assemblies. For example, the above-mentioned “Sermon on the true faith” was presented at the ecclesiastical and national assembly in the Monastery of Žiča. Emperor Stefan the

[2] In different historiographic works written about “Sermon on the true faith”, but also in general about details regarding Saint Sava’s life and work, one can often find differences about the exact date of the national assembly in the Monastery of Žiča. That is the reason why both 1220 and 1221 are given here as the years of this famous sermon.

[3] Nowadays, there is extensive literature about his topic in the Serbian language and, owing to modern electronic resources, the text of “Sermon on the true faith” is available on many websites.

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Mosaic icon of the Virgin Hodegetria (12th century): The oldest surviving icon in the Hilandar Treasury, created by masters from Thessaloniki. According to tradition and the Life of Saint Simeon, Stefan Nemanja (Saint Simeon the Myrrh-streaming) fell asleep in front of this icon.

On display at the exhibition dedicated to Saint Sava at the SASA Gallery, May 2026

Photo: Serbian Orthodox Church

Fourth Dušan Nemanjić was crowned in Skopje on Estar, 16th April. The First Serbian Uprising began on the Day of the Meeting of the Lord in Orašac in 1804. Miloš Obrenović accepted to be the leader of the Second Serbian Uprising on Palm Sunday, 11th (or 23rd) April 1815, at the council in Takovo. It was the Annunciation Day on 2nd April 1861 when one of many ecclesiastical and national assemblies were held in Sremski Karlovci, which would largely determine the political activities of the Serbs in the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. Why is this particular “detail” so important? Because of the fact that gatherings of the Serbian people, i.e., their most important representatives at that historical moment, in the most important church centres, on great Orthodox Christian red-letter days, and that an active role at those gatherings was played by priests as well as by the believing people, i.e., the Church.

The words of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed state that the Church is One, Holy, Conciliar and Apostolic. Conciliarity as a characteristic of the Church points to a community. Conciliarity of the Church points to the Eucharist – the liturgical community, but at the same time to the gathering of the people, to their communion both in the temple and around it. It is in this very element that the huge importance of priesthood emerges, in our case – the priesthood of the SOC. This priesthood helped and is helping primarily the functioning of the worship

segment of church life. At the same time, the priesthood helps in what today we define as preserving national identity.^[4] Today, particularly after the period spent in the socialist system, in which religion was marginalized, this segment of the SOC functioning is of great importance. Its importance is multi-layered because for several decades our society has been in a rather challenging environment. In fact, everything that occurred on the political stage after the Cold War, all the challenges we encountered and are still encountering in a more or less open way, point to the process of marginalization and even the process of eradication of national identity.^[5] Furthermore, certain political factors see the SOC exactly as an “organization” that is most responsible for the preservation, as well as for the strengthening of national identity. Even in its name – the Serbian Orthodox Church – it has been recognized that “Serbdom was in the first place, followed by Orthodox Christianity and only at the end, if any room was left, came Christianity (as a faith common with other non-Orthodox churches) (Tomanić, 2001, p. 46). It is unnecessary even to mention that, in the opinion of some political factors, the SOC is the bearer and propagator of „mythology” and „mythomania”, i.e., „dangerous” elements that prevent the rapprochement of Serbian society to „contemporary trends”. The particular fear from the SOC when it comes to its perseverance in preserving national identity can

[4] Today, there is quite extensive literature about the question of national identity in the Serbian language. Of course, attitudes regarding this question vary depending on the authors’ political views. The resulting situation is that there are works minimizing its importance and even claiming that the existence of national identity is not necessary. On the other hand, there are works by the authors who recognize national identity as a necessity and a special bastion in front of the challenges of globalism and neoliberalism.

[5] For the topic of national identity of Serbs seen from different perspectives, see: Bodin, 2024, pp. 1046–1072; Weft of Serbian identity, 2016; Radenović, 2006, pp. 221–237; Radaković, 2010, pp. 43–61...

be recognized primarily in the fact that the SOC showed its strength exactly in the Serbian diaspora in terms of preserving traditional values. “It can be rightfully claimed that, if it had not been for the Church, it would be difficult to imagine the existence of the Serbs as a recognized and acknowledge organic community in the diaspora” (Đorđević, 2012, pp. 24–25). To many, the SOC is still someone that has “strongly contributed to the awakening of ethno-nationalism and the great-state mood of the broadest strata of the people, manipulating their religious and national feelings for political purposes” (Popović Obradović, 22nd February 2009). In the present, as well as in the future, these and such beliefs continuously lead to the beginning of minor or major ideological offensives aimed at creating resentment in the broadest society strata towards “the institution” that enjoys huge trust among the people.^[6] The reason for such attacks is exactly the persistence of the SOC in the preservation of moral values and, thus, of Serbian national identity both in an individual and in society on the whole. National identity is seen by some researchers as “super glue” which, according to them, serves for political purposes (Čolović, 2014, pp. 163–166). Contrary to this opinion and similar ones, national identity in the present, as well as in the future, is – let us use medical terminology – a specific immune system. This *immunitatis* really protects a living organism both from the attacks of foreign/external microorganisms and their toxins, and from its own/internal altered and worn-out cells.

If a healthy immune system is necessary for the man’s body health, then a healthy national identity with all its constituent elements is necessary exactly for the purpose of preserving the proper functioning of the individual, family and entire society. In that respect, Sanja Višnjić has an interesting attitude: “National identity is the key supposition of the functioning of society and the state; a man with an identity is an important subject of society, while society with an identity is a stable foundation of individual, societal and national security” (Višnjić, 2019, p. 259).

From a political perspective, national identity also contains a religious component. In fact, ethno-religious identity when we speak about the territory of the Balkan Peninsula, makes affiliation to one of “Abraham’s religions”, made equal to national affiliation. From the standpoint of Orthodox theology, this is not of crucial relevance when speaking about the Church as a community of believing people. This was most beautifully explained by Apostle Paul: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Epistle to the Galatians 3:28). This conciliarity (community) emphasized by Apostle Paul was written about in the following manner by Saint Justin of Čelije: „According to the Orthodox understanding, conciliarity is not a topographic, geographical concept but an internal, substantial, psychological one. True conciliarity is ideally realized in the Holy Trinity. Whoever truly, who evangelically confesses the Holy Trinity, is truly

[6] Public surveys in Serbia as well as in the countries such as Montenegro or Bosnia and Herzegovina offer the opportunity of gaining an insight into the trust in the institutions expressed in percentages. Although it is wrong to classify the SOC among “institutions”, it can still be seen that citizens, particularly young ones, still show a high percentage of trust in the Church. See: Maksimović, 2019, pp. 85–104; Kljajić (25th May 2024).

conciliar, apostolic conciliar, saintly conciliar.” (Popović, 1986, p. 82). It can be openly said that Christian faith exceeds the frameworks of the origin for the sake of a more significant, in fact essential element for every believing person – the eschatological a dimension of the Church. Man’s longing for the beyond, the longing to satisfy his metaphysical hunger, is actually the individual’s desire to spend his earthly life in such a way that after the separation of the soul from the body of Christ, he does not hear the following: “Truly I tell you, I do not know you” (Matthew 25:12). To put it simply, the longing of every believing man is exactly the realization of the community with God, the community that our first parents, Adam and Eve, had before falling to sin. On the other hand, when speaking about local churches, why do we encounter words such as Serbian, Russian, Romanian, Greek, Cyprian etc.? As a living organism, the Church has spread for centuries, is currently spreading and will spread. Christian faith was and is accepted by individuals from different nations of the world. To overcome the undesired situations of a political, administrative and any other type that actually undermine conciliarity of the Church, as was the example of the long-lasting process of the separation of the Roman patriarchate from the community with Jerusalem, Constantinople, Alexandrian and Antiochian patriarchates, the creation began of autocephalous churches as local, autonomous and independent in their internal life, and which are at the same time in full dogmatic, canonical and liturgy unity with other

local Orthodox churches.^[7] However, when, particularly during the 20th century, the national question became politicized, the national determinant, such as “Serbian” before “Orthodox Church” became a specific stumbling stone to many in the relations with the nations with a different religion. The Balkan Peninsula became and still is widely known for it not only in terms of inter-church relations, but also in terms of political ones. The attempt to remove the term “Serbian” more or less openly, or to marginalize as well as to physically eradicate it from everyday life resulted in the creation of “state” structures such as the Croatian Orthodox Church, the Yugoslav Orthodox Church or the Constantinople Orthodox Church. In fact, each of these para-synagogues also had and still has its role allotted by certain political elites, but always and for ever with a single specific aim – to destroy the SOC and, through it, to degrade and destroy Serbian national identity.

Although it seems to be a “problem”, the existence of autocephalous Orthodox churches with the name of the nation/the state – the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Greek Orthodox Church etc. – should not actually offend anyone’s national feelings in any respect, having in mind, first of all, that all local churches are within the community. This is, among other things, confirmed by the fact of the mutual mention of every church individually in the service of the Holy Liturgy. In other words, the Church, administratively speaking, consists of the local churches within the so-called Diptych.^[8] The church that is not within

[7] For more details about it, see: Vujović, Mirović, Čelić, 2020.

[8] For more details, see: Tsypin, V. (5th July 2012), *Diptych*.

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President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić and Serbian Patriarch Porfirije at the reception of the Belt of the Most Holy Theotokos at Nikola Tesla Airport in Belgrade, May 20, 2026

Photo: Dimitrije Gol

this community is actually not a constituent part of One, Holy, Conciliary and Apostolic Church. The church that is not within that community, although it seems to have the attributes and manifestations of the Church (worship, places of worship, priesthood...), is actually not the Church but, in the vocabulary of Orthodox ecclesiastical-canonical law, a classic para-synagogue. Such communities, as it

is unfortunately well-known to us, particularly due to the problems they have created in the past few years, are a huge stumbling block and a temptation for the believing people. At the same time, the fact that autocephalous Orthodox churches do not accept the newly-created para-synagogues is a clear and unambiguous indicator that, despite political attempts, the Church as a community simply does

not want to accept under its auspices those pseudo-Orthodox communities that do not have the Holy Spirit in them. To put it simply, the immune system of the Church does not allow any viruses penetrating into its healthy and functional body because they would, sooner or later, harm it in a certain way.

A similar challenge to the believing people is the attack on the SOC because of its position towards national identity. In fact, the above-mentioned attacks outside the daily political events have no meaning whatsoever. Nevertheless, taking into account the situation arising in societies formed after the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, these attacks definitely become a certain kind of discomfort that often leads towards confrontation. Historically speaking, ever since World War 2 the SOC has posed a problem to those who aimed, more or less openly, was to destroy the Serbian people. It is enough to recall the position and suffering of the SOC in the Ushashi Independent State of Croatia, or the position and suffering of the SOC in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia/the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The changes experienced by Serbian society is going through in the past decades, particularly those in terms of de-secularization, which led to the greater presence of the Church in public life and society on the whole, were not welcomed with good intentions by all. To those whose aim is to change the value system and to minimize the influence of Orthodox faith on the system of social values, the SOC definitely poses a

problem. In fact, to them, the SOC is an opponent that should be fought against everywhere and in every place. For example, let us mention the recent events on the occasion of the arrival of one of the greatest Christian holy objects in Serbia – the Belt of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As a matter of fact, the arrival of a large number of believers who visited Saint Sava Cathedral in Belgrade out of fully personal religious feelings, to pray and venerate this holy object, who gathered and made a large community of persons connected by the prayerful reverence for the Blessed Virgin Mary, was the occasion for improper attacks on the SOC.^[9] On the other hand, did any of those who criticized more than a million people coming to Belgrade for solely religious reasons (Over 1,100,000 believers venerated the Holy Belt of the Blessed Virgin Mary..., 6th June 2026; Over 1.1 million believers venerated the Holy Belt of the Blessed Virgin Mary..., 6th June 2026) ever think about hurting personal feelings of individuals, both religious and national ones? Past experiences suggest that this was certainly not a coincidence, recklessness, or anything like that. Furthermore, it is also possible to speak about a carefully devised and conducted campaign with a specific aim – to attack the national identity of the Serbian man. The fact that the Ombudsman had to react to this unpleasant phenomenon also speaks volumes about the massive scale of this problem. (Pašalić, 2026). How widespread this phenomenon was is also proved by the fact that the priesthood found itself in an odd situation of having to “justify” the gesture of bringing this great Christian holy

[9] In electronic media today it is really easy to find some of the numerous attacks orchestrated by individuals, as well as some organizations, against the SOC and the government of the Republic of Serbia.

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Belt of the Most Holy Theotokos, Belgrade, May 20, 2026

Photo: Dimitrije Gol

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object to the capital of Serbia and to give certain reasons for the spontaneous gathering/assembly of a huge number of people. Exactly this fact indirectly shows that Serbian society, despite the years-long process of de-secularization, still shows some weaknesses deriving not only from the open antitheism of individuals, but also from insufficient knowledge, i.e., from insufficient familiarity with some basic postulates of the functioning of the Church and its significance to the entire Serbian people. To understand it better, we will deal with only one, in

our opinion, interesting detail that is almost paid no attention whatsoever.

As already mentioned, conciliarity and gathering are an inevitable element of the Church and its life/existence within a society/community. In our Serbian nation, conciliarity or gathering has always been associated with church holidays, people gathering around churches, worship and general communion. In the past, but not that long ago, pocket church calendars published by the SOC so that the believing people could know the name of the saint celebrated in prayers

on that particular day, also contained a list with the red-letter days celebrated as holidays in Serbia by local churches. Unfortunately, because of the influence of the “spirit of time”, i.e., the process of separating the ordinary man from the Holy Church, red-letter gatherings are more and more frequently called “fairs” or “fetes” in our language.^[10] This term has absolutely nothing in common with the tradition of the Serbs gathering around their Orthodox place of worship, let alone the Orthodox Christian practice of communion and conciliarity. On the other hand, the older people remember that the above-mentioned pocket calendars of the SOC used a special term – “panađur”. And, as it would be, as a rule, said by the experts dealing with the Serbian language history, this term used to denote exactly the people gathering around a church on important holidays, which implied both the communion of the believing people in the Holy Liturgy, and the communion that continued after the worship.

The term *πανηγυρικός*, from which the Serbian form “panađur” derives, also denoted the opportunity for the priests and political leaders to send public and general national messages relevant for the future of the community. Starting from early Christianity to recent times, as proved by the practice of the usage of this term among Serbs and its presence in the communication of the SOC priests with the believing people, the central thread of the word denoted by it is the liturgical communion and decision-making about the matters either of general social importance or relevant for the individual and the family. When we compare the meaning of the terms “fair/fete” and “panađur”, we can see that changes occurring only

in reference to the language. In fact, the acceptance of the term “fair/fete” has substantially degraded the meaning of church conciliarity at the parochial level, for example. To a more careful observer of such social movements, it becomes clear that there has been a degradation of the importance of Sokolowski the SOC in this specific event because, whether we want to admit it or not, a “fair/fete” is definitely not the place where priests have the opportunity to do their task of educating and strengthening the gathered believing people in faith. In fact, a “fair/fete” with its manifestations is often shocking to people. On the other hand, a gathering that, in addition to the worship element, also has concrete events through which the people become acquainted with their tradition (performances of folklore troupes, cultural and artistic programs etc.), but also with the current social events that will on a smaller or larger scale leave their trace in the forthcoming period (of great use here are lectures about useful topics delivered by priests and experts in different fields), confirms the fact that the SOC has a very specific role in the process of preserving and strengthening religion and religious feelings, and thus, of national identity as well. Therefore, for starters, it might not be a bad idea to reintroduce the practice of using the term “panađur” in the afore-mentioned pocket calendars published by the SOC. Moreover, it is also necessary that the priesthood of the SOC should, through constant catechetical work with the believing people, deepen the knowledge about the foundations of religion, history, tradition and language, i.e., the elements that make national identity.

[10] Vášár is a word of Hungarian origin and it actually refers to the word *sajam* (an etymologically questionable old Slavic expression) or to a Turkish word *pazar/bazar*, deriving from the Persian word *baha-čār*.

Summing up these truly basic notes about the role of the SOC in the struggle for preserving the national identity of the Serbian people both in the present and in the future, we will emphasize that the symphony existing between secular and ecclesiastical power in the Republic of Serbia definitely has huge importance regarding the question that we have only briefly discussed here. Today in the Republic of Serbia we stand witness to the fact that the expression *Acta non verba* is part of everyday life and, for the sake of emphasis, part of the position of secular power both towards the preservation and strengthening of national identity, and in its position towards the SOC. In fact, the SOC is, let us repeat, an extremely important factor in the preservation of everything that the Serbian nation was, is and will be. “The Serbs have for centuries found exactly in religion the strength to overcome the obstacles they

have encountered on the road of the preservation of their national identity” (Bodrožić, 2014, p. 39). It is exactly due to this fact (and the same refers to the future) that we encounter the attacks of those who are most openly against the influence of the SOC on the people and who are only briefly mentioned in the previous part of the text. Moreover, we also encounter those religious-political factors which, recognizing the importance of the SOC in the Serbian national corpus, most frankly want the Church to continue acting and leading the spiritual flock entrusted to it by God on the road towards salvation while simultaneously resisting the temptations and being of benefit to all of us who want to be and stay what our ancestors used to be – a proud, brave and unwavering confessor of Christ the Savior who will not be ashamed to say that he is a Serb, a Serb with a national identity.

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Tomos on the Autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric (2022): the Serbian Church Mission and the End of the Macedonian Schism

Abstract: The paper shows that the Tomos on the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, granted by the Serbian Orthodox Church, was a superb decision of Serbian church mission. It resolved the half-century-long Macedonian church schism and thwarted the religious interventionism that the Patriarchate of Constantinople intended to implement in the Republic of North Macedonia.

Keywords: Serbian Orthodox Church, Macedonian Orthodox Church, Patriarchate of Constantinople, Tomos on the Autocephaly, church dispute

Introduction

The Macedonian Church question has been a burden in the relations of the Serbian and Macedonian nations for more than five decades. The most frequently mentioned key years for the Macedonian Church crisis are 1959 and 1967, while it is consid-

ered that as early as 1941 the Bulgarian aggressor displaced the Serbian church hierarchy from the occupied Vardar banovina which was part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. As a matter of fact, as of 1931, there were three dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the territory of the Vardar banovina: the Diocese of Skopje with the seat in Skopje;

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the Diocese of Zletovo and Strumica with the seat in Štip, and the Diocese of Ohrid and Bitola with the seat in Bitola.

In 1945, after the victory of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia in the Second World War, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia established socialism and the federal order of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, in which the People's Republic of Macedonia became one of six federal units. According to the Comintern's plans devised between the two world wars, the separate Macedonian nation was recognized in 1945. In this way, Macedonians were separated from the Serbian nation and simultaneously from the Bulgarian nation as well.

Despite this separation from the Bulgarian nation, in terms of the church question, Yugoslav communists continued on the road tracked by the Bulgarian occupiers. In fact, in 1944, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia stood behind the "Initiative Committee in Skopje for the establishment of independent Orthodox Church in Macedonia and the establishment of the historical Ohrid Archbishopric". In March 1945, its alleged "ecclesiastical-national council" declared the Macedonian Orthodox Church. However, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church declined it; Josif, the Metropolitan of Skopje and the bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church, said that the church separation was advocated by the priests who had formerly represented Bulgarian interests. Moreover, the communist authorities forbade Serbian bishops to return to the People's Republic of Macedonia. It enabled the "Initiative Committee" to establish separatist autocracy in southern dioceses which canonically belonged Serbian Orthodox

Church (Slijepčević, 1969, pp. 26–44; Puzović, 1997, pp. 16–33; Đurić Mišina, 2012, pp. 598–600).

In 1959, under the pressure of the government and Party bodies, the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church was forced to recognize the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, as two autonomous hierarchies, and thus the Constitution of the Serbian Orthodox Church ceased to be valid in the People's Republic of Macedonia. The Macedonian Orthodox Church requested autocephaly in 1966 and the Serbian Orthodox Church did not accept it (Puzović, 1997, pp. 59–81; Radić, 2002, pp. 257, 267–291; Đurić Mišina, 2012, pp. 610–616).

The escalation began when the Church and People's Council of the Macedonian Orthodox Church self-proclaimed its autocephaly in 1967. The Serbian Orthodox Church announced that the Macedonian hierarchy was in schism and that all canonical communication with it had been suspended. Government and Party authorities of socialist Yugoslavia accepted the self-proclaimed autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Autocephalous Orthodox churches fiercely condemned the non-canonical step of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. The Serbian Orthodox Church invited several times in vain the Macedonian bishops to repent. In 1977, both churches established committees for negotiations that never reached a solution (Slijepčević, 1969, pp. 70–88; Puzović, 1997, pp. 82–95, 98–104; Đurić Mišina, 2012, pp. 616–645).

As a matter of fact, the decisions of the Serbian Orthodox Church from 1959 did not even mention that the Serbian medieval churches and monasteries on the territory of the People's Republic of Macedonia – the most famous of which are Matejče, Staro Nagoričane, Marko's Monastery Saint Nikita

and Lesново – might be separated as stauropegial and thus connected to the Serbian Patriarchate.

In 1992, at the time of the breakup of socialist Yugoslavia, the Serbian Orthodox Church tried to persuade Macedonian authorities in Skopje to return Serbian medieval churches, monasteries and spiritual heritage of the Serbian people in the territory of the Republic of Macedonia under the authority of the Serbian Patriarchate and that Macedonian authorities should acknowledge the work of Serbian priests (Puzović, 1997, pp. 105–107, 165–167). During the 1990s, the attempts to return the Serbian Orthodox Church to the territory of the Republic of Macedonia also failed.

The Serbian Orthodox Church and the Macedonian Orthodox Church were on the verge of reconciliation when the Niš Agreement was signed in 2002. However, after returning to Skopje, Macedonian bishops withdrew their signatures from that document. In response, Jovan Vraniškovski, the Metropolitan of Veles and Povardarje, returned with the priests of his metropolis into the canonical unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church in 2002 (Raković, 2015, pp. 231).

In May 2023 the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church gave the consent to Metropolitan Jovan, as the Exarch of Ohrid, to appoint candidates for new bishops who would subsequently establish the Holy Synod of the Ohrid Archbishopric within the Serbian Orthodox Church. After the establishment of that hierarchy, the Serbian Orthodox Church issued the Tomos on Church Autonomy on 24th May 2005 and recognized the church autonomy of the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric led by Archbishop Jovan Vraniškovski (Raković, 2015, p. 235).

In this manner, the dispute of the two hierarchies became the dispute of turn hierarchies: on

one side, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric and, on the other side, the Macedonian Orthodox Church in schism which in 2009. added the Ohrid Archbishopric to its name, so that its full name was: the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric. The dialogue of the churches ended up in a blind alley and, in particular, it could not be carried out during the backlog of court proceedings and imprisonment of Jovan Vraniškovski. Namely, starting from 2004, Archbishop Jovan was exposed to grave persecution and imprisonment for as many as thirteen years in the Republic of Macedonia (Raković, 2015, pp. 238–249). Therefore, the crisis became rather profound.

However, the Constantinople intervention in Kiev cast a new light on the future of the relations among Orthodox churches. The decision of Bartholomew, the Patriarch of Constantinople, of 11th October 2018 to accept into the liturgical communion two separatist Ukrainian church factions (OrthodoxChristian.com, 16th October 2018) was an overture for his arbitrary decision to grant those separatist factions – united under the name of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine – the Tomos on the Autocephaly in January 2019., thus violating the canonical order of the Moscow Patriarchate in the territory of Ukraine (*Kyiv Post*, 5 January 2019).

That is how the Ukrainian church question became as contentious as the Ukrainian government question. The Patriarchate of Constantinople sent signals about its readiness to interfere with the canonical territory of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Republic of North Macedonia (Religija.mk, 16th December 2021). This suited neither the Serbian Orthodox Church nor the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric.

Tomos on the Autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric (2022)

After Porfirije Perić, the Metropolitan of Zagreb and Ljubljana, was appointed Serbian Patriarch (2021), the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric negotiated for months, far from the public eye, about returning the separated Macedonian hierarchy into the canonical unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church.

22 | When on 6th May 2022 the news leaked into the public about the Serbian and Macedonian hierarchies being on the verge of reconciliation, on 9th May 2022 the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople made a decision to absolve the Macedonian Orthodox Church of the schism, to recognize it under the name of the Ohrid Archbishopric, solely within the boundaries of “North Macedonia”, and to take its jurisdiction over the dioceses in the Macedonian diaspora and advise it to resolve its status in negotiations with the Serbian Orthodox Church (Mpc.org.mk, 9th May 2022). On 10th May 2023, the Macedonian Orthodox Church thanked the Patriarch of Constantinople for the resolution of the schism (Mpc.org.mk, 10th May 2022), but it did not accept other decisions.

By interfering with the canonical order of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Patriarchate of Constantinople paved the path for the procedure of its being the first to recognize the autocephalous

status to the Ohrid Archbishopric, by applying the well-known Ukrainian scenario.

However, in line with the months-long positive course of negotiations and based on the already sent plea of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric to return into the canonical unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church, on 16th May 2023 the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church greeted the acceptance of the status of the broadest possible autonomy and full independence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric (*Spc.rs*, 16th May 2022). That was a solution to the dispute which began in 1967 and the schism was resolved after 55 years.

On 19th May 2022, the reconciliation liturgy was served in the Church of Saint Sava in Belgrade by Serbian Patriarch Porfirije, Macedonian Archbishop Stefan and bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric and the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric. Special joy because of the return of the Macedonian hierarchy into the canonical order was expressed by Archbishop Jovan Vraniškovski, who also emphasized that as of 19th May 2022 all the Sacraments performed by the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric were retroactively recognized.^[3]

The public in the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia accepted the reconciliation of Serbian and Macedonian hierarchies with approval. The Church of Saint Sava in Belgrade was filled with believers who came to attend this event.

[3] Holy Hierarchal Liturgy in the Church of Saint Sava, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjNpyWUhZWg>), 19th May 2022

However, the public was not familiar with the fact that the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church had already decided unanimously at its session in May 2022 that the Serbian Orthodox Church should recognize the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric (Tomos, 23rd May / 5th June 2022). This decision was announced by Serbian Patriarch Porfirije at the joint liturgy of the bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric and the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric respectively in the Church of Saint Clement of Ohrid in Skopje on 24th May 2022 (Radio-televizija Srbije, 24th May 2022).

According to Patriarch Porfirije, the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church “unanimously accepted the plea” of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric and “the Council of our [Serbian Orthodox] Church approves, blesses, accepts and recognizes the autocephaly of this [Macedonian Orthodox] church” (Radio-televizija Srbije, 24th May 2022).

In fact, the Serbian Orthodox Church observed the decision regarding the procedure of granting autocephaly which was made at the Council of Crete in 2016. According to that decision, the Mother Church decides about whether the conditions have been fulfilled for granting autocephaly to the Daughter Church, and then it proposes to other autocephalous Orthodox churches to acknowledge and recognize the new autocephalous church. However, the Patriarchate of Constantinople had already ignored the decision of the Council of Crete about granting autocephaly although it had convened that Council itself, by intruding into the territory of the Moscow Patriarchate in the territory of Ukraine.

Regarding this historical decision, the Serbian Orthodox Church consulted the Russian Orthodox Church and other autocephalous Orthodox churches, which congratulated Serbian Patriarch Porfirije and let him know that they were glad about the decision made by the Serbian Orthodox Church on the recognition of the autocephalous status to the Macedonian Orthodox Church (Sputnikportal.rs, 5th May 2022).

As a matter of fact, there were no external pressures on the Serbian Orthodox Church to make this decision. The Serbian Orthodox Church did not keep its decision secret in order to hide it from the Serbian people, but in order to prevent interventionist sabotage and the scenario similar to the one in Ukraine (Sputnikportal.rs, 25th May 2022).

In the event of a foreign intervention in its canonical territory in the Republic of North Macedonia, the Serbian Orthodox Church would have been forced to cease the communication with the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

On 5th June 2022, Serbian Patriarch Porfirije delivered the Tomos on the Autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric to Archbishop Stefan in the Cathedral Church in Belgrade (Radio-televizija Srbije, 5th June 2022). The Tomos states as follows: “Holy churches and monasteries, particularly the great shrines from the period of the Nemanjić dynasty and subsequent periods of Serbian presence, church construction and cultural creation in the territory of today’s North Macedonia, as well as the overall movable and immovable property of the Serbian Orthodox Church within its boundaries, are granted for use to the new autocephalous sister Church” (Tomos, 23rd May / 5th June 2022).



Serbian Patriarch Porfirije and Archbishop of Ohrid Stefan during the presentation of the Tomos of Autocephaly, 5 June 2022, Skopje, North Macedonia

Photo: Tanjug/Miloš Milivojević

Therefore, the text explicitly states that the Serbian shrines in the Republic of North Macedonia will be given for use to the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric, but they will not be in its ownership. This means that the Ser-

bian medieval shrines in North Macedonia, as well as all others made by the Serbian people in recent times, will remain in the ownership of the Serbian Orthodox Church. This is interpretation advocated by the Serbian Orthodox Church.^[4]

[4] From the author's notes.

The Tomos also states that the Serbian Orthodox Church recognizes the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric, under this name. Moreover, the Tomos also states that the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric will grant its full autocephaly after being recognized by all other autocephalous Orthodox churches (Tomos, 23rd May / 5th June 2022).

Reactions of other Orthodox churches

The announcement of the cabinet of Macedonian Archbishop Stefan (7th June 2022) noted that the delegation of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric, which was to pay an official visit to the Patriarchate of Constantinople for Pentecost, hoped “to finalize our Church question by the issuance of the generally recognized Tomos by His Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, in compliance with his legal and historical authorities” (Mpc.org.mk, 7th June 2022). On 10th June 2022, during the official visit to Constantinople, Bartholomew, the Patriarch of Constantinople, delivered to Archbishop Stefan the Patriarchate’s and Synod’s act by which “the Ohrid Archbishopric” was accepted into the liturgical and canonical unity (Makedonska radio-televizija, 10th June 2022). On 12th June 2022, Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Stefan served the first liturgy together in the Church of St. George in the Phanar (Orthodoxianewsagency.gr, 12th June 2022).

To the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the church in the Republic of North Macedonia, under the name of the Ohrid Archbishopric, is an auton-

omous church. Moreover, no Greek church has recognized the Tomos on the Autocephaly granted by the Serbian Orthodox Church to the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric.

At the session on 8th June 2022, the Holy Synod of the Archdiocese of Athens accepted the decision of the Patriarch of Constantinople to return “the Ohrid Archbishopric” into the canonical order of Orthodox churches, while at the same time it expressed “serious objections and reservations” about the Tomos on the Autocephaly granted by the Serbian Orthodox Church to the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric. The Archdiocese of Athens. took a position that granting autocephaly was the exclusive authority of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, that the name of the Macedonian Orthodox Church was already the name of the Ohrid Archbishopric, under which the Patriarchate of Constantinople had recognized the church with the seat in Skopje as canonically autonomous within the Serbian Orthodox Church and that the Patriarchate of Constantinople had properly decided to leave out the Macedonian diaspora from “the Ohrid Archbishopric” which is limited solely to the Republic of North Macedonia (Romfea.gr, 8th June 2022).

The Russian Orthodox Church and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church have a different stand regarding this question.

Namely, on 25th August 2023, the Russian Orthodox Church restored the canonical unity with the Macedonian Orthodox Church and, at the same time, recognized the autocephaly of this Church under the name of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric, and the title of its head as the Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia

(Patriarchia.ru, 25th August 2022). Namely, the Russian Orthodox Church thought that the Serbian Orthodox Church had properly granted the Tomos on the Autocephaly.

Based on the Tomos on the Autocephaly, on 13th December 2022, the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church made a decision to recognize the autocephaly of “the Orthodox Church in the Republic of North Macedonia” and the title of its head as “the Archbishop of North Macedonia” (Bg-patriarshia.bg, 16th December 2022).

On 4th February 2023, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church decided – based on the Tomos on the Autocephaly granted by the Serbian Orthodox Church – to recognize the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, but under the name “the Archbishopric of Ohrid and North Macedonia, with the seat in Skopje”, and its head under the title of “the Archbishop of Ohrid, Skopje and North Macedonia” (Basilica.ro, 10th February 2023). However, on 13th February 2023, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church issued a clarification which noted that it was waiting for “the Ecumenical Patriarchate to initiate consultations and issue the final Tomos on the Autocephaly in order to reach the pan-Orthodox consensus about the question of recognizing the autocephaly” for “the Orthodox Church in the Republic of North Macedonia” (Basilica.ro, 13th February 2023). Namely, the Romanian Orthodox Church recognized the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church under the name “the Archbishopric of Ohrid and North Macedonia” and then – regarding the tomos that might be granted by the Patriarchate of Constantinople – it named it “the Orthodox Church in the Republic of North Macedonia”.

On 25th October 2022, the Synod of the Polish Orthodox Church received the information sent by Serbian Patriarch Porfirije about “the independence of the Orthodox Church in North Macedonia”. In that respect, the Polish Orthodox Church “acknowledges prayer ties” with “the Orthodox Church in North Macedonia” (Orthodox.pl, 25th October 2022). Namely, the Polish Orthodox Church accepted the canonical unity with the Macedonian hierarchy, but did not state clearly whether it recognizes the autocephaly of – as it was named – “the Orthodox Church in North Macedonia”.

On 7th February 2023, the Synod of the Orthodox Church of Czech Lands and Slovakia received the information about the decisions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople about “restoring the Eucharistic communication with the dioceses in North Macedonia” and the decision of the Serbian Orthodox Church about “granting autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in North Macedonia”. The conclusion stated the following: “These canonical decisions of the sister Orthodox churches have been accepted with the gratitude to God for abolishing the years-long schism” (Eparchiapo.sk, 7th February 2023). Although the Orthodox Church of Czech Lands and Slovakia considered both decisions canonical, it did not state clearly whether it recognized the autocephaly of – as it was referred to – “the Orthodox Church in North Macedonia”.

On 18th October 2023, the Holy Antiochian Synod announced “its gratitude to God and joy due to the return of the Orthodox Church in the Republic of North Macedonia into the Eucharistic unity with the whole Orthodox Church” and “expressed its intention to reach the pan-Orthodox consensus regarding the name and the legal

status of this Church” (Holy Antiochian Synod, 18th October 2022).

Moreover, on 14th February 2023, the Holy Synod of the Georgian Orthodox Church decided that the Georgian Orthodox Church “should enter the Eucharistic unity with the Orthodox Church in North Macedonia” led by “Archbishop Stefan” (Orthodoxchristian.com, 16th February 2023). On 14th February 2023, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Albania announced that it had accepted the decision of Bartholomew, the Patriarch of Constantinople and that it entered the Eucharistic unity with the Ohrid Archbishopric led by Archbishop Stefan. Subsequently, the Orthodox Church of Albania took a stand that only the Patriarchate of Constantinople was entitled to grant the tomos on the autocephaly and determine the name of the new church (Orthodoxalbania.org, 24th February 2023).

Therefore, the Macedonian Orthodox Church has been in the canonical unity with all other Orthodox churches since 2022. However, its status within the pan-Orthodox church hierarchy has not been completely resolved (autocephalous or autonomous), which also refers to its name (the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric, or only the Ohrid Archbishopric, or even a third version of the name).

Integration of the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric into the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric (2023)

At the joint session, the Holy Synods of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric

and the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric (25th April 2023) agreed that the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric should be integrated into the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric. However, in order to achieve this, the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church needed to make a decision about the canonical dismissal of the bishops of the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric (Tanjug, 25th April 2023).

At its session held from 14th to 20th May 2023, the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church “made a decision about granting the canonical dismissal to the bishops of this autonomous Church by the Serbian Orthodox Church and its integration into the Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church in line with the sacred canons and Constitutions of our two local Churches, as well as the formerly reached agreement of the Synods of all three church structures” (Spc.rs, 20th May 2023).

Based on this decision of the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, on 20th June 2023 the Holy Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric decided to accept four bishops of the former Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric into the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric: Kruševo and Demir Hisar diocese was granted to Jovan Vraniškovski, who had formerly had the title of the Metropolitan of Kruševo and Demir Hisar, and this marked the end of his duty as the archbishop; Deljadrovci-Illinden diocese was granted to bishop Joakin with the title of the metropolitan of Deljadrovci and Ilinden; Delčevo-Kamenica diocese was granted to bishop Marko with the title of the metropolitan of Delčevo and Kamenica, and bishop David was appointed the vicar bishop of Dremvitsa in the Metropolis of Skopje (Mpc.org.mk, 20th June 2023).

On 28th June 2023, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric of the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric informed the public as follows: “The Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric fulfilled the meaning of its administrative existence as an autonomous Church in the canonical territory of the Serbian Orthodox Church, witnessing the unity of the Church for the past 20 years, mostly spent in persecution and humiliation”, and “by the Serbian Orthodox Church granting autocephaly to the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric and accepting all the bishop of the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric under the jurisdiction of the mentioned [Macedonian Orthodox] Church”; the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric “entirely transfers into the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric” (Poa-info.org, 28th June 2023). This is the last document of the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric.

Conclusion

The Serbian Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church have recognized the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric;

the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox under this name, and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church under a different name. Greek churches do not accept the autocephaly granted by the Serbian Orthodox Church to the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric. In fact, Greek churches believe that only the Patriarchate of Constantinople is entitled to grant autocephaly and they follow this Patriarchate’s decision about the recognition of the autonomous Ohrid Archbishopric.

Other Orthodox churches accepted the return of the Macedonian hierarchy into the canonical unity while also acknowledging the decision of the Serbian Orthodox Church on the autocephaly and of the Patriarchate of Constantinople on the autonomy. The tomos granted by the Serbian Orthodox Church states that the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric will get full autocephaly after the approval of all autocephalous Orthodox churches.

The decision of the Serbian Orthodox Church to grant autocephaly to the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric was an excellent move. Since 2022, Serbian Patriarch Porfirije has often performed service in the Republic of North Macedonia, just as other Serbian bishops, monks and priests.

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Appendix

TOMOS

on the autocephaly Of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric

PORFIRIJE

By the grace of God,

Archbishop of Peć, Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovci, and Serbian Patriarch,
with the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church,
to His Beatitude Stefan, Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia

In compliance with the sanctified and established canonical order of the Most Holy Orthodox Church of Christ and, in particular, with Rule 34 of the Holy Apostles,

– according to the decision of the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church ASNo. 47/note 8 of 16/3rd May of the current year, by which the Council, with deepest gratitude to the Lord, in the always glorified Trinity, and with great joy, accepted the decision of His Beatitude, Archbishop Stefan of Ohrid, and the Holy Synod of Bishops gathered around him. To accept the universally recognized canonical status of the dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North Macedonia, granted in 1959, namely the status of the broadest possible autonomy, i.e., of full internal autonomy and, since ion this way all reasons for the cessation of the liturgical and canonical communication have ceased to exist, after being caused by the one-sided proclamation of their autocephaly under the name “the Macedonian Orthodox Church” om 1967, established full Eucharistic communication and canonical unity with the above-mentioned Church,

stated that the dialogue about its future, final canonical status was possible in reality, legitimate and purposeful, that the Serbian Orthodox Church accepted it, that it would be governed solely and exclusively by ecclesiological-canonical principles and ecclesiastical-pastoral needs and that, after the resolution of the status question, it would not condition the new sister Church by restricting clauses regarding the scope of its jurisdiction in the home country and the diaspora worldwide, with a fraternal recommendation to this Church to resolve the question of its official name in direct fraternal dialogue with the Greek-speaking and other local Orthodox churches,

– according to the decision of the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church ASNo. 55/note 65 of 20/7, in May of the current year, which accepts the plea of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – the Ohrid Archbishopric SASNo. 65 of 18th May of the current year to grant the canonical status of the autocephalous Orthodox church to this church, autonomous within the Serbian Patriarchate, and to bless, grant and recognize the requested canonical status of the autocephalous Orthodox church, whereas the Council is obliged by duty to the Holy Council of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church to resolve the necessary technical-organizational matters; subsequently, the Serbian Patriarch will officially and publicly announce the relevant decision of the Council, sign the appropriate Tomos and submit it to all sister autocephalous Churches for adoption, since the Serbian Orthodox Church is not the sole factor of the autocephaly, but it is the full jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church, and that is why decisions and reception by other Orthodox churches are necessary,

– and having in mind the newly-created ecclesiastical-historical and other circumstances, with the primary aim of enabling the Christ-named People of God to have the greatest possible spiritual benefit and to advance on the road to salvation, as well as to enable the governance of church matters without difficulties, purposefully, in a canonically proper, dignified and benevolent manner,

Our Holy Serbian Orthodox Church, as the heir of the old and glorious Patriarchate of Peć, gives its Council's blessing and approval, grants and recognizes the autocephalous status to the God's Church in North Macedonia, today called the Macedonian Orthodox Church, which is the heir of the old and glorious Ohrid Archbishopric, and that is why it also includes its honourable name and encompasses the canonical space of the former eponymous Church, autonomous since 1959, within our Serbian Patriarchate.

The autocephaly of the new sister Church is full autocephaly. It means that the Serbian Orthodox Church will not condition it by the provisions restricting its canonical jurisdiction and pastoral care for its faithful Orthodox people in the home country and the diaspora. At the same time, the Serbian Orthodox Church warmly recommends that His Beatitude, the head of the new sister Church and its Holy Synod should resolve the question of the official name through a direct fraternal dialogue with the Greek-speaking and other local Orthodox churches.

Holy churches and monasteries, particularly the great shrines from the Nemanjić period and the subsequent periods of Serbian presence, church construction and cultural creation in the territory of today's North Macedonia, as well as the overall movable property of the Serbian Orthodox Church within its boundaries, are given for use to the new autocephalous sister Church.

For proof, confirmation, and lasting testimony of all that has been canonically established and determined in this manner, we hereby deliver to His Beatitude Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia, Stefan, beloved in Christ the Lord, brother and fellow minister of our humility, with all the Most Reverend, Most Reverend and God-loving hierarchs gathered around him, our beloved brothers and fellow ministers in the Holy Spirit, the following

Patriarchate's and Council's Tomos,

The original text of which, accurate and intact, is kept in the Archives of our Holy Patriarchate

We pray to the God of all grace, who has called us to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus our Lord, that, by the grace of His Holy Spirit and the prayerful intercession of His holy Church, He may grant our youngest sister autocephalous Church every blessing and every good spiritual fruit, in an unbreakable bond of love and unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church and with all the holy local Orthodox Churches throughout the world. To Him, who is always glorified in the Trinity, be glory, honour, power, and worship forever and ever. Amen.

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In the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade,
On the Sunday of the Holy Father, the First Ecumenical Council,
On 23rd May / 5th June of the year of the Lord of 2022

Archbishop of Peć,
Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovci,
and Serbian Patriarch

Porfirije
Chairman of the Holy Council of Bishops
of the Serbian Orthodox Church



Old and New Democracy

Abstract: The paper examines the change in the meaning and practice of democratic values in interstate and domestic political relations. The main ideas of democracy focus on the state order which is understood as a general good with three branches of power, laws on citizens' rights and the free market. Foreign policy characteristics of the new democracy reality are the prevalence of globalization over national interests, the new role of the media, wars between democratic countries, growing hatred and phobias. Internal changes in democracy are also prominent: the political role of money, non-procedural decision-making, the relationship between the minority and the majority, and the power of the media. Serbian democracy is burdened by external as well as by domestic pressures: the legacy of Yugoslavism, the struggle for Kosovo and Metohija, the absence of the desired national consensus. The conclusion underlines the increasing criticism of these processes in foreign and domestic democracy which bring its values and institutions into question and point to a tendency of self-contradiction of democracy in the new reality.

Keywords: democracy, foreign and domestic characteristics, Serbia

Introduction

The idea of democracy is conceptualized in the middle of the 19th century, while it was practically formed during the 20th century as an opposite to dictatorships, fascism and forms of personal power. Its cognitive foundation was in equal rights of citizens, freely expressed opinion, and authority that gains legitimacy in general elections. However, the classical meaning of democracy has been under-

mined by new opinions, behaviours and political actions. Within its auspices, there are widespread manifestations of anarchist behaviour, hate speech, lies, the practice of violent struggle for power, and interference by foreign Western states in the sovereignty of other, smaller states (including the attacks by armed forces), the rise of nationalism in multinational states, the increasingly prominent role of domestic and foreign money in politics. These and other factors have caused a problem to the essential

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meaning of democracy – non-violent establishment of the general interest in society and the state.

At the end of 2025, the agency “Ipsos” published the survey about the state of democracy in several West European countries. The results show that the majority of citizens (86% in France) is concerned for the future of democracy. A threat to democracy is seen in the distribution of disinformation, corruption, absence of politicians’ responsibility, the rise of extremism (*Politika*, 17th November 2025). Unprecedented violence occurred in France after the local election because of the increasing lack of security and worsening living conditions (*Novosti*, 28th March 2026).

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Old reality of democracy

Democracy is one of the leading concepts in modern West Europe. Its basic meanings appeared in the 19th century as the criticism of non-democratic forms of power guided by the idea of the state and society of general freedoms, equality and justice for everyone. The main idea – “inalienable rights to freedom, life and the pursuit of happiness” – expressed in the 1776 Declaration of Independence and the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. It was believed that those inalienable rights were provided by the state’s democratic order.

Despite the conceptual, normative and socio-historical differences in understanding democracy, it is possible to distinguish *a common core of the meaning* in all theoretical traditions of thought about democracy. Democracy is: (a) a form of government and social order, (b) a system

of institutions achieving individual and general freedoms and interests, (c) non-violent competition and opposition of political and non-political groups in the struggle for power, (d) an individual’s right to fulfil his/her intellectual, moral, aesthetic and hedonistic needs. On that basic idea, many theories of democracy have been built, which differently define the relations between citizens and the state. From the perspective of the sovereignty of power, it is possible to distinguish national and civil democracy. According to the manner of decision-making, there are majority democracy and consociative democracy, while from the perspective of political history we can distinguish between classical (protective, developmental, direct) and modern (competitive, pluralist, participatory, consensual) understanding of democracy (Avramović, 2000).

New reality of democracy

There is no decisive institutional and political gap between the old and the new meaning of democracy. In the new reality of democracy, *old anthropology* (human nature with intersections of good and evil, lies and truth, selfishness and altruism) and *the institutions of power division* have been retained. In other words, the struggle for acquisition, the will to power, and a potentially anti-democratic personality have been retained. An anti-democratic (non-democratic) personality is recognized by an obsessive idea of believing in a just cause, a mission in society. *The messianic idea* can also appear in the guise of democracy and not only in totalitarian systems: it is the political idea that should rescue

the world from its evils and uncertain future (for example, America's self-perception as the leader of the whole world).

What is new in relation to the old meaning and practice? The new reality of democracy is characterized by a transition from *procedural* democracy, in which the most important rules of the game in the power struggle of the minority and the majority, to *substantial* democracy, which is dominated by will, interests, need for rhetoric about human rights, open society, and free market. This new practice should be supplemented by innovation that was not perceived by the founders of the opinions about democracy. They primarily considered the national, state concept of democracy and not the expansion of the Western system at the expense of other countries with the aid of the globalist ideology. In old democracy, main medias were newspapers, while in new democracy those are powerful expansive electronic media. The thinkers of old democracy were under the illusion that democratic countries did not wage wars against one another. The new reality of democratic states is manifested at two levels: in foreign and domestic policies.

Interstate (external) aspects of the new reality of democracy

1. *National democracy grows into global democracy.* Since 1989, the political speech of the modern Western world has been dominated by the word *democracy*. Theoretical thinkers and political elites send a single political message to the "international community" (community? – an inadequate sociological concept, added by the author): the world will be democratic since democracy has no political alternative. The concept

of global democratization is understood as: a) expansion of the Euro-American model of democracy (the EU) to other parts of the European and world territories, b) this process is taking place under a strong political-pragmatic American influence. Under the impact of globalism, national identity spills over into standards and typification or uniformization of economic, political, cultural and entertainment life. These identity meanings that have been built for centuries, such as history, freedom, male-female relations, customs, mythology and understanding good and evil – all these are now exposed to a great pressure of the new reality of democracy that builds its construct of identity on postmodernist "freely wandering individual". (The slogan that is frequently sent to small nations is: "Let us forget the past, let us turn to the future".)

2. *The new role of media in democracy.* New media play a huge role in the new reality of democracy. While in old media (newspapers, telephone, television) the valid rule was "one-to-many", in new media there is the rule "many-to-many", i.e., every individual on the internet (web) is potentially in the domestic and world game of representation and participation. A private opinion becomes general for one part of the public on the web. The internet (mobile telephone) is a means of communication through which the fragmented subject (man) transfers his experience and opinion into the hyperreal (virtual) communication environment. The democratic media public is more a product of "freely wandering individuals" on the web rather than an institution of a democratic order. In other words, non-democratic media public may also form in a democratic sys-



Photo: Freepik

tem. On the scene, there is an ongoing struggle of these two forms of media public in a democratic order (Jevtović, 2003).

In new democracy, a struggle is waged between media anarchism and “digital totalitarianism”. However, the means of this struggle are in the hands of private digital media companies (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram etc.), which are more powerful than the state. The owners and anonymous employees of these companies close the accounts of the head of the

state (Donald Trump) and have access to the users’ private data. A number of other consequences – intellectual, social, emotional, physical – are not the subject of this paper.

3. *Democracies wage wars against one another.* The most recent European experience denies the basic claim of classical democracy thinkers that the states with a democratic order do not wage wars against one another. Where there is democracy, there are no wars (Popper, 1993). In fact, a) in former Socialist Federal Republic of Yu-

goslavia, wars broke out after the 1990 democratic elections; b) the democratic member-states of the NATO bombed the democratic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999; c) Russia and Ukraine, both with democratic governments, entered the war conflict in 2022.

The attack of the NATO member-states against the Serbs was nothing in comparison to the NATO's arrival at the border of Russia and its help to Ukraine in the war against Russia in 2022. As a matter of fact, with the EU and European countries (except for Serbia), the total war was declared against Russia, the war that does not imply an armed conflict, but includes all other kinds of war. Europe has started speaking in a single political voice, in collective hatred towards Russians and Russia. How should this democratic one-mindedness of Europe be understood?

The NATO defends Western democracies, but it attacks or threatens other states. The greatest threat to democracy comes from those actors acting in its name and not from open opponents of this order of government. There is no state without military power, but the EU has joined forces with the USA at the head of the alliance called NATO. Now in Europe we have got an armed democracy that is spreading (Avramović, 2012; 2014).

4. *Democracy does not guarantee state sovereignty and independence.* The governments and intellectual circles of Western countries (the West and America) *openly interfere in the democratic life* of certain countries. The forms of interference are different: mild messages are sent, sometimes even warnings about what should be done; anti-regime NGOs are invited or visited; scientific conferences with selected guests are organized and, in particu-

lar, "positive politicians" are promoted, thus openly discriminating legally elected representatives of citizens. Part of this game is also the policy of "double standards". Principles and charters created by the West are thrown away while pragmatic standard are applied to small nations and states: seizing the Province of Kosovo and Metohija, the refusal to recognize the referendums in Crimea, Donbas and Catalonia.

5. A growing problem in the new reality of democracy refers to *ethnic prejudice, hatred and phobia*. How is it possible to explain the ethnic racism of a democratic government (and a large part of the public) against another democratic state and nation? It is not the same when such prejudice is spread by smaller groups of racists and when such attitudes come from the ranks of political representation or government. The Western man is also able to hate. He hated in the monarchy, he hated in the republic, and he also hates in democracy. The racist statements of Western politicians about Serbs will never be forgotten: "Let the Serbs drown in their own stench" (Helmut Kohl); "The Serbs are a nation without laws and faith, the nation of bandits and terrorists" (Jacques Chirac), "The war against the Serbs is the war of good against evil, the war of civilization against barbarianism" (Tony Blair). Even John Paul II, the Roman pope (famous Wojtyła) voiced his opinion: "You should bomb the Serbs" (in the same vein, the US President Biden said that the Russian president was a "butcher"). Hatred is a reaction to being thwarted from achieving a certain goal or desire. In other words, it is a response to frustration. And it was caused by the refusal of non-Western governments to follow the will of the

Western ones. Specifically, of Serbia to renounce Kosovo and Metohija. Every unfulfilled wish of the Western governments after 2012 found the culprit in Moscow: the Russian child being expelled from school in Norway, the works of Dostoyevsky and Tchaikovsky being prohibited in Italy and Zagreb. Who knows? But a book of evidence has been written about outpours of hatred towards the Russian man in Western democracies. The Russian has replaced the Serb.

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Domestic, internal aspects of the new reality of democracy. Apart from the foreign policy level, the new reality of democratic states is also manifested at the domestic policy level.

1. What is the basic lever that drives individuals and social groups, political parties in the new reality of democracy? *Money power* in modern democratic societies is no longer a secret. Serbia is no exception. Modern civil societies (West Europe and America) have placed money in the centre of their existence and the entire life of society takes places around the profit orientation. According to an American saying, “money is the mother’s milk of politics”. There is no power of politics without the power of money.

2. Has the new reality of democracy solved the problem of decision-making about public matters? The concept of *procedure* can be so normed that it provides (does not provide) adequate political representation. On the other hand, citizens elect but do not rule. Decisions are made on their behalf and despite formal power division, the prime minister or the president has the keys of war and peace. In his memoir (*The Journey*, 2010), Tony Blair recalls Kosovo, i.e., the bombing of Serbia in 1999.

By his own admission, he was the main architect and performer of war works. This is what he says: “From the very beginning I have been completely ready for a military solution... I was unwavering in my determination not to pacify the matter, but to bring it to an end” (Avramović, 2012; 2014).

3. The new reality of democracy has not resolved *the majority/minority relationship* in a political struggle either. The classical idea of a public, free discussion that practically resolves the majority/minority relationship in power is less and less observed. Elections in democratic countries (from America to Serbia) show that the minority does not want to respect the will of the majority of citizens. The conflict of Trump and Biden in the USA in 2021 announced something that had not existed in the past – the legality and legitimacy of elections are being challenged.

4. Domestic political *lies* are “justified” by the struggle for power. The opposition has a new means – new media. Print media are being displaced while the electronic ones are advancing. Social media have become the main communication channel. Every voice about political matters goes independently on the social media. The democracy of media anarchism has been entered. Disinformation and extremism in democracy are its inevitable product. Everyday insults, accusations, threats: “Tying the tongues of slanderers is like building a gate in a field”, as a character of a novel says.

Serbia and old-new democracy

During the 20th century Serbia lived through two states (Yugoslavia and Serbia), three political

orders (monarchy, dictatorship, democracy) and two social systems (capitalism, socialism). As for the democratic order, Serbia had democracy (1903–1914), defective Yugoslav democracy within monarchy (1919–1941) and the new democracy after the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (as of 1990).

Those periods witnessed the combination of the concepts and practice of peaceful and violent forms of public and political life. The Serbian political mosaic is filled with the intertwining of reason and passion, Serbian political figures, leaders and followers, power and opposition – in the irreconcilable struggle for power; problems of political knowledge and language, the struggle for Kosovo and Metohija in new circumstances, troubles with the European Union, the legacy of Yugoslavism.

Some problems of modern Serbian democracy have been *inherited from Yugoslavism*. From one unfinished job, Serbia entered another, as history has shown, unfruitful state enterprise. Plenty of energy, knowledge, establishment of institutions, and political careers was thrown into an abyss. How is it possible these far-reaching political and social mistakes in the history of the Serbian people? After 1914, the Serbian state immersed its name and institutions in the state which was torn by national egoisms and the struggle against the alleged “Great Serbian nationalism” as a pretext for own national extremism. This also continued in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Seventy-two years of the Yugoslav state were an involution for Serbian democracy, as well as for the disintegration of the Serbian people which, paradoxically, made the greatest

sacrifice for the South Slavic brotherhood and life in a single country.

Another inherited problem of Serbian democracy is definitely *Kosovo and Metohija*. As of 1945, Serbia has fully helped the development of this province: economically, institutionally, culturally and politically. When democracy was institutionalized in 1990, Kosovo Albanians understood and applied democracy in a separatist way. For a whole decade they refused to participate in the democratic politics of the Republic of Serbia before the NATO bombing of Serbia because of the “humanitarian catastrophe”, but in fact because of the plan to seize this province, and from the states with a democratic order.

The main question is posed to Serbian political parties and figures from a democratic standpoint: Is the Serbian consensus about Kosovo and Metohija possible? Furthermore, how to wage a struggle in democracy against those forces that renounce Kosovo and Metohija? In the struggle for defending the Province, Serbian democracy relies on six institutions: the Serbian state, the Serbian Orthodox Church, opposition political parties, intellectuals, media, and educational institutions.

New problems of Serbian democracy are caused by fierce party and personal political struggles for power. They are stronger than general interests and they cause the crisis of democracy that affects social, family and personal life. In the absence of *minimal national consensus*, democracy is equally in the hands of hidden and authentic democrats.

The difficulties in achieving a minimum consensus within democracy derive from *Serbian mentality*. Serbian politicians carry in themselves

a surplus of emotions, lack of the sense of reality, and problematic political plans. Slobodan Jovanovic correctly observed that the inter-party struggle for power revealed “our impetuousness and exclusivity... Hence the inclination towards one-sided and exaggerated decisions”. In recent Serbian history, if we compare politics with other spheres – economy, science, army, art, sport – we will easily conclude that it is the weakest in poorest in quality, results and figures, both in non-democratic and in democratic systems.

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In Serbian democracy, there is an ongoing struggle between *procedural* and *substantial democracy* (no democracy means dictatorship). Intellectuals, politicians and scientists are still arguing about how to answer the question.: What is true democracy? In public, it can be heard that “we are living in a dictatorship”, that “there is neither justice nor freedom”. Such criticism of Serbian democracy could be heard particularly during the student blockades of 2024/2025. Here is an unusual example of the negation of procedural democracy. The Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade made a public announcement (Decision of the Teaching Scientific Council of 9th December 2024) that plenums were a real road to democracy. “Plenums are the students’ democratic space and way of decision-making and so far, they have enabled all students to participate in them”. The democratic space without a procedure, against the law, the prohibition of studying! The democratic space filled with violence! And something like this has been signed by the university professors convinced that they “defend freedom”! How is it possible to explain the fact that knowledge retreats before student voluntarism (Avramović, 2025).

The problems in Serbian democracy are also created by those governments, media and intellectual circles of the Western countries (America) that openly *interfere* in the democratic life of Serbia. Such external discrimination of political institutions of the elected representatives of one country is definitely a way of producing and maintaining the crisis of democracy. One of the means of interference is the failure to observe the electoral results in case they do not appeal to the Western rulers.

Final considerations

Ideals are destined not to come true. Interests, needs and values with more or less passion also pace democratic systems of governance. Tolerance, reason and freedom were put aside when capitalist interests and needs had to be protected by military force.

Democracy is a *problem* at the end of the second and the beginning of the third millennium, just as it was in the era of Plato and Aristotle. Its problems derive from the decisions that are legitimized by democratic institutions, from political natures and passions, knowledge and beliefs, virtues and faults of those serving it, but also from its most profound values – freedom and equality.

Negative emotions also thrive in democracy. Numerous thinkers point to the impossibility to remove envy from democracy (everyone envies everyone in different spheres of life). Furthermore, there is a tendency of weakening the authority of those in power, the virtue of discipline and obedience is becoming weaker because the individualist view of life is ever stronger.

The question is whether the states with democratic institutions are deprived of encouragement and development of non-democratic orientations in society. The analyses of modern capitalist societies warn that these societies are not immune to non-democratic behaviours, attitudes and ideas. Potentials of non-democratic behaviours and opinions exist in every society, including democratic society.

Another type of criticism is theoretical. John Keane's research shows that in every "democratic order a germ of despotism is hiding" which is manifested in certain spheres and activities. We could apply the following criticism of American democracy by Noam Chomsky: "We always oppose democracy where we cannot control its results". Academic action in Serbia might be defined in a similar manner: "We always oppose Serbian democracy where we cannot control our requests".

Democracy cannot remove struggle for power and governance from the national and international

social and political game. What will be democracy? What is the future of democracy? Domestic conflicts and wars. Today's question is: What will democracies do when the whole world becomes democratic? Does democracy have future without the military balance in the world, without the reform of the NATO alliance?

Where can we find hope and optimism in the modern world, in which we witness the crisis of democracy? The criticism of the new democratic reality often encounters the following objection – is there a better order? That is wrong. First of all, the democratic system cannot remove criticism from the public opinion and speech. Second, this system is not deprived of internal conceptual and practical problems. Third, at what point do non-democratic or anti-democratic phenomena become a threat to democracy? Fourth, pessimism is not negation. The question is at what point of political life *self-contradiction* of democracy begins.

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Metamorphosis of Geopolitics in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Abstract: The paper first gives an overview of the genesis of the idea and the concept of geopolitics in socio-political theory and through the history of different periods of civilizational change, with a particular emphasis on its formation into a separate scientific discipline, geostrategy and practice. The author's focus of consideration is the trend of its metamorphosis from the 20th century to date: from geopolitics in the service of the imperialist predator practice of conquest, subjugation and national exploitation, through its transformation in the era of neoliberal globalism into geoeconomics, i.e., the struggle for the redistribution of resources (water, oil, gas, nuclear energy, ores – minerals etc.) and, finally, into geoculture in the forms of action of global media and symbolic violence as a hybrid form of warfare in modern times. At the end of the paper, the author points to the current neoconservative politics of Trumpism as protectionist politics and rise of multipolarity forces in the form of the BRICS movement and the project of convergence of different systems in the modern world.

Keywords: geopolitics, geoeconomics, geoenergy, geoculture, metamorphoses

Duty gives birth to new obligations:

It won't allow for evil to triumph.

Honour is a nation's sacred relic:

Let the struggle go on without respite.

Let it be what men thought could never be.

(Petar II Petrović Njegoš)

*Everyone wants to rule the world,
and I would like to make it the property
of all humanity with my discoveries.*

(Nikola Tesla)

Genesis of the idea and concept of geopolitics and different periods of civilization

The evolution of human consciousness has been described by various authors as ranging from a rhythmic-

mic-cyclical flow to a spiral flow. The path to the rise of a developed scientific consciousness was preceded by forms of mythological and common-sense consciousness in various forms – geom mythology, geopolitics, geohistory, geophilosophy, to the emergence of geopolitics, geoeconomics and geoculture.

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In its search for advanced knowledge about itself and the world, humanity progressed laboriously and slowly, increasing its cognitive power through a series of attempts and errors, rises and falls and renewed rises. This phenomenon of the journey/ascent of the human spirit was depicted a kind of Iliad and Odyssey – from relative to absolute truth – by Helel in his study *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*). The great ancient thinker shows the dialectical rise of the human mind through a series of evolutionary and revolutionary forms and changes, while he presents history as a complex process which is manifested alternately in the form of tragedy and in the form of farce (Hegel, 1979, p. 367).^[2] In it, a specific form of cunning of the historical mind takes place, with the power of playing with the destiny of individual nations, civilizations and territories. Hegel also indicated that people often did not distinguish between the apparent and the essential in that complex process, and that is why they belatedly learnt about its true essence. At the same time, he also warns and instructs us about how “the truth is revealed at the end of the road” and that repeaters in history often pay a high price for their bad choices and consequences.

The history of human knowledge, social and political thought, has left us with various traces of

both the Eros of creation and the conflicts and forces of destruction that have accompanied the human race in its ascent through history, space and time, always through the interrelationship of politics and space. They are found in different texts of both religious writers and of poets and philosophers, historians and scholars, from Confucius, through Heraclitus, Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides, to Plato and Aristotle and, later, T. Aquinas, J. Bodin, Ch. Montesquieu, N. Machiavelli and T. Hobbes.

This paper will give a brief overview of the period of the birth and development of geopolitical ideas about the relationship of politics, space and preservation of state sovereignty and the expansion of geostrategic powers. In the pre-modern era of traditional communities, there is a range of these ideas from antiquity to the 19th century. Their common denominator could be summarized under the syntagm of pre-modern ideas and theories of predestination, i.e., the fateful deterministic connection of a state with its geographical location (the location of its geographical territory, soil morphology, climate and water, demographic substrate and other natural resources). Based on these characteristics of the territory and blood, political/military elites (ruling structures) built the geostrategy of the state and its political action in international relations.^[3] Certainly, the choice of the strategy and concept of

[2] Here, Hegel considers the possible development of all forms of consciousness, up to the point when it becomes a reality in itself, i.e., when the spirit knows itself through the mediation of sociality. Hegel's basic thesis is that only through action does man establish unity with the world in which he exists. Therefore, he states: “Action is nothing other than the realization of an inner moral purpose, nothing other than the production of a reality determined by purpose.”

[3] For more details about the development of the idea and concept of geopolitics, see the studies of foreign and domestic authors: Lacoste, 1993; Thual, 1995; Tial, 2007; Panarin, 1996; 2004; Dugin, 2004; Despotović, Jevtović, 2019; Brzeziński, 1997; Vidal, 1999; Vidal, 2004; Nye, 2006; Toffler & Toffler, 1993; 1998; Pavić, 1973; Stepić, 2004; 2016; Petrović Piroćanac, 2004; 2010; Mitrović, 2008; 2014.

warfare always included ideological legitimization. In traditional communities it was often immersed in idealistic, religious and racial “arguments”. The formation of this strategy and concept of warfare in every epoch was affected by the level of the development of weapons technology. However, it was not until the 19th and the 20th centuries that geopolitics saw its university establishment as a separate scientific discipline. First it was done at military academies and then at universities as scientific and educational institutions. From a brief overview of geopolitics in the studies of political science, international relations and within military strategies one can see that they developed primarily in the west of Europe (in Germany, France, England, Sweden) and in the USA, particularly in the era of the rise of imperialist powers and the spread of the practice of colonialism. Although the term *geopolitics* (γῆ, Ancient Greek for Gea (Earth) + πολιτική, Ancient Greek for politics) was first introduced by Swedish Professor Rudolf Kjellén (1864–1922) in his work *The State as a Living Organism* (1916), determining with it the “science of the state as a geographic organism or phenomenon in space”, it should be noted that the term *political geography* was coined by German Professor Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904) in the eponymous work from 1897.^[4] In his works *Anthropogeographie* (1882), *Politische Geographie* (1897) and *Lebensraum* (1901) Ratzel laid the foundations of geopolitics as a determinist theory about the relationship between politics and space. In fact, this author believes that successful politics relies

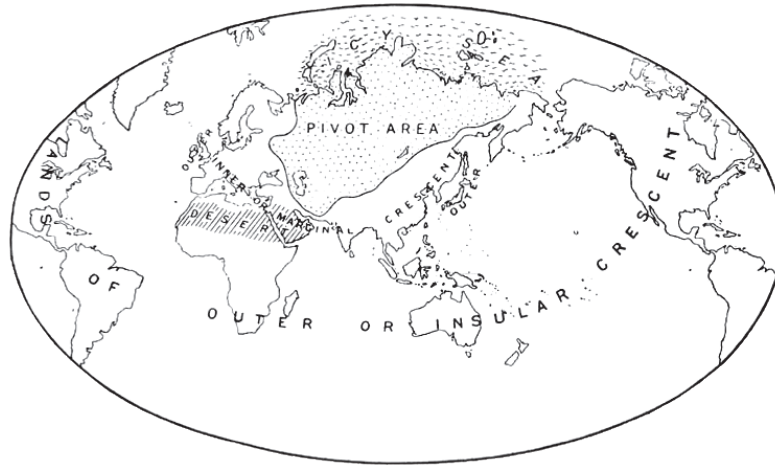
on understanding space as destiny, from which derives the establishment of geostrategy “about the right of the stronger to expand their space at the expense of the weak”, which was openly proposed later by the ideologists of German Nazism, connecting this theory with the socio-Darwinist theory and Hobbes’ theory that “man is a wolf to man”, from which different versions of the racist theory derived. Building on Ratzel’s work, Kjellén established his understanding of the importance of the land base in the space without which no state can exist, emphasizing its aspiration to expand in large territories. In that context, he stressed the necessity of political unification of Central Europe as a counterweight to the USA, England and Russia.

US Navy officer and professor Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914) developed a geopolitical view about the importance of distinguishing and contradicting main naval and continental countries of Eurasia – England and Russia. Starting from the same premises, British geographer Sir Halford John Mackinder (1861–1947) gave advantage to “heartland” – the Eurasian continent in geopolitics, which he expressed in his famous syllogism in 1904: “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island (Eurasia); Who rules the World Island commands the World!”^[5]

Defining geopolitics as “a science about the dependence of political events on living space”, German general, geographer and sociologist Karl Ernst Haushofer (1869–1946) saw it as an instru-

[4] For more details see: Matic, 1993, pp. 341–345, as well as: Stepić, 2016, pp. 153–273

[5] It is surprising how this geopolitical syllogism was operationalized many years later by Zbigniew Brzezinski in his work *The Grand Chessboard* – as a project of struggle for superiority/domination and hegemony of the USA in the 21st century.



Map of the world showing the regions defined by Halford John Mackinder in his 1904 work "The Geographical Pivot of History"

Photo: Wikipedia

ment of "reviving the German state with the aid of geography", turning it into a mere ideological and propaganda instrument of German national socialism in its aspiration to rule Europe and the world. Here it should be emphasized that this idea was accepted by Adolf Hitler who used it in his book *Mein Kampf* even before coming to power. It is well-known how many victims the world suffered in the Second World War as the price for the achievement of such geopolitics. The highest price of the fascist war in terms of the number of victims was paid by Russians, Jews and Serbs.

II. Metamorphosis of geopolitics in modernity – form and essence

After two world wars caused by Germany's expansionist politics, geopolitics underwent stigmatization and was long discredited as a racist "bourgeois"

science deriving from workshops of ideologists of "blood and soil" who proclaimed the Aryan race as superior to other races and civilizations. For almost 40 years after the Second World War, mankind lived in a bipolar balance between great powers of the East and the West as global actors in the world. Peace was secured through a culture of fear, arms control, and interdependence and responsibility in preserving the world order under the auspices of the UN. This political climate in international relations enabled the competition of great actors, but also of the entire humanity in innovative-developmental terms within the third and fourth scientific-technological revolutions. In the context of civilizational development, geopolitics was suppressed and replaced by *geoeconomics* (liberalization and globalization of the international market, growth and expansion of transnational companies) worldwide. In those terms, detente and great progress were achieved, as well as the affirmation of socio-dem-

ocratic ideals and values in the world in the form of a social welfare state in the West and mono-party socialism in the East, but also the convergence of different models of development, management and preservation of peace in the world. It is the age of relative peace accompanied by local regional wars, but also the period of combating colonialism in the so-called third-world countries and of the expansion of the non-alignment and peaceful coexistence movement. Unfortunately, due to the implosion of socialism at the end of the 1980s and the disappearance of the bipolar order, i.e., his replacement by the unipolar order, the platform of the rise of the forces of neoliberal globalism geopolitics was “revamped” in the form of restoration of capitalism, renewal of imperialism and re-colonization. In that context, the NATO expanded to the East, the international order and world peace were undermined and destroyed under the motto of expanding the ideology of human rights and colonial democracy in new territories, particularly in the countries undergoing post-socialist transition. A key geopolitical change was the fall of the Berlin Wall whose direct and long-lasting consequences are visible even nowadays. geopolitical researchers point out that the biggest direct consequence of the Berlin Wall fall was “the creation of a united German state in the centre of Europe. United Germany immediately began playing the key role on the old continent and assume leadership within the EU institutions, gradually directing it towards the achievement of its own priority interests” (Gajić, 2025, p. 60). Political, military and security changes, along with the destruction of the real socialist bloc, made it possible for the USA to use economic influences and Euro-integrations to bring geopolitically closer

former socialist countries and to spread the NATO eastwards in practice, to the very borders of Russia. The cunning strategic plan concealed the intention to bring these transformed states into the EU overnight, with the task of opposing German hegemony and thus quietly controlling its spreading influence, but also to become a new “sanitary cordon”, thus preventing any future economic closeness between Germany and Russia.



Zbigniew Brzezinski

Photo: Wikipedia

The claws of this predatory-devised deployment of forces by the global West were first shown by the intervention of the NATO alliance against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in spring 1999 without the approval of the UN Security Council. The essence and geostrategic guidelines of this predatory, neo-imperialist geopolitics of the USA and its satellites were presented in Zbigniew Brzezinski's geostrategic study *The Grand Chessboard* (1997), as well as in George Friedman's geopolitical forecasts *The Next 100 Years*

(Brzeziński, 1999). They explained the project of the predatory Odyssey and the NATO: from Serbia and the Balkans – to the Eurasian Balkans, the war in Ukraine and a highly likely long march of the USA to the East (with the aim of disintegrating Russia and subordinating China). Unfortunately, this platform of geostrategic vision and geopolitics of the distribution of world resources began its brutal realization throughout the world. The rise and consolidation of Russia under Putin and of China under Xi Jinping have become a barrier to its realization and are hopefully leading to its collapse. The rise of the forces of the third and fourth technological-development waves, which is associated with the discoveries in the field of information technologies, intellectual capital, symbolic power, communications and *geoculture of development*, was optimistically welcomed by humanity. The Internet as an invention was formerly declared “the person of the year” in the USA, just as in 2025 it was done with artificial intelligence. Sadly, the power of new technologies is largely used nowadays in the sphere of armament, military industry (robots, killer drones) and the strengthening of hybrid warfare in the form of using so-called soft power and symbolic violence, the role of global media in spinning and manipulations, spreading the patterns of controlled colonial democracy. Their role was previously written about by Noam Chomsky in his studies *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* and *Deterring Democracy*, by French authors Pierre Bourdieu in *The Mirror of Narcissus* and *Signals of Lights 1* and *2*, and Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle*, by American authors Edward Herman and Robert McChesney in *Global Media*, as well as by Russian author Sergey Kara-Murza in *Mind Manipulations*.

However, it is certain that the future technological, economic and general social development of humanity will increasingly depend on the role of human intellectual and cultural capital and its use in the service of humanity. That capital will be the key element of the development of new production forces of the future and general social progress. Its innovative-creative role in social changes as the elite of the cognitariat is today written about by eminent sociologists and futurologists, such as Alvin Toffler (*The Third Wave*), Jacques Attali (*A Brief History of the Future*), Antonio Negri (*Empire*), Paul Kurtz (*How to Reorder the World*), Edgar Morin (*Global Thinking*), Johan Roos (*Intellectual Capital*), Daniel Goleman (*Social Intelligence* and *A Force for Good*), John Naisbitt (*Megatrends* and *Megatrends 2000*) and Lester Brown (*World Without Borders*). All these outstanding scholars optimistically look at the future in their studies and send us a message in the spirit of megatrends which are shaped by new actors of social change – protagonists of the cognitariat, i.e., intellectual capital, that a new era is coming. In his *Megatrends*, John Naisbitt writes the following: “just as in the past geopolitics and geohistory determined our preset, new megatrends in the future will determine the present and chances for new generations”. In the context of these scientific and futurological prospects, we might wonder whether by the end of the 21st century geopolitics will survive political turbulences of modern humanity. Will geoculture and peace culture in the future win the deterministic power of the geographical position of the state that in the past determined, like fate, the life of the people and the role of the state in international relations? (Naisbitt, 1995). Unfortunately, the revival and spread of American

interventionism in today's world (as proved by the current aggression of the USA and Israel against Iran) primarily indicates that we are entering the age of a long wave of geopolitical chaos and instability with unforeseeable consequences for humanity.

III. Crisis, rise of new global powers and culture of peace

In the first two decades of the 21st century, exactly in terms of liberalization and globalization in the world market and in international relations, a huge financial crisis took place in 2008, but also the accelerat-

ed rise of China, whose economy, technology and comparative competence came to the fore. Its rise has been written about by Zbigniew Brzezinski in his study *Strategic Vision* ("Chinese influence and rise in the world is a reality to which America must adjust"), Arnold Toynbee ("the future unifier of the world will not be a Western or a pro-Western country, but China"), as well as Jeffrey Sachs and Joseph Stiglitz (the story about China is the most successful story about development in the history of the world).

In his world system analysis of international relations, American sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein predicts the collapse of the capitalist system and its replacement by a multipolar socio-democratic



Photo: Freepik

system in the middle of the 21st century. In this respect, there is a large movement growing today – BRICS with a new development philosophy, the project of the just, democratic and multipolar world order in which equality, independence of every nation and country in the modern world will be respected. Chinese President Xi Jinping writes the following about this movement and its platform in the study *On Building a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity* (2023): “We should build the Belt and Road into a road for peace. The ancient silk routes thrived in times of peace, but lost vigour in times of war. The pursuit of the Belt and Road Initiative requires a peaceful and stable environment. We should foster a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation; and we should forge partnerships of dialogue with no confrontation and of friendship rather than alliance. All countries should respect each other’s sovereignty, dignity and territorial integrity, each other’s development paths and social systems, and each other’s core interests and major concerns. The Chinese Dream is not only about pursuing strength of the country, rejuvenation of the nation and happiness of the people. It is a dream about peace, development, cooperation and win-win. The Chinese people have always believed that China will only be well when the world is well, and that the world will only be well when China is well” (Jinping, 2024). The essence of multilateralism is not only in the innovative direction of the global concept development but also in the creative transformation of the essence of the exceptional culture of China which is creating a theoretical system rich in thought, deep in connotations and logically rigorous. The core principles distinguished by Chen Bo are as follows: “upholding fairness and justice is the

primary criterion, openness and inclusiveness are essential, adherence to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter is the fundamental guideline, practicing extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits is the necessary path, and keeping pace with the times is an inevitable choice” (Bo, 2025, pp. 10–11).

Today’s crisis of global neoliberal capitalism has revealed deep internal and external roots of the conflict (the growing public debt burden of large countries – the USA, Germany and Japan) and attempts to use war to disguise internal contradictions and redirect to external conflicts with migrants and other countries. In his study *Europe and Global Geopolitical Changes* Siniša Lepojević writes, *inter alia*: “The first two decades of the 21st century brought epochal geopolitical changes, which carry with them historical fractures, and on the historical ruins a completely different and new world will emerge. A new world order is being created in which future generations will live”. He says that in modernity, “unfortunately, everything has become geopolitics, from football and sport, through Eurovision Song, to high-level politics. Nothing has been spared”. In the end, he points out that “geopolitics has become a universal excuse for rescuing something that can no longer be rescued, and that is where all hope is lost” (Lepojević, 2024, p. 41).

Donald Trump has given a cynical excuse that “globalization is guilty of today’s crisis”, and equally cynical was the first move of the Nobel Prize candidate immediately after winning the new mandate to rename the US Department of Defense into the Department of War. In practice, he encouraged the politics of armament and interventionism disguised as the revival of the Monroe Doctrine. The revamping and rise of the forces of globalism (from the NATO’s

intervention in Kosovo and Metohija to the proxy war in Ukraine and the war in the Middle East and in Gaza, with the use of new technologies, e.g., drones and so on) have evidently revealed the predatory imperialist nature of these conflicts. In line with the old saying, “The wolf changes its coat but never its mood.”

After the COVID-19 pandemic, the world seems to be immersed in a new fugue of death: ethnic and military conflicts have been revived, urbanocides and ecocides are rapidly spreading, epidemics, diseases and famine are increasing, the contradiction between the rich north and the south is growing. Modern wars show their real nature just as Bertolt Brecht said: “Wars increase the wealth of the rich and the poverty of the poor”. In his study *War as the US Foreign Policy*, Noam Chomsky analyzed all conflicts after the Second World War and showed that in more than 95% cases Americans were involved either directly or indirectly.

French sociologist Raymond Aron also reveals the predatory essence of war in his study *Peace and War*, pointing to its Machiavellian nature ranging from Clausewitz to modernity: “War is not just the implementation of politics by other means, but also that politics can be that too”. Raymond Aron believes that nowadays humanity is living in the childhood period in terms of the culture of peace and that it will take many centuries and wars before humanity learns its lesson and adopts the Gandhian politics – that peace is development and that politics of non-violence and dialogue is the politics of peace.

Final considerations

Geopolitics as a synthetic science unites the corpuses of modern knowledge that in the era of arti-

ficial intelligence becomes even more available and comprehensible to all nations on the planet. The hypertrophied interests of hegemonic states are thus becoming more accessible and visible, and it can be argued that the world is at a great crossroads – in a mission of achieving peace or on the road towards new wars that will mark the forthcoming epoch. The task of democracy is to permanently tame politics by developing different forms of unity of representative and directive democracy, to control it and harness by the activity of social actors so as to prevent its alienation from the interests of citizens and, just the opposite – to be in the service of their interests and preservation of original national sovereignty. Many critical thinkers have warned about this since antiquity to date. During the golden age of ancient democracy, wise Pericles emphasized that rights belonged to those who are awake, that *democracy was an act of courage* and that it was defended by the polis citizens’ active participation in social life. In the second half of the 20th century, French President de Gaulle warned that “politics must not be left only to politicians” because it might be deformed into a party democracy, i.e., “a democracy without people”. That is why democracy through its different direct forms (local and regional self-government, referendums and other civil society institutions) must be strengthened and constantly kept under the watchful eye of the citizens so as to prevent the emergence of any form of political pathology. The development of participatory democracy and legal state is the best path towards socialization of political power and the conquest of freedom by citizens, promotion of national sovereignty and building a fairer and more progressive society.

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Political Landscape of Youth Blogging: Axiological Aspect^[2]

Abstract: The article is devoted to political themes in the cases of young Russian bloggers. The research is conducted from the perspective of analyzing the value orientations that emerging young influencers broadcast while addressing current Russian and global agendas. The relevance of turning to youth blogging stems from the necessity of identifying the value systems of young people for the formation of state youth policy. It has been established that young bloggers whose texts are related to politics are few in number. They demonstrate unique content depending on their interests, biographies, and value systems. Three groups of values represented in the studied blogs have been identified: Fundamental state-oriented values; Fundamental life-oriented values; Fundamental moral and ethical values.

Keywords: political discourse, axiology, traditional values, youth policy, emerging young influencers.

Introduction

In the document entitled “Strategy for the Implementation of Youth Policy in the Russian Federation until 2030” (hereinafter – *Strategy*) one of the key concepts is “youth participation”. It implies the involvement of young people in the public life of the country, namely in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres, as well as the opportunity to participate “in developing decisions and carrying out

actions for the realization of the rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of youth” (Strategy, 2024, p. 3). The document notes that according to surveys of young Russians aged 18–35, only 4% in 2022 and 6% in 2023 stated that they were members of political parties. At the same time, 77% of young citizens in 2022 and 75% in 2023 said they are interested in political events and news (Strategy, 2024, p. 11).

The data from the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM), dated July 1, 2024 and

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presented in an article by L.V. Rozhkova, show a decrease in youth interest in politics, even though most Russians (51.9%) follow political news, but “the youth group does not belong to the groups that are interested in this” (Rozhkova, 2025, p. 25). Young people’s apolitical stance is partly due to the fact that, according to the Strategy, “the value system of youth reflects a shift from collectivism to individualism and from statehood to cosmopolitanism over the last 30 years” (Strategy, 2024, p. 7). This thesis is supported by researchers of socio-political processes in Russia over the past decades, who note that for “a significant part of Russian youth, private life and achieving personal success and material well-being are more important. At the same time, youth is easily manipulated and can be involved in protest actions” (Belyaeva, 2020, p. 25). The colour revolutions of the 21st century demonstrated that young people became the main participants in protests. For instance, “the ‘Orange’ revolutions in CIS countries showed that electorally passive youth can become active participants in mass actions that significantly influence political processes” (Baranova, 2011, p. 272). Consequently, it can be assumed that “youth participation in socio-political life is only beneficial when it has a constructive direction, based on socially approved axiology and balanced, considered judgments” (Gabibullaeva, 2024, p. 344).

One of the tools for forming loyal attitudes among young citizens towards state policy and understanding the value orientations of the state is political content. Thus, a regional study (in Penza) of

youth interest in foreign policy showed that “45.7% of respondents consider Russia’s foreign policy to be independent. Most youth agree with Russia’s role as a world leader in maintaining peace, including in its traditional sphere of interests – the post-Soviet space” (Rozhkova, 2025, p. 27).

From 2014 to 2022, Russian state youth policy saw a turnaround (Gabibullaeva, 2024; Il’insky, 2025; Kozlova, 2020; Otrokov, 2023; Ponomareva, 2021; Rozhkova, 2025; Shabunova et al., 2023 et al.), this was linked to the “introduction of the concept of ‘traditional values’ into the core objectives for youth work, which is directly connected to serious changes in state rhetoric and practice” (Omel’chenko & Lisovskaya, 2022, p. 71). It is important to consider that the Internet, and specifically social networks and messengers (Rozhkova et al., 2025), is one of the primary channels for political influence on the younger generation and the shaping of its value systems, as young people curate their own information feeds. Therefore, young bloggers represent a potential resource that the state must consider when engaging with youth. The purpose of this research is to examine the characteristics of political content in the Russian online space, focusing on the value-based (axiological) frameworks of youth blogs that engage with political themes.

Material, Methods

The study analyzed blogs on the social network VKontakte and in the messengers Telegram^[3] and

[3] The messenger has been blocked in the Russian Federation since April 1, 2026.

Max (2024–2026) that contained the words *politika*, *politik*, or *politicheskij* in their theme, title, or article content. This was done to gain insight into the nature of political content across these platforms. The main material for analysis was then selected from this pool: 5 case studies of young Russian bloggers (n=5) with channels containing articles on political topics (n=500). The authors include two women (Marianna Naumova, known online as MARIANNA BAT'KOVNA, and Alexandra Jost, known as Sasha Meets Russia) and three men (Timur Gainutdinov / GOZT, Ivan Dymov / dymovivan, and Nikolay Sobolev / Sobolev LIVE, SOBOLEV), born between 1993 and 2007. Note that, under Federal Law No. 489-FZ of December 30, 2020, "On Youth Policy in the Russian Federation" (hereinafter — On Youth Policy), the socio-demographic category of youth comprises individuals aged 14 to 35 inclusive, who are considered young citizens of the Russian Federation (On Youth Policy, 2020, Art. 2). The analysis of metrics on VKontakte, Telegram, Max, and YouTube (until 2022) revealed that these are the most in-demand channels within the political landscape of youth blogging.

For the analysis, 100 texts from each blogger were selected, which were posted on the messenger Telegram (prior to the restrictions on its operation in the Russian Federation), Max, and the social network VKontakte (n=500) during the 2024–2026 period. Using qualitative content analysis procedures, we identified the main political interests and preferences of this group of bloggers. The texts were evaluated according to three parameters: main thematic focus, value orientations, and verbal markers of values. The results obtained will

be published in the "Atlas of Value Orientations of Young Russian Bloggers" alongside materials related to non-political blogs.

The scientific significance of this research of young bloggers' case studies lies in the development of a methodology for identifying value patterns in online discourse and the compilation of a text corpus. The practical significance consists in creating materials that allow for conclusions about the value interests of youth, which can be used to develop solutions for the implementation of state youth policy.

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Political blogging in the Russian segment of the Internet

A study of the political landscape of Russian social networks has shown a high level of user interest in the topic of politics. Thus, in the social network VKontakte, searches for *politika* (politics), *politik* (politician), and *politicheskij* (political) have revealed over 300 channels, which can be typologized according to the criterion of the "channel creator".

The first type includes channels of government bodies (ministries, departments, administrations), where the word "politics" in the name reflects their official function. Examples are the *Tyumen Ministry of Social Policy* (20.1K subscribers) and the *Department of Economic Policy and Development* (52.8K subscribers).

The second type is media outlets focused on political content, for example, *Proslushka 2.0: Politics. Economy* (260.7K subscribers) and *Politics | Putin* (88.3K subscribers).



Photo: Freepik

The third type unites channels that position themselves as communities with various specializations but are united by political themes. Examples include: *Research on Political Processes in the East. Science* (69.6K subscribers), *Information War Against US Policy. Education* (51.9K subscribers), *Ugarnaya Politika. Humor* (85K subscribers). Additionally, channels dedicated to Serbian political topics are also represented in Russian social networks

and, judging by the number of subscribers, enjoy significant popularity. Examples include: *Serbia | News* (91.8K subscribers), *Serbia | Србуја* (44.3K subscribers), *Russian-Serbian Portal / Serbia / Balkans / Russia* (29.7K subscribers).

The fourth type consists of author-run channels, identified by the name of a person. Examples include: *The World Today with Yuri Podolyaka* (490.4K subscribers), *Political Commentator*

Konstantin Syomin (49.7K subscribers). This type of community also includes channels that are not explicitly labelled as political, but whose content may encompass political topics alongside others. Examples of such channels are: *Stas AY, Kak Pros-to!* (674.7K subscribers), *Dmitry Goblin Puchkov* (645.8K subscribers).

It should be noted that, as a rule, the authors of the channels belong to the age category of 35 and older. Youth blogging containing political content is represented insignificantly. In our view, this can be explained by the thesis stated in the Strategy regarding the individualism and cosmopolitanism of the younger generation. As a result of the analysis of the political landscape of the Russian blogosphere, several unique author blogs have been identified that address political themes to varying degrees. Let us consider five case studies of young bloggers who produce content with certain specific characteristics.

Main Thematic Focus

The complexes of political texts created by young bloggers on social networks inevitably reflect the values of the authors themselves. T. V. Leontieva, the head of a project supported by the Russian Science Foundation, which studies “Value Meanings in the Personal Narrative of Russian Youth Bloggers”, suggests referring to them as the value case of a digital personality. It can be assumed that, in general, each such case is accepted by the blogger’s subscribers, who share their value orientations. The bloggers’ engagement with domestic and foreign policy topics, their commentary on events,

the narration of their reactions to them, and the description of their own actions indicate what they consider important and, as a consequence, mark as values. In particular, the very engagement with political topics is implicitly stated as a value. At the same time, the narratives of bloggers differ depending on the importance of foreign or domestic policy issues to them.

Content related to foreign policy is typically created by bloggers based on the current news agenda. On the one hand, this agenda is characterized by stability due to the scale and significance of certain events for Russia, such as the Special Military Operation in Ukraine, the political activities of Donald Trump, and the European Union’s sanctions policy against Russia. On the other hand, within the framework of the aforementioned topics, the event background changes, and at certain periods, highly relevant issues arise that interest young bloggers (the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Iranian-American military actions, various statements from the American administration, for example, regarding Greenland, and others). At the same time, the focus on foreign policy issues is represented by a significantly larger number of texts from only one blogger with the online nickname Sobolev LIVE / SOBOLEV: out of 100 posts, the topic of foreign policy events is covered in 84 cases, both as a standalone subject and in conjunction with other topics. For other bloggers, the foreign policy content of their texts is reflected in a significantly smaller number of instances: the author with the online nickname dymovivan / Ivan Dymov – 12 times, the author Sasha Meets Russia – 6 times, and the bloggers Maryana Batkova and GOZT – 2 times each.

The analysis of thematic preferences among young influencers shows that they are more interested in domestic events than in foreign policy, particularly those related to military events involving a neighbouring state, since in this case, foreign and domestic political events are closely intertwined. The topic of the military conflict with Ukraine is predominant in the blog of the author with the online nickname Maryana Batkova. Working as a war correspondent in the SVO zone, the 27-year-old girl is actively involved in public activities, collecting and delivering humanitarian aid to the residents of Donbass. In addition, the topic of military actions in Ukraine and terrorism is relevant for the blog of the twenty-year-old Crimean resident with the online nickname GOZT. Furthermore, both bloggers write about security, information hygiene, heroes and their actions, and other topics related to the political situation in which Russia finds itself due to the military conflict of recent years.

Foreign policy military events in the Middle East, as well as the related activities of the U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration, are of interest to the 33-year-old blogger with the nickname Sobolev LIVE: a significant portion of his texts is dedicated to the analysis of statements and actions of the American leader. In the priority topics of the bloggers dymovivan (Ivan Dymov) and Sasha Meets Russia (Alexandra Jost), military conflicts are not represented, although they are sometimes mentioned and commented on. The former, in the studied content, primarily addresses stories related to foreign agents and actors of the domestic political agenda, which is relatively new for Russian society and has become relevant since

2022. The young blogger (24 years old) presents content in a discussion format, discussing what he perceives as unethical behaviour of real or potential opponents, exposing political fakes, and writing about information security. Sasha Meets Russia is an author whose interests, as reflected in her blog, are largely shaped by her emigrant background. According to information from open sources and the author's blog, 28-year-old Alexandra Jost was born in Hong Kong, lived and studied in the USA and Europe, and then came to Russia, which she considers her homeland. Accordingly, in her blog, she talks about life in Russia and, although she states: "I make content about Russia in a positive light, without politics" (Telegram, 20th February 2026), she nevertheless becomes an actor in the political process, since her social networks are subjected to blocking in the Western segment of the Internet due to the complimentary content of her texts towards Russia: "I have been blocked more than 10 times already. This shows how afraid they are of a different picture" (Telegram, 20th February 2026).

Thus, the analysis of thematic preferences among young Russian bloggers, whose content is directly or indirectly related to political issues, shows that the authors create unique content based on their interests, occupations, and biographies. It is quite evident that the texts differ in style, structure, and the questions they raise, as well as in the authorial "I", so they cannot be forced into any template. In our view, this implies that the value orientations presented in the blogs, whether explicit or implicit, possess originality and can be considered as a tool for native influence on a youth audience. The very engagement with political topics, to varying

degrees, indicates an understanding by young bloggers of the importance of shaping political thinking among their subscribers, since the events of recent years have exposed “a multitude of problems related to values, identity, and the consolidation of society on key issues of its development” (Aseeva, 2023, p. 8).

Value Orientations and Their Markers

The complexity of identifying values is determined by the absence of a common list that could be used as a set of descriptors. Therefore, the assessment and nomination of value orientations have a certain degree of subjectivity. At the same time, the *Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 809 dated November 9, 2022, “On Approval of the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values”* (hereinafter – *Decree*) (Decree..., 2022) outlined the value orientations that are significant for the state policy of the Russian Federation. The document names 17 traditional values, which are defined as “moral guidelines that shape the worldview of Russian citizens, are passed down from generation to generation, form the basis of the all-Russian civic identity and the unified cultural space of the country, strengthen civil unity, and have found their unique, distinctive expression in the spiritual, historical, and cultural development of the multinational people of Russia” (Decree, 2022). These include “life, dignity, human rights and freedoms, patriotism, civic consciousness, service to the Fatherland

and responsibility for its fate, high moral ideals, a strong family, creative labour, the priority of the spiritual over the material, humanism, mercy, justice, collectivism, mutual assistance and mutual respect, historical memory and continuity of generations, and the unity of the peoples of Russia” (Decree, 2022). Our research has shown that the nominations of these values, in the form in which they are fixed in the document, are generally not presented in the cases of young bloggers. It is not possible to identify them through a simple search by the names of the values, since the life guidelines that are important to the bloggers are reflected in their blogs implicitly.

In our search for objective approaches to analyzing values, we relied on linguistic data, specifically on identifying verbal markers of value orientations. The majority of value orientations are expressed through phrases or sentences; however, there are frequent words in the texts that can be called key words for the blogger and around which the “value-based” statements are constructed. Thus, in the content of the blogger with the nickname Maryana Batkovna (the total volume of texts is 27,692 words), the following key words are found: *my / nash / nashi / nashix / nas* (we / our / our / our / us) (n=846), *pomogat'* (to help) (n=294), *russskij* (Russian) (n= 254), *ya / menya* (me) (n=248), *zdes' / tut* (here) (n=234), *lyudi* (people) (n=222), *rabotat'* (to work) (n=192), *slushat'* (to listen) (n=192), *vse* (everything) (n=184), *voennyj / voennosluzhashhij* (military / serviceman) (n=181), *zhizn'* (life) (n=162), *smotret'* (watch) (n=160), *vojna* (war) (n=154), *proekt* (project) (n=126), *prodolzhat'* (to continue) (n=116), *Novorossiia* (n=114), *prigranich'e* (borderlands) (n=106), *budut* (will)

(n=106), *podpisyvatsya* (to subscribe) (n= 102), *nikto* (nobody) (n=100). The analysis of contexts with these key words allowed us to identify the value orientations of the blogger. Thus, the values of collectivism, mutual assistance, and mutual respect are marked by the pronouns *my / nas / nam / nash / nashi / nashix* (we/us/our), for example: *my' sobiraem / razgovarivaem / govorim / slushaem / rabotaem / prodolzhaem rabotat'* (we gather / talk / speak / listen / work / continue working); *nash vizit / proekt / sport / muzej / batal'on* (our visit / project / sport / museum / battalion); *nasha strana / s'emochhnaya gruppa / «Operaciya Volshebstvo» / sobaka / Rodina / sovместnaya broshyura / sila* (our country / film crew / "Operation Magic" / dog / Motherland / joint brochure / strength); *nashe neprostoe vremya / «Nashe delo» / bratstvo* (our difficult time / "Our Business" / brotherhood); with the verb *pomogat'* (to help), for example: *Watch, listen, subscribe, help, participate; No one will help us except ourselves, all of ours is us*, etc. The adjective *russskij* (Russian) in the texts of the blogger with the nickname Maryana Batkovna is generally associated with several values depending on the context: the unity of the peoples of Russia (*The Komi Republic – a Russian northern land with vast forests and rich natural resources*), historical memory and the continuity of generations (*Rus' was baptized in the Sevastopol Chersonesos, then it was Kiev, Vladimir, Moscow. All of this is Russian land, it was, is, and will be...*).

In bloggers' texts, keywords partially overlap. For example, in the blog *Sasha Meets Russia* (the total text volume is 6,926 words in both the Russian and English versions), the key words are *ya / mne / moj / moy / moyo / moi* (I / me / my mine)

(= 113), *Rossiia / rossiiane / rossijskij* (Russia / Russians / Russian) (= 92), *svoj / svoyu / svoya / svoe* (one's own / his / her own) (= 43), *my* (we) (= 34), *mir* (world) (= 35), *zhizn'* (life) (= 33), *se-godnya* (today) (= 20), *lyudi* (people) (= 20), *videt', uvidet'* (to see, to catch sight of) (= 20). We should note that if Mariana's most frequent pronouns are *my / nash* (we / our), then Alexandra's are *ya / moj* (I / my). Moreover, in our opinion, the latter pair of pronouns in most texts by all bloggers is associated with the concept of personal responsibility for one's words and actions. This responsibility can also be considered a value and added to the list established in the Decree. For example: *I proposed, among other things, to integrate our Safe World project's graphic brochures into school and extracurricular programs* (Mariana Batkovna); *I have known the wonderful Elena Eduardovna for a long time, and I decided to highlight her noble contribution to our Victory* (Sasha Meets Russia); *The most important thing, in my opinion, is that Timur is a true patriot...* (ГОЗТ); *Exactly a year ago, the khokhly stole my YouTube channel from me. I had been developing it since January 2019 and had gained 125k subscribers* (dymovivan). The blogger with the nickname SOBOLEV does not present an "I-concept"; the texts are written in the form of a detached account of an event in which the author does not participate and to which he has no direct connection. The posts of the last blogger are the closest in format to news and political content. Based on the analysis of blogs by young influencers, it is possible to compile a correspondence table of linguistic markers and the authors' traditional value systems, where the quantity of markers indicates the most prioritized values.

Correspondence of Values and Markers in Youth Political Blogs

Values	Markers
Life	<i>life (preserve / maintain / save / build / ordinary / peaceful / city / small), we, I, people, peaceful life, peaceful people, peace (pray for peace / want peace / honour peace / rush towards peace), peaceful coexistence, etc.</i>
Dignity	<i>sportsmanship, humility and dignity, to help, to listen, know our people</i>
Human rights and freedoms	<i>rights, freedom (of speech, of religion, to give one's life for freedom), I / me</i>
Patriotism	<i>Russia (love / show / call), Russian, we, us, to us, our, ours, our / of our, service / devotion), work (= to serve) (in New Russia / Belgorod / Bryansk regions / Russian borderlands / a thousand kilometres from Moscow / in this time / in Belgorod region / for the glory of Russia), etc.</i>
Civic consciousness	<i>civil participation / civic engagement (Fifth International Forum on Civil Participation), citizen of Russia</i>
Service to the Fatherland and responsibility for its fate	<i>to serve, to continue, we, us, to us, our, ours, our / of our, Russian borderlands, Russian weaponry, Russian soldier, the best of the nation / the elite of the nation, here, there (at war, in a foreign country), work (= to serve) (in New Russia / Belgorod / Bryansk regions / Russian borderlands / a thousand kilometres from Moscow / in this time / in Belgorod region / for the glory of Russia), military operation, military borderlands, military artists / priests, military pilot / military institute, military personnel (of a volunteer brigade / regiment / our army / with a call sign / from Komi), service / devotion, etc.</i>
High moral ideals	<i>mercy / compassion, justice, service / devotion</i>
A strong family	<i>family (big / strong / mine / ours / own / talk / talk about family), home (we are at home / comfortably / released to be sick at home / return home), children, dad, mom, grandma, grandpa, together, etc.</i>
Creative labour	<i>to work (continue / a great honour / in New Russia / Belgorod / Bryansk regions / Russian borderlands / a thousand kilometres from Moscow / in this time / in Belgorod region / for the glory of Russia), project, service / devotion, etc.</i>
The priority of the spiritual over the material	<i>spiritual (principle), service / devotion, to serve</i>

Humanism	<i>humanely, help / assistance, mutual help / mutual assistance</i>
Mercy	<i>mercy (to show mercy), to help, to listen</i>
Justice	<i>(un)just or (un)fair, (in)correctly / (un)right, world (a just world, to show the world the truth)</i>
Collectivism	<i>We, us, to us, our, ours / our, our / of our, together (filmed / work / serve / we are together), to listen (to people / soulful songs / stories), all (ours / our own / services / residents / normal guys / officers / branches of the military / rights / involved), thank you everyone, to subscribe (to a channel), world (came from all over the world / the whole world, people from all over the world / we lived through it all together), etc.</i>
Mutual assistance and mutual respect	<i>help / assistance, to respect, to help, all (ours / our own / services / residents / normal guys / officers / branches of the military / rights / involved / military), thank you everyone, military (helps), etc.</i>
Historical memory and continuity of generations	<i>History, generation, to remember, memory, Russian land, Russians (people / women), Russian (borderlands / weaponry), Russian (region / city / soldier), Russians / a Russian (noun) will come, Mother of Russian Cities, I am a Soviet person, Russian spirit, one's own (valuable battalion / contribution / voice / path / experience / home / front), one's own history, one's own (roots / relatives / principles / films / children / students / ideas / women / values / lives / travels), etc.</i>
The unity of the peoples of Russia	<i>Russian land, Russian region, Russia, Russians, Russian people (heroic / northern / simple / worthy / close / irreplaceable / best / our), New Russia (to work / work in New Russia / today / «History of New Russia» / topic of the day for New Russia), borderlands (Russian, military / to work in the borderlands), Russian spirit, from (Kalmykia, Ossetia, Vladikavkaz, various corners of Russia, all regions of Russia), etc.</i>

The list of traditional Russian values, as established in the Decree, can be supplemented with other value orientations that are conveyed in the studied content of youth blogging related to political topics. For example, bloggers write

about: safety (*take care of yourself and your children*), heroism (*our heroes*), masculinity (*to give one's life for...*), personal responsibility for one's words and actions (*I am proud...*), personal mission (*to make the world fall in love with Russia*).

It should be noted separately that the analyzed content includes congratulations, which indicate an attitude towards the tradition of holidays as a value. All bloggers congratulate their subscribers on traditional holidays, such as: New Year, International Women's Day, Orthodox Easter, Victory Day, Russia Day. Additionally, you can find congratulations for professional holidays, including: Air Force Day, Day of the Military, Medic Teacher's Day, and others. Respect for the traditions of celebrating national, professional, and personal holidays correlates with the values of historical memory and generational continuity, as well as the unity of the peoples of Russia. For example, *Sasha Meets Russia* emphasizes the youth's interest in traditional customs: *Did you know that the main wedding trend of 2025 is the return of Russian traditions? Yes, traditional Russian weddings are becoming incredibly popular among young people again* (Telegram, 18.07.2025).

Another value, which is not documented and has a rather personal character, is the orientation towards life, career, and status growth. It is represented in significant social events for the blogger, such as meetings with the President, high-ranking officials, and celebrities; obtaining citizenship of the Russian Federation; and trips to the Arctic, among others. For instance, the blogger with the nickname Mariana Batkovna writes: *I managed not only to ..., but also to briefly introduce myself and my work to the President and to present proposals for implementing a project aimed at the safety of children and adolescents* (Telegram, 8th March 2026). Furthermore, bloggers also share stories about the lives of other people who become warriors, save lives, and receive awards for their public

service. For example: *We remembered Father Anthony, who saved four soldiers and covered a fifth officer with his body, preserving his life* (Mariana Batkovna, Telegram, 26th January 2026); *Together with the head of the Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia for the city of Sevastopol, Sergey Viktorovich Sigunov, I presented schoolboy Timur Gainutdinov with the badge "Hot Heart"* (GOST, Telegram, 20th June 2024). Additionally, the texts emphasize the importance of a rational worldview, common sense in evaluating events, and the absence of illusions: *Finish with your illusions. The world is entering a phase of contradictions of messianic ideas* (SOBOLEV, Telegram, 3rd March 2026).

Conclusion

As a result of analyzing the value cases of these young bloggers, we identify three main groups of values that are represented in articles on political topics. The first group includes value orientations that are of paramount importance for the functioning of the state—fundamental state guidelines. These include service to the Fatherland and responsibility for its fate, patriotism, unity of the peoples of Russia and Russian society, historical memory and continuity of generations, heroism and masculinity, mutual assistance, and collectivism. These values are typically represented in texts that focus on current domestic and foreign policy news, particularly in relation to military affairs, heroes and their actions during wartime, historical events, customs, traditions, and the cultures of the peoples living in Russia.

The second group of values, in our view, is associated with fundamental life orientations of individuals who recognize themselves not only as private persons but also as citizens of their country. We include the following in this group: *safety, peace, life, strong family and home, creative labour, rights and freedoms, citizenship, personal responsibility for actions, and life (career/status) growth*. As a rule, these value orientations of young bloggers are revealed in their articles about *information security* (exposing fakes), significant communication with officials (for example, meetings with the president), as well as about their profession, work or studies, *self-development, and self-actualization*. In such publications, the authors often express their social stance regarding current political events, including military ones.

To the third group, we attribute value orientations that are extracted from the content of the texts through the authors' direct and indirect evaluative judgments, reflecting fundamental moral and ethical guidelines: *mercy, humanism, justice, and dignity*. They are identified in texts that reveal the author's public stance on certain events (for example, athletes' participation in the Olympic Games under a neutral status, without a flag and anthem; an interview with a foreign agent condemning Russia, etc.); in stories about heroes and their actions; in significant communication (interactions with interesting people, participation in international and all-Russian events, meetings with the President); and in personal impressions. It should be noted that two traditional values, which are established in the state document – *high moral ideals and the priority of the spiritual over the material* – are not explicitly expressed in the texts of

youth blogs. The authors do not use the concepts of “spiritual” and “moral”, however, value orientations towards *mercy* (humanitarian aid to civilians affected by war, the wounded, etc.) are directly related to these value systems.

The analysis of the political landscape of the Russian segment of the Internet has shown that maintaining political blogs is not typical for young authors. They are more interested in psychology, healthy lifestyles, professional development, and other topics, as well as entertainment content. Political channels are generally run by bloggers over the age of 35. We were able to identify 5 authors of various ages, from 20 to 33 years old, who maintain channels that reflect the current political agenda. Two of them—Mariana Naumova and Alexandra Jost—are already officially cooperating with the state, working as correspondents for the information company «Russia Today». In our view, the state has a direct interest in collaborating with as many bloggers as possible, since social media is today the most powerful tool for influencing minds. As researchers note, „agents of political socialization need to actively work with youth, taking into account the instability of their beliefs and the lack of formed political orientations” (Baranova, 2011, p. 269).

We believe that the state's interest in loyal and patriotic young influencers should be accompanied by fostering youth's interest in politics through their involvement in discussion clubs, volunteer projects, conferences, and other events focused on current socio-political issues. “The search for an ‘ideal’ Russian model of youth policy (MP) continues to this day. Reality, with events of various scales, intrudes into the negotiations between the

state and youth, as well as into discussions of youth issues, changing the current agenda and requiring new answers and solutions” (Omelchenko, Lisovskaya, 2022, p. 71).

The prospects for researching the value cases of digital personalities lie in the possibility of a comparative analysis of youth blogging in different countries. The author of the article, in collaboration with Serbian colleagues, has planned a

publication that will reflect the study of patriotic cases among young bloggers in the Russian and Serbian online spaces. This research will allow for an exchange of experience in studying online discourse among scholars from Russia and the Balkans, as well as to observe the peculiarities of patriotism perception by young influencers from different countries.

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Values as a Subject of Discussion in Russian-Serbian Online Communities^[2]

Abstract: The paper examines the axiology of texts presented in online communities. The study is based on material from groups on the social network VKontakte that position themselves as platforms for international communication in the context of discussions of Russian-Serbian issues. The content of a corpus of Russian-language texts published between 2022 and 2026 was analysed according to the criterion of the presence of words denoting *ценности* (values) in posts or comments. The analysis established that all the entries in the sample are devoted to the discussion of values in the context of an international agenda concerning Serbia, Russia, Europe and the USA. The contextual use of the word “value” was analysed. The findings demonstrate that, for this audience, the concept of VALUE constitutes both the core of cultural identity and the foundation of a political worldview.

Keywords: axiology, values, Serbs, Russians, cultural identity, transformation of values, military metaphor

Introduction

In the contemporary information space, online communities serve as platforms for discussing current issues. At the same time, the concept of VALUE, which is central to the sociological analysis of culture and identity, paradoxically appears relatively rarely as an explicit topic in the everyday narratives of internet users.

This study is devoted to analysing the mechanisms through which values are represented in the digital environment, where they are profiled through direct naming (in Russian, *ценности*, i.e. values) with varying degrees of intensity depending on the type of online community.

The importance of studying the specific ways in which values are represented on media platforms is indisputable, particularly in an in-

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ternational context, as emphasised in scholarly works, for example, in the study “Social networks as the main platform of communication between the media and society shape the image of a state at the international level” (Kunich, Muzykant & Panasenko, 2022, p. 184). Specifically, Z. Kunich and colleagues draw attention to the “specific features of the creation and promotion of Russia’s image in the *digital territory* of a kindred nation” (Kunich, Muzykant & Panasenko, 2022, p. 171).

We proceed with an analysis of discussions on Serbian culture and politics conducted by users of the Russian-language social network, VKontakte.

The methodological foundation of this study was developed on the basis of key concepts from the sociology of knowledge, discourse analysis and cognitive analysis. First and foremost, we draw on the theory of P. Berger and T. Luckmann, who regard values as products of the social construction of reality: “Values and worldviews have a social origin” (Berger & Luckmann, 1995, p. 15). In addition, we take into account the sociological theory of values developed by Émile Durkheim, which distinguishes between different types of values: “There are different kinds of values. Economic value is one thing; moral, religious, aesthetic and metaphysical values are quite another” (Durkheim, 1995, p. 291). He distinguishes between “judgements of fact” and “value judgements”, defining the latter in terms of ideals: “Value judgements are based on ideals” (Durkheim, 1995, p. 302).

Values are reflected in language, particularly in metaphors; therefore, we draw on the theory of metaphor developed by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, who point to a strong connection between meta-

phors and values: “The most fundamental cultural values are coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in that culture” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2004, p. 46). At the same time, as researchers point out, the cultural layer is primary in comparison with individual experience, since a person initially perceives the world through the prism of the culture of the community to which they belong: “Cultural models, values and attitudes cannot be regarded as a conceptual blanket that we arbitrarily spread over our experience. A more accurate view is that our experience constitutes the flesh of our culture; we experience the world in such a way that our culture is already part of every act of cognition and experience” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2004, p. 94).

In addition, in order to operationalise the concept, content analysis tools were employed, making it possible to translate abstract ideological constructs into measurable empirical indicators.

The identification of the value profile of a text is based on the frequency of use of particular linguistic units, as well as on the collocations of the key word with other nominations; therefore, the prevalence of the word “values” and a range of key linguistic units within the broader textual environment constituted the subject of research in this article. The methods applied were frequency analysis and collocation analysis.

The empirical analysis demonstrates that resources with an international focus constitute one of the most relevant types of online communities for studying this issue. There are several reasons for this. On the one hand, by its very nature, an international agenda presupposes a particular comparative

view of the world. In situations of collision between different sociocultural spaces, the contrast between values acquires distinct and clearly defined characteristics. When discussing international issues, participants in communication are compelled to resort to direct naming in order to identify civilisational differences, political regimes or models of economic development, thereby making discourse on values explicit. Consequently, studying this segment makes it possible to identify which semantic fields and axiological indicators are used to establish a distinction between “us” and “them” in the global context.

O. N. Novak notes a discrepancy in the semantic scope of the Russian word *ценность* and the Serbian word *вредност* (Novak, 2017, p 100); therefore, in order to establish a shared understanding of the key term, we note that in this paper, value is understood as a culturally significant fact of reality (a phenomenon, object or cognitive attitude).

The Polish scholar J. Bartmiński, who initiated a project for the systematic description of values among Slavic peoples, stated that “one should not attempt to identify the inherent values of each language (each cultural-linguistic community); rather, one should seek to determine their rank and significance, their relationships with one another and with other values; to reconstruct the way in which they are understood – and only then should they be compared with the situation in other languages” (Bartmiński, 2008, p. 64). Today, scholarly work on describing the values of ethnic communities is ongoing and has long-term prospects.

In this article, we have focused on describing the axiology of the Serbian and Russian peoples

as a single and complementary value field, shaped by a shared civilisational code and historical destinies.

2. Materials and methods

The research material consisted of contexts containing the Russian word *ценности*, meaning ‘values’ (in Russian, the singular form of this word, *ценность*, occurs less frequently), extracted from posts and comments in two Russian-Serbian groups on the VKontakte social media platform: (1) RUS-SERBIAN PORTAL / Serbia / Balkans / Russia (more than 29,000 subscribers); (2) Serbia (more than 44,000 subscribers).

Both groups are devoted to Serbia and are primarily aimed at a Russian-speaking audience discussing the culture, traditions, history and politics of the Republika Srpska and Serbia, and occasionally the wider Balkan region. The data were collected using tools developed by Ilya Barkov (vk.barkov.net) on a website that identifies target audiences on social networks and processes posts.

The sample consisted exclusively of Russian-language texts, as the search was conducted for the Russian word *ценности*, meaning ‘values’. The initial search results, limited to the period from 2022 to 2026 (to date), comprised 202 texts, of which 185 were included in the final sample after duplicates had been removed.

More than half of the analysed texts (107) date from 2023 and 2024 (see Figure 1), indicating that this period was characterised by a sharp increase in direct discussions of value categories.

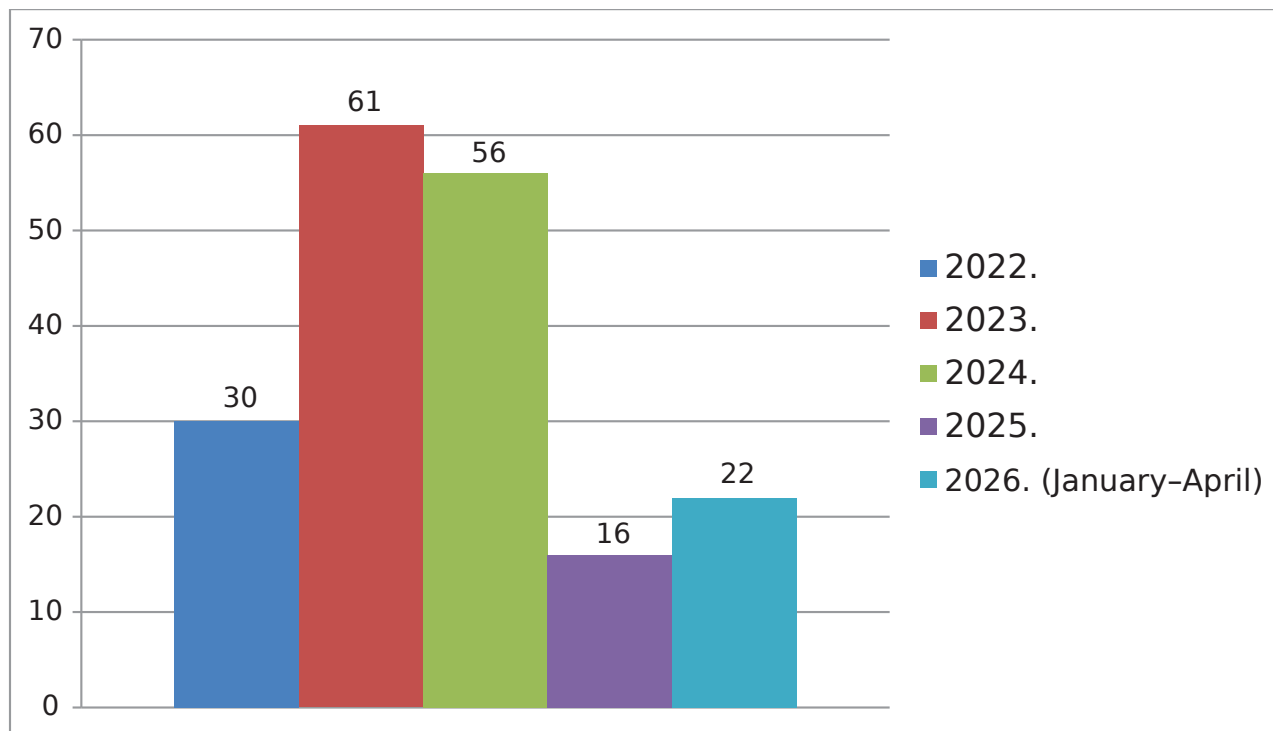


Figure 1. Number of posts containing the Russian word *ценности*, meaning 'values', in the analysed Russian-Serbian blogs, 2022-2026

According to the statistics, the age and gender structure of participants discussing values (i.e. the authors of the selected excerpts) is characterised as follows: 12.07% of the total number of participants belong to the youth category (14–35 years old), while 43.1% belong to the older age group (36 and above); the remaining 56.9% have not specified their gender on their profiles. Among subscribers who mention values in their posts and comments, the majority are men (60%) (vk.barkov.net).

According to our observations, the reported proportion of young participants in communication (under 35 years of age) among the total number of people involved in a thematic online community represents an average indicator for each community on the VKontakte social network (10–15%).

The corpus of texts thus compiled will subsequently be analysed from two perspectives. First, the content of the corpus is analysed in order to identify semantic “peaks” (categorical-thematic slots) by recognising and interpreting key words

on the basis of their frequency. Second, the collocations of the Russian word *ценности*, meaning ‘values’, as represented in the sample of texts are analysed.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Frequency of linguistic units in the corpus of posts from the Russian-Serbian online community: the context of discussions on values

The corpus of texts collected for analysis, comprising approximately 250,000 characters in total, contains the following words with the highest frequency of occurrence (more than 25 times), alongside the keyword *ценности*, meaning ‘values’, used for the selection of texts, according to data from the text analysis website Voyant Tools (<https://voyant-tools.org>):

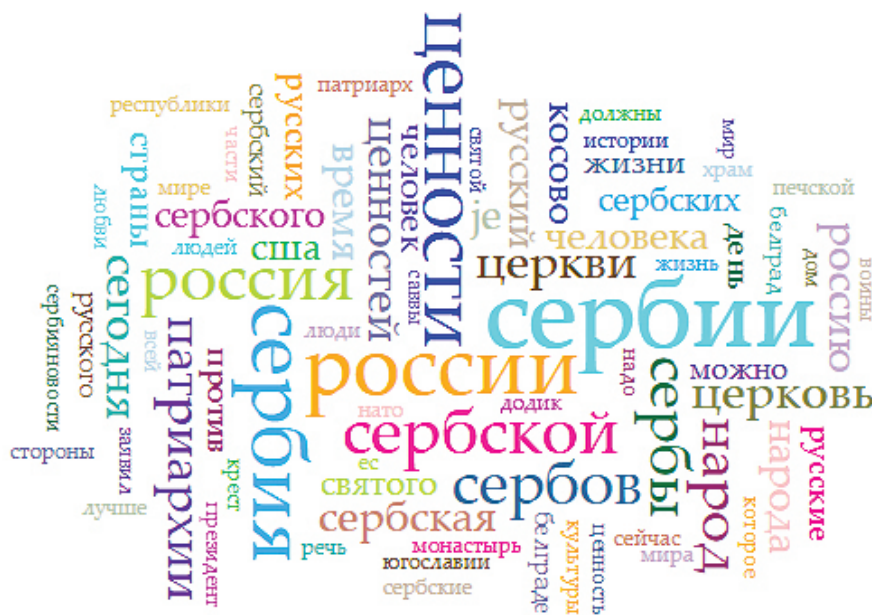
- in Russian: *сербский* – Serbian (252),
- in Russian: *Сербия* – Serbia (241),
- in Russian: *Россия* – Russia (239),
- in Russian: *ценности* – values (204),
- in Russian: *русский* – Russian (167),
- in Russian: *сербы* – Serbs (139),
- in Russian: *народ* – people/nation (112),
- in Russian: *церковь* – church (109),
- in Russian: *человек* – person/human being (90),
- in Russian: *жизнь* – life (69),
- in Russian: *Белград* – Belgrade (69),
- in Russian: *люди* – people (61),
- in Russian: *святой* – holy/saint (60),

- in Russian: *патриархия* – patriarchate (58),
- in Russian: *сегодня* – today (54),
- in Russian: *время* – time (49),
- in Russian: *Косово* – Kosovo (47),
- in Russian: *США* – USA (46),
- in Russian: *страна* – country (43),
- in Russian: *день* – day (41),
- in Russian: *против* – against (40),
- in Russian: *сейчас* – now/at present (33),
- in Russian: *НАТО* – NATO (31),
- in Russian: *республика* – republic (30),
- in Russian: *война* – war (30),
- in Russian: *крест* – cross (29),
- in Russian: *Додик* – Dodik (29),
- in Russian: *Савва* – Sava (28),
- in Russian: *культура* – culture (28),
- in Russian: *ЕС* – EU (28),
- in Russian: *надо* – need to/must (26),
- in Russian: *заявил* – stated/claims (26).

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This frequency list provides a preliminary lexical-semantic map of the value-centred discourse, highlighting key thematic nodes such as national identity, religion and geopolitical entities.

The Cirrus tool, part of the web-based Voyant Tools text analysis platform, provides a visual representation of word frequency in a text. This makes it possible to identify the concepts that constitute the immediate semantic environment of the Russian word *ценности*, meaning ‘values’. By counting the number of times each word occurs, a “word cloud” is generated in which font size is directly related to the frequency of the word (the more frequently a word occurs, the larger its font). It should be noted that different forms of the same word are not reduced to a single form, while the font is



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munities on VKontakte, and on an interpretation of the semantic relationships between them, the following main conclusions can be drawn, revealing the ways in which values are conceptualised in accordance with the ideological profile of the audience.

Identity as self-definition through opposition. The high frequency of words such as *Россия* (Russia), *Сербия* (Serbia), *сербский* (Serbian) and *русский* (Russian), together with their presence in texts in the immediate vicinity of the designation of the concept of “values”, indicates that the value system of the participants is not vaguely

universal. Rather, discussion of values always mitigates the ambiguity created by globalisation; consequently, the national agenda (the lexemes *страна* – country, *республика* – republic, *народ* – people/nation) acquires clear contours and a distinctive character when viewed through an axiological lens. It possesses a specificity corresponding to the thematic field of the online community and is built on a solid foundation of collective identity, in which Russian and Serbian culture are jointly designated as a single field, i.e. “one’s own” – as opposed to “the other”. Within the discourse of the online group, the appeal to the shared value foundation of these two Slavic peoples is less a direct statement of cultural affinity than an act of sociopolitical and ideological self-definition. Discussion of values serves as an instrument for constructing and reinforcing an image of a united civilisational space in opposition to external influences. Thus, value-based discourse becomes a marker of belonging to a particular community.

The church as an institutional bearer of values. Participants in the analysed online communities agree on the protective role of the church with regard to values. The significant quantitative presence of religious vocabulary in the analysed texts (*церковь*, meaning church; *святой*, meaning holy/saint; *патриархия*, meaning patriarchy) demonstrates that religion is regarded within the community as one of the key values and functions as a social institution that serves as the primary transmitter and guarantor of the preservation of values. In turn, this points to a need for traditional, time-tested moral principles and reliance on authority despite the uncertain-

ties of the present day. Values are sacralised and accorded a sacred status.

Values as an instrument for understanding the geopolitical field. The frequent mention of linguistic units such as *НАТО* (NATO), *США* (USA), *ЕС* (EU), *Косово* (Kosovo) and *война* (war) as values within the same semantic field reveals their pragmatic function. Here, values serve not only as an internal moral compass but also as an analytical tool for evaluating global events. The actions of global actors (e.g. NATO) are considered through the prism of their conformity or non-conformity with the aforementioned Russian-Serbian values. The conflict of values becomes the primary prism through which participants view international politics. Consequently, the defence of values is established as a distinct geopolitical position and form of solidarity.

Values as an indicator of the spatiotemporal continuum. Axiology does not exist outside social groups; by its nature, it is relative. A value is defined from the perspective of the culture of a community, which is determined by two factors – space and time. In this context, chrononyms (*время*, meaning time; *день*, meaning day; *сегодня*, meaning today; *сейчас*, meaning now/at present) serve as markers of the relevance of a particular value system, linking its variability to a specific historical moment. Given the defining role of the chronotope, values are simultaneously stable and variable. By providing a social group with a shared foundation for its existence, they serve as a guarantee of the predictability of human behaviour, the stability of the future order and the resilience of the social structure (ethnos, nation). However, space and time, by the very nature of their constitutive “dimensions”, entail changes in

paradigms and social transformations, after which values themselves become subject to change. This process is almost always painful because it affects the foundations of group identity, leading to social conflicts and crises.

The deontological essence of values. The inclusion of the name of any value in discourse presupposes a logical transition from its ontological status (“what is it?”) to the modal status of prescription (“how should it be?”). In other words, a value possesses imperative force and prompts an appeal to a social norm within the text. Its deontological nature is revealed through the presence, among the frequent contextual neighbours of the word *ценности*, meaning ‘values’, of linguistic units such as *надо* – need to/should/must, *заявил* – stated, and *против* – against, which actualise the categories of obligation, adherence to norms and disagreement with the norms of others within the narrative. Thus, the semantics of obligation contained in the Russian word *надо*, which conveys the meanings “it is necessary”, “should” and “is recommended”, expresses the normative-imperative register of discussions on values. Specifically, the emphasis is placed on the fact that every value functions as a norm, social attitude or rule. If something is recognised as a value, it logically follows that there is a prescription to act in accordance with it. This connection transforms a value judgement into a practical guide for action. In turn, the presence of the word *заявил*, meaning ‘stated’, indicates that statements by leaders and prominent figures (*Додик* – Dodik, *Вучич* – Vučić, *Сийярто* – Szijjártó, *Рейнке* – Reinke, *Ховеньер* – Hovenier, *Милошевич* – Milošević, *Путин* – Putin, *митрополит* – Metropolitan, *академик*

Бабурин – Academician Baburin, *посол Сербии при ЕС Апостолович* – Serbia’s ambassador to the EU Apostolović, *актер Бикович* – actor Biković, *венецианская комиссия* – Venice Commission, *академия наук* – Academy of Sciences) signify the public positioning of an individual or state (an act of self-identification) within an axiologically designated space and according to the criteria of a normative fact that imposes an obligation, a duty to adhere to a norm-value. Finally, the frequency of the word *против*, functioning as a marker of negation with regard to “the other/the alien”, in the analysed corpus of texts confirms the polarised nature of the value space, the divergence of worldviews and the conflict of beliefs.

Thus, values give structure to social existence in time and space, while their deontological essence transforms this structure into a moral and ethical framework. This framework consists of obligations (*надо*, meaning ‘must/should’), statements (*заявил*, meaning ‘stated’) and opposition to violations of consensus or disagreement with interference/intervention (*против*).

3.2. The collocational profile of the word *ценности*, i.e. ‘values’, in the corpus of posts from the Russian-Serbian online community

Based on corpus data from two Russian-Serbian groups on the VKontakte social network, we will analyse the combinations of the word *ценности*, meaning ‘values’, with other linguistic units. Within the corpus, 136 unique collocations containing this word were identified in the sense of “objects or phenomena of great cultural significance” (uses

of the word in other meanings were excluded, e.g. *скупать ценности* – ‘to buy valuables’, *ценность коллекции* – ‘the value/significance of a collection’), while the textual realisations reached a total of 283 occurrences. The corpus contains the following word combinations formed according to the “adjective + noun” pattern, which generally demonstrate the typical combinability of the noun in Russian, but also display specific characteristics in terms of their composition and quantitative criterion (high frequency), in accordance with the thematic discussions within the two thematic groups on VKontakte. The highest number of occurrences (>10) was recorded for the following attributive combinations:

- *традиционные ценности* (23) // traditional values,
- *евроатлантические* (5) / *европейские* (10) *ценности* (=15) // Euro-Atlantic/European values,
- *свои ценности* (12) // one’s own values,
- *семейные* / *семейно-родственные ценности* (12) // family/familial values,
- *духовные ценности* (10) // spiritual values,
- *культурные ценности* (10) // cultural values.

The combinatory properties of the word *ценности*, meaning ‘values’, reveal key directions in the conceptualisation of ideas about values.

Traditionalist ethicisation of discourse. It is symptomatic that the corpus of analysed texts contains no discussion of instrumental values such as wealth, career, popularity, success, etc. The subject of discussion is explicitly ethical imperatives and vital values, as reflected in the combinations:

традиционные/христианские/непреходящие ценности // traditional/Christian/enduring values.

The ontology of values. The discourse contains predicative constructions indicating the presence or absence of values in someone, primarily within a particular human community: *(у кого) есть ценности* // (someone) has values, *(у кого) нет ценностей* // (someone) has no values, *(у кого) не приняты такие ценности* // (someone) does not accept such values, *никаких ценностей (нет)* // (someone) has absolutely no values, *человек с ценностями* // a person with values.

Hierarchy-based ranking of values. A set (series) of values forms a system, which is why the collocation *система ценностей*, meaning ‘system of values’, is stable. Language illustrates the hierarchisation of values within a system – *высшие ценности стоят над (чем)*, meaning ‘higher values stand above (something)’; *(какие) ценности должны быть в приоритете*, meaning ‘which values should be prioritised’; through the introduction of attributes with gradational and superlative semantics. Thus, the significance of a particular value on a given abstract scale is conceptualised through the metaphor of size – *большая/огромная ценность*, meaning ‘great/enormous value’ – or through an evaluation of value, in which case pleonastic constructions arise – *значимые ценности*, meaning ‘significant values’, *самая дорогая ценность*, meaning ‘the most valuable value’. These are relative evaluations, as a comparative context is implicitly assumed, even though the combinations **меньшая* / **незначимая* / **менее значимая* / **дешевая ценность* – **lower value*, **insignificant value*, **less significant value*, **cheap value* – are non-idiomatic or generally impossi-

ble; the corpus of analysed texts contains only one combination that actualises lower levels of the hierarchy: *более низкие ценности*, meaning 'lower values'.

On the other hand, combinations such as *главная ценность*, meaning 'the principal value', *базовые/основные/высшие ценности*, meaning 'basic/fundamental/supreme values', *величайшая ценность*, meaning 'the greatest value', *высочайшие ценности*, meaning 'the highest values', serve to indicate an absolute position within a given hierarchical structure. At the same time, different methods are used to verbalise the top of the value pyramid: *главная, высшая, базовые, основные*, meaning 'principal', 'supreme', 'basic' and 'fundamental', respectively. These are lexical-semantic markers that indicate the formative element of the system, in relation to which all other values occupy a subordinate position, while *величайшая* and *высочайшая* are superlative forms, i.e. lexical-grammatical markers. Generally speaking, this series of combinations is characterised by a preference for the singular form in their contextual realisations. The plural form (*высочайшие/базовые/основные ценности*, meaning 'highest/basic/fundamental values') indicates the presence of several irreducible dominants that constitute the core of the value system.

Consolidation of the strength of values. A number of collocations reflect a constitutive (fundamental) characteristic – their ability to unite people, i.e. their function as a social integrator and cognitive support for collective identity. Above all, the word *общий*, meaning 'common', and its derivatives are actively involved: *общие/общечеловеческие ценности*, meaning 'common/universal human

values'; *приобщиться к ценностям*, meaning 'to embrace/subscribe to values'. The idea of absoluteness is embodied in the semantics of "individual/united": *универсальная ценность*, meaning 'universal value' (in Latin, *unus* – 'one'). Meanings of coincidence are also actualised: *схожие / одни и те же ценности*, meaning 'similar/the same values'. The word *человек*, meaning 'person/human being', likewise serves as a lexical marker of integration, denoting the commonality of fundamental values: *человеческие ценности, ценности человека*, meaning 'human values, a person's values'. Finally, among the linguistic means used to describe social integration and solidarity based on values, there are not only attributive but also predicative descriptors – verbs that establish the following relations: *ценности связывают (кого)*, meaning 'values connect (someone)' / *разделять ценности (с кем)*, meaning 'to share values (with someone)'; the verb *разделить*, among other things, also means "to join something, express agreement, show solidarity with someone in something" (Kuznetsov, 1998, p. 1067).

Polarisation of sides based on value priorities. The conceptualisation of a worldview through the category of possession – the antinomy of "one's own" versus "the other/another's" (*свои/другие/чужие/их/ваши/наши/аутентичные ценности*, meaning 'one's own/other/others'/their/your/our/authentic values') – presupposes a conflict between the bearers of the aforementioned values.

With regard to the idea of polarised sides, language provides a well-defined framework of struggle – a military metaphor, within which several key groups of combinations with the word *ценности* emerge, creating a framework of ide-

ological confrontation through the use of the following lexical units:

– Verbs of direct confrontation: *выступать против (каких-либо) ценностей*, meaning ‘to oppose (certain) values’, *бороться за ценности*, meaning ‘to fight for values’, *бросать вызов (каким-либо) ценностям*, meaning ‘to challenge (certain) values’. This group denotes an active conflict in which the subject is positioned as an actor initiating a counteraction.

– Verbs of defence and preservation: *стоять за (свои) ценности*, meaning ‘to stand up for (one’s own) values’, *отстаивать/защищать ценности*, meaning ‘to defend/protect values’, *защита ценностей*, meaning ‘the defence of values’, *во имя ценностей*, meaning ‘in the name of values’. These units form a defensive scenario in which values are presented as an object that must be protected from an external threat, while the acting subject assumes the role of defender.

– Nominalisation of processes: *крестный ход за (традиционные) ценности*, i.e. a religious procession for (traditional) values; *борьба за ценности*, i.e. a struggle for values. The use of deverbal nouns transforms a dynamic process into a static category, thereby contributing to the reification of the conflict.

– Verbs of destruction: *ниспровержение ценностей*, i.e. the overthrow of values; *уничтожение ценностей*, i.e. the destruction of values; *уничтожить / уничтожены ценности*, i.e. to destroy values / values have been destroyed; *разрушать ценности*, i.e. to destroy values; *подрывать (какие-либо) ценности*, i.e. to undermine (certain) values; *отнимать ценности*, i.e. to take away values; *лишить ценностей*, i.e. to

deprive [someone] of values; *попирать ценности* (literally: to trample on, to walk on), i.e. to destroy, trample on values. This group describes antagonistic action aimed at eliminating the opponent’s system of values and creating a value vacuum.

– Verbs of triumph: *ценности должны победить*, i.e. values must prevail/survive.

Identity and the self-determination of a people in relation to values. Both individuals and social communities make personal or collective choices regarding values – whether to accept or reject them.

A negative personal perception of certain values is reflected in collocates carrying the semantics of rejection, negation, dismissal or doubt: *неприемлемые ценности*, i.e. unacceptable values; *не нужны (какие) ценности*, i.e. (certain) unnecessary values; *отказ / отказываться от ценностей*, i.e. rejection / to reject values; *поставить под сомнение ценности*, i.e. to call values into question.

An individual’s positive attitude towards phenomena that have the status of values within a particular group is the result of a complex mental process. The status of a value is attributed to a particular fact of ideal or actual existence through a process of critical evaluation, which has given rise to the metaphor of a mental act (knowledge, recognition, understanding): *признание ценности*, i.e. recognition of a value; *осознать ценность*, i.e. to understand/recognise a value; *всё что нужно знать про (европейские) ценности*, i.e. everything one needs to know about (European) values. This cognitive operation is inextricably linked to processes of decision-making and intellectual reflection, which is reflected in language through the presence of

contextual collocates denoting decision-making (*определиться с ценностями*, i.e. to determine one's values) and vision (*пересмотреть взгляд на ценности*, i.e. to reconsider one's view of values – the visual metaphor is typical of the conceptualisation of intellectual activity).

Further engagement with assimilated values also presupposes the continuous activity of consciousness, which operates in terms of belief, memory and respect. This is evident in linguistic constructions describing a deep personal connection between the subject and the object: *предан/верен (каким) ценностям*, i.e. devoted/loyal (to certain) values; *(не) забыть (свои) ценности*, i.e. (not) to forget (one's) values; *чтутся ценности*, i.e. values are honoured. Dangerous processes of deviation from or gradual loss of this connection are also conceptualised through the concept of memory: *напомнить о ценностях*, i.e. to remind someone of values.

In addition to mental operations, the linguistic data also point to the idea of axiological pragmatics, which rests on the premise that practical actions by an individual (or community) are necessary for the preservation of values. A responsible attitude towards values is expressed through collocates denoting preservation, support, care and observance: *соблюдение ценностей*, i.e. observance of values; *хранить ценности*, i.e. to preserve/maintain values; *сохранение ценностей*, i.e. preservation of values; *сохранены (будут) ценности*, i.e. values are preserved (will be preserved); *забота/заботиться о ценностях*, i.e. care / to care for values. This undoubtedly activates the metaphor of inheritance, significant property and a resource for future generations.

Personal choice is also conceptualised through spatial metaphors – orientation (*ориентировалась на (какие) ценности*, i.e. to be oriented towards (certain) values), being located in a particular place or segment of a conceptual space (*быть на стороне (каких-л.) ценностей*, i.e. to be on the side of (certain) values; *приверженность / приверженный (каким-л.) ценностям*, i.e. commitment / committed to (certain) values), support (*опирающийся на ценности*, i.e. relying on values), and movement towards convergence (*стремление к (истинным) ценностям*, i.e. striving towards (true) values). In linguistic terms, values are ontologically conceived as characterised by “extralocality” in relation to the individual and, consequently, by stability, whereas the individual is mobile; it is the individual who moves within the realm of mentality, shifting between conditional locations or objects fixed in space: *переходить на (какие) ценности*, i.e. to shift to (certain) values; *оторвать от ценностей*, i.e. to detach [someone] from values; *возвращать (человека) к ценностям*, i.e. to return (someone) to values.

Dynamics of values. The collocability of this word points to two possible vectors of value transformation: their natural internalisation and deliberate influence. The dynamics may be described as something that occurs spontaneously (*упадок ценностей*, i.e. the decline of values). The second option is a voluntary change in values, conceptualised through an active metaphor of possession and metaphorically modelled by means of the verb *взять*, i.e. to take, which implies conscious choice and a voluntary effort: *перенять ценности*, i.e. to adopt/embrace values. However, in Russian-Serbian online communities, the central topic of discus-

sion is a third type of value transformation, namely influence (западнячки) – *ценности дают о себе знать*, i.e. “to have an influence”, “to make themselves felt”, or external influence exerted by various subjects.

Thus, the idea of the internalisation of values in discourse turns towards a target audience of children through education and upbringing, which is important for understanding the range of mechanisms involved in the transmission and purposeful transformation of a value-based worldview: *воспитывать в / воспитываться на (каких) ценностях*, i.e. to educate/raise [someone] according to (certain) values.

The second method of external influence is the implantation of one’s own values in another society: *ввести / интегрировать (какие) ценности*, i.e. to introduce/integrate (certain) values; *лезть с (какими) ценностями*, i.e. to impose (one’s own) values on someone; *транслировать ценности*, i.e. to disseminate/transmit values; *продвижение ценностей*, i.e. the promotion of values; *пропагандировать (какие) ценности*, i.e. to promote (certain) values; *навязывать ценности*, i.e. to impose values; *ценности навязываются*, i.e. values are imposed; *насаждать ценности*, i.e. to force values upon others / to instil values.

This creates the construct of an enemy, an external malicious actor who carries out an act of intellectual sabotage, destroying the authentic value matrix and introducing foreign elements. This is done through a framework of deception, in which one object (the original) is secretly or fraudulently replaced by another (a counterfeit): *подмен / подмена ценностей*, i.e. the substitution of values.

Characterisation of phenomena and properties as values. The assessment is based on one’s own worldview, grounded in the opposition between “falsehood and truth”: *ложные ценности*, i.e. false values – *правильные / настоящие / истинные ценности*, i.e. correct / genuine / true values; *верны ли ценности*, i.e. whether the values are true/correct.

Values as the subject of public statements and debates. At the level of contextual analysis of the word *ценности*, collocates such as the following verbs are recorded: *говорить/заговорить про ценности*, i.e. to talk / start talking about values; *речь шла о ценностях*, i.e. values were being discussed; *декларировать ценности*, i.e. to declare values. This indicator is associated with the high frequency of the verb *заявить*, i.e. to state, in the corpus of texts analysed from the online community. Generally speaking, these linguistic markers indicate the high symbolic capital of the concept of values, which functions both as a signalling regulator of communication and as a basis for the social ritual of expressing one’s own identity.

Values as an instrument for measuring and assessing the world around us. In a number of combinations, a real-life event that becomes the subject of discussion is subjected to ethical evaluation, and participants in online communication frequently invoke values as a standard or measure: *на весах (христианских) ценностей*, i.e. on the scale of (Christian) values; *противоречащий (каким) ценностям*, i.e. contrary to / in conflict with (certain) values. Language conceptualises an individual’s value system as a personal scale, generally understood as a system of quantities arranged in descending or ascending order and adopted for

measuring, determining or evaluating something: *шкала ценностей*, i.e. a scale of values (at last it dawned on me that it was time to change my own life “value scale”).

Axiological diversity. The multiplicity of values is conditioned by their antinomic nature and profiling – their correlation with various ideal categories and spheres of reality. On this basis, different types of value systems can be identified, which are also grounded in the stable collocability of the word *ценности*, i.e. values:

- according to the duality of the world: *духовные/моральные/нравственные/этические ценности*, i.e. spiritual/moral/ethical values – *материальные ценности*, i.e. material values;
- according to temporal reference (past – present – future): *исторические/современные ценности*, i.e. historical/contemporary values;
- according to geopolitical boundaries and their associated ideological constructs (such as civilisation, country and nation): *западные ценности*, i.e. Western values, *национальные ценности*, i.e. national values, *социальные ценности*, i.e. social values, *ценности (нашего, сербского) народа / (русского) общества / России / (этой) страны*, i.e. the values of (our, Serbian) people / (Russian) society / Russia / (this) country;
- according to their correlation with a particular social institution (family, church, secular state, culture and the arts): *православные/религиозные/библейские/небесные ценности*, i.e. Orthodox/religious/biblical/

divine values, *атеистические ценности*, i.e. atheist values, *семейные ценности*, i.e. family values, *культурные ценности*, i.e. cultural values;

- according to political and ideological affiliation (with a particular socio-political group or party): *демократические ценности*, i.e. democratic values;
- according to affiliation with a particular sub-culture: *ценности футбола, футбольные ценности*, i.e. the values of football, football values.

4. Conclusions

Thus, an examination of word frequency in the collected corpus of texts, which brings together statements by internet users and members of Russian-Serbian communities on the VKontakte social network, shows that for this audience the concept of values is multidimensional, simultaneously representing the core of cultural identity and the foundation of a political worldview.

Based on the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that the key counterpoints, reconstructed through contextual antonymic pairs in combination with the lexeme *ценности*, i.e. values, serve to demonstrate the fundamental axiological dichotomy of “one’s own” versus “the other’s”. The specificity of contextual antonyms lies in the fact that they are not antonyms in the language itself, but acquire a logical correlation within the context, reflecting the subjective, personal vision of the author of the text. First and foremost, the following pairs were identified: *европейские*

ценности vs национальные ценности, i.e. European values versus national values, *европейские ценности vs сербские ценности*, i.e. European values versus Serbian values, *западные ценности vs православные ценности*, i.e. Western values versus Orthodox values, *европейские ценности vs традиционные ценности*, i.e. European values versus traditional values. As can be seen, the globalist project (Europe) is conceptualised as the “other” in relation to local identity (the nation, Serbia). Thus, lexical collocability functions not only as a marker of a semantic field but also as an instrument for discursively constructing identity by separating it from the space of alternative values.

The corpus of analysed texts confirms, on the one hand, that values constitute an objectively dynamic system of coordinates. However, a significant emphasis in understanding their national, historically established values in the context of the geopolitical agenda is placed on the participants’ hope of preserving traditional values.

Moving beyond an analysis of the collocability

of the word *ценности*, i.e. values, we can list the values that were explicitly named in the corpus of analysed texts and, therefore, reflect categories that are significant to subscribers of the thematic Russian-Serbian communities: the human being, human life, the Orthodox faith, family, security, old Serbian songs (performed by gusle players), the traditional folk dance – kolo, the mother tongue, and Epiphany water.

The opposite pole of values, which characterises the space of the “other” and the condemned, brings together categories such as consumerist greed, money, profit, hegemony, and fascist ideology.

The first list comprises anthropocentric, spiritual and social/domestic values, as well as elements of the national-cultural code. The second list is characterised by predominantly utilitarian values and superior attitudes. It is important to emphasise that this list does not represent a coherent and definitive axiological system; it merely outlines the key values that are important to the discourse community.

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Stalking as a Form of Gender-based Violence – International Standards and National Law

Abstract: Based on the international standards contained in the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the so-called Istanbul Convention), a system of criminal liability and punishment for the act of “Stalking” has been established in European criminal law. Depending on the legal regulation that provides for this incrimination against a person’s personal freedom, this criminal offence consists of causing fear, insecurity, anxiety or distress to another person or a person close to them. This unlawful misconduct is undertaken by someone repeatedly and persistently following, harassing or stalking another person or a person close to them. However, the essence of this incrimination is reflected in the attempt to establish unwanted or inappropriate contact between the perpetrator and another person, directly or through a third party, through information and communication technology. Based on international standards, the paper analyzes the content, characteristics, elements of being and forms of manifestation of the criminal offense of persecution in the law of the Republic of Serbia, or in the law of selected European countries (Italy, Germany, Poland, Switzerland).

Keywords: criminal law, international standards, stalking, personal security, punishment

Introduction

In the past years, both the world and the Republic of Serbia have witnessed increasingly frequent and various forms of attacks which violate or threaten fundamental human values (life, body integrity, health, fundamental freedoms and rights, dignity) of others and which are based on gender diversity, i.e., on gender discrimination. In an attempt

to efficiently prevent and/or suppress these various forms of socio-pathological, unlawful, prescribed behaviours of individuals or groups, the international community has reached maturity in the awareness of the need for a uniform, generally accepted approach. To this end, in 2011 the Council of Europe adopted the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence^[2] (Istanbul Convention), which

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[2] Law on Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, “Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – International Contracts”, No. 12/13 and 4/16.

defines “gender-based violence against women” as violence directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately, (Article 3, Item d).

According to the Convention (Čović, 2013, pp. 279–292), the forms of manifesting gender-based violence include: a) psychological violence (Article 33), b) stalking (Article 34), c) physical violence (Article 35), d) sexual violence, including rape (Article 36), e) forced marriage (Article 37), f) female genital mutilation (Article 38), g) forced abortion and forced sterilisation (Article 39), and h) sexual harassment (Article 40). In order to combat these various forms of violence, the Convention establishes a system of measures (general and special) of prevention and repression (punishment) which have been accepted by all national legislations of the Council of Europe member states, including the Republic of Serbia.

The law of the Republic of Serbia, based on the accepted international standards established within the Council of Europe, stipulates criminal liability and punishability for multiple criminal offenses which, by their characteristics, content, elements, and forms or modes of manifestation, constitute criminal offenses with elements of gender-based violence. In addition to the system of repression measures (the application of criminal sanctions), the Republic of Serbia gives a special role to the prevention measures with the foundation in the Strategy for the prevention and combating of gender-based violence against women and domestic

violence for the period 2021–2025^[3], which was adopted in April 2021.

Stalking as an international criminal act

Having in mind that the criminal act of stalking finds its foundation in international law (in the Council of Europe Convention), it may be qualified as an international criminal act. In fact, the introduction of incrimination of the criminal act of stalking in the criminal law of several European countries constitutes the fulfilment of the international obligation that was established after the signing and ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. By accepting this international document, the states have assumed the obligation to stipulate sanctions and the bases of the liability of the perpetrators of these criminal acts in their respective national, domestic criminal legislations (Miladinović Stefanović, 2017, pp. 231–252).

According to this Convention, the criminal act of stalking (Article 34) is “all intentional (deliberate) behaviour by repeating threats directed at another person, which causes that person to fear for his/her safety”. In addition to the direct, intentional engagement in the act of perpetration, the Convention (Article 41) explicitly stipulates punishability in two more cases: a) for attempting to commit

[3] Strategy for the prevention and combating of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence for the period 2021–2025, “Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 30/18.



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an act (without consequences), and b) for complicity in the form of inciting (persuading) or assisting (enabling, facilitating) another person to commit this act.

For the perpetrators of this criminal act, in addition to the prison sentence, according to the provisions of the Convention (Article 45), the following measures are stipulated: a) monitoring or supervision of convicted persons, and b) withdrawal of parental rights, if the best interests of the

child, which may include the safety of the victim, cannot be guaranteed in any other way. in the determination of the sentence to the perpetrator of the offence of stalking, the court particularly takes into consideration the following aggravating circumstances (Article 46): a) the offence committed against a former or current spouse or partner as recognised by internal law, by a member of the family, a person cohabiting with the victim or a person having abused her or his authority, b) the offence,

or related offences, committed repeatedly, c) the offence committed against a person made vulnerable by particular circumstances, d) the offence committed against or in the presence of a child, e) the offence committed by two or more people acting together, f) the offence that was preceded or accompanied by extreme levels of violence, g) the offence committed with the use or threat of a weapon, h) the offence resulting in severe physical or psychological harm for the victim, and i) when he perpetrator had previously been convicted of offences of a similar nature.

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In addition to the Council of Europe Convention, the set of measures directed towards suppressing and/or preventing the act of stalking, although the specific type of “cyber stalking”, is stipulated by the European Union, whose full membership is aspired by the Republic of Serbia as well. Namely, Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and Council of 14th May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence (Item 21) emphasizes that “cyber stalking” is a modern form of violence which is often perpetrated against family members or persons living in the same household as the offender but is also perpetrated by ex-partners or acquaintances. Typically, technology is misused by the offender to intensify coercive and controlling behaviour, thereby increasing the victim’s fear, anxiety and gradual isolation from friends, family and work. Therefore, minimum rules on cyber stalking should be established.

The offence of cyber stalking should cover repeated or continuous surveillance, by means of ICT, of the victim without the victim’s consent or a legal authorisation. Such surveillance might also be enabled by processing the victim’s personal data,

such as by means of identity theft, by stealing passwords, by hacking the victim’s devices, by secretly activating keylogging software to access the victim’s private spaces, by installing geo-localisation apps or by stealing the victim’s devices. Furthermore, the offence of cyber stalking should cover the monitoring of victims, without the victim’s consent or authorisation, via technological devices connected through the Internet of Things, such as smart home appliances. However, there can be situations where surveillance is carried out for legitimate reasons, for example in the context of parents monitoring their children’s whereabouts and their online activity, of relatives monitoring the health of ill, elderly or vulnerable persons or persons with disabilities, or of media monitoring and open-source intelligence.

Criminal liability for “cyber stalking” (Item 22) should be limited to situations in which monitoring is likely to cause serious harm to the victim. When assessing whether an act is likely to cause serious harm, the focus should be on whether the act would typically cause harm to a victim. In the definition of the offence of cyber stalking (Item 23), the concept of “tracking” should refer to tracing the location of a person and following that person’s movements and the concept of “monitoring” should refer to watching over a person more generally, including observing that person’s activities. In the context of cyber stalking, both actions ultimately aim at controlling a person.

General characteristics of the criminal offence of stalking

Although this is an extremely dangerous form of manifesting gender-based violence as a form of

manifesting criminality in general, until 2016 and the adoption of the Law on Amendments to the Criminal Code^[4], the Criminal Code^[5] (2005) of the Republic of Serbia had not stipulated the criminal act of “stalking” (Article 138a) as separate incrimination. Chapter XIV, entitled “Criminal offences against freedoms and rights of man and citizen”, prescribed a specific criminal act directed towards endangering man’s personal safety and/or his personal life. Man’s personal security was practically understood in subjective terms as the feeling of his safety (absence of any threat) that constitutes an integral element of man’s personal freedom. In fact, it is incrimination that appears as a separate, special form of the criminal act of threatening security (by its legally determined content).

Legal theory points out that the specific criminal act against personal freedom under the name of “stalking”, “harassment” or “persecution” (English, *stalking*, French *harcèlement obsessionnel*, German *Nachstigungeung*, *Belästll*, Italian *Atti persecutori*) implies an expression that means harassing, tracking and/or persecuting another person – a victim or a close person (“make someone’s life miserable”). Such behaviour consists of two elements (Kovačević, 2018, pp. 57–71): on the one hand, there is stalking and, on the other, there is a victim disturbed in a certain manner, particularly through: a) intimidation of any kind, b) intrusion into private life, surroundings, home or property, c) tracking, spying or harassment of any kind, d) physical, unannounced and repeated visits to the workplace

or home, e) giving presents, f) repeated presence in the same places, causing discomfort or concern or even helplessness or confusion related to the feeling of unsafety or potential threat deriving from it, and g) virtual repetition and intrusive contact by telephone or electronic devices such as electronic mail or social media (Kovačević & Maljković, 2016, pp. 85–98).

In legal theory, stalking is defined as repeated, persistent, continuous observation, persecution, intrusive effort by the perpetrator to establish direct or indirect contact through technical means of communication with the victim or his/her relatives, in which the perpetrator’s actions cause fear, discomfort, restlessness, anxiety or threat (Filipčić & Korošec, 2023, pp. 707–717). Furthermore, stalking is manifestation form of threatening another person’s safety, i.e., a form of manifesting violence in the family or in the family union (in case the perpetrator’s activities are directed against the victim he/she previously lived in a family union, and in case the victim is in a subordinate or dependent position in relation to the perpetrator). Due to different activities, either of physical or psychological character (nature), the perpetrators repeated and continuous acts a specific relationship between the victim and the perpetrator is gradually established, and/or developed or strengthened (Dimovski, 2016, pp. 163–181).

In fact, contact is gradually established and connection, helplessness and dangerous belief are maintained that the perpetrator’s acts are com-

[4] Law on Amendments to the Criminal Code, “Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 94/16.

[5] Criminal Code, “Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 85/05, 88/05, 107/05, 72/09, 111/09, 121/12, 104/13, 108/14, 94/16, 35/19 and 94/24.



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pletely harmless or even oppositely, they are even understood as a kind of affection, sympathy or attention and not as violence that may potentially escalate (which often happens). By stalking, the perpetrator, on his/her own or through other persons (indirectly) or devices (both traditional and modern information communication ones), constantly reminds the victim, communicates with the victim, indicates that he/she is there, present and central, thus causing mental and physical suffering to the victim, depriving the victim of freedom or even control of own life.

Therefore, stalking denotes unwanted intrusion, penetration and interference in the victim's life by the perpetrator of this offence – the stalker (Đurišić, 2019, pp. 89–101). This type of violence is characterized by intrusion, interference (penetration) in the private sphere of the victim's life. In this manner, the perpetrator shows “superiority” by persistently repeating a series of interconnected activities directed against the same person – the victim, causing simultaneously fear or anxiety, uneasiness, restlessness and discomfort. It is a pattern of behaviour that includes intrusive, per-

sistent and repetitive contact with the victim, as well as harassment that can be direct. – personal and/or indirect – by telephone, via social media, by sending text messages or e-mails, letters, gifts or expensive valuables, by waiting in front of the victim's flat, house or workplace, as well as by violating or destroying the victim's property (Dečković, 2017, pp. 135–144).

Stalking in the criminal law of the Republic of Serbia

In the law of the Republic of Serbia, the criminal act of stalking (Article 138a), starting from international standards, is qualified by a number of legally stipulated alternative activities. Those include:

a) Unauthorized tracking of another person or taking other action with the aim of physically approaching that person against their will. Unauthorized and unlawful “tracking” refers to the establishment or maintenance of a certain spatial or temporal distance towards another person that enables the control of his/her movement (Jovašević & Miladinović Stefanović, 2023, pp. 82–85). However, this act may also emerge as any other activity that leads to physical closeness, i.e., the activity that reduces spatial distance between the perpetrator and another person, thus practically creating direct, close conditions for establishing their contact.

b) An attempt to establish contact with another person contrary to his/her will, directly or indirectly, through a third person or means of

communication. It is an activity aimed at establishing contact with another person no matter whether it actually occurred or not. Such contact may be established directly or indirectly (through another person or modern technical means of communication, including the internet), without the consent of another person (Đorđević & Bodrožić, 2024, pp. 61–63).

c) Misuse of personal data of another person or a person close to them for the purpose of ordering goods or services. This must refer to unlawful, unauthorised use of other people's personal or private data with a specific purpose – for ordering certain goods or services no matter whether the order has been actually made in the given case or not (Dragojlović, 2025, pp. 67–70). According to the Law on Personal Data Protection^[6] (Article 4. Item 1), “personal data” means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name and an identification number, location data, an online identifier in electronic communication networks or to one and/or more characteristics of the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person;

d) Threat of attack on the life, body or freedom of another person or a person close to them - manifests itself as announcing, making it appear, orally, symbolically or in writing, causing some harm to another person in the form of an attack - endangering the life, body integrity or freedom of another person or a person close to them;

[6] Law on Personal Data Protection, “Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 87/18.

e) Taking another similar action in a manner that could significantly endanger the personal life of another person. This is a “consequential” action, which includes any activity that is likely to cause the consequence of an act that the law defines as “significantly endangering the personal life of another person” (Petrović, Ferhatović & Jovašević, 2024, pp. 87–88).

For the existence of the criminal act of stalking, the law demands two additional conditions. In fact, it is necessary that an alternative enforcement action prescribed by law should be taken (Delić, 2021, pp. 80–81):

1) In a certain way – persistently. Persistence is perseverance, that is, the willingness, determination of the perpetrator to repeat, repeatedly undertake an action, which means that an action committed once does not constitute this offence. This way of perpetrating an act implies multiple repetition of the prescribed activities for the sake of achieving a certain aim. Persistence in perpetrating an act is understood in two ways (Đorđević & Kolarić, 2020, pp. 50–51): a) objectively – as a multiple (twice or more) repetition of an activity in terms of perpetrating an act, and b) the perpetrator’s awareness that the passive subject does not want and does not accept the perpetrator’s communication, actively or passively, explicitly or tacitly. Persistence as a way of undertaking the act of perpetration indicates that this is an act “with an indifferent number of perpetrations” (Paunović, 2019, pp. 21–41). In fact, repetition in the form of multiple, continuous reiteration of the same or different activities does not lead to a conjunction or apparently real conjunction in the form of a prolonged criminal act, but it is encompassed by a single act.

2) In a certain period of time – during a certain period. The actual length of stalking is determined by the court as a factual matter in a given situation.

The consequence of the criminal act of stalking is contained in a significant (substantial, lasting) threat to the personal life of another person. Such “significant or substantial” (particularly on a larger scale or for a longer period of time) threat to someone’s personal life is manifested as causing anxiety (discomfort, inconvenience) in terms of feeling fear, anxiety and concern for the everyday life of the victim or close persons (Stanković, 2023, pp. 432–433).

This criminal act belongs to *delicta communia*, which means that it may be perpetrated by anyone while, in terms of guilt, there must exist the perpetrator’s premeditation. A passive subject (victim) can be any person, both the person towards whom the act of perpetration is committed indirectly and his/her close person.

For the basic form of the act of stalking, there is an alternatively stipulated fine or prison sentence of up to three years.

Apart from the basic one, this criminal act also has two more serious forms of manifestation that are qualified as the emergence of a graver consequence, which is in a cause-and-effect relationship with the action taken to execute the basic form, while in subjective terms it needs to be accompanied by the perpetrator’s negligence (Turković et al., 2013, pp. 191–192). Those are: a) the first more serious form of the offence (Paragraph 2), where due to the undertaken act of perpetration a concrete, indirect, close and real danger to the life, health or body of another person or his/her close person, for which the prison sentence between three

months and five years has been stipulated, and b) the second more serious form of the offence (Paragraph 3), where negligence caused the death of the stalked person or his/her close person through undertaking an act of perpetration. For this offence, the prison sentence between one and ten years has been stipulated.

Stalking in European criminal law

Based on the above-listed international standards, many European states have defined stalking as a separate criminal act in the special part of criminal laws or codes. However, this solution is actually not common in all the legislations of the Council of Europe member states although it might be expected. Namely, in some legislations stalking is legally qualified as a separate or special form of some of the offences against fundamental human rights. The legislations that prescribe the criminal act of stalking in the incrimination system include, in addition to Bosnia and Herzegovina, some of the central European countries. Those are as follows:

- a) The Italian Republic,
- b) The Federal Republic of Germany,
- c) The Republic of Poland, and
- d) The Swiss Confederation.

In the Italian Republic, the Criminal Code^[7] (*Codice Penale*), in Book 2: “Special offences” (*Libro secondo: „Dei delitti in particolare”*), Part XII – “Criminal offences against person” (*Dei delitti contro la persona*), Chapter 2 – “Criminal offenc-

es against personal freedom” (*Dei delitti contro la libertà individuale*), stipulates criminal liability for the criminal act of stalking (*Articolo 612 bis*) – *Atti persecutori*. This is a subsidiary incrimination that exists only if in the given case the characteristics of another, graver criminal act have not been fulfilled. The criminal act of stalking (*Articolo 612 bis*) is committed by a person who with his/her repeated behaviour threatens or harasses another person in a way that causes permanent and serious state of anxiety or fear or justified fear for own safety or the safety of a relative or another close person (in an emotional relationship) or forces that person to change his/her way of life (Cicinella, 2025).

This criminal act is characterized by the following elements (Garofoli, 2025, p. 1): the object of the attack is the feeling of personal safety (absence of fear, apprehension or anxiety of any kind), 2) the act of perpetration contains activities such as; a) threat – likelihood of causing harm to another person, b) harassment of another person or c) forcing (coercing) another person (through the use of physical or psychological coercion or force) with the aim of changing his/her present life, and 3) the act of committing the offence is undertaken in a certain way: a) repeatedly, persistently, and b) in a way that is objectively suitable, sufficient to lead to the consequence of the offence in the form of causing permanent and serious state of anxiety or fear or justified fear for own safety or the safety of a relative or close person (in an emotional relationship). This is a common criminal offence characterized by the repetition of threats

[7] Codice Penale (R. D. 19. ottobre 1930, n. 1398... R. D. 16. ottobre 2025, n.151).

or harassment that continues over a certain period of time in a serial manner and includes minimum three different alternative events which must be in direct causal relation to the perpetrator's aggressive behaviour.

For the basic offence, the prison sentence is stipulated of six months up to six years.

A more serious form of the offence (Paragraph 2), for which a stricter prison sentence is stipulated without a closer determination of the length, applies to the following: a) if the act is perpetrated by a person with a certain capacity (*delicta propria*), a spouse (or a former spouse) or a person currently or formerly related to the victim in emotional terms, or b) if the act is perpetrated in a special, specific way – by computer or telematic means. However, if the offence of stalking has been perpetrated against a certain person as a victim, the stipulated sentence is increased to its half (Paragraph 3). This offence exists in case the act has been perpetrated: 1) against a certain person: a) a minor, b) a pregnant woman or c) a person with disabilities, 2) in a dangerous way – by using a weapon (a cold weapons or a firearm), or 3) by a masked (disguised) person (hiding his/her identity).

Criminal prosecution of the perpetrator is initiated upon the motion of the aggrieved person, which must be filed within six months. Exceptionally, criminal prosecution is initiated *ex officio* if the criminal act has been perpetrated: a) against a minor or a person with disabilities (which must be accompanied by the perpetrator's premeditation), or b) in conjunction (connected) with another

criminal offence for which the prosecution of the perpetrator is otherwise initiated *ex officio*.

The Criminal Code of the Federal Republic of Germany^[8] in Chapter XVIII – “Criminal offences against personal freedom” (*Straftaten gegen die persönliche Freiheit*), also stipulates the criminal act of stalking (§ 238) (*Nachstellung*). This act, for which there is an alternative prison sentence of up to three years or a fine, is contained in the unlawful stalking of another person in a way that might significantly (substantially) violate his/her way of life by repeated (Perron, Stenberg & Eisele, 2025): 1) demanding (requesting) that person's physical closeness, 2) attempting to establish contact with that person by using telecommunications or other means of communication or through third persons, 3) by misusing another person's personal data: a) by ordering goods or services in his/her name, or b) by inciting third persons to contact him/her, 4) by threatening another person with the injury to his/her or a close person's life, bodily (physical) integrity, health or freedom, 5) by distributing or publicly displaying the photos of another person or his/her close person (relative), or 6) by distributing or publicly displaying the content that might violate the honour or reputation of another person or his/her close person.

A more serious form of the offence – “Particularly serious cases” (*In besonders schweren Fällen*) (Paragraph 2) – for which the prison sentence is stipulated in the length of three months up to five years, exists in the following cases (Fischer, 2023): 1) if bodily harm has been caused to another person

[8] Strafgesetzbuch vom 13. November 1998. (BGBl.I.S. 3322/1998... BGBl.I.S.351/2024).

(or his/her relative or close person) or if his/her life or body integrity have been exposed to direct (close, specific) danger, 2) if stalking of another person: a) has lasted for a longer period, minimum six months and b) has been perpetrated by the use of a computer program designed for digital tracking of other persons or by the use of pictures or other content obtained (acquired) in that manner, and 3) if the offence has been perpetrated against a minor up to sixteen years old (while the perpetrator is already 21 years old).

The most serious form of the act of stalking (Paragraph 3) refers to the offence qualified by a graver consequence. It exists in case when, due to the perpetrated action, death has been caused of another person (the victim, the victim's relative or close person). For this offence, the prison sentence of one year up to ten years has been stipulated.

The Criminal Code of the Republic of Poland – *Kodeks karny*, у глави XXIII – “Offences against liberty” (*Przestępstwa przeciwko wolności*), stipulates, although without specifically naming it, the criminal act of stalking (§ 190a)^[9]. The offence refers to creating the feeling of fear, humiliation or anguish in another person or his/her close person (relative) or significantly violating the person's privacy through persistent harassment or causing property or personal damage to another person by personating another person, by using his/her image, personal data or other data on the basis of which that person is publicly identifiable.^[10]

Apart from the object of the attack as personal freedom, the feeling of personal or property safety of another person or his/her close person, this offence is characterized by the perpetration act in the form of: a) harassment, stalking, spying or b) personating (fully or partly false) another/any person by using his/her image, personal data or any other data on the basis of which that person is publicly identifiable. The consequence of this offence has the form of the damage to the protected good manifesting as (Stefansky *et al.*, 2025): a) causing the personal feeling of fear, anxiety, resentment, humiliation, b) damage (violation) to the privacy (of a personal secret) or c) causing (property/material or non-property/affectation) damage regardless of whether the consequence refers to the aggrieved person or his/her close person (relative). The perpetrator of this offence may be any person, while premeditation is necessary regarding guilt.

For the basic offence, the prison sentence is stipulated of six months up to eight years. An interesting solution (Paragraph 4) is the one according to which criminal prosecution of the perpetrator is undertaken only upon the aggrieved person's motion.

A more serious form of the offence (Paragraph 3), for which the prison sentence of two years up to fifteen years is stipulated, is the offence qualified by a more serious consequence. In this case, there is a stricter punishment in case the undertaken act of perpetration resulted in the aggrieved person's suicide attempt.

[9] Kodeks karny, Dz. U. 1997 Nr 88 poz. 553; *Opracowano na podstawie*: t.j. Dz. U. z 2025 r. poz. 383.

[10] Praca zbiorowa (2025). Kodeks karny, Warsaw, C. H. Beck, pp. 232–233.

The Criminal Code of the Swiss Confederation^[11] (*Il Codice penale svizzero*), in Part two – “Special Provisions” (*Zweites Buch: Besondere Bestimmungen*), Chapter IV – “Crimes or offences against personal freedom” (*Titolo quarto: Del crimini o dei delitti contro la libertà personale*) defines the criminal act of stalking.

According to the text of this law, the criminal offence of stalking (*Articolo 181b*) – *Atti persecutori* was introduced in the Swiss legal system through the novation (amendment) to the Criminal Code from June 2025 (which came into force on 1st January 2026). This offence, which violates another person’s personal freedom, consists of persistent tracking, harassment or threats to another person in a way that might significantly limit his/her freedom of choice. According to the explicit letter of the law, criminal prosecution is initiated upon the aggrieved person’s motion (Heger, Pohlreich, Dreher & Maassen, 2025).

The act of perpetration consists of three alternatively prescribed actions, conduct that may seriously restrict the freedom or life of another person and cause psychological, social and economic damage to him/her. Those are (Trechsel, Pieth & Geth, 2025): a) persistent (repeated, continuous, for a longer period of time) tracking (stalking), b) harassment – causing fear, discomfort, inconvenience or anxiety, with the loss, full or partial, permanent or temporary, of the feeling of peace, or c) threat – verbal or written and/or symbolic statement that announces causing any harm to another person. For the existence of this offence, it is essential that these

actions are undertaken in a special manner – which might significantly (particularly, on a larger scale or in a longer period of time) restrict the freedom of choice due to another person’s conduct.

For this offence, there is an alternatively stipulated prison sentence of up to three years or a fine.

Conclusion

Stalking (persecution) is a specific form of violating, harming or endangering man’s personal safety as universal or regional international standards of the protected human right and/or of his personal freedom. The foundation of this incrimination encompasses the standards contained in the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2011). This Convention obligates the signatory states to prescribe specific criminal offences of gender-based violence in their respective national criminal legislations. These offences include the incrimination called stalking (Article 34). This offence refers to any intentional (premeditated) conduct by repeating threats against another person that cause this person’s fear for his/her own safety.

According to this international standard, the positive criminal law of the Republic of Serbia classifies the criminal act of stalking (Article 138a) in the group of criminal offences against the freedoms and rights of man and citizen (Chapter XIV). As the object of protection of this offence, there is the feeling of the personal safety of another person, his/

[11] *Schweizerisches Strafgesetzbuch* vom 21. Dezember 1937. (BGBl.311.0... BGBl.2020/2025).

her family member or close person, which indicates that this is a special, specific form of the offence of threatening safety. An important component of the content of this offence includes the following elements: 1) persistence in undertaking legally stipulated activities during a certain (implied as “longer”) (period of time, 2) unauthorized, unlawful, persistent tracking of another person or undertaking any other activity with the aim of physical closeness against his/her will, 3) establishing contact with another person directly, through a third person or through means of communication against his/her will, 4) misuse of the personal data of another person or his/her close person for the purpose of ordering goods or services, 5) threatening by attacking the life, body or freedom of another person or his/her close person, or 6) undertaking any other act in a manner that might substantially endanger another person’s personal life.

For the basic form of the act of stalking, there is an alternatively stipulated fine or a prison sentence of up to three years.

Apart from the basic form, this offence, depending on the type, nature or importance of incurred consequences, may have two graver forms of manifestation which are qualified by a graver consequence: a) a specific, direct, close danger to life, health or body of another person or his/her close person (with the stipulated prison sentence of three months up to five years), and b) death of the stalked person or his/her close person (with the stipulated prison sentence of one year up to ten years).

Based on international standards, some criminal legislations of the member states of the Council of Europe (apart from the Republic of Serbia), for

example Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Poland, contain a specific incrimination in the form of a separate criminal act – stalking. The analysis of comparative solutions in the above-listed criminal laws points to specific characteristics that are not included in our national criminal law, which may be of help to our legislator in improving the existing regulations in this area. Firstly, we can say that stalking is by its name recognized in all the analyzed laws (except for the Polish law, which does not specifically name any criminal offence in the text of the law). This offence is classified among the criminal offences against: a) personal freedom (Italy, Germany, Switzerland) or b) freedom (Poland), which points to the object of its protection.

The basic form of the criminal act of stalking is, according to the analysed comparative legal solutions, characterized by the following elements: 1) persistent tracking, harassment or threats to the victim in a way that might significantly restrict the victim’s freedom of choice (Switzerland), 2) causing fear, humiliation, anguish or significant damage to the victim’s privacy through persistent harassment or causing harm to the victim by personating, using another person’s image, personal or other data (Poland), 3) unlawful persistent tracking of the victim by demanding his/her physical closeness, attempting to establish contact by using the means of telecommunications or through third persons, by misusing personal data with the aim of ordering goods or services in his/her name or by inciting third persons into contact, by threatening harm to life, body, health or freedom, by distributing or publicly displaying photographs or content that might damage honour or reputation of another person or his/her close person (Germany) or

4) repeated threats or harassment of the victim in a way that causes permanent and grave state of anxiety or fear or forces him/her to change his/her way of life (Italy).

Depending on the type of law, there are different punishments stipulated for the basic act of stalking: a) the prison sentence of one year up to six years, and of six months (Italy), b) the prison sentence of up to three years and a fine (Germany, Switzerland) or c) the prison sentence of victim six months up to eight years (Poland). Although the perpetrator of this offence is, as a rule, prosecuted *ex officio*, some of the laws (Italy, Poland, Switzerland) still stipulate that the criminal prosecution is initiated upon the motion of the aggrieved person. Exceptionally, criminal prosecution is initiated *ex officio* if the criminal act has been perpetrated: a) against a minor or a person with disabilities (which must be accompanied by the perpetrator's premeditation), or b) in conjunction (connected) with another criminal offence for which the prosecution of the perpetrator is otherwise initiated *ex officio* (Poland).

Among the analysed criminal codes, only Switzerland does not stipulate a graver, qualified form of the offence (while two graver forms are stipulated by Italian and German laws respectively). For the qualified forms of the offence, the following punishments have been prescribed: a) increased severe punishment by up to half, without specifying the duration (Italy), b) prison sentence of three months up to five years, i.e., prison sentence of one year

up to ten years in the case of causing the passive subject's death (Germany) and c) prison sentence of two up to fifteen years in the case of the aggrieved person's suicide attempt (Poland).

Apart from the above-listed graver consequences in the form of death (Germany) or suicide (Poland) of the aggrieved person, certain legislations have also stipulated the following as qualifying circumstances in the criminal act of stalking: 1) in Germany: a) causing bodily injury or causing danger to the life or body of another person, relative or close person, b) in case stalking of another person has lasted minimum six months, c) in case the act has been committed by the use of a computer program aimed at digital tracking of other persons or by the use of the pictures or other content acquired in that manner, and d) in case the act has been committed so as to harm a minor up to the age of sixteen, and 2) in Italy: a) in case the act has been committed by a spouse (or an ex-spouse) or a person related to or formerly emotionally related to the victim, or b) in case the act has been committed by computer or telematic means, c) in case the act has been committed to the harm of a minor, a pregnant woman or a person with disabilities, and d) in case the act has been committed by the use of weapons or by a masked person.

The above-mentioned comparative solutions, particularly in terms of the listed qualifying circumstances, may also be relevant to the legislator in the Republic of Serbia when amending the existing legal solutions to the criminal act of stalking.

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Between Facts and Interpretation: The March Pogrom of 2004 in the Reports of the Secretary-General of the United Nations^[2]

Abstract: This paper analyses the reports of the Secretary-General of the United Nations concerning the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) that address the March 2004 Pogrom, with the aim of determining how this international organisation presented these events. The research employs a qualitative methodological approach, primarily based on the critical discourse analysis with a particular emphasis on the framework, complemented by the normative analysis and the provision of the historical context. Prior to examining the reports, the author seeks to present the situation in Kosovo and Metohija from the middle of 1999 until the outbreak of the March Pogrom in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the continuity of the intolerable living conditions experienced by Serbs and other non-Albanians during that period. Taking all that into consideration, the findings indicate that, although the reports contain a relatively detailed account of the events and their consequences, their use of terminology that mitigates the character of the violence, coupled with the absence of broader contextualisation, contributes to the relativization of the scale of the suffering endured by Serbs and other non-Albanians. By overlooking the necessity of a broader understanding of the circumstances, the reports portray the March Pogrom as an isolated security incident rather than a culmination of years of violence and suppression of fundamental human rights to which Serbs and other non-Albanians have been subjected since the deployment of the international missions (UNMIK and KFOR). The paper therefore concludes that, although these reports constitute an important source of information, they must be interpreted critically and compared with other relevant sources and the wider body of scholarly literature in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the March Pogrom.

Keywords: Kosovo and Metohija, March Pogrom, United Nations, UNMIK, KFOR

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[2] The author, expressing a personal viewpoint while adhering to the applicable legal framework—the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (2006) and United Nations (hereinafter referred to as: UN) Security Council Resolution 1244 (199), maintains that the Province of Kosovo and Metohija (hereinafter: Kosovo and Metohija) constitutes an integral part of the Republic of Serbia enjoying substantive autonomy, and that nothing in this paper should be construed as calling into question the sovereignty or territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia. In this regard, the unilaterally declared and internationally disputed entity that has existed since 2008 within the territory of Serbia's southern province, and whose status remains the subject of divergent positions within the international community, will, for the purposes of this paper, be referred to as the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Priština (hereinafter: PISG in Priština), and in cases where this designation is not feasible, an alternative qualifier will be employed ("so-called") when it comes to any status-sensitive term.

1. Kosovo and Metohija following the end of the aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

The signing of the Military-Technical Agreement at Kumanovo and the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) in June 1999 brought to an end both the months-long NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (hereinafter referred to as: FRY) and the armed conflict in Kosovo and Metohija. At the same time, these instruments marked the beginning of the establishment of a new security and political order in Kosovo and Metohija, which entailed the withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army and the police forces of the Republic of Serbia from the province and the deployment of the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) under the UN mandate. Alongside the establishment of the international military presence, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was also established under the auspices of the United Nations. It was entrusted with administering the province and creating the conditions necessary for the stabilisation of its political and social circumstances. Its activities were organised around four pillars, which included civil administration, the establishment of democratic institutions, reconstruction and economic development, and the provision of humanitarian assistance to the population affected by the consequences of the conflict (Caplan, 2015, p. 619).

However, the immediate post-conflict period proved extremely difficult for the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities, as they were left entirely unprotected from attacks by Albanian extremists.

In this regard, „the result of the joint criminal enterprise of NATO and Albanian terrorists gathered around the KLA was the expulsion of approximately 250,000 Serbs and other non-Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija immediately following the arrival of KFOR forces in 1999” (Šuvaković, 2015, p. 39). The Serbian cultural and religious heritage were not spared either, suffering extensive devastation during the first years of international civilian and military administration in Kosovo and Metohija. Cultural heritage in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija comprises approximately 1,300 Orthodox churches, monasteries and other religious sites, of which 110 were destroyed between 10 June 1999 and 1 March 2004 alone. Furthermore, during the initial and most intense waves of violence carried out by Albanian secessionists, led by soldiers, who had not been demobilized, and commanders of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army (hereinafter: the so-called KLA), entire Orthodox cemeteries, gravestones, and monuments dedicated to prominent figures in Serbian history—primarily located in urban areas—were destroyed (Stevanović & Đurđević, 2021, p. 197).

The remaining Serbian population, which had nevertheless decided to remain in Kosovo and Metohija, continued to live in rural and isolated communities. A notable exception was the northern part of Kosovska Mitrovica, which remained the only significant urban centre where the Serbian population, through its own efforts, succeeded in preventing frequent attacks by Albanian groups. By contrast, Serbs living south of the Ibar River found themselves in a hostile environment and faced numerous security challenges, severe restrictions on freedom of movement, brutal physical assaults, and

kidnappings (Stevanović, 2018, p. 61).^[3] During the first ten months (from 10 June 1999 to 30 March 2000), while the international civilian and military administration was still laying the foundations for its future operations, 4,564 terrorist attacks carried out by members of the so-called KLA and other Albanian extremist groups were recorded. The consequences of these attacks were devastating: 936 people lost their lives, 876 were injured, and 866 were abducted, while the overwhelming majority of the victims were Serbs, although Albanians who had previously been employed by the institutions of the FRY and the Republic of Serbia were also targeted. In addition to the loss of life, more than 50,000 houses—predominantly owned by Serbs, but also by other non-Albanians—were destroyed, burned, or severely damaged (Guskova, 2014, p. 352).^[4]

In full view of the international community, and particularly the collective West, which at the close of the twentieth century celebrated what it regarded as the zenith of the rule of law and the protection of human rights, a systematic campaign of persecution was carried out without anyone being held accountable. Where the international presence was intended to serve as a guarantor of security, the Serbian and other non-Albanian populations were, with only rare exceptions, left to fend for themselves and compelled to rely on their own resources for basic survival (Šuvaković, 2010). Consequently, the

avoidance of confrontation with members of the so-called KLA and the failure to prosecute those responsible for crimes committed both during and immediately after the war not only constituted a serious failure and demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the international presence, but also encouraged Albanian extremists to organise a new wave of violence, this time employing considerably more sophisticated methods.

2. The March Pogrom – the events leading up to it

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Following the consolidation of the international military and civilian administration from the middle of 2001 onwards, a partial decline in high-intensity ethnically motivated attacks was recorded. However, although the number of such attacks decreased, this did not signify a substantial improvement in the situation of the Serbian and other non-Albanian populations. On the contrary, more serious incidents merely gave way to lower-intensity forms of violence, particularly physical assaults, arson, livestock theft, and the stoning of vehicles transporting members of non-majority communities. These frequent forms of low-intensity violence perpetuated a constant atmosphere of fear and insecurity among Serbs and other non-Albanians,

[3] One of the gravest crimes for which no one has been held accountable to this day is the massacre in the cadastral area of the village of Bujance near Lipljan, where, on 23 July 1999, only a few weeks after the arrival of the international military and civilian administration, members of the so-called KLA murdered 14 Serbian harvesters from the nearby village of Staro Gracko while they were engaged in seasonal agricultural work.

[4] In addition to the killings, kidnappings were also frequent, with one of the most brutal of them being the abduction of the monk Hariton Lukić on 15 June 1999, whose decapitated and mutilated body was discovered more than a year later in the vicinity of Prizren.

resulting in an exceptionally low level of confidence in the international administration. A similar conclusion is reached in the report of the International Crisis Group, although it goes a step further by observing that the decline in violent incidents was also partly attributable to the significant reduction in the Serbian population. Those who remained succeeded in regrouping into small, compact, and relatively secure communities in rural areas, although their freedom of movement throughout Kosovo and Metohija continued to be severely restricted (Friedrich, 2005, pp. 233–234; Lađevac, 2009, p. 36). It would soon become evident, however, that even such „safe areas” offered no absolute guarantee against violence, and this was demonstrated by the murders of the Stolić family in Obilić and of four Serbian youths on the Bistrica River near Goraždevac during 2003, incidents that signalled Kosovo and Metohija’s descent into a new cycle of ethnically motivated violence.

The failure to prosecute those responsible for these crimes gradually became a defining feature of post-conflict Kosovo and Metohija. In such circumstances, following a brief period of relative calm, Albanian extremists increasingly made it clear that they had no intention of abandoning the objective first articulated by the so-called KLA – the creation of an ethnically homogeneous Kosovo and Metohija in which there would be no place for either Serbs or other non-Albanians. This sentiment was further reinforced by growing frustration over the fact that the process of secession was not advancing at the pace demanded by Kosovo Albanians (Rakić, 2009).

The convergence of these two factors brought the security situation in Kosovo and Metohija to a boiling point in March 2004.^[5] On the night of 15 March 2004, at the entrance to the village of Čaglavica, a Serbian boy, Jovica Arsić, was wounded by gunfire. Shortly thereafter, Serbs from Čaglavica and Gračanica spontaneously gathered on the Priština–Skopje main road and the Priština–Gnjilane regional road, blocking both routes and demanding an immediate response from KFOR units and the UNMIK Police. The following day, 16 March, during the afternoon, three Albanian boys from the village of Čabra (Municipality of Zubin Potok) drowned in the Ibar River, while a fourth managed to reach the riverbank safely. The surviving boy claimed that he and his three companions had allegedly been chased by Serbs with dogs, forcing them to seek refuge in the river. This account was subsequently disseminated extensively by the most influential Albanian media outlets. In addition, Albanian politicians and public figures competed in issuing inflammatory statements that placed sole responsibility for the tragedy on the Serbian community. Despite appeals by the spokesperson for the UNMIK administration, Kakuk György, and the spokesperson for the UNMIK Police, Tracy Becker, urging the media to report more cautiously because there was no evidence that the incident constituted an ethnically motivated crime, anti-Serbian hysteria continued unabated (Aleksić, 2025, pp. 21–23). One month after the end of the pogrom, these statements were further reinforced by another spokesperson for the Police and Justice Department of the international

[5] On the evening of 19 February 2004, near Lipljan, Albanians fatally shot Zlatomir Kostić and Milijana Marković with gunfire from automatic weapons.

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Breaking of the cross on an Orthodox church
in Podujevo in 2004 during the March Pogrom

Photo: RTS screenshot



Nuns from the Devič Monastery
during the March Pogrom in 2004

Photo: Wikipedia



The Church of the Holy Virgin of Ljeviš in Prizren after being set on fire during the March Pogrom in 2004

Photo: Office for Kosovo and Metohija



The Monastery of the Holy Archangels in Prizren after being set on fire during the March Pogrom in 2004

Photo: Office for Kosovo and Metohija

interim administration, Neeraj Singh, who pointed out that there were significant inconsistencies in the testimony given by the surviving boy during two separate interviews, adding that the child had been subjected to intense pressure from Albanian media outlets, which had effectively suggested what he should say. Consequently, the boy's allegations were ultimately found to be logically inconsistent with other evidence that had already been established during the investigation (UN News, 2004). Nevertheless, this did not prevent Albanians from organising a violent protest in the southern part of Kosovska Mitrovica the very next day and advancing towards the northern part of the city with the apparent intention of doing there what had already been done in other urban areas where Serbs had lived prior to 1999. The flames ignited by Albanian extremists on the bridge over the Ibar River quickly spread throughout Kosovo and Metohija, engulfing and devastating numerous Serbian communities, including Obilić, Svinjare, Bresje, Kosovo Polje, villages around Lipljan, Štimlje, Potkaljaja in Prizren, and many others. During the three-day outbreak of violence involving, according to various estimates, approximately 60,000 Albanians, 19 people were killed (11 Albanians and 8 Serbs), while 954 individuals—most of them Serbs—as well as 126 members of the international security forces, sustained injuries of varying severity. More than 1,000 properties belonging to Serbs and other non-Albanians were burned and looted, while 35 Orthodox churches, monasteries, and other monuments of cultural heritage were destroyed or severely damaged (Serbian Government for Kosovo and Metohija [2004]; Rakočević, 2025; *Failure to Protect: Anti-Minority Violence in Kosovo, March 2004*, 2004; S/2004/348).

As the foregoing demonstrates, the March Pogrom constituted a carefully planned and coordinated campaign of violence which, in the space of only 72 hours, inflicted immeasurable and lasting consequences upon the Serbian people and their centuries-old cultural and spiritual heritage in Kosovo and Metohija. Precisely because of the scale of the destruction and the climate of fear established as early as 1999 and 2000, the overwhelming majority of internally displaced persons never returned to their homes, which is why the province to this day has the lowest rate of returnees in the world, with fewer than 2% of displaced persons having returned (Serbian Government for Kosovo and Metohija [2004] – *Documentary Films by TVNS Radomir Grujić*). Particularly concerning is the fact that no one was adequately prosecuted for the events that took place between 17 and 19 March. Although dozens of proceedings were initiated before the judicial authorities of UNMIK and the PISG in Priština during the following year, only a small number of those who had participated in the attacks, arson, and persecution were brought to justice, and even fewer received sentences proportionate to the gravity of their offences. The penalties imposed were, as a rule, merely symbolic, thereby reinforcing the prevailing pattern of impunity that had existed even before the pogrom itself (Gudžić, 2025, p. 162). From the perspective of the Serbian people as a whole, these atrocities were met with profound indignation, not only because of the devastation they caused but also because of the persistent silence of Europe, whose foundations are rooted in Christianity and which failed to respond as Orthodox places of worship were destroyed and the traces of an entire people's historical presence were systematically

erased from its own continent. However, regardless of how clearly these events were perceived by the Serbian people, the question of how the March Pogrom was recorded and interpreted beyond the borders of the Republic of Serbia remains equally

important, since, among other factors, the reports of international organisations played a significant role in shaping international perceptions of the events in Kosovo and Metohija.

Table 1. Casualties and material damage during the March Pogrom of 2004

Category	Number
Fatalities	19 (8 Serbs and 11 Albanians)
Injured	954 (predominantly Serbs and other non-Albanians)
Burned or looted immovable property owned by Serbs and other non-Albanians (houses, flats, land, agricultural holdings)	More than 1,000
Destroyed or severely damaged property of the Serbian Orthodox Church (churches, monasteries, and cultural monuments)	35
Injured members of the international missions (KFOR and UNMIK Police)	126

Source: Source: Human Rights Watch (2004) Report; documentation of the Government of the Republic of Serbia; Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (S/2004/348).

3. Reports of the United Nations Secretary-General on the work of UNMIK in Kosovo and Metohija

The subject of analysis in this section consists of the regular reports of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), submitted to the United Nations Security Council during 2004 and 2005. Particular attention is devoted to Report S/2004/348 of 30 April 2004, followed by

Reports S/2004/613 of 30 July 2004 and S/2004/907 of 17 November 2004, as well as Kai Eide’s Comprehensive Review of the Situation in Kosovo, annexed to the Secretary-General’s letter S/2005/635 of 7 October 2005.

Specifically, Report S/2004/348 provides an account of UNMIK’s activities and the overall security and socio-political situation during the period from 1 January to 31 March 2004. Accordingly, this is a report that the Secretary-General, in coordination with his Special Representative, submitted—and continues to submit—to the United Nations Se-

curity Council in accordance with the procedures governing the operation of United Nations-mandated missions.^[6] Undoubtedly, the most significant event marking the reporting period was the March Pogrom, a fact acknowledged in paragraph 2 of the report, which states that „the defining event [...] was the widespread violence.” For this very reason, the report constitutes an important source. However, its interpretation must take into account that it is a document reporting on a period during which the UNMIK system, and indeed the United Nations itself, suffered a profound failure. Consequently, a tension runs throughout the text between acknowledging the scale of the crimes and the need to minimise the responsibility of the mission. This observation becomes even more significant when one considers that, although differing in certain respects, UNMIK and the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) have been the two most complex United Nations missions to date, both mandated to assume comprehensive control over a post-conflict territory, facilitate its recovery, and establish an entirely new administrative and governmental framework (Kondoch, 2001).

At the outset, attention should be directed to the terminology employed in the report. Specifically, in paragraph 2 of document S/2004/348, the events are described as „an organised, widespread and targeted campaign of violence” directed against the Serbian, Roma, and Ashkali communities, while paragraph 52 also refers to the existence of „a desire

to expel the Serbs.” These two examples—among several others throughout the report—demonstrate that the authors consistently avoided using terms such as „pogrom”, instead opting for more neutral expressions such as „violence”, „unrest”, or „conflict”, terminology that can scarcely capture the scale and consequences of the crimes committed. For example, paragraph 3 states that 954 individuals were injured „during the conflict.” The use of the term „conflict” is particularly problematic because it implies the existence of two relatively equal opposing sides, thereby obscuring the one-sided nature of the violence, which was directed exclusively against the Serbian and other non-Albanian populations. Even in places where Serbs resisted Albanian extremists, such as Čaglavica, Gračanica, and the northern part of Kosovska Mitrovica, those involved constituted a vastly outnumbered group of people who had gathered spontaneously in an effort to protect their own lives, the lives of their families, and their communities from destruction. The attempt to create an appearance of symmetry between Serbs and Albanians is also reflected in the manner in which the victims are presented. The statement in paragraph 3 that „19 people were killed, including 11 Albanians and 8 Serbs” is formally accurate, however, presented without any contextualisation, it creates the impression that the fatalities, together with the other losses and damage, resulted from clashes between two ethnic communities. The actual circumstances were markedly different. Serbs and their property were the exclusive targets of

[6] Until 2020, four reports per year on the work of UNMIK and the situation in Kosovo and Metohija were submitted to the United Nations Security Council. From that year onwards, this reporting schedule was consolidated into two semi-annual reports.

Albanian extremists, whereas the deaths and injuries sustained by Albanians resulted from actions taken by the UNMIK Police and KFOR forces in self-defence while responding to attacks against them and attempting to protect members of the non-majority communities. In addition to these figures, the other statistics presented in the report also correspond relatively closely to those contained in the official Serbian reports (summarised in the previous chapter), however the analysed document fails to provide clear content for them as well.

108 | With regard to the immediate trigger of the violence, the UNMIK report demonstrates a certain degree of caution. In paragraphs 5 and 38, concerning the drowning of the Albanian boys in the Ibar River, the report correctly states that „the circumstances of the incident have yet to be established” and further notes that the violence was exacerbated by subsequent „inflammatory and biased media reporting.” However, rather than explicitly emphasising that there was no evidence whatsoever of an ethnically motivated crime, which was a position publicly maintained by senior UNMIK officials even at the time, the report leaves the issue unresolved, and in doing so, it has, to this day, allowed room for the development of a false narrative concerning the „continuity of Serbian crimes”, which for nearly three decades has served as the foundation upon which efforts have been made to construct a national myth and the so-called statehood of Kosovo. Even if one accepts that the report correctly identifies the immediate triggers by referring to the shooting of the Serbian youth in Čaglavica and the tragedy in the village of Čabra, its analysis ends there and fails to examine the underlying causes of the violence. These consisted precisely in the deeply rooted hatred

of the leading Albanian political and paramilitary structures towards the Serbian population and the Republic of Serbia, supported by the financial, military, and propaganda resources of the leading powers of the collective West both during and after the conflict in Kosovo and Metohija; in the weak and unsystematically established security apparatus of the KFOR forces and the UNMIK Police, as a result of which Serbs and other non-Albanians were continuously left as easy targets for Albanian extremists; and in impunity, which served as a reward for crimes committed against Serbs and other non-Albanians both during the war and subsequently in the post-conflict period.

A similar pattern can also be observed in the sections dealing with the organisation of the unrest. Thus, when describing the attacks on Serbian communities in Kosovo and Metohija, the report states that they were „apparently spontaneous at the very beginning”, but that they were „quickly taken over by organised elements” interested in provoking tensions along ethnic lines. This carefully formulated sentence only partially confirms the thesis of well-organised and coordinated violence, as it nowhere identifies who the actual instigators were or who stood behind the extremists, despite the fact that certain individuals were already, at that time, either part of the UNMIK system or known to the UNMIK Police as former leading figures of the so-called KLA. A clear example of this is certainly Jakup Krasniqi, who at the time served as Minister of Public Services in the government of the PISG in Priština. His significant role in organising and carrying out violent actions against Serbs and KFOR forces in Kosovo and Metohija was exposed by representatives of the United States mission in

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Photo: Freepik

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Kosovo and Metohija during the pogrom itself. In addition to his case, the example of Jetulah Dibrani is also noteworthy. He was one of the first commanders of the so-called Kosovo Protection Corps (hereinafter: the so-called KPC) of the PISG in Priština and a former member of the so-called KLA, who organised the attack on and burning of the village of Svinjare. The fact that figures from almost all influential institutions of Albanian society in Kosovo and Metohija participated in organising the pogrom is further demonstrated by the information that representatives of the Islamic Religious Community of the so-called Kosovo also played a role in preparing the armed activities. During religious gatherings, they encouraged Albanians to participate in the uprising, the expulsion of Serbs, and the forced removal of the UNMIK and KFOR administrations. This group largely consisted of

imams such as Samed Xhezairi from Prizren and Musa Ademi from the vicinity of Vitina, who were known to have links with radical Islamists and mujahedeen (BIA, 2024, pp. 12–13).

Perhaps the most substantial criticism to be raised in this paper concerns the almost complete absence of self-criticism regarding the collapse experienced by the UNMIK and KFOR systems during the pogrom. Not only was there no acknowledgement of their own responsibility, but paragraph 8 states that „UNMIK and KFOR quickly launched efforts to arrest those involved in the violent actions”, and that the heads of these two components of the international presence in Kosovo and Metohija established a „senior crisis team” as well as a „crisis management body”. However, all of these claims describe exclusively the measures undertaken afterwards, once the rampage by Albanian extremists

was already in full swing, skilfully concealing the reasons why the violence had not been prevented through an earlier response. In other words, how was it possible for approximately 60,000 people to spend three full days burning, destroying, and expelling people without obstruction, in front of armed members of KFOR and the UNMIK Police?! The passivity of these formations is perhaps best illustrated by the burning of the Monastery of the Holy Archangels, the Church of the Virgin of Ljeviš, and the Prizren Theological Seminary in full view of members of the German KFOR contingent, and precisely because of this perceived cowardice, the influential German newspaper *Der Spiegel* referred to them as the „*rabbits of Kosovo*” (*Der Spiegel*, 2004).^[7] It is also paradoxical that paragraph 9 records that, once the majority of the destruction had already been completed, „approximately 2,000 additional troops were deployed” and that checkpoints were temporarily re-established in Serbian communities. Rather than interpreting this information as evidence that the initial deployment of forces had been incapable of fulfilling the primary task defined by the mandate, the report obscures its significance through the use of vague and inadequate terms such as „increasing visibility and presence”, with the apparent aim of concealing the extent of the failure. The failure to provide adequate protection undoubtedly had lasting consequences for the position of Serbs and other non-Albanians, as confirmed in paragraph 26, which states that following the pogrom they became „more isolated

than at any time during the previous three years”, and that many, particularly elderly persons, no longer wished to move around „without the exclusive escort of KFOR forces”. This only confirmed the thesis that Serbs and other non-Albanians could rely solely on KFOR forces and the UNMIK Police, despite the fact that these were units that lacked agility and were insufficiently trained to operate in crisis situations.

The favourable attitude towards the PISG Police Service in Priština, as well as towards the so-called (KPC), was also problematic. Regarding the Police Service, paragraph 41 states that „many members acted professionally under difficult circumstances”, while only briefly and conditionally mentioning that „some members may have done nothing to prevent the violence or, even worse, may have participated in it”. Specifically, there is not a single piece of evidence that could substantiate the claim that members of the PISG Police Service in Priština responded adequately anywhere. On the contrary, wherever they were able to do so, such as in the case of the burning of the Health Centre and the Russian Military Hospital in Bresje, they tacitly allowed attacks against Serbs and other non-Albanians to take place (Dimitrijević & Bisenić, 2025). Similarly, with regard to the so-called KPC), an organisation predominantly composed of former members of the so-called KLA, the report states in paragraph 43 that the organisation „operated professionally”, despite acknowledging that „some members had active links

[7] Although the conduct of KFOR forces, viewed as a whole, was catastrophic, there were also positive examples of adequate responses, such as the members of the Italian KFOR contingent who succeeded in protecting the Visoki Dečani Monastery and the Patriarchate of Peć from extremist attacks.

with extremist organisations”. Such contradictions indicate an effort by the authors to avoid a more critical assessment of the security structures of the PISG in Priština and to avoid establishing their responsibility during the pogrom. At the same time, there was undoubtedly also a desire on the part of the international interim administration to avoid direct confrontation with Albanian political and paramilitary structures, whose influence on the ground at the beginning of the twenty-first century often exceeded the formal boundaries of institutional control.^[8]

The desire to place Albanian extremists and Serbs on the same level, similarly to the use of the term „conflict”, was also evident in the conclusion. Specifically, paragraph 52 characterises the destruction of Orthodox religious sites as an act deserving „particular condemnation”, only for the authors, in the very next sentence of the same paragraph, to refer to alleged Serbian retaliation, emphasising that „the burning of mosques in Belgrade and other parts of Serbia must also be condemned”. Although every attack on any place of worship is deserving of condemnation and criminal sanction, by making such a comment, UNMIK undoubtedly exceeded the scope of its mandate by addressing internal political developments in central Serbia. Furthermore, the suggestion by the authors of the report that such an uncivilised act also required condemnation did not correspond to the facts, given that, as early as the

following day, 18 March 2004, almost all relevant political actors strongly condemned the burning of the Bajrakli Mosque in Belgrade and the Islam-aga Mosque in Niš. The incidents also received judicial resolution through the imposition of prison sentences on three young men (*Politika*, 2004). The late Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral Amfilohije Radović also took part in the efforts to prevent the burning of the mosque in Belgrade. Unlike the imams in Kosovo and Metohija who encouraged Albanians to expel Serbs, his actions represented a powerful example of responsibility and a call for peace and mutual understanding (RTS online portal, 2020). Therefore, establishing a direct connection between the aforementioned events evidently served the purpose of creating the impression of mutual responsibility and guilt on the part of Serbs and Albanians, which in no way corresponded to the scale, nature, and consequences of the March Pogrom.

In an attempt to present the mechanisms of their response in a favourable light, the authors of the report stated, rather optimistically, in paragraph 10 that more than 260 arrests had been carried out, and that from the end of the pogrom until the publication of the report, more than 45 cases had been brought before UNMIK courts and more than 100 before the courts of the PISG in Priština. It is now known, however, that the majority of these proceedings ended with symbolic

[8] For the purpose of obtaining a clearer understanding of the attitude of leading Albanian political figures towards Albanians loyal to the FRY and the Republic of Serbia, Serbs, and the temporary international military and civilian administration during the first decade of the twenty-first century, see the documentary film *Infinite War (La Guerra infinita)* produced by Italy's national broadcaster (*Radiotelevisione Italiana*), available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=du1to5RHctA&t=2397s>, as well as the report by Dick Marty, *Inhuman Treatment of People and Illicit Trafficking in Human Organs in Kosovo*, presented before the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2011, available at: <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/12608/html>.

or suspended sentences, or that no penalties were imposed at all. This only confirms the position expressed at the time by Werner Wnendt, Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and Metohija, that the entire judicial system „was not strong enough” to address the majority of the challenges it faced at that time (OSCE Mission report examines response of Kosovo’s justice system to the March 2004 riots, 2005). Finally, with the exception of the introductory remarks, the report examines the March Pogrom primarily through the prism of a political process, namely the implementation of the „standards before status” policy. This can particularly be observed in paragraph 52, where it is assessed that „the violence represented a serious setback in efforts to build a democratic, multi-ethnic and stable Kosovo”, as well as in paragraph 54, which states that it „called into question the timetable for the successful implementation of the standards”. Such subordination of human suffering to political considerations can further be observed in paragraph 60, which states that „Kosovo still has a long way to go in meeting the standards”.^[9] Moreover, the entire subsequent engagement is framed around the demand that „progress (in Kosovo) must be restored”, thereby implicitly suggesting that the greatest damage caused by the pogrom was the slowing down of a political process, rather than the expulsion of 4,000 people and the destruction of cultural heritage, parts of which date back as far as the fourteenth century.

However, it is particularly indicative that, despite the depth and lasting nature of its consequences, the March Pogrom had already begun to recede into the background during the second half of 2004. While the consequences of the destruction and displacement remained more than evident, the focus of the subsequent three reports gradually shifted towards the necessity of accelerating the commencement of negotiations on the future status of the province. Within this context, a narrative increasingly gained prominence—one that remains dominant today and was shaped both by Albanian political elites and by those who support them. According to this narrative, the March Pogrom was not a pre-planned and well-organised campaign of expulsion, but rather a consequence of Albanian dissatisfaction and frustration arising from the unresolved status of the territory in which they lived. In other words, this narrative suggests that once the status issue was finally resolved, Serbs and other non-Albanians would be able to exercise, without obstruction and to the fullest extent, all rights granted to them under the future legislation of the PISG in Priština (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p. 179). In this way, responsibility for the violence was gradually shifted from the perpetrators to the dispute over status, while the so-called independence was presented as the ultimate solution for overcoming ethnic tensions.

It was precisely this approach gained the support of a significant part of the international

[9] The document Standards for Kosovo was presented in December 2003 by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Harri Holkeri, and was subsequently endorsed by the United Nations Security Council. It represented a set of political benchmarks that the PISG in Priština, in coordination with UNMIK, were required to fulfil before any negotiations on the issue of the territory’s future status could begin.

community. This is also reflected in document S/2005/635, prepared in 2005 at the request of the Secretary-General of the UN by Special Representative Kai Eide. As Eide himself states in the introduction, the purpose of the entire report was to assess „whether the conditions had been met for launching and conducting the process concerning the future status”. Bearing this in mind, his answer to that question was affirmative, despite the fact that the standards—including issues related precisely to the return of internally displaced persons, the protection of Serbs and other non-Albanians, and the preservation of religious and cultural heritage—had not been fulfilled. Thus, once again in the section concerning future status, Eide concludes in paragraph 62 that, although „there will never be a good time to resolve Kosovo’s future status”, „the overall assessment leads to the conclusion that the time has come to launch this process”. The author of the report explicitly acknowledges that progress in implementing the standards had been „very uneven”, but immediately adds in paragraph 64 that „it is unlikely that postponing the process related to future status would lead to further and tangible results”. Thus, the failure to meet the standards was transformed from an obstacle into an argument in favour of initiating the process of determining future status. In this way, the „standards before status” policy, which the April 2004 report still upheld, was effectively abandoned, while the Eide report paved the way for future negotiations (Bataković, 2015, p. 366).

366). The United Nations Security Council subsequently provided full support for the commencement of negotiations in October 2005, and only a few weeks later appointed Martti Ahtisaari as Special Representative. This was followed by the unsuccessful Vienna negotiations, during which the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement was presented, and for the Serbian side, this proposal was almost entirely unacceptable, as it envisaged the creation of a new state on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, contrary primarily to Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)..^[10] However, disregarding international law, as had also been the case in 1999, Kosovo and Metohija Albanians, with the open support of the United States and leading Western European powers, carried out an act of unilateral secession in February 2008 and unlawfully declared independence on the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, and in doing so they completed a process in which the March Pogrom constituted an important component. In this manner, the paradox was confirmed that violence committed against the Serbian and other non-Albanian populations, instead of being subject to strict punishment, was rewarded through the acceleration of the secessionist process, which, viewed from the perspective of developments since 1999, opened a Pandora’s box and produced far-reaching consequences for respect for the fundamental rules of the international order embodied in the UN system and its Charter.

[10] In February 2007, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia formally rejected, by a majority vote of its members, the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement: <https://www.parlament.gov.rs/akti/ostala-akta/doneta-akta/u-sazivu-od-14-februara-2007>.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the reports of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the work of UNMIK and the events of March 2004 demonstrates, above all, that documents produced by international organisations, regardless of how frequently they are perceived as neutral sources, are not created in a political vacuum. On the contrary, they are inevitably shaped by the institutional framework within which they are produced, as well as by various, and often conflicting, interests of leading powers. For this reason, their reliability and objectivity must be subject to continuous scrutiny, as their significance lies not only in the chronological presentation of events but also in the manner in which facts are described, presented, and interpreted.

In this regard, the analysis conducted in this paper has confirmed the fundamental premise from which the research was initiated. Namely, in the aforementioned documents, and particularly in the report from April 2004, despite a relatively detailed factual account of the events and their consequences, the very nature and scale of the March Pogrom were not presented adequately. A careful examination of the terminology employed, the manner in which victims were presented, the conduct of international security structures, and the broader political framework within which the violence was situated reveals that the suffering of the Serbian and other non-Albanian populations was relativised at multiple levels throughout the report. Thus, the report clearly reflects the interplay of two parallel objectives. On the one hand, its authors could not entirely disregard the violence, the number of victims, the destruction of homes and property,

the devastation of religious sites, and the profound consequences that remained. On the other hand, there was a discernible effort to present the events in a manner that would in no way call into question the credibility of the entire system of international military and civilian administration in Kosovo and Metohija. It is precisely in this discrepancy between facts and interpretation that the essence of the document lies. The more evident the consequences of the March Pogrom became, the greater the need to politically and institutionally lessen their substantive significance. Consequently, the report neither denies what occurred nor provides a clear and comprehensive account of the events. By omitting the broader historical context and seeking to characterise all acts of violence in an inadequate manner, the report attempts to create the impression that the events constituted an isolated security crisis rather than the culmination of a prolonged process that had begun in the canteens of the student halls of residence in Priština as far back as 1981. In this way, the issues of responsibility, accountability, and, most importantly, how such attacks were allowed to occur at all were entirely marginalised. By following this course, supporters of the so-called independence of Kosovo gradually shifted the focus away from the suffering of the victims towards the perceived necessity of accelerating political processes whose ultimate objective was the attempted detachment of the territory of the Republic of Serbia.

It should also be borne in mind that the extent of the (lack of) success of the international interim administration and the KFOR mission cannot be assessed solely on the basis of a single document, but also by what has remained unchanged ever since. More than two decades after the March Po-

grom, the obstacles and hardships have not been overcome. Serbs, as well as other non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija, continue to live in conditions of uncertainty, with minimal trust in the mechanisms of the international presence and under persistent tensions fuelled by the activities of the authorities in Priština. In recent years, crises in the north of Kosovo and Metohija have become particularly pronounced, marked by unilateral and escalatory actions by the authorities led by Albin Kurti, frequent arrests followed by politically motivated trials, incursions by the special units of the Priština police into predominantly Serbian communities, and a series of other incidents that have further deepened the sense of insecurity. At the same

time, numerous ethnically motivated attacks, the desecration of the heritage of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and pressure exerted on the Serbian population rarely receive attention commensurate with their frequency and significance. Viewed from this perspective, the March Pogrom belongs not only to the past, nor can it be reduced to a single tragic episode in recent history. Regrettably, it remains a lasting reminder that violence which has not been fully investigated and adequately sanctioned cannot truly be overcome. Instead, it continues to endure through the consequences it has left behind, permanently shaping political processes, relations between communities, and everyday life long after the last flames of its destruction were extinguished.

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Opinion Review



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When the Stone has the Scent of Orthodoxy – How the identity of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija is changing



Branislava Vučković: *Erasing Memory – Transmission of Serbian Culture in Kosovo and Metohija*, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Priština, in Kosovska Mitrovica, Kosovska Mitrovica, 2026

The complex reality in Kosovo and Metohija is becoming gloomier and more tragic by the day, and the fact that this is an organised, planned, and co-ordinated project of ethnic cleansing of the Serbian population by the self-declared Kosovo authorities with silent support of their mentors from the West is laid out in the book *Erasing Memory – Transmission of Serbian Culture in Kosovo and Metohija* by Branislava Vučković, Assistant Professor at the

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Faculty of Philosophy in Kosovska Mitrovica. Walking across the expanses of our southern province in the theoretical footsteps of the famous French philosopher and mediologist, Régis Debray, it is a testimony of the heroic sacrifice and expulsion of the Serbian population, but also of the horrific vandalism and destruction of Orthodox monasteries, churches, and graveyards, which erases any trace of the Serbs' right to live on their ancestral land. Material memorials are burned and trampled, graveyards are dug up and demolished, crosses are broken, including the stone that is crushed, pulverised and dispersed because they are reminders of the Serbs, as carriers of symbolic memories. It is as if a whisper: "*nothing is accidental*", comes from every page of this monograph, not large in size, but rich in information that strives to tame the space and accumulated layers of the past, intertwined and multi-layered in a cluttered space and time.

In an era of warped values, intellectuals do not have the right to remain silent, no matter how high the price. This was the opinion of Régis Debray when, after returning from Macedonia, he wrote an open letter entitled "Letter of a traveller to the President of the Republic" (13 May 1999), informing the then-president of France, Jacques Chirac, that the situation in Kosovo was "ugly". Spending four days in this part of Serbia, which was demonised in the Western media, he talked to ordinary people in Priština, Prizren, Peć, and other towns and villages in Kosovo and Metohija, choosing the locations and interlocutors on his own in order to witness an exodus of a people, but not of the Albanian as the global media claimed in unison. "In the little village of Lipljan I saw ... a house that projectiles turned to dust, three little girls and their grandparents massa-

cred, and no military facilities in a three-kilometre radius", the French writer reported objectively, adding that in Prizren, "in the Gypsy quarter, I saw two civilian houses that had been turned into ash two hours before, with multiple casualties amongst the rubble". Brutal, anti-Serbian narratives hid the truth, Debray shouted, but nobody wanted to hear cries of the injustice done to an entire people, even though it was published by *Le Monde*. The former associate of Che Guevara and former advisor to French President François Mitterrand was immediately designated as "pro-Serbian", but he managed to raise suspicion among the Western public that not everything was as portrayed in the media.

Nearly three decades afterwards, in the footsteps of his mediological teachings, Branislava Vučković examines the reality in Kosovo and Metohija, analysing the material eradication of Orthodoxy and Serbian cultural heritage. Ideas, memories, pictures, and myths are transmitted through time via state institutions and people as carriers of symbolic meanings. In other words, if they are gone, the so-called state of Kosovo will build an architecture of new memories and narratives to justify the violent statehood and synthetic creation of new identities. That is why the daily expulsion and intimidation of the Serbian population is always accompanied with violence against the monuments of their existence, whether it is burning churches, ploughing over and digging up of cemeteries, demolishing monuments, or raiding schools. The destruction of identity is thorough, comprehensive, and in the long-term the essence of the strategy of Albanisation, Vučković suggests, citing numerous examples and illustrations of the crimes that prove it. She interprets the concept of *transmission*, borrowed from Debray,

through the dynamic of collective memory, without which there is no cultural identity. By severing ethnic continuity and imposing different cultural forms, a new mediological perspective is created, where, in the absence of cultural heritage, institutions, and the people, history is revised and falsified, oblivion is imposed, and a new reality is promoted. Transmission carries messages across generations, so stone is not just a construction material – it is a specific archive that does not allow the past to be pushed out from a certain area. Therefore, the land of Kosovo and Metohija is not just a territory stolen with support from a part of the international community, but also a treasure trove for Orthodoxy, Serbian culture, and tradition, and a key to self-understanding and identity.

By structurally dividing the book into three chapters, the author maps out the three pillars of Kosovo and Metohija's transmission – cultural heritage, state institutions, and the people, as carriers of symbolic memories. Methodologically sound, with a careful narrative, gradual in theory, authoritative, and with a distinctive style, she searches for Serbian stones dispersed throughout the area, exposed to political violence and the passage of time. Monasteries such as Gračanica or Visoki Dečani have been standing for over 700 years precisely because they were built of stone, but their purpose is in the preservation of Saint Sava's Orthodoxy as an anchor in the spirit of the nation. Stone cannot be created as a political idea that comes into existence overnight, so the church is an important institution that brings the people together. From the viewpoint of Debray's mediology, when extremists concertedly drive people away from a certain territory, they attack stone monuments more than they attack

the people, because stones are a medium of transmission. The communication practice in ethnically diverse environments builds a collective *We*, but only transmission enables cultural understanding and memory. Without material carriers, there is no collective memory, reconstruction of the past, or a new place for ceremonial gatherings.

Branislava Vučković is rooted in the Kosovo and Metohija milieu, competent in situating the horizon of interpreting messages that circulate in the public space. She sees power and ideology as an important formative framework that determines the broader socio-cultural milieu. In other words, transmission is not spontaneous. It is an "indicator of values", the author claims, stating that "mediation separates the message from its primary source, translates it into collective memory, turning the idea into a concrete social construct" (Vučković, 2026, p. 43). The repository of memories is the connective tissue of the community, source of its strength and uniqueness, the author points out brilliantly, understanding that by reconstructing the past, a basis for the present and future of Serbian life in these areas is created. That is why this monograph requires careful reading and analysis, calling for a multidisciplinary and deep knowledge of the reader. Like Debray, Vučković also searches for dusty layers of the past, a "mediological Gospel", where "a bone was in the beginning of everything", which, extended with stone, created a monument embedded into a space. The French philosopher believes that this negates time, but also marks certain culture and message. Branislava Vučković takes it a step further: "During the pre-war, wartime, and *especially the post-war period* of the ethnic conflict in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbian cultural

monuments (sacral, secular and funerary) were targets for destruction” (Vučković, 2026, p. 63). Reports of the Serbian Orthodox Church show 76 cases of vandalism against monuments as early as August 1999, with another 35 desecrated churches and monasteries after the 2004 March pogrom. The world is silent about the fact that these were acts of vandalism, with blasting, burning, demolition, and similar eradication of the traces of Serbian existence. With physical destruction, Albanian extremists permanently change Orthodox churches as places for worshippers to gather, who later leave, discontent due to the loss of spiritual identity. The remaining religious objects are then renamed into *Kosovo-Byzantine heritage*, which is the property of Albanians who also lived in these areas.

With the disappearance of Serbian cultural heritage, the content of the messages kept for centuries by the Serbian community also disappears. A new memorial landscape is created with the aim of confirming Albanian autochthony, by directing the process of so-called *Kosovisation* to the area itself, and not the culture and the people who lived in it. Of more than 400 Orthodox graveyards, only a few dozen have remained in areas where Serbs still live, while the majority have been destroyed, overgrown, or silently left to oblivion. Dematerialisation of tombstones leaves Serbs without links to the past, and without those it is only a matter of time when the cultural identity will also change. At the same time, the Greater Albanian ethno-nationalist identity is installed in the beginning of everything, combined with supranational political centres of power from the West. The fact that the instruments for preventing the continuity of Serbian memory are numerous is shown by the author who trans-

lates the current relationship of political power with growing repression and expulsion of Serbs. State institutions, found in healthcare and education, are the only archives of collective memory. By closing them, intimidating employees, arresting and punishing citizens, the self-declared Kosovo authorities displace and sever the link of cooperation with the heartland (state of Serbia), derogating its existence and functioning in this region. The names of towns are Albanised (Novo Brdo – Novobërda; Devet Jugovića – Bardhosh, Srbica – Skënderaj...). Streets, especially in the parts formerly inhabited by the Serbs, are given names that glorify the Illyrian origin of Albanians, important figures from Albanian national history, or the names from the recent struggle for so-called Kosovo independence. The newly-established political reality also brings a new ideology, which entails a comprehensive shift in the culture of memory, with new official holidays and different monuments. Violence precedes the erasure of memory, and in order to carry this out, the so-called Kosovo authorities aim “in the direction of integration of Serbian institutions into the Kosovo system” (Vučković, 2026, p. 109), permanently severing transmission. The Kosovo and Metohija Coordination Centre registered 287,000 internally displaced persons, predominantly Serbs, but also Romani, Gorani, and members of other ethnic groups. Torn away from their homes and natural environment they nurture the culture of memory, occasionally visiting ancestral places, but their numbers are diminishing as they do not want to take too many risks due to security incidents. Institutional persecution continues with the announced Law on Foreigners, which will prevent the remaining Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija from

staying there unless they register with the “Kosovo Civilian Register”, essentially accepting the functioning of the self-declared state. As the author concludes – “memories are kept by people”, but the question left without an answer is how long they will be here in order to preserve transmission.

The book *Erasing Memory – Transmission of Serbian Culture in Kosovo and Metohija* is essential for any good-willed reader who wants to know the

truth about cultural heritage of this part of Serbia, so we warmly recommend it. Along with the author, the publisher also deserves recognition – the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Priština, with a temporary seat in Kosovska Mitrovica. This is also a way of showing gratitude to a good friend of Serbia, philosopher, journalist, and mediologist Régis Debray, who was among the first to see what kind of fate others have prepared for us.

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Damaged Serbian cemetery
in Kosovska Mitrovica
Photo: Tanjug



Damaged Serbian cemetery
in Kosovska Mitrovica
Photo: Tanjug



Damaged Jewish Cemetery
in Pristina

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Event Reports



Excerpt from President Xi Jinping's speech on the occasion of the 105th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China^[1]

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday hailed the 105-year history of the Communist Party of China (CPC) as the „most magnificent epic” of the Chinese nation and urged the Party to press ahead to build China into a modern socialist country on schedule.

Addressing a gathering marking the CPC's 105th founding anniversary in Beijing, Xi, also General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, called on Party members to remain steadfast in their convictions and work tirelessly to fulfil the Party's missions in the new era and on the new journey. Founded in 1921 against the backdrop of a weak China plagued by foreign humiliation and poverty, the CPC has grown from a small group of just over 50 members into the world's largest governing party with tremendous global influence. Xi underscored the importance of meeting the goal of fully realizing socialist modernization by the middle of the century.

„Time stops for no one, and neither does history,” he said.

Create historic feats

The whole Party must adhere to its basic theory, basic line and basic policy to „remain undaunted by passing clouds and stay on course through wind and waves,” Xi said. Stressing that the Party must rely closely on the people to create historic feats, Xi urged Party members to „further reinvigorate the enterprising spirit for getting things done.” He also called on the whole Party to actively respond to risks and challenges on the path ahead. „China's development is now in a period where strategic opportunities coexist with risks and challenges, and where uncertain and unpredictable factors are on the rise. We must always be prepared to withstand major tests of high winds and raging waves, and even violent storms,” he warned. As profound

[1] The Editorial Board would like to thank the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Serbia for providing the report by Xinhua agency which contains the excerpts from President Xi's speech on the occasion of the 105th anniversary of the Communist Party of China.

Celebration of the 105th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China

Photo: Gulliver image

changes unseen in a century accelerate, the world has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation, with humanity once again standing at a crossroads of choice, Xi said. „We must continuously promote the building of a community with a shared future for humanity,” he said. Xi also stressed advancing full and rigorous Party self-governance with sustained efforts to win „the tough, protracted and all-out battle against corruption. „It is imperative that all of us in the Party never forget our original aspiration and founding mission, that we always stay modest, prudent, and hard-working, and that we have the courage and ability to carry on our fight,” he added. According to the latest statistics, the CPC now has nearly 101.29 million members and over 5.43 million primary-level Party organizations. At the gathering, Xi conferred the July



Xi Jinping at the celebration marking the 105th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China in Beijing,
July 1, 2026, Beijing, PR China

Photo: Gulliver image

1 Medal, the Party's highest honor. Eight individuals received the honor this year, including a grassroots mediator, a veteran, a village Party official, a rural doctor, a community worker, an agricultural specialist, a mechanical engineering expert, and a petroleum refining engineering expert who was honored posthumously. Outstanding Party members, Party workers, and primary-level Party organizations from across the country were also honored at the 3,000-strong gathering. The event was attended by Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang, and Li Xi -- all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee -- as well as Vice President Han Zheng.

Fine qualities

In his address, Xi said the CPC boasts fine qualities with no parallel among other political parties and political forces. He said the Party's endeavors over the past 105 years have fundamentally transformed the future of the Chinese people, blazed the right path toward the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, demonstrated the strong vitality of Marxism, had a profound influence on the course of world history, and made the CPC a powerful Communist Party. Under the CPC's leadership, China has become the world's second-largest economy, emerged as one of the world's fastest-rising innovators, raised the average life expectancy of its people to more than 79 years, and established the world's largest education, social security and healthcare systems. The Party remains committed to seeking truth and always adheres to the right direction, Xi said, adding that it is deeply rooted in the people and always boasts a solid foundation. He said the CPC courageously rises to its historic missions and always maintains the strategic initiative. It follows the trend of development and always remains at the forefront of the times. Xi also praised the Party's courage and ability to fight, its unwavering confidence in victory, and its commitment to continuous self-improvement. Having led the country to eradicate absolute poverty, the CPC has mapped out a blueprint to basically realize modernization by 2035 and build China into a great modern socialist country in all respects by the middle of the century. Stressing the need to uphold the Party's absolute leadership over the armed forces, Xi urged efforts to achieve the goals for the centenary of the People's Liberation Army in 2027 and elevate the people's armed forces to world-class status at a faster pace. He also called on the military to resolutely defend China's sovereignty, security and development interests, and make greater contributions to safeguarding world peace and development. Promoting the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macao is essential to realizing national rejuvenation, Xi said. Resolving the Taiwan question and realizing China's complete reunification are a historic mission and an unshakable commitment of the CPC, he said. He pledged resolute actions to fight secessionists seeking „Taiwan independence,” oppose external interference, and advance national reunification.

Xinhua

In the beehive of letters

On the occasion of the exhibition of Mira Maoduš's paintings
"In Praise of the Cyrillic Language" at the Cyrillic Museum
in Bajina Bašta, 26th March 2026

"[...] A great man is one who, with his intellectual gifts and abilities, surpasses other people, who, like a bee, gathers honey, gathers knowledge, and discovers new truths, but crowns all of this with love for humanity, to help it rise as soon as possible from the miseries oppressing it: fear, hunger, ignorance, disease." [...]^[1]

When Cyril and Methodius created the foundations of Slavic literacy, in their Christian piety they certainly did not even think that they would be crowned with a halo of saints for their merits, and that a day would be designated in the year when grateful posterity would celebrate the memory of their mission. It is even more certain that, despite their God-inspired foresight, which in itself can move a mortal to immortal deeds, they could not foresee the path that would have to be traversed by that script and that language, for whose originality and beauty they were preparing a highly elevated form of spirit. With their heroic work they covered the past centuries and left a legacy for posterity. We owe them the evergreen beauty of the Liturgy in Church Slavonic, the homeland of the Slavic languages. At this mystical wedding of Slavdom with God, these saints stand with candles of godfatherly joy.

That specific *hymn* to God and the Family settled in the heart of Mirjana Mira Maoduš, and now there is a beehive of Slavic iconic letters in it. Her ancestors abide in it, they sing bee-like psalms... *To our Lord Father of bees*^[2]. The quiet song of letters hummed by the bees from the thyme and basil in Lika, Tesla's and her beginning, transfers the all-fruitful unanimity with the earthly pattern, to testify to the dominion, power and genius of the most brilliant Serb and citizen of the world. Mira Madouš herself comes from that national and patriotic beehive. That is her point of support. Hence her talent for art and strength in life. Her epic, knightly ancestor from Lika is in her spirit and her breath. That is why she, expressing praise to

[1] From the book *Nikola Tesla and His Era*, Toronto, "Istočnik" (1993), quoted according to V. Savić, *Nikola Tesla, Our Great Ambassador in the USA*.

[2] All the verses in the text are quoted according to V. Vukašinović, *Light in the Hills. Selected and New Poems*, Čačak (2007).



A painting inspired by motifs from the poem "Idu" (They are going) by Vladislav Petković Dis, by Mirjana Maoduš

Photo: Mirjana Maoduš

the Creator, is able to shape exciting pictorial-Cyrillic letter structures (gold-topped temples), thus bringing their own charm – the appearance of bees of its own. *Among bees there is also light // just like among letters.*

“[...] Upon their appearance, the bees looked inspirational to man’s overall imagination. From time immemorial, *bees* and their products have had a privileged place in ancient peoples’ magic, myth, poetry, naturalist manuscripts; and later in sciences, in art. That is because bees are artists themselves ion the production of the Sense of life as a triumph over death, coldness and nothingness. [...]”^[3]

Carrying within herself the gift and responsibility for choosing the oldest roots, the oldest covenants and signs, the deepest spiritual bonds, she has opted for the Cyrillic alphabet, the secret of the unity of the fraternal Slavic peoples. To Mira, every letter is a sight with a spiritual meaning and message and/or moral.

[3] M. Radović, *The Appearance of Bees*, Novi Sad (2017), p. 17.

That is why she could not have secured her inspiration on a more solid and divine place. Cyrillic is our liturgical script, the vertical of Serbian spiritual, cultural and historical identity. The letter is the Light on these patriotic canvases, which connect us with eternity. With her unique pectoral language, Mira paints letters and praises the Logos, offering pictorial-poetic sermons to our feelings, which is the goal of Orthodox literature.

The God-seeking art of Mira Maoduš leads us through the Church Slavonic, or Serbian and Russian Cyril and Methodius tradition. This journey of letters is also a chant, an echo of selfless love in the Holy Trinity, in which the colours of n the artistic expression of the presence of the Holy Trinity in the “miracle” of the Liturgy. Ison – that quiet chant of the Holy Spirit of God proceeding from the silence of the Father.

Ison is the flight of eagles in the spirit, the third, most important ingredient of the language, contained in the Orthodox fullness of Pentecost.

Art contributes to the overall joy of theology. The inspired and talented builders of Saint Sophia knew the ancient Hellenic secret, that’s why the hallowed space of that temple was completely devoted to the praise of the Divine Logos. Mira has learnt that secret and that is why in her pictures, the offsprings of the soul and the spirit, there are burning colours in the rhythm of Serbian and Russian manuscripts that create words with accents, because when a language can use its accent to become the embodied “Music of God”, it is a sign of its royalty and eagle-like flight. Therefore, these sweet-sounding letters, the praise to God, bring the miraculous Light, Epiphany and joy to the spirit. Mira is impressed by the characters of holy warriors, holy martyrs and holy archangels. Her artistic poetics proves that an Orthodox artist has the wisdom of distinguishing: he emphasizes (the artistic procedure) only with the beauty of the Transfiguration world – revelation in Christ God. That is why the Greatest Artist give him courage to change first himself and then the surrounding world – by introducing and miraculously multiplying the loaves of the Beauty of God...

Where has Mira taken us? To the Slavic landscapes of the bees’ multicoloured prayer chant in the Light called by the soul (litany). To those regions and spaces of spirituality that demand prayerful sincerity and purity. To the wondrous and miraculous source of Sava’s water – This is our originally pure Orthodox faith, which springs from the cross that the Saint made in our thirsty soul. From that inexhaustible spring, let us rejoice in the love, kindness, and mercy of Saint Sava. The sights we will shortly absorb by our tearful eyes will show us Mira’s way of creating, see the harmony of forms in the in harmony of colours, like the masters from Kosovo and Metohija – the capital of the Serbian artistic empire, the Holy Mountains of Fruška Gora and Mother Russia, because those covenants are so close to our hearts. In this endless swarm of Slavic letters Mira Maoduš has managed to capture the magic of the beehive. The mystical Secret, contained ion her artistic journey of letters through universal spiritual history.

The gifted and patient hand, impressed by the beauty of Serbian and Russian manuscripts (the Light comes from the East), proves the inexhaustible Saint Sava honey-flowing source and the invincible strength of holy Serbian and Russian ancestors. Because the Logos has become human, so that we might be deified.

Guardian of the invisible in the visible

In her skill and art, Mira Maoduš presents before us the vividly written and illustrated thought of Saint Sava. "For Serbs, there is a narrow path and not a wide road". These words direct us towards measure, i.e., balance and pater, model and ideal as the principles of freedom, while giving strength to Mira so that she can see the certainty of her artistic aspirations in her *service to the light*.

Art contributes to the integrated joy of theology. Mira has come to know this secret of artistic creation – in the dedicated praise of the Divine Logos. This praise to God and the Family settled in the heart and spirit of Mirjana Mira Maoduš, and she was amazed by the images of holy warriors, holy martyrs, and holy archangels. Her painting poetics proves that an Orthodox artist has the wisdom of distinguishing: he emphasizes (the artistic procedure) only with the beauty of the Transfiguration world – revelation in Christ God. That is why the Greatest Artist give him courage to change first himself and then the surrounding world – by introducing and miraculously multiplying the loaves of the Beauty of God... Her hand is guided by the Holy Spirit towards free strokes inspired at the source, for in the beginning was the Word (Logos). Here we can feel that Letter, see its descent on the earth, its saviour energy and perceive what distinguishes it from its mechanical presentation. Mira's *light writing* (painting) thus dispels darkness, giving the holy beauty of Serbian (Slavic) iconic Cyrillic letters – images. By reading, in them we find the verses of the Serbian-Russian poetic fraternity about God, love, fatherland, honour and glory...

The source of Mira's inspiration is in the light contained in the Creator's depths and secrets. The stroke of her colour, the secret touch with the world that sends its messages, and the beauty of her handwriting, is not only in the chosen line and colours, but in the meanings, in the material and the spherical created by these meanings, stemming from the longing for the invisible world. That is why her artistic expression is shaped in a hymn to creation. That is how she enriches the life around us and gives it hope and harmony with the time that does not pass.

Mira's soft, Christ-longing soul was absorbed by the ground that now bears the Lord's gifts to touch our soul. She is accompanied by a whisper of prayerful silence and a gentle blue like a royal, Raška, blue eye and a subtle sensitivity and need for beauty. Her pictures, painted in prayer and with love, permeated by lyrical sensitivity, live in inviting the Divine while imbuing and encouraging us, transferring the spiritual joy from the models to us, observers. This is an imperceptibly conquered and achieved spirituality, because Mira's inner spiritual landscapes of felt landscapes, cities, essence, possess an invisible language, and her paintings are her inner gardens from which the heavenly shines. Mira resists temptations and persistently stays on the chosen road, enticing her talent by the knowledge that in each embryo there is a secret message from the ancestors. Mira paints – heartily, eagerly, devotedly, bravely, she both warns and reminds, cures and encourages. She is the painter of Hope, Faith and Love. Her soul about which we speak is without reservation shaped by concealed centuries of the Serbian Golgotha, but also by the Resurrection. In her paintings, there is a sense of something timeless, but also timely... they are a unique kaleidoscope of knowledge and talent,

experience and love. That is why they radiate and attract with their divine inspiration, by the willingness to sacrifice even one's life for the sake of the Holy Spirit of truth and beauty. That through beauty we may rise and rejoice in the Truth that knows no time.

Before she became the resident of large cities, shining and luxurious capitals, and the citizen of the world, before all her academic and artistic beginnings, traversed roads and trials, high rewards and well-deserved respect and fame – Mira Maoduš had been imbued with Dučić's worldview about God and Serbdom, on which her ardent patriotism rests: "The fatherland is neither a tribe nor a language, but a collective spirit of a nation".

The organizers and authors of the exhibition of Mira's selected pictures know that the most beautiful reception is a gift, and that is why they wanted this spiritual feast to bring us all joy and elation, reminding us of the depth of our root and of the height of our lineage.

Instructions for Authors

The editorial board of the journal *Progress* will only consider articles which are in accordance with these Instructions. The journal publishes only new and original articles. The editors will accept papers *in extenso* which have previously partially been published at a scientific gathering, under the condition that this is duly indicated by the author. Any attempt at plagiarism or self-plagiarism will be sanctioned (banning the author from publishing his/her work in this journal for a length of time which corresponds to the severity of the plagiarism; the institution with which the author is affiliated, and the appropriate professional organizations will also be informed of the wrongdoing).

Papers are regularly published in Serbian Cyrillic and in English. The editorial board may EXCEPTIONALLY decide to publish an edition thematically devoted to a particular country, our diplomatic relations with that country etc. in another language, i.e., the official language of that country.

The editorial board maintains the right to proof-read and edit all the papers, in accordance with best practices and Serbian/English language standards. After presenting their papers, authors are required to submit

a statement signed by all the authors and co-authors asserting that the paper has not been published either partially or wholly in another publication. The statement on the particular contribution of each author must be signed by every author, scanned and sent with the manuscript, as additional documentation. This is to ensure that all authors are made responsible for the fulfilling of all the conditions. After this, the paper goes through the editorial process.

Accepted papers are published in the order the Editorial Board establishes, on the suggestion of the Chief Editor and Executive Editor. In the case of Thematic Issues, the Chief Editor and Executive Editor will take into consideration the suggestions of the guest editor of the Thematic Issue, before sending the paper to the Editorial Board. The journal *Progress* publishes papers in the field of social sciences and related multidisciplinary papers that shed light on society.

The papers are categorized in accordance with the 2009 *Act on the editing process of scientific journals* adopted by the Minister of Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

Papers can be:

Scientific articles:

1. Original scientific papers.

These papers expose previously unpublished results of the author's personal research, conducted according to scientific standards. The length of the body of these papers must not exceed 28,800 characters with spaces. This number does not include the name, middle initial, surname and affiliation of the author, the title of the article, the summary (up to 800 characters with spaces), key words (up to 5 words or phrases), the list of references, footnotes;

2. Review. Contains an original, detailed critique of a scientific problem or area, in which the author has established his/her credentials, confirmed also by the presence of self-citations. The body text of a review must not exceed 28,800 characters with spaces. The total number of characters does not include the elements stated above (cf. Original scientific papers);

3. Brief or previous statement.

This is an original full format scientific paper up to 18,000 characters with spaces in length, or a preliminary paper. The total number of characters does not include the elements stated above (cf. Original scientific papers);

4. Scientific critique, or polemic.

(discussion on a given scientific sub-

ject, exclusively on the basis of scientific arguments) and reviews. The length of these papers is up to 10,000 characters with spaces. This type of paper must include the name, middle initial, surname and affiliation of the author, as well as a summary up to 400 characters with spaces in length, key words (up to 5 words or phrases), a list of references. These elements are not included in the total number of characters allowed.

Expert papers:

1. **Expert paper** is an article which presents information that contributes to the study of social phenomena but not necessarily based on the scientific method. These papers must not exceed 18,000 characters with spaces. The total number of characters does not include the elements stated above (cf. Original scientific papers);

2. **Informative contribution** (editorial, commentary, information on the work of the Foundation which is the publisher of *Progress*, etc.). These texts are shorter, with a length of up to 12,000 characters with spaces. The total number of characters does not include the elements stated above (cf. Original scientific papers);

3. **Review** (book, research, scientific event, etc.). The length is up to 7000 characters with spaces. The use of photographs is encouraged (images of book covers, photographs of events, etc.). Images count as 500 characters with spaces. A review does not contain a summary or key words but must include references.

The journal *Progress* will not publish papers that contain less than 5 references. The Editorial Board encourages authors to use journal references of a more recent date, if possible.

All types of papers can contain photographs, graphs, tables, and other illustrations. Every illustration counts as 500 characters with spaces. The Editorial Board encourages the use of illustrations, especially graphs and tables, to present data which do not have to be repeated in the body, but just referred to. Every table must have a number (1 – n) and title, while every image (graph, photograph...) must have a number (1 – n) and caption.

The authors and co-authors suggest the category of the manuscript. This is also done by the reviewers, but the final decision on the categorization is made by the Chief Editor and Executive Editor of the journal.

The manuscripts must contain standardized abbreviations, but not in the title or abstract. The full name with its abbreviation in parenthesis is given when first mentioned. Abbreviations are permitted further on in the text, both in the abstract and in the paper itself. Abbreviations must not be used in the conclusion of the paper (not abstract).

In the case of a paper written in the Serbian language, foreign names are transcribed, and the original name given in parentheses the first time they are mentioned in the text. In the case of papers written in the English language, names are given in the original format or transcribed (eg. Chinese or Arab names). Foreign phrases are written in the original format, in italics, and if necessary, their translation and meaning are given in a footnote.

Manuscripts must be submitted as a Word Document, line spacing 1.5, A4 paper size single sided, margins 2.5 cm, justified alignment, font size 12pt, Times New Roman. Bold and italics should be avoided and can be used in subheadings. The Summary,

Key words, and footnotes are single spaced, 1.0.

Submitted manuscripts are sent (without author's name) to at least two reviewers/editors. Comments and suggestions of the editors and reviewers (not giving the reviewer's name) are sent back to the author.

After undergoing a peer and editorial review, the paper is sent back to the author. All changes must be made within the space of three days. During this phase it is not possible to make significant changes but only correct minor typing and similar mistakes. If the corrected text is not returned to the Editorial Board within three days, the Editorial Board will assume that the author has no further comments. The manuscripts of papers approved for publication are not returned to the author.

Preparing a manuscript

Manuscripts are prepared in accordance to APA citation format. Parts of the paper are: title page, abstract and key words, body, acknowledgements (optional), references, appendices (tables, images). Pages must be numbered (upper or lower right corner), starting with the first page.

1. Title Page

a) The title of the paper should be brief, clear and informative, in the Serbian or English language, without abbreviations and it should correspond to the contents of the paper. Headings and subheadings should be avoided. If the paper is the result of research conducted during a project or if the authors feel the need to express their gratitude to a supporting institution or individual, this can be done in a footnote at the end of the title.

b) Above the title, in the upper left corner, in large letters, the author suggests the category. Below this is the name, middle initial and surname of the author and co-authors. Scientific papers can have up to two co-authors. The Editorial Board encourages authors to publish papers written by one author. Papers with more than two authors/co-authors will not be considered. After the surname of the author/co-author it is necessary to place a numbered footnote (starting from 1), which gives the professional title of the author/co-author and his/her electronic address (email). The author/co-author responsible for corresponding with the Editorial Board is required to provide telephone numbers (mobile, landline) and postal address (with the words "for correspondence purposes"), besides his/her electronic address. The footnote(s) for each of the author(s)/co-author(s) states the year of birth of the author(s) (e.g. born in 1968.)

c) Below the name of each author/co-author it is necessary to give their affiliation. In the case of institutions with complex organizations, all levels of organization must be stated, from the highest to the lowest (e.g. name of university, name of faculty, name of department), the location of the institution and the country in parentheses.

2. Summary and key words

On the second page of the paper, it is necessary to provide a structured summary in Serbian and English, written concisely and including the Introduction/Aim, Basic Premise, Methods (research methods, basic procedures, sampling), Results (most important), and Conclusion. It is necessary to underline new and important aspects of

the research. A structured summary must not exceed 800 characters with spaces. In the case of scientific critiques, polemics and reviews, a summary must not exceed 400 characters with spaces.

The summary must be followed by Key words, not exceeding 5 concepts or phrases.

Papers categorized as reviews do not require an abstract but it is necessary to provide the following information on the book (event) being reviewed, in the following order: Name and Surname of author (in the case of an Event, the name of the event organizer); title of the book in italics (or title of the Event in italics); place of publication; publisher; year of publication (place of event, time of event), total number of pages (not applicable to Events). A photograph of the book/event reviewed must be submitted in JPEG or TIFF format as an attached file, minimum resolution 300x300 pixels.

Example of review:

Stjuart Prajs: Izučavanje medija. Klio, Beograd, 2011, 749 p.

Example of event:

European Sociological Association: 13th ESA Conference(Un)Making Europe: Capitalism, Solidarities, Subjectivities. Athens (Greece), 29.08 - 01.09.2017

3. Body of text

The body of the paper starts at the third page. It is suggested but not required that original scientific papers and reviews, especially if they are based on empirical research, be structured thus: Introduction/Aims of research; overview of methodology; results; discussion; conclusion. For scientific papers

categorized as "Brief Statements" and "Scientific critique, polemics, reviews", structuring is not required.

Tables, graphs and images are incorporated into the body, except in the case of a book or event review where the photographs are submitted as a separate file.

Illustrations, maps, photographs, graphs and other images are submitted in JPG or TIFF format, minimum resolution of 300x300 pixels.

Every illustration (table, graph, drawing...) must be numbered and captioned (center alignment) in the following way:

- The title of the table is given above.

Example:

Table 1: Average values of ethnic distance

- Graphs, photographs and other illustrations are captioned below.

Example:

Graph 1: Average values of ethnic distance scores

Tables should be simple, in black and white, no shading. Indentations and alignment in tables must be produced via automatic formatting, not by manually adding spaces.

All types of graphs must be black and white, and with the use of different types of lines.

3.1 Citing and referencing other authors in the body

In accordance with the APA Citation standard, citations are given EXCLUSIVELY in the body, in bibliographical parentheses.

The use of footnotes is allowed only for the purposes of comments, in order to avoid loading the text. It is on the author's discretion to decide to provide in a footnote additional information (e.g. email of author, acknowledgements, etc.), brief explanations regarding certain terms and concepts (e.g. the meaning of a lesser-known Latin proverb), biographical data of importance for the understanding of the text (e.g. providing biographical information on a theorist in order to better understand the context). Footnotes can be used to comment or critique the position of other authors (e.g. regarding their inconsistent views on a subject), to provide an illustrative example or interesting comment regarding another author or for the purpose of directing the reader towards another author's work.

Bibliographical references are always given in the Latin alphabet. In the Literature section, only one place of publication is given, even if the publication itself names several.

AUTHOR(S) BIBLIOGRAPHICAL PARENTHESES – FIRST MENTION IN TEXT

Work by one author (Lukić, 1995a, p. 209) (Lukić, 1995a, p. 30)

Work of one author published in the same year as previously cited work (Lukić, 1995b, p. 30) (Lukić, 1995b, p. 20)

Work by two authors (Haralambos & Heald, 1989) (Haralambos & Heald, 1989)

Work by three to five authors
FIRST MENTION: (Marković, Golenkova, Šuvaković, 2009); SECOND AND OTHER MENTION OF SAME WORK: (Marković et al, 2009)

Work by more than seven authors (Mihailović et al, 2012) (Mihailović et al, 2012)

GROUP (INSTITUTION, ORGANIZATION) WITH A RECOGNIZABLE ABBREVIATION

(Republički zavod za statistiku [RZS], 2020) (RZS, 2020)

GROUP WITHOUT RECOGNIZABLE ABBREVIATION (Centar za profesionalni razvoj zaposlenih u obrazovanju, 2020) (Centar za profesionalni razvoj zaposlenih u obrazovanju, 2010)

Included within bibliographical parentheses should be the surname of the author, the year of publication and, if necessary, the number of the page. If there is more than one author with the same surname, especially if they are cited or referenced in the paper, the APA standard clarifies that the initial of each author be provided before the surname.

If a page number is provided in bibliographical parentheses (in the case of a direct quote), it is separated with a comma, preceded by the abbreviation "p.". In some cases, it is not necessary to provide page numbers (if the entire work is referenced, or the idea contained within; that is, if there is no direct quote).

Example:

In his text Petrovic enters into a polemic with several methodologists and researchers of social phenomena, pointing out their schematism in the interpretation of statistical data, as well as their lack of knowledge of the concept of "civil society" (Petrovic, 2020).

For sources and literature in foreign languages it is possible to use "et al" instead of the Serbian "i dr."

It is also possible to use "&" instead of "and" in Anglo-Saxon literature.

In the case of citing several authors at the same time, according to the APA standard, the author's names are given within one set of parentheses, in alphabetical order.

Example:

Not an insignificant number of authors believe that globalization is a historical process that started centuries ago (Bžezinski, 2015, p. 14; Chumakov, 2010, p. 49; Mandelbaum, 2004, p. 257; Robertson, 1992, pp. 58-59; Hatibović, 2002; Šuvaković, 2004, str. 53)

Quotations are given within a sentence. However, if the quotation contains more than 40 words it is necessary to separate the quotation in a new paragraph (automatic), with speech marks. The bibliographical parentheses are given after the last punctuation mark. The rest of the text that follows is in a new paragraph.

Example:

"The basic elements of the gay movement correspond to the chief aspirations of (post)modern capitalism. The emphasis in personal or collective identity is transferred from its locus in the system of production on "lifestyle" (consumer behavior model). Hence, the popular (hypnocratic) culture contains so little information on class identity, while sexual identity is given the central position of social and personal attention. The more people's needs for freedom can be satisfied in the area of work or politics, the more "freedom" in consumer behavior and lifestyle is advocated in the public (cultural) sphere. This includes "sexual freedoms". (Antonić, 2014, p. 210)

Continuing with our research, we reached the clear and unambiguous conclusion...

3.2 References in the Literature section – an overview of common cases

3.2.1 General remarks

The Literature section is the same for both versions of the paper. The titles of the references are always in the English language, even if the source was not originally written in the English language but, for example, in Serbian. In this case, it is necessary to give the original language in brackets (e.g. [In Serbian]). References are given in alphabetical order (Serbian Latin). If only foreign authors are cited, references are given in British alphabetical order. If works from different languages are referenced, they are arranged in Serbian Latin alphabetical order. Letters which do not exist in Serbian Latin (W, Q, Y, X) are given last.

Serbian surnames should be written in Latin and Serbian diacritic signs should be used.

If more than one work by an author is cited, then the works are listed by date of publication (from oldest to most recent).

If the author published one work individually, the second work as a co-author, the third with two other authors, it is necessary to first list the work written individually, then the work written with one other author, then the work written with two other co-authors. Alphabetical order should be followed when giving authors' surnames.

If works of one author published in the same year are referenced, they

should be listed with letters added to the years (2019a) (2019b), etc.

3.2.2 Monographies

Surname, Initial. (year of publication). *Title of monography in italics*. Place of publication: Name of Publisher.

If there is more than one city with the same name (in the case of cities in different states of the USA), it is necessary to provide the state name after the city.

If the monography is available online it is encouraged to provide a link, with the comment "Available at".

Example:

Antonić, S. (2014). *Power and sexuality: the sociology of the gay movement*. Istočno Sarajevo: Sociološko društvo Republike Srpske. Available at [sahttps://fedorabg.bg.ac.rs/fedora/get/o:7605/bdef:Content/download](https://fedorabg.bg.ac.rs/fedora/get/o:7605/bdef:Content/download) [In Serbian]

Lukić, R. (1995a). *Basics of sociology*. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, BIGZ [In Serbian]

Lukić, R. (1995b). *Political parties*. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, BIGZ [In Serbian]

3.2.3 Articles in serial publications

Surname, Initial. (year of publication). Title of article. *Name of journal* vol. (issue no. in year): pages from – to.

If the paper has a DOI, this is given at the end; if the paper is available online it is encouraged to provide a link, with the comment "available at".

Example:

Antonić, S. (2013). Social mobility in socialist Serbia: a revisionist approach. *Sociološki pregled*, XLVII

(2), 145–170 Available at <http://scindeks-clanci.ceon.rs/data/pdf/0085-6320/2013/0085-63201302145A.pdf#search=Antonić+Slobodan> [In Serbian]

Vuletić, V, Stanojević, D. (2013). Social Networks - Networks of Old School Ties. *Kultura*, (141), 37-52. doi:10.5937/kultura1341037V [In Serbian]

The Editorial Board strongly encourages authors to give the DOI of papers published in journals instead of the URL or http:// address.

3.2.4 Articles published in thematic collections, chapters in monographs, statements in proceedings

Surname, Initial. (year of publication). Title of article. In: Name initial and surname of editor with (ed. or eds. in parentheses). *Name of publication in italics*. (pages from – to). Place of publication: Name of Publisher.

Example:

Petrović, J. (2014). Note on the so-called. the new French sociology and its methodological consequences - a review of the most important issues. In: J. Petrović, D. Đorđević (eds) *Research of social phenomena: methodological considerations* (213-222). Niš: Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Nišu; Mašinski fakultet Univerziteta u Nišu [In Serbian]

3.2.5 Daily newspaper articles

Surname, Initial. (year, month, day of publication). Title of article. *Title of Newspaper in italics*, p. X

Example:

Vuletić, V. (2017, July 13). Region and barriers. *Politika*, p. 28 [In Serbian]

3.2.6 Texts in periodicals (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, annual publications)

Surname, Initial. (year, month, day of publication). Title of article. *Title of publication*, issue no., pages from – to. (NO ABBREVIATION to “p.”)

Example:

Čomski, N. (2009, September, 4). Victims of the Imperial Mentality of the West (interview). *НИН* 3041, 19-21. [In Serbian]

3.2.7 Citing unpublished doctoral dissertation or master thesis

Surname, Initial. (year of defense). *Title of dissertation in italics*. (doctoral dissertation / master's thesis). Name of institution where the thesis was defended, place [In Serbian].

3.2.8 Citing a doctoral dissertation available in database

Surname, Initial. (year of defense). *Title of dissertation in italics* (doctoral thesis / master's thesis). Name of institution where the thesis was defended, place. Available at [In Serbian].

Fill in this form, scan it and forward to the electronic address of Editorial Office. This form is signed by the author or all co-authors, depending if the paper is individual or co-auctorial

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3. Finally, correct the version for publishing.

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 - c) Acquiring and collecting data,
 - d) Analyzing and interpreting data,
 - e) Writing article,
 - f) Critical correction (revision) of article,
 - g) other (specify)

Clash of interests: None (/) Yes (specify):
.....

Signature:

Author for correspondence:

Name and Surname:

.....

Signature:

