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Poštovani čitatelji,

pred vama je drugo izdanje časopisa Strategos u 2025. godini. S novim uredničkim timom i osvježnim savjetodavnim odborom zaključujemo godinu s jasnim ciljem da Strategos učinimo još jačim, vidljivijim i relevantnijim časopisom, kako u Hrvatskoj tako i u inozemstvu. Kao i dosad, Strategos će objavljivati radove na hrvatskom i engleskom jeziku, međutim tematski horizont časopisa proširen je s primarnih sigurnosnih i obrambenih tema i na one politološke te povijesne; pri čemu se posebno misli na područja međunarodnih odnosa, geopolitike i vojne povijesti.

Proširen, ali istovremeno fokusiran odabir tema reflektira se u samim radovima koji su prošli rigorozan recenzentski postupak. Ivan Boban u članku „Zahtjevi suvremene protuzračne obrane“ temeljito obrađuje ubrzani razvoj balističkih, hipersoničnih i bespilotnih prijetnji koje predstavljaju sve veći izazov tradicionalnim obrambenim tehnologijama. Ovakav razvoj dao se naslutiti još u Zaljevskome ratu početkom 1990-ih, da bi se pretvorio u jednu od glavnih značajki suvremenih ratnih sukoba između Rusije i Ukrajine te Izraela i Irana. Grupa autorica Antonia Vodanović, Ivana Pokrajčić i Tina Marinić Kuliš podrobno su usporedile dvije terorističke organizacije – Al-Kaidu i ISIL, ukazujući na njihove sličnosti, ali i značajne razlike u ideologiji i načinu djelovanja. Autorice pokazuju da su ove dvije skupine, unatoč teškim udarcima koji su im zadani proteklih godina, pronašle načine da se reformiraju, regrupiraju i aktiviraju na novim bojištima, zbog čega i dalje predstavljaju značajnu prijetnju međunarodnoj zajednici. Marin Jašić u svome radu osvjetljava postepenu transformaciju „tvrde“ austrijske neutralnosti iz vremena Hladnoga rata u fleksibilnu neutralnost današnjice koja se prilagođava Zajedničkoj vanjskoj i sigurnosnoj politici Europske unije te na različite načine odgovara na suvremene sigurnosne krize, posebno one na europskom kontinentu. Elmir Badalov nas uvodi u izuzetno dinamičan svijet geoenergetike, pružajući dubinski uvid u izazove pred kojima se nalazi projekt izgradnje Transkaspiskog plinovoda koji bi mogao predstavljati strateško rješenje za smanjenje europske ovisnosti o ruskom plinu. Konačno, Hrvoje Vuković nam pruža originalno teorijsko pojašnjenje suvremene srpske geopolitike, obilježene strateškim vakuumom i identitetskim konfliktom između formalnog opredjeljenja za članstvo u EU i duboko ukorijenjenog afiniteta prema Rusiji.

Ovom prilikom zahvaljujem svim autorima i recenzentima, kao i članovima uredništva i savjetodavnog odbora na njihovom važnom doprinosu pri izradi broja Strategosa koji je pred vama i pozivam buduće suradnike da zajedničkim trudom podignemo časopis na još višu razinu kvalitete i prepoznatljivosti.

Glavni urednik

Janko Bekić

Editor's Word



Dear readers,

before you is the second edition of Strategos magazine in the year 2025. With a new editorial team and a revamped advisory board we are closing the year with the clear goal of making Strategos even stronger, more visible and relevant; both in Croatia and internationally. As always, we will continue publishing papers written in Croatian and English, however, the magazine's thematic horizon has been broadened and it now includes the primary security and defence topics, as well as those pertaining to political science and history, with a special focus on international relations, geopolitics and military history.

The expanded, yet still specialised choice of topics is reflected in the papers which have undergone a rigorous review process. In his article "Requirements of Modern Air Defence" Ivan Boban delves into the accelerated development of ballistic, hypersonic and unmanned threats which represent an ever-increasing challenge to traditional defence technologies. This development had already become visible during the Gulf War of the early 1990's and has transformed into a major feature of contemporary armed conflicts, such as those between Russia and Ukraine and Israel and Iran. The group of authors consisting of Antonia Vodanović, Ivana Pokrajčić and Tina Marinić Kuliš has meticulously compared two major terrorist organisations – al-Qaeda and ISIL, pointing out their similarities, but also significant differences in terms of ideology and modes of operating. The authors explain how these two groups have managed to withstand serious setbacks in recent years and find ways to reform, regroup and reactivate in new battlegrounds; thus remaining a considerable threat to the international community. Marin Jašić illuminates the gradual transformation of "hard" Austrian neutrality from the Cold War era to a more flexible version of neutrality which is being adjusted to the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU and the current security crises, especially those on European soil. Elmir Badalov introduces the readers to the highly dynamic world of geoenergetics, offering us a deep insight into the various challenges standing in the way of the Trans-Caspian Pipeline – a project that has the potential of drastically decreasing Europe's dependence on Russian gas. Finally, Hrvoje Vuković offers an original theoretical explanation of contemporary Serbian geopolitics, characterised by strategic vacuum and an identity conflict pitting Serbia's formal commitment to EU membership against its deeply rooted kinship to Russia.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank the authors, reviewers, members of the editorial and advisory boards on their important contributions to the newest edition of *Strategos*. I equally invite and encourage future collaborators to help us raise our magazine to an even higher level of quality and reputation.

Editor-in-chief

Janko Bekić

Requirements of Modern Air Defence

Ivan Boban¹

ABSTRACT

Modern air defence systems are facing accelerated development of ballistic, hypersonic, and unmanned threats that increasingly surpass the capabilities of traditional defensive technologies. This paper analyses the main challenges posed to air defence by ballistic missiles and various categories of unmanned aerial vehicles. Through case studies from Ukraine, Israel, and the Gulf War, it illustrates the limited effectiveness of existing defence systems, particularly against sophisticated threats. Special attention is given to the concepts of air defence saturation through drone swarms and the economic implications of such tactics. In the final section, technological solutions for future defence are presented, including a multi-layered orbital sensor architecture, directed energy weapons, and electronic warfare systems. The paper concludes that the future effectiveness of air defence will depend on the ability to integrate various technologies into flexible and economically sustainable defence systems.

KEYWORDS: *air defence, ballistic missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, hypersonic weapons*

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Introduction

Modern air defence is confronted with dynamic and increasingly complex challenges driven by rapid technological advancement and evolving security threats. While traditional systems were primarily focused on neutralizing enemy aircraft, today's reality demands responses to two increasingly serious threats – ballistic missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles. Ballistic missiles, due to their high velocity, increasingly complex flight trajectories and potential to carry conventional or nuclear payloads, pose an existential risk to critical infrastructure and strategic targets. Their detection and interception are complicated by factors such as steep impact angles, reduced reaction time and the emergence of modern hypersonic missiles capable of manoeuvring, which further highlights the limitations of existing systems as evident in the war in Ukraine and Iranian attacks on Israel. On the other hand, unmanned aerial vehicles have redefined the concept of asymmetric warfare. From inexpensive commercial drones used for reconnaissance to swarms of autonomous unmanned aircraft capable of overwhelming targets through coordinated strikes, these platforms enable the mass saturation of airspace at minimal cost. Their widespread use from the war in Ukraine to conflicts in the Middle East exposes the vulnerabilities of traditional air defence systems.

The key challenges of modern air defence lie not only in the technical ability to detect and neutralize these threats but also in the integration of multi-layered systems, rapid response capabilities and adaptation to hybrid scenarios in which ballistic missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles are employed simultaneously. This paper analyses how global and national systems must transform their operational paradigms through the synergy of advanced technology and intelligence capacities for early warning. By examining real-world examples, the objective is to explore the possibilities and limitations of contemporary solutions and to highlight critical guidelines for future development.

Ballistic Missiles: Technical Characteristics and Challenges for Air Defence

Ballistic missiles represent one of the most complex challenges for modern air defence systems. Their trajectory is divided into three phases: boost (launch using a rocket booster), midcourse (free flight, often at high altitude or outside the atmosphere for longer range systems) and terminal (high speed descent through the atmosphere). Based on their range, ballistic missiles are commonly categorized as SRBM (300 km to 1000 km), MRBM (1000 km to 3000 km), IRBM (3000 km to 5500 km), and ICBM (over 5500 km) (Missile Defence Advocacy Alliance [MDAA], 2018). During the first two phases of flight, a missile, particularly an ICBM, can reach speeds exceeding Mach 20. In the terminal phase, due to the denser layers of the atmosphere, air resistance causes deceleration, but the missile still travels at supersonic or even hypersonic speeds. This dynamic significantly shortens the time available for defensive response, especially if detection occurs only in the terminal phase (Ali, 2021).

In addition to speed, one of the key challenges lies in flight geometry. Ballistic missiles such as the 9M723 Iskander employ a steep impact angle of nearly 90° in the terminal phase, thereby entering the radar dead cone, a zone where radars are unable to track the target due to limitations in the elevation angle of the antenna. This effectively allows the missile to approach the target undetected in the final phase (Dziczkaniec, Noga, Matysek, Uminski, 2024). Modern ballistic missiles do not follow classical ballistic trajectories, instead they perform manoeuvres during flight. For example, the aforementioned 9M723 Iskander is capable of manoeuvring at forces exceeding 30 G (Center for Strategic and International Studies [CSIS], 2024a), which is often beyond the capabilities of conventional interceptors. Furthermore, it can alter its trajectory by up to 70 km horizontally (Dziczkaniec et al., 2024), complicating interception during the terminal phase. Systems such as the GMD (Ground-based Midcourse Defence) lack sufficient flexibility to counter such threats, as they mostly rely on predictable trajectories (Ali, 2021). In addition, some ballistic missiles release decoys during flight creating a cloud of several dozen false targets that saturate radar systems and mimic the radar signatures of actual warheads (Li, Jin, Li, 2023).

Hypersonic Missiles: A Technological Shift in Modern Warfare

The definition of hypersonic missiles is still not unambiguously established. A speed exceeding Mach 5 is considered hypersonic and by that standard, any missile surpassing this velocity could be classified as a hypersonic missile. In that case, hypersonic projectiles would not currently represent a significant technological shift in modern warfare, given that virtually all ballistic missiles reach hypersonic speeds in their initial phases, primarily due to their high apogees and the reduced air resistance at those altitudes. The characteristic that sets modern hypersonic projectiles apart from others is their ability to manoeuvre during flight in order to evade enemy air defence and to maintain hypersonic speed in the terminal phase.

According to their flight profile, modern hypersonic missiles can be divided into several categories.

- Hypersonic Glide Vehicle (HGV): these are primarily launched using intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), which lift them into the upper layers of the atmosphere. After the launch phase, the HGV separates and enters a glide phase, using its aerodynamic shape to manoeuvre. Due to their high speed and ability to make sudden changes in direction, HGVs complicate detection and interception by enemy air defence systems. Such systems are most often strategic in nature and their primary purpose is the delivery of a nuclear warhead. An example of such system is the Russian Avangard which is launched using the intercontinental missile RS-28 Sarmat. After separating from the carrier rocket, the HGV itself has a range of about 6000 km and flies at a speed of Mach 20+, changing altitude and direction to avoid interception (Center for Strategic and International Studies [CSIS], 2024b). Although hypersonic glide vehicles are often associated with intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear use there are examples that deviate from this pattern. Chinese DF-17 system is launched from mobile medium-range platforms and has been developed primarily for conventional use (Center for Strategic and International Studies [CSIS], 2024c), thereby applying the HGV concept in regional, non-nuclear scenarios.
- Hypersonic air-launched ballistic missile: a type of missile in which the initial phase of flight is achieved through its own propulsion, while the later

part follows a quasi-ballistic trajectory. This trajectory is characterized by a relatively low flight profile or a flight path similar to that of traditional ballistic missiles with the added capability of unpredictable manoeuvring. The Kh-47M2 Kinzhal is a true example of a hypersonic air-launched ballistic missile. This type of missile has been used relatively intensively in the war in Ukraine, with its primary launch platforms being the MiG-31K and TU-22M3 (Center for Strategic and International Studies [CSIS], 2024d), while in the near future launches will likely also be possible from SU-34 aircraft (TASS, 2023a). During its quasi-ballistic flight it reaches a maximum speed of over Mach 10, while in its final phase during its descent toward the target its speed decreases due to increased air density and due to the missile's own manoeuvring, which results in a loss of kinetic energy. The Kinzhal can be considered as an air launched version of Iskander-M ballistic missile system, from which it evolved.

- Hypersonic ballistic missile: they are launched from ground-based systems using powerful propulsion systems and after the completion of the boost phase, they continue to move in free fall along a ballistic trajectory. The main characteristics include long range, high kinetic energy upon re-entry into the atmosphere and among more modern systems the capability of manoeuvring during terminal phase. Examples of such systems include the Iranian Fattah-1 and the Russian Oreshnik.
- Hypersonic cruise missile: cruise missiles use a continuously operating engine and sophisticated navigation systems to maintain a stable, controlled flight at relatively low altitudes. Their aerodynamic profile allows for high precision and flexibility in route selection and flying at low altitudes further complicates radar detection. Currently, the only operational example of this type of hypersonic missile is the 3M22 Zircon.

Effectiveness of the Patriot System Against Scud Ballistic Missiles During the Gulf War

According to Postol (1991), during the Gulf War, Patriot PAC-2 system was presented as a revolutionary defence against Iraqi Scud missiles. Initial claims by the U.S. military and the manufacturer Raytheon indicated a 96% interception success rate. However, subsequent analyses particularly by Israeli experts,

revealed a significantly different picture. For example, in Israel, 17 Scuds were reported as intercepted, but less than 20% of the warheads were actually destroyed. The cause of this discrepancy lay in the definition of interception success. The system registered a successful hit whenever a missile detonated near the target, even if the warhead was not destroyed. This meant that impacts on fuel tanks or debris were also included in the statistics, resulting in a distorted perception of the system's effectiveness.

The Iraqi Scuds were unstable and tended to disintegrate at altitudes between 15 and 20 km. This flaw became a challenge for the Patriot system. It identified multiple fragments (fuel tanks or fuselage sections) and lost track of the actual target, the warhead. Patriot's radar automatically targeted larger fragments, while the smaller and more aerodynamic warhead often passed undetected. During attacks on Israel, the system misidentified debris as threats, resulting in the launch of 28 missiles at only 5 Scuds, and on the night of January 25, six Patriot batteries in Tel Aviv launched 27 missiles against 7 Scuds (Postol, 1991). In addition, Patriot missiles were optimized for slower targets, which led to delayed detonations when engaging the faster Scuds.

As a result of all these issues, the development of a new variant of the Patriot system followed designated PAC-3, which represents a technological evolution of the PAC-2 version. The new version is optimized specifically for intercepting ballistic threats, integrating more advanced sensors and hit-to-kill technology in an effort to address the challenges posed by modern ballistic missiles.

War in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine represents the first major conventional conflict after a long period of relative peace, revealing numerous strengths and weaknesses of certain systems and methods of warfare including aspects of air defence. In this section, we analyse the effectiveness of Ukrainian air defence in intercepting ballistic missiles, based on available statistical data published on August 20, 2024. It is important to note that the data is based on an official release by the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence. As Ukraine remains in an active conflict, the interpretation and relevance of this data must be approached with a certain degree of caution.

Table 1. Interception rate of Russian missiles in Ukraine

Missile	Launched	Intercepted	Interception rate
S-300/S-400	3008	19	0.6%
KH-555/101	1846	1441	78.1%
KH-25/29/31/35/58/59/69	1547	343	22.2%
Iskander-M/KN-23	1300	56	4.3%
Kalibr	894	443	49.6%
KH-22/KH-32	362	2	0.6%
P-800 Onyx	211	12	5.7%
Iskander-K	202	76	37.6%
KH-47M2	111	28	25.2%
Tockha-U	68	6	8.8%
KH-35	15	1	6.7%
3M22 Zircon	6	2	33.3%

Source: Ukrainian Ministry of Defence; Defence Express, 2024

Table 2. Interception rate of Russian missiles by type

Type	Launched	Intercepted	Interception rate
Ballistic missile	4849	111	2.3%
Cruise missile	4721	2318	49.1%

Source: Table 1.

Analysis of the presented tables clearly indicates a significant disparity in the effectiveness of Ukrainian air defence when intercepting ballistic versus cruise missiles. According to official Ukrainian data, by mid-August 2024, Russia had launched nearly an equal number of ballistic and cruise missiles. However, the interception rate for cruise missiles was 21 times higher than that achieved against ballistic threats. These results are not unexpected given frequent statements by senior Ukrainian officials who emphasize that ballistic targets pose a considerable challenge for their systems and that Ukrainian air defence can-

not consistently or effectively respond to such attacks (TASS, 2023b; Meduza, 2022).

Particularly noteworthy is the comparison of interception effectiveness between the KH-22/32 missiles and the hypersonic KH-47M2 Kinzhal. Both missiles are air-launched and have a similar quasi-ballistic flight profile, but Kinzhal possesses twice the maximum speed, more advanced guidance systems and the capability for intensive manoeuvring in the terminal phase of flight. Therefore, it is surprising that Ukrainian data shows a significantly higher interception rate for the Kinzhal compared to the KH-22/32. These figures contradict statements by the spokesperson of the Ukrainian Air Force, Yuri Ignat, who has stressed that the Kinzhal is a significantly more challenging target than the KH-22 (Frontier India, 2023). A possible explanation is that Ukrainian forces prioritize targeting the Kinzhal and according to a report by the Kiel Institute of Economy, they often launch between 16 and 32 Patriot missiles to intercept a single Kinzhal (Wolff, Burilkov, Bushnell, Kharitonov, 2024). Considering the cost of approximately 4 million dollars per interceptor and the limited annual production of only 500 missiles, such an approach is not sustainable in the long term (Kubo & Kelly, 2024). Another possible explanation is offered by former Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, who stated that Ukrainian forces often misidentify launched missiles resulting in reports of Kinzhal interceptions that did not actually occur (Sputnik News, 2023).

Nonetheless, regardless of these potential uncertainties in identifying the specific type of missile, presented data clearly illustrates how all forms of ballistic threats remain a substantial challenge for modern air defence systems.

Israel and Iran

On October 1, 2024, Iran launched approximately 200 ballistic missiles, primarily medium-range Shahab-3s and first-generation hypersonic missiles at targets in Israel. This mass attack represented a serious test for Israel's multi-layered air defence system, which includes Iron Dome, David's Sling, Arrow-2, Arrow-3, and several U.S. Navy destroyers equipped with the AEGIS system (Youvan, 2024). In the context of a mass strike, radar systems can become overwhelmed by the sheer number of simultaneous targets, leading to radar saturation and delays in the prioritization and launching of interceptors (Ibid.). The hypersonic variants further complicate the task with their manoeu-

Figure 1. Identified Iranian missile impacts at Nevatim Airbase

Source: Brumfiel (2024)

vres in the terminal phase of flight, which accordingly increases the likelihood of breaching defences. While Iranian reports claimed a very high success rate, Israeli officials stated an equally high interception rate. Nevertheless, analysis of satellite imagery and videos recorded during the attack clearly confirms that a significant number of missiles penetrated Israel's air defence. For instance, no fewer than 32 impacts were identified at the Nevatim Airbase, which houses Israeli F-35 aircraft (Brumfiel, 2024).

The subsequent Twelve-Day War in June 2025 provided another test of layered air and missile defence over Israel. According to some sources, Iran fired 574 ballistic missiles and Israeli officials claimed that only 49 missiles impacted on populated areas, Israeli infrastructure and bases (Cicurel, 2025). Implying interception rates above 90%. However, the widely cited figure that US and Israeli forces intercepted 273 missiles Iran launched refers to the 322 missiles they chose to engage yielding an 85% success rate, whereas measured against all launches the share of missiles physically destroyed in flight is closer to one half, with the remainder either malfunctioning or landing in open areas (Ibid.). This methodological choice, based on Israeli reported data, means that interception

figures are difficult to independently verify and could possibly overstate performance of the defensive systems.

Israel's initial surprise strikes on Iranian nuclear and missile infrastructure sharply reduced Tehran's ability to mount a single, concentrated retaliatory mass strike, easing part of the burden on the defensive layer. The defensive "umbrella" combined Iron Dome, David's Sling and Arrow-2/3 with forward-deployed US Patriot and THAAD batteries and Aegis destroyers equipped with SM-3, augmented by limited French and Arab contributions (Ibid.). Even so, US and Israeli officials concede that defending against roughly 500 Iranian missiles consumed around a quarter of US THAAD and SM-3 stocks and hundreds of high-end Israeli interceptors in less than two weeks, leaving Israel running low on anti-ballistic missiles (Lair, 2025).

These attacks confirm that, although the Israeli air defence systems are among the most sophisticated in the world and cover a relatively limited geographical area, ballistic and hypersonic threats continue to pose undeniable challenges. It is essential to continue the development of new technologies and mechanisms to ensure that air defence remains one step ahead of the rapid advancement of ballistic missile capabilities.

Future Solutions in Countering Ballistic Threats

In the context of growing threat posed by advanced ballistic and hypersonic missiles the demands of modern air defence are increasingly shifting toward the development of a multi-layered, integrated and highly responsive architecture of sensors and interceptors. One of the most significant proposals involves the establishment of an orbital network of sensors deployed across various orbits, from low Earth orbit (LEO), through medium Earth orbit (MEO), to geostationary (GEO) and highly elliptical orbits (HEO). Such a layered architecture would provide complementary global coverage and ensure system resilience in the event of an attack on a specific orbital layer (Karako & Dahlgren, 2023a).

A key technological component of this future defence is the development of advanced space-based sensors capable of continuous tracking of high-speed and manoeuvrable targets including the provision of so-called fire-control quality tracks for guiding interceptors. Particularly noteworthy is the HBTSS (Hy-

personic and Ballistic Tracking Space Sensor) program which aims to enable precise and uninterrupted tracking of hypersonic and ballistic threats in real time (Karako & Dahlgren, 2023b). Sensors on high-altitude unmanned aerial vehicles provide an additional layer of early warning and tracking, especially useful in regional scenarios where orbital coverage is not yet sufficient (Karako & Dahlgren, 2023a).

In terms of interceptors, new models featuring multi-object kill vehicles (MOKVs) and flexible propulsion configurations are being proposed, expanding engagement space and enabling sequential multiple intercepts (“shoot-look-shoot”) (Karako, Williams, Rumbaugh, 2020). Particular focus is also being placed on the possibility of interception during the boost phase, while the projectile is still ascending, considering concepts such as directed energy weapons, space-based interceptors, and forward-deployed platforms (Karako, Williams, Rumbaugh, 2020).

Although these proposed solutions are becoming increasingly technologically feasible, it is important to emphasize that most remain largely in the conceptual and experimental stages. Implementing such an architecture brings with it a series of challenges, including the extreme complexity of managing a sensor and interceptor network, the need for a high level of interoperability and very high financial costs (Karako & Dahlgren, 2023a). Additionally, operational integration among different military branches and allies, as well as institutional coordination, represent further obstacles that must be addressed in order for the vision of an effective and adaptable defence system to be realized. At the same time, the majority of these concepts are primarily focused on countering high-end strategic ballistic threats. Their extreme unit cost and likely production constraints suggest that they will be reserved for a limited set of critical targets and cannot provide an answer to scenarios in which an adversary can launch hundreds or even thousands of SRBMs.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles as a Challenge to Modern Air Defence Systems

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have rapidly evolved into a key component of modern warfare. Their mass availability and technological advancement represent a significant shift in the threat paradigm faced by air defence

systems. Unlike traditional combat aircraft or missiles, various types of drones can be produced cheaply and in large numbers allowing even less technologically advanced actors to pose a serious threat to highly sophisticated and expensive air defence systems. The use of UAVs on the battlefield exemplifies a classic asymmetric threat. One of the main reasons is the stark cost disparity, a relatively inexpensive drone can challenge and potentially neutralize military equipment that is exponentially more costly. For example, Geran-2 (Russian modified version of the Iranian Shahed-136), a loitering munition or “kamikaze” drone extensively used by Russia in the war in Ukraine, has been estimated by some sources to cost only around USD 35,000 per unit (Hollenbeck, Altaf, Avila, Ramirez, Sharma, & Jensen, 2025). However, given the increasingly expanded production capacities associated with Geran-2 drones (Luxmoore & Lytvynenko, 2025), actual cost per drone may be even lower. Their low cost enables the frequent launch of mass swarms, which both depletes and overwhelms air defence systems. On the other hand, interceptors such as modern surface-to-air missiles are significantly more expensive. For instance, guided missiles like the American Patriot can cost several million dollars per unit (Evsitfeev, 2024). UAVs have thus emerged as a weapon of attrition, forcing defensive forces to either expend costly munitions or risk drone penetration to the target.

Typology of Unmanned Systems

Unmanned aerial vehicles encompass a wide range of systems from miniature quadcopters to large strategic UAVs. For the sake of simplicity they can be classified into three basic categories.

- Heavy UAVs: larger long-range, high-altitude UAVs capable of carrying substantial payloads. This category includes so-called MALE/HALE UAVs (Medium/High Altitude Long Endurance) such as the American MQ-9 Reaper and RQ-4 Global Hawk or the Turkish Bayraktar TB2. These systems are designed for reconnaissance and precision strikes using guided bombs or missiles often operating at significant distances from the operator.
- OWA (one-way attack) or Kamikaze drones: one-way attack unmanned aerial vehicles that carry a warhead and crash into the target, destroying themselves on impact. These so-called loitering munitions combine characteristics of drones and missiles. Examples include the Iranian Shahed-136

(Geran-2) or smaller tactical munitions such as the Russian Lancet drone or the American Switchblade. Their role is to carry out single-use attacks and they serve as cheaper, albeit less capable, alternatives to cruise missiles and guided bombs.

- FPV (first person view) drones: mini and micro drones piloted by an operator via real-time video feed. These are most often commercial quadcopters equipped with improvised explosives. They are used for close-range tactical strikes with high precision, though they have limited range and battery life.

This classification is simplified and in practice there exists a continuum of UAV sizes and roles. Nevertheless, the categories outlined above help distinguish the primary functions and challenges each type poses to air defence systems.

Limitations of Heavy UAVs

Large or heavy UAVs were originally developed as an extension of air power capable of loitering over the battlefield for extended periods while conducting surveillance or precision strikes with guided munitions. However, experiences from recent conflicts have revealed significant shortcomings in this class of UAVs. Firstly, these are highly expensive systems. For example, a single Reaper with associated equipment and armaments is valued at over USD 50 million (U.S. Air Force, 2020), while even smaller platforms like the TB2 cost several million dollars. Secondly, the production of such complex platforms is limited as they require advanced electronics, sensors, and trained operators, which means they cannot be quickly replaced in the event of losses. Their principal vulnerability lies in contested airspace dominated by enemy air defences. If an adversary possesses a layered air defence system, a heavy UAV becomes an easy target due to its size, limited manoeuvrability and relatively low speed. In the early phase of the war in Ukraine in 2022, Bayraktar TB2 drones achieved some success against armoured columns. However, as Russian air defence established a multi-layered protective network, including missile systems and electronic warfare capabilities, TB2 losses increased sharply (Shoaib, 2023) and according to Russian sources, total number of Bayraktar TB2 drones shot down surpassed 100 units (Leonkov, 2025). Already by mid-2022, Ukrainian forces had begun using them less frequently due to the higher risk of shoot downs

and their declining operational effectiveness. A similar fate befell large American UAV near sophisticated air defences. In 2019, Iran shot down a U.S. Global Hawk valued at around USD 176 million (Law, 2019), demonstrating that even the most advanced unmanned aircraft are not immune to well-organized defence systems. Heavy UAVs are particularly vulnerable to enemy electronic warfare (EW) as their communication links with ground control stations can be jammed or disrupted. In a conflict between near-peer adversaries, heavy UAVs no longer enjoy the strategic freedom they had in low-intensity conflicts. Given the high costs and loss rates their role becomes questionable. Their operational usefulness is limited to environments where enemy air defence and aviation are inactive, making them unsuitable for highly contested airspace. In such scenarios, the focus shifts toward more numerous, lower-value platforms that can be more easily sacrificed.

OWA UAVs and Air Defence Saturation

One-way attack drones (OWA), also commonly referred to as kamikaze or suicide drones, have emerged as an effective and economical substitute for cruise missiles in numerous scenarios. These drones loiter in the vicinity of a target before diving and detonating like a guided missile. Their growing popularity stems from several factors such as low cost, long range and tactical flexibility. In recent times, the most well-known example of this type is the Geran-2, which has a range of approximately 2,000 km and carries a warhead of about 40 kilograms. Statistics show that from September to December 2024, Russia launched more attack drones at Ukraine than in the previous 23 months combined (Hollenbeck et al., 2025), and the trend of mass drone launches has continued into 2025. Geran-2 drones are used both for attacking targets and for saturating air defence systems. Their sheer numbers flood radar screens and force defending forces to expend valuable missiles on relatively inexpensive threats (Ibid.). Kamikaze drones are therefore deliberately used to exhaust air defence systems and even when shot down in large numbers the defence pays a high price through the depletion of interceptors and reduction of stockpiles.

Russian doctrine in the war in Ukraine heavily relies on this attrition strategy. Typically, a wave of low-cost unmanned aerial vehicles (such as the Geran-2) is first launched toward infrastructure targets, forcing Ukrainian air defence to activate its missile and anti-air artillery systems across multiple locations si-

multaneously. Once defences are exposed and partially depleted dealing with drones, a second wave of more precise and expensive munitions (ballistic and/or cruise missiles) is launched against selected targets. Through this “swarm-then-strike” tactic, the attacker maximally exploits the advantages of low-cost drones. Ultimately, even if only a small percentage penetrates the defence and hits its target, the attack is cost-effective as the resulting damage outweighs the expense of the strike.

FPV Drones: Precision and Quantity

FPV drones represent a micro-level unmanned threat but with a disproportionately large effect at the tactical level. These are typically small quadcopters operated by a user through a first-person video feed. They are equipped with improvised explosives such as grenades, shaped charges, or similar lethal payloads and are used for precise short-range attacks, usually within a few kilometres of the operator. Their main advantage lies in their exceptional precision thanks to real-time video guidance, the operator can direct the FPV drone precisely to a target’s weak point.

However, FPV drones also have clear limitations. Their reliance on radio signals for control and video transmission makes them vulnerable to electronic jamming. With sufficiently powerful electronic warfare systems signal can be easily disrupted, causing the drone to lose control and crash before reaching the target (Pultarova, 2025). One proposed solution is the use of fibre optic FPV drones which are immune to electronic warfare systems. However, this introduces new constraints, particularly in terms of mobility. Additionally, the range of FPV drones is limited due to the need to maintain signal integrity, it rarely exceeds a few kilometres and battery life typically supports only 10 to 15 minutes of flight. In the case of drones using fibre optics, range is determined by the length of the cable. This means FPV drones are applicable primarily at the tactical frontline level to support units in direct contact with the enemy, but not for deep strikes into enemy rear areas.

Despite these limitations, FPV drones have proven extremely effective, as quantity becomes a quality of its own. A drone’s frame, motor, and electronics can be procured on the commercial market for a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. Operator training is quick and soldiers can be made combat-ready to use FPV drones in a short period. As a result, warring sides are capable of

fielding hundreds or even thousands of FPV drones on the battlefield simultaneously. In 2024, for example, Ukraine launched a procurement program for 10,000 advanced drones equipped with AI components with the specific goal of saturating the battlefield with these systems (Bondar, 2025). According to some estimates, total domestic production of small drones in Ukraine reached into the millions annually (Ibid.). A similar trend is seen in Russia, which is mass-converting commercial drones for FPV attacks and training large numbers of operators at the small-unit level.

The key advantage, therefore, becomes the sheer number of available drones. Even if air defence systems jam or shoot down a large portion of them, a certain percentage inevitably penetrates the defences and delivers its strike. FPV drones have established themselves as precise, expendable assets that significantly increase infantry firepower, while their quantity further strains defensive systems at all levels.

Future Counter UAV Defence

In light of the aforementioned threats, modern air defence systems must adapt to a new reality. Relying solely on kinetic interceptors has proven both insufficient and economically unsustainable in the face of mass drone swarm attacks. As Evstifeev (2024) notes, when confronted with swarms of micro and mini drones, air defence systems quickly become overwhelmed, expensive missiles are rapidly depleted and neither in quantity nor cost can all drones be intercepted by missile systems alone. A transition toward a layered counter-drone defence combining diverse technologies is therefore essential.

- Electronic Warfare (EW): jamming and takeover systems already represent the first line of defence. Strong jammers of GPS signals and control frequencies can cause attacking drones to veer off course or crash. Additionally, systems for cyber takeover of UAVs are being developed, which could redirect enemy drones, potentially even turning them against their original operators. In the current war, there have already been instances where electronic measures have downed more drones than conventional kinetic systems. EW offers a relatively low-cost defence as a single jamming system can cover a wide area and simultaneously affect multiple drones.

- Directed energy systems: they are increasingly emerging as a promising solution for close-range air defence. Lasers can physically disable UAVs instantly and at minimal cost with each “shot” amounting to little more than the consumption of electrical energy. The U.S. and Israel are actively testing prototypes. For example, the American mobile DE M-SHORAD system (mounted on a Stryker armoured vehicle) combines a 50-kW laser with an automatic cannon and missiles in a unified counter-drone turret (Ibid.). Although laser systems are dependent on atmospheric conditions and are therefore less effective at longer ranges it is likely that laser weapons will gradually assume the role of close-range defenders of key assets against drone attacks, once technical challenges related to cooling and power supply are resolved.
- Active countermeasures and new interceptors: in addition to lasers, there is growing demand for more affordable kinetic interceptors specifically adapted to unmanned aerial threats. One solution lies in short-range missile systems such as 70 mm laser-guided rockets APKWS II, which cost around USD 35,000 per unit. This is significantly less than multimillion dollar Patriot missiles, yet they can effectively destroy drones within a few kilometres of range (Ibid.). A similar approach is being pursued by Russian forces with the development of a specialized variant of the Pantsir air defence system designed for counter-drone operations. The new version, Pantsir SMD-E, is equipped with 48 smaller and more cost-effective TKB-1055 very short-range missiles, instead of the standard 12 type 57E-6 missiles (Trevithick, 2024). Additionally, traditional air defence artillery is being enhanced with smart munitions. Programmable 30–57 mm rounds are under development capable of air-bursting near the UAV and releasing a cloud of ball bearings to increase the likelihood of striking small targets. Systems such as the German Oerlikon Skynex or the American M230LF mounted on the Stryker allow one smart projectile to replace a dozen conventional ones offering a clear economic advantage (Evstifeev, 2024). Also, various types of interceptor drones are also being developed. These are small unmanned aerial “hunters” that autonomously track enemy drones and neutralize them through collision or net deployment. Speaking of sensors, an additional line of development is the use of distributed acoustic detection networks. Ukraine’s Sky Fortress system illustrates this approach through a nationwide grid of several thousand low-cost passive acoustic sensors that detect the characteristic sound of Geran OWA UAVs

and provide targeting data to mobile gun and MANPADS teams (Decker, 2024).

In the future, effective drone defence will likely depend on the integration of all these elements into a layered system. The key is finding a cost-effective approach. Expensive interceptors should be reserved for larger and more dangerous targets, such as ballistic and cruise missiles or combat aircraft, while swarms of small drones should be countered through a mix of electronic warfare, laser weapons, and lower-cost kinetic means. It is clear that the era of exclusively kinetic air defence is coming to an end and a new era of hybrid interception systems is emerging where rapid algorithms, directed energy and smart munitions confront swarms of increasingly intelligent and numerous unmanned aerial vehicles.

NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence in the Missile Age

NATO already fields a sophisticated form of integrated, multi-layered air defence in the shape of the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System (NATINAMDS). NATINAMDS is a 24/7 network of national and NATO sensors, command and control nodes and weapon systems under SACEUR's authority, designed to provide a shield against aerodynamic and ballistic threats across the Alliance's airspace (NATO, 2025). In terms of sensing, data fusion and C2, the system is highly mature consisting of airborne early warning, space and ground-based radars and standardised Air C2 architectures; all this gives NATO forces excellent situational awareness and rapid information sharing. NATINAMDS also connects air-based air defence (ABAD) with a layered ground-based air defence (GBAD) architecture that spans very-short and short-range systems (e.g. Stinger, Mistral, Gepard-type platforms), medium-range systems such as NASAMS or IRIS-T SLM and long-range surface-based air and missile defence assets like Patriot and SAMP/T complemented by Aegis Ashore sites and Aegis equipped surface combatants providing upper tier ballistic missile defence (NATO, 2024).

However, much of this upper layer remains fundamentally optimised for a relatively small number of high-end strategic ballistic threats, rather than for sustained campaigns involving large salvos of modern SRBMs and massed

OWA UAVs. The Aegis BMD architecture, for example, relies heavily on exoatmospheric, hit to kill SM-3 interceptors designed to defeat medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles in their midcourse phase, with smaller numbers of endoatmospheric SM-6 interceptors available for terminal engagements. Depressed, quasi-ballistic trajectories such as those flown by Russian Iskander-M or North Korean KN-23 missiles spend most of the time in the lower atmosphere and therefore are not best suited for interception by exoatmospheric systems. In addition, the annual production of high end exoatmospheric interceptors is extremely limited. Grieco, Slingbaum and Walker (2024) note that two US Navy ships expended roughly a year's worth of SM-3 production in a single day while intercepting Iranian ballistic missiles bound for Israel, underlining that these weapons are inherently strategic assets that cannot sustain prolonged high-intensity use.

Fixed Aegis Ashore sites, while offering persistent coverage, are also static and therefore increasingly vulnerable in an era where cheap FPV and long-range autonomous drones can be used for covert sabotage of high value targets deep in the rear. Ukraine's recent Operation Spiderweb, which destroyed or damaged dozens of Russian long-range bombers at multiple air bases using truck launched drones operating from Russian territory, illustrates how previously safe strategic assets and infrastructure can be systematically hunted by low-cost unmanned systems once their location is known. Similar vulnerabilities would apply to any inadequately protected, above-ground missile defence site. Beyond these structural issues, many other GBAD systems within NAT-INAMDS have only limited or uncertain effectiveness against the most modern manoeuvring ballistic threats and almost all suffer from insufficient and constrained production capacity, making it doubtful that they could sustain interception rates required in a prolonged peer conflict.

Medium-Term Solutions: Rebuilding Magazine Depth and Industrial Capacity

The emerging environment can be increasingly characterised as a “missile age” or an era of high precision aerial warfare, in which the opening weeks of a conflict are dominated by the mass employment of ballistic and cruise missiles, UAVs and loitering munitions. Grieco's (2024) analysis of Chinese missile threats to US air bases in the Indo-Pacific is illustrative. Under conservative assumptions, PLARF runway attacks would exhaust US and Japanese missile

defence interceptors within the first 24 hours, closing runways to fighter operations for roughly 12 days in Japan and about two days in Guam and other Pacific locations, while closing tanker operations for more than a month in Japan. Even doubling the number of Patriot and THAAD interceptors in theatre still leaves the defender running out of missiles within as little as 56 hours, with only modest reductions in runway closure times. Grieco further estimates that the current US stockpile of around 1,200 Patriot interceptors and roughly 500 THAAD interceptors would likely be expended within a few days in a high-intensity campaign, highlighting a structural imbalance between offensive missile inventories and defensive magazines.

NATO's own IAMD policy recognises the need to strengthen "surveillance, interceptors and command and control" and explicitly links this to the broader defence planning and industrial base agenda (NATO, 2025). Yet in the medium term, there is no quick solution to the magazine depth problem. Significantly increasing production of complex SAM and BMD interceptors requires major investments, workforce expansion and the partial reorientation of defence and industrial capacity away from post-Cold War paradigms focused on expeditionary counter-insurgency operations. Present production volumes, and corresponding stockpiles, remain largely calibrated to limited contingencies, not to months long, high-intensity peer conflict. Grieco's findings therefore strongly suggest that, at least for the coming years, neither NATO nor the United States can simply "buy" their way out of the problem of massed missile salvos through more of the same high-end, expensive interceptors. Any serious medium-term solution must thus prioritise rebuilding interceptor inventories, expanding manufacturing capacity and rebalancing cost-exchange ratios, while accepting that this will necessarily be a multi-year effort rather than something that can be solved in a matter of months.

Short-Term Solutions: Dispersal, Hardening and Tactical Reconfiguration

Given these constraints, a number of measures can and should be pursued in the near term using existing forces and infrastructure. First, Cold War habits of concentrating large numbers of aircraft, GBAD assets and personnel on a limited number of major bases and hubs must be abandoned. Offensive long-range strike capabilities have matured to the point that no realistic level of air and missile defence can guarantee very high interception rates over a prolonged

period. Survivability therefore depends on dispersal and redundancy. Grieco's modelling shows that dispersing US aircraft and personnel across JSDF bases and selected civilian airfields, combined with faster runway repair techniques, can reduce fighter and tanker closure times by up to 60–70%, even though it cannot eliminate disruption entirely. For NATO, this logic implies a systematic effort to pre-plan and resource dispersal to military and, where politically feasible, civilian airfields, along with hardened and redundant logistics nodes, fuel and munitions storage and C2 facilities.

Second, wherever practicable, critical functions should be moved underground or into heavily hardened structures before a crisis, including command posts, key communication nodes, maintenance facilities and high-value stocks of interceptors and spare parts. Modern precision weapons, including ballistic missiles and OWA UAV swarms, pose a particular danger to exposed, above-ground infrastructure in the operational and even strategic rear.

Third, at the tactical level, GBAD units themselves require much more robust close-in protection against OWA UAVs and FPV drones. High-end SAM launchers, radars and command vehicles must be surrounded by “guardian” elements equipped with MANPADS, short range anti-aircraft guns, mobile EW teams, counter-FPV teams and small, networked mobile air-defence groups. Finally, in conditions of saturation, the burden on C2 and fire control becomes extreme. Enhancing training and drill within existing NATO Air C2 structures and gradually integrating new and developing AI-based tools into Threat Evaluation and Weapon Assignment (TEWA) processes, offers one of the few realistic ways to accelerate decision making. In combination, such short-term doctrinal, organisational and infrastructure adjustments can significantly increase the resilience and sustainability against the types of high-volume missile and UAV campaigns that current stockpiles of interceptors alone are unlikely to defeat.

Conclusion

The analysis of modern air defence reveals an increasingly evident divergence between the technological capabilities of offensive systems and the defensive systems attempting to counter them. The evolution of ballistic and hypersonic missiles significantly reduces the effectiveness of conventional air defence solutions. Simultaneously, the widespread and low-cost use of unmanned aerial vehicles confirms the transformation of the battlespace toward a reality in which quantity often outweighs quality. In this context, the requirements for

modernizing air defence are no longer limited to the technical refinement of interceptors, but rather demand the development of integrated, multi-layered architectures that combine kinetic, electronic, and directed energy means. A multi-layered, integrated and responsive defensive architecture leveraging advanced sensors, artificial intelligence, and new interceptor technologies is becoming a necessity rather than an option. There is a particularly pressing need for the implementation of orbital and aerial sensor networks capable of early detection and precise tracking of highly manoeuvrable threats. However, the implementation of such systems faces a range of operational, logistical, and financial challenges, especially in terms of ensuring long term cost-effectiveness and strategic resilience.

The future of air defence depends not only on technological superiority but also on the ability to strategically adapt, cooperate and build systems capable of responding to dynamic, multi-vector and increasingly accessible aerial threats in real-world conflict scenarios. It is important to emphasize that the advancement of offensive means is developing along two distinct trajectories. On the one hand, highly sophisticated systems such as ballistic and hypersonic missiles, and on the other, the mass employment of inexpensive drones whose main strength lies in quantity. Accordingly, modern air defence must evolve in both directions simultaneously. While advanced orbital sensors, artificial intelligence and precision interceptors are indispensable for countering high-end missile threats, defending against swarms of drones requires simpler, more robust, and cost-effective measures such as artillery, programmable ammunition or laser weapons. Only an integrated, multi-layered system that combines missile, artillery, electronic warfare and directed energy components can provide credible and sustainable protection in the complex threat environment of the future.

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Zahtjevi suvremene protuzračne obrane

SAŽETAK

Suvremeni sustavi protuzračne obrane suočeni su s ubrzanim razvojem balističkih, hipersoničnih i bespilotnih prijetnji koje sve češće nadilaze mogućnosti tradicionalnih obrambenih tehnologija. Ovaj rad analizira glavne izazove koje za protuzračnu obranu predstavljaju balistički projektili te različite kategorije bespilotnih letjelica. Kroz analizu slučajeva iz Ukrajine, Izraela i Zaljevskog rata prikazuje se ograničena učinkovitost postojećih obrambenih sustava, osobito protiv sofisticiranih prijetnji. Posebna pozornost posvećena je konceptima zasićenja protuzračne obrane rojevima dronova i ekonomskim posljedicama takvih taktika. U završnom dijelu rada predstavljena su tehnološka rješenja za buduću obranu, uključujući višeslojnu orbitalnu arhitekturu senzora, oružja usmjerene energije i sustave elektroničkog ratovanja. Rad zaključuje kako će buduća učinkovitost protuzračne obrane ovisiti o sposobnosti integracije različitih tehnologija u fleksibilne i ekonomski održive obrambene sustave.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: PZO, balistički projektili, bespilotne letjelice, hipersonično oružje

Organizacijska struktura, strateško upravljanje i ideologija: usporedba Al-Kaide i ISIL-a

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SAŽETAK

U radu se analizira organizacijska struktura i strateško upravljanje unutar dvije transnacionalne mrežne organizacije – Al-Kaide i Islamske države Iraka i Levanta⁴ (ISIL) – s ciljem identifikacije ključnih čimbenika koji pridonose njihovoj operativnoj otpornosti i prilagodljivosti. Primjenom deskriptivne komparacije istražuje se njihova organizacijska struktura, ideološki temelji, kratkoročni i dugoročni ciljevi, modeli financiranja, te propaganda. Rezultati ukazuju na značajne razlike u pristupima upravljanju – dok Al-Kaida primjenjuje decentralizirani model s naglaskom na

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⁴ U kontekstu naziva ISIL – Islamska država Iraka i Levanta, "Levantom" se prvenstveno misli na Siriju i okolna područja istočnog Mediterana.

ideološku koheziju, ISIL se odlikuje hijerarhijski usmjerenijom strukturom i centraliziranim upravljanjem resursima. Osim interpretacije ideoloških sličnosti i razlika ovih dviju organizacija i uvida u razinu prijetnje koju predstavljaju danas, zaključci ove analize mogu se primijeniti u području kriznog i sigurnosnog upravljanja.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: Al-Kaida, ISIL, terorizam

Uvod

Pojava terorizma nadilazi okvire suvremenog društva i prisutna je u različitim povijesnim razdobljima. U cilju boljeg razumijevanja dinamike terorizma formuliran je i jedan od najutjecajnijih teorijskih modela poznat kao teorija “četiriju valova” (Rapoport, 2022.). U okviru toga modela terorizam se, počevši od kraja 19. stoljeća, promatra kao niz uzastopnih, ideološki profiliranih i vremenski razgraničenih valova, od kojih svaki traje približno četrdeset godina te se razlikuje po ideologijama, motivacijama i metodama djelovanja. Ovaj rad analizira fenomen četvrtog vala terorizma na području Bliskog istoka. Konkretnije, usredotočuje se na dvije salafijsko-džihadističke terorističke organizacije Al-Kaidu i ISIL radi njihova iznimnog utjecaja na svijet i regiju dok su bile na vrhuncu svoje moći i utjecaja. Fokus ovoga rada jest na komparativnoj analizi njihove organizacijske strukture i ciljeva, modela financiranja i ideologije. Rad je usmjeren na usporedbu ovih dviju terorističkih organizacija, te su istaknuti određeni islamski koncepti koji su ključni za njihovu ideologiju. Glavna istraživačka pitanja su: (1) Kako se razlikuju organizacijski modeli upravljanja u Al-Kaidi i ISIL-u te kako te razlike utječu na njihove operativne kapacitete? i (2) Na koji način ideološki temelji Al-Kaide i ISIL-a oblikuju njihove organizacijske strukture, modele upravljanja i dugoročnu strategiju?

U zaključku su valorizirane Al-Kaida i ISIL u kontekstu današnjice. Posebno su uzeti u obzir događaji koji su obilježili nedavnu povijest, zatim svrgavanje Bashara al-Assada s vlasti u Siriji od strane Al-Kaidine bivše podružnice, povratak talibana na vlast u Afganistanu 2021. godine te kako je on utjecao na Al-Kaidu. Pojašnjene su i još uvijek aktivne podružnice navedenih organizacija te procjena prijetnje koju Al-Kaida i ISIL danas predstavljaju.

Tablica 1. Usporedna analiza pojmova džihad, džihadizam i globalni džihad

	Džihad	Džihadizam	Globalni džihad
Osnovno značenje	Borba na Božjem putu	Ideologija koja svodi džihad na nasilni aktivizam usmjeren prema političkim i vojnim ciljevima	Transnacionalni militantni pokret koji spaja džihadizam s globalnim djelovanjem
Način borbe	Unutarnja (duhovna), vanjska (oružana)	Oružana borba protiv nevjernika, režima i muslimana koji odstupaju od puritanskog tumačenja	Teroristički napadi i operacije protiv globalno definiranih neprijatelja
Cilj	Moralno usavršavanje, obrana od nevjernika	Uspostava šerijatskog poretka putem nasilja	Formiranje globalne islamske države / kalifata
Glavni akteri	Široka islamska zajednica	Terorističke i ekstremističke skupine	Transnacionalne džihadističke mreže
Zlouporaba pojma	Često sveden na vanjsku (oružanu) dimenziju	Potpuna instrumentalizacija džihada za političko nasilje	Pretvara religijski koncept u globalnu terorističku doktrinu

Izvor: autor

Komparativna analiza ideologije Al-Kaide i ISIL-a

U suvremenom globalnom sigurnosnom kontekstu terorističke organizacije predstavljaju ozbiljnu prijetnju stabilnosti država, regija i međunarodnog poretka. Među njima, Al-Kaida i ISIL ističu se kao dvije najistraživanije organizacije, s jasnim ideološkim temeljem i globalnim ambicijama. Iako dijele

zajedničke korijene u salafijskom džihadizmu, razlikuju se po organizacijskoj strukturi, ciljevima, ideologiji, te metodama financiranja i propagande. Kod pojma salafijski džihadizam govorimo o obliku suvremenog islamskog ekstremizma koji kombinira salafijski pristup islamu s džihadističkom ideologijom. Naime, salafizam je islamski pravac koji teži povratku prvobitnom, "čistom" islamu prema životu proroka Muhameda te kao takav on nije nužno militantan ili ekstreman. No, kombiniranjem salafizma i militantne ideologije nastaje salafijski džihadizam koji u sebi nosi dominantno obilježje nasilja kao legitimnog sredstva za obranu ili širenje "pravog" islama. Nadalje, salafijski džihadizam se definira kao "religijska ideologija" koja objašnjava uvjerenja, identitet, te nudi program akcije u vidu oružanog džihada kao odgovora na stanje vjernika (Moghadam, 2008.). Al-Kaida je tradicionalno definirana kroz salafijski džihadizam s fokusom na borbu protiv SAD-a, Izraela i zapadnih saveznika koje smatra dalekim neprijateljima.

U suprotnosti, Islamska država kombinira salafijski džihadizam s takfirističkom ideologijom i primarno cilja bliske neprijatelje, uključujući šijite, kršćane, Židove i sunita koji se ne pokoravaju ISIL-u. Važno je istaknuti kako je takfirizam u svojim izvorima i počecima bio strogo regulirana kategorija u islamskoj teologiji te su islamski učenjaci bili vođeni strogim pravilima prije nego što su nekoga proglasili nevjernikom, te je u tom smislu takfir bio više teološki instrument nego opravdanje za nasilje. ISIL je razvio ekstremno široku i pojednostavljenu primjenu takfirizma. Svaki musliman koji ne slijedi ISIL-ovu interpretaciju islama može biti proglašen nevjernikom što se onda koristi kao izravno opravdanje za mučenje i ubojstvo. Ideološki razvoj obiju organizacija obilježen je djelovanjem ključnih teoretičara: dok su Said Kutb i Abu Musab al-Suri značajni za Al-Kaidu, ISIL dodaje ideološke doprinose Abua Mohamada al-Maqdisija i Abua Bakra Najija, zadržavajući u svom diskursu i utjecaj Saida Kutba.

Razlike su također vidljive u ciljevima i strategijama. Kratkoročni ciljevi Al-Kaide uključuju borbu protiv SAD-a, destabilizaciju sekularnih režima na Bliskom istoku i sukobe s Izraelom, dok ISIL teži teritorijalnoj konsolidaciji radi uspostave kalifata. Dugoročni cilj obiju organizacija ostaje uspostava kalifata, no ISIL nastoji ostvariti transnacionalni kalifat, dok je Al-Kaidin plan bio zamišljen kao postupno širenje kroz plan 2020⁵. Kalif i kalifat nisu

⁵ U pismu Aymana al-Zawahirija, vođe Al-Kaide nakon smrti Osame bin Ladena, (analiziranom od strane Hudson Instituta) opisano je sedam faza strategije Al-Kaide, pri čemu je zadnja, sedma faza predviđala "Odlučujuću pobjedu" islama oko 2020. godine.

primarno teritorijalne kategorije, nego izraz jedinstva i duhovno-političkog autoriteta svih muslimana koji se temelji na nasljedovanju misije Poslanika Muhameda.⁶ Nakon Muhamedove smrti 632. godine, Abu Bakr je izabran za prvog kalifa, tj. političkog i vjerskog nasljednika Muhameda. No, kalifat Abu Bakra bio je institucionalizirana i konsensualna institucija rane islamske vlasti usmjerena na očuvanje jedinstva muslimanske zajednice, dok suvremeni džihadistički pokreti promoviraju nasilnu i ideološki radikaliziranu verziju kalifata radi političko-militantnih ciljeva. Što se tiče financiranja i propagande, Al-Kaida se oslanjala na osobno bogatstvo Osame bin Ladena, donacije i kriminalne aktivnosti, dok Islamska država koristi kriminalne aktivnosti, poreze nametnute nemuslimanskom stanovništvu (*džizija*) i kontrolu resursa na okupiranim teritorijima. U području propagande, obje organizacije koriste masovne medije, ali ISIL je posebno usmjeren na internet i digitalnu prisutnost radi širenja ideologije i privlačenja regruta.

Al-Kaidu su predvodili Osama bin Laden i Ayman al-Zawahiri, dok je trenutni vođa Sayf al-Adl, a mreža podružnica uključuje: Al-Kaida u islamskom Magrebu (AQIM), Al-Kaida na arapskom poluotoku (AQAP), Al-Kaida na indijskom potkontinentu (AQIS), Skupina za pomoć islamu i muslimanima (JNIM) i Al-Shabaab. S druge strane, ISIL su predvodili Abu Musab al-Zarkawi i Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, dok je trenutni vođa Abu Hafs al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, a podružnice obuhvaćaju: Islamska država Iraka i Levanta – Libija (ISIL-L), Islamska država Iraka i Levanta – Khorasan (ISIL-K), Pokrajina Islamske države Zapadna Afrika (ISWAP), Pokrajina Islamske države Srednja Afrika (ISCAP), Islamska država u Velikoj Sahari (ISGS) i Islamska država Iraka i Levanta – Jemen (ISIL-J).

Uvod u ove ključne aspekte pruža temelj za detaljnu analizu i usporedbu Al-Kaide i ISIL-a, omogućujući razumijevanje njihovih sličnosti i razlika u ideološkom, strateškom i operativnom kontekstu te olakšava procjenu njihovog utjecaja na suvremene globalne sigurnosne izazove.

⁶ Kalif (nasljednik, zamjenik), vrhovni vjerski i politički poglavar islamske zajednice, Muhamedov nasljednik. Posljednji od naslova nosio je prvi Muhamedov nasljednik Abu Bakr (632.–634.), koji se, kao i njegovi nasljednici Omar (634.–644.), Osman (644.–656.) i Ali ibn Abi Talib (656.–661.), nazivao »pravovjernim« kalifom i stolovao je u Medini... Šijiti su smatrali prvu trojicu »pravovjernih« kalifa te nakon njih Omejide uzurpatorima te časti, tvrdeći da ona pripada Aliju, kojega je u šijitskoj tradiciji kalifom imenovao sam Muhamed, a nakon Alijeve smrti isključivo njegovim potomcima, imamima. Za razliku od »pravovjernih« kalifa, omejidski su kalifi bili ponajprije svjetovni vladari upućeni na osvajanje novih teritorija.

Salafijski džihadizam

Al-Kaida i ISIL spadaju u širi spektar salafijskih džihadističkih pokreta, no unatoč zajedničkom ideološkom korijenu, njihova evolucija i fokus znatno se razlikuju. Al-Kaida je bila dominantna sila svjetskog salafijskog džihadizma sve do pojave ISIL-a, te je utemeljena na sintezi vehabizma i radikalnog egipatskog islamizma. Vehabizam, koji svoje izvore bilježi u 18. stoljeću, je specifična orijentacija unutar salafizma te dio reformističkog napora da se islam očisti od “praksi koje nisu izvorne” (Kamali, 2016.), dok je radikalni egipatski islamizam političko-vjerski pokret nastao u 20. stoljeću koji odbacuje postojeće sekularne ili autoritarne režime kao nevjerničke (*džahilija*), i nastoji uspostaviti društvo utemeljeno na strogoj primjeni šerijata te opravdava nasilje i revolucionarni otpor državnoj vlasti kao legitiman „džihad“.⁷

Salafijski džihadizam u vremenskom odnosu na vehabizam i radikalni egipatski islamizam nastaje kasnije (20.-21. stoljeće), no kao takav objedinjuje ta dva aspekta i pretvara ih u militantni pokret. Ideološki okvir Al-Kaide naglašava globalni džihad protiv Zapada i sekularnih režima u islamskom svijetu, pri čemu glavni neprijatelji uključuju Sjedinjene Američke Države, Izrael i njihove saveznike. Sam pojam globalni džihad je koncept koji opisuje transnacionalni militantni pokret ili ideologiju koja ima nekoliko ciljeva: širenje islama i primjenu šerijata izvan granica jedne države, borba protiv nevjernika i neprijatelja islama te jačanje transnacionalnih veza i globalno širenje. Organizacija se profilirala kao pokret s jasno definiranim strateškim i taktičkim ciljevima, uz dugoročnu ambiciju uspostave kalifata.

S druge strane, ISIL je nastao kao radikalna i brutalna frakcija unutar globalnog salafijskog džihadizma, razvijajući ideološki okvir koji kombinira osnovne principe salafijskog džihadizma s genocidnom identitetskom politikom usmjerenom protiv šijita i drugih skupina koje se ne pokoravaju ISIL-u. Ova kombinacija omogućila je ISIL-u da postane izuzetno agresivan i teritorijalno ambiciozan, s ciljem uspostave transnacionalnog kalifata, pri čemu je nasilje prema “bliskim neprijateljima” postalo ključna karakteristika njegove ideološke prakse (Gerges, 2016.).

⁷ Said Kutb, egipatski ideolog smatra se intelektualnim ocem radikalnog islamizma. Kao autentične nositelje islamskog poretka i reforme vidio je politički i vjerski islamski pokret Muslimanska braća. Kutbove ideje vraćanja šerijatu i radikalnog islamizma te opravdavanje nasilja protiv „nevjerničkih” režima preuzele su terorističke organizacije Al-Kaida i ISIL kao legitimaciju napada na bliskoistočne režime i zapadne sile.

Usporedba ovih dviju organizacija pokazuje da iako dijele religijski temelj u salafijskom džihadizmu, Al-Kaida i ISIL razilaze se u pristupu, ciljevima i metodama. Dok je Al-Kaida usmjerena na dugoročne, strateške ciljeve s fokusom na Zapad kao glavni izvor prijetnje, ISIL koristi ideologiju kao opravdanje za neposrednu, brutalnu i teritorijalno orijentiranu politiku koja uključuje masovno nasilje protiv lokalnih i regionalnih skupina.

Tablica 2. Ključni koncepti vehabizma i njihovo značenje

Aspekt	Izvorni vehabizam	Vehabizam – Saudijska Arabija	Vehabizam – Katar	Vehabizam – terorističke organizacije
Nastanak	18. stoljeće (Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab)	20.-21. stoljeće	20.-21. stoljeće	20.-21. stoljeće
Uloga	Religijski reformistički pokret	Državna ideologija	Nije službena državna ideologija, ali postoji religijski utjecaj	Ideološki okvir za militantne pokrete
Cilj	Pročišćenje islama, povratak praksama prvih generacija	Održavanje legitimiteta kraljevske kuće, kontrola religije u društvu	Financijska i ideološka podrška određenim grupama radi širenja vehabizma	Legitimizacija džihada, takfirizma i nasilja
Korelacija s nasiljem	Nije nužno militantan	Stroga kontrola države, izbjegava poticanje globalnog džihada	Povremena podrška militantnim skupinama u inozemstvu	Ekstremno nasilje

Izvor: autor

Koncept neprijatelja u djelovanju Al-Kaide i ISIL-a

Koncept neprijatelja predstavlja temeljni ideološki okvir u djelovanju salafij-skih džihadističkih pokreta, ali se razlikuje između Al-Kaide i ISIL-a. Al-Kaida je svoju strategiju temeljila na ideji „dalekog neprijatelja“, prvenstveno usmjerenog na Sjedinjene Američke Države i zapadne saveznike. Organizacija je izbjegavala teritorijalna osvajanja, s ciljem da globalni džihad ostane fokusiran na Zapad, čime je njeno djelovanje imalo izrazito simbolički i strateški karakter. Napad na SAD 11. rujna 2001. godine predstavlja ilustraciju ove strategije, jer je cilj bio oslabiti američku moć i njihovu podršku bliskoistočnim režimima, čime se posredno ugrožavao geopolitički poredak u regiji (Napoleoni, 2014.).

S druge strane, ISIL je implementirao koncept „bliskog neprijatelja“ kao centralni element svoje strategije. Prema zapovjednicima ISIL-a, Abu Musabu al-Zarkawiju i Abu Bakru al-Bagdadiju, prvo je bilo nužno uspostaviti teritorijalnu bazu kako bi se realizirali strateški ciljevi. Ova baza, često definirana kao bagdaski kalifat, trebala je omogućiti provedbu malog ofenzivnog džihada, uspostavu šerijatskog zakona i eliminaciju neprijatelja u neposrednoj blizini. Glavni neprijatelji ISIL-a prema njihovoj hijerarhiji bili su šijiti, nakon čega slijede američke i iračke snage, dok su Kurdi smatrani najmanje važnim neprijateljima (Gerges, 2016.).

Ideološki temelj ove distinkcije nalazi se u tumačenju islamskih izvora i stavovima ključnih teoretičara. ISIL-ov teoretičar al-Maqdisi potkrijepio je ideju prioriteta bliskog neprijatelja citiranjem 9. sure, ajeta 123 iz Kurana: „O vjernici, borite se protiv nevjernika koji su u blizini vašoj i neka oni osjete vašu strogost!“. Ovaj ajet opravdava protušijitske akcije i naglašava važnost borbe protiv neposrednih prijetnji za ostvarenje ideoloških ciljeva (Aerosoae, 2015.).

Za razliku od ISIL-a, Al-Kaida je bila pod snažnim utjecajem ideja Aymana al-Zawahiriya i Abu Musaba al-Suriya, koji su zagovarali dugoročnu strategiju usmjerenu na globalni džihad. Zawahiri je, iako inicijalno fokusiran na regionalne prijetnje, svoj boravak u Afganistanu iskoristio za redefiniranje prioriteta prema „dalekom neprijatelju“, dok je Suri naglašavao prilagodbu džihadističkih grupa poslijehladnoratovskom međunarodnom okruženju, obilježenom pojačanim globalnim protuterorističkim koordinacijama. Prema ovom pristupu, osnaživanje lokalne moći i uspostava kalifata na određenom teritoriju mora biti odgođeno sve dok se daleki neprijatelj ne oslabi (Ibid.).

U konačnici, analiza koncepta bliskog i dalekog neprijatelja ukazuje na temeljne strateške razlike između Al-Kaide i ISIL-a. Dok je Al-Kaida fokusirana na simbolične i strateške udare daleko od islamskog svijeta, ISIL daje prednost neposrednoj teritorijalnoj konsolidaciji i lokalnoj eliminaciji neprijatelja, koristeći nasilje i protušijitsku politiku kao sredstvo ostvarivanja kratkoročnih i dugoročnih ciljeva. Ova divergencija u konceptu neprijatelja reflektira različite pristupe globalnom i regionalnom džihadu te oblikuje operativne i propagandne strategije ovih organizacija (Napoleoni, 2014.).

Medijska prisutnost i širenje propagande

Medijska prisutnost i sposobnost širenja propagande predstavljaju ključne aspekte djelovanja suvremenih salafijskih džihadističkih organizacija, uključujući Al-Kaidu i Islamsku državu (ISIL). U literaturi se medijska dimenzija označava kao „*jihad of the pen*“ ili „*mediated jihad*“, naglašavajući ulogu narativa i vizualnih sadržaja u oblikovanju percepcije, širenju ideologije i mobilizaciji sljedbenika (Lia, 2016.; Ingram, 2015.). Obje organizacije prepoznale su medije kao snažan alat za utjecanje na javno mnijenje, regrutiranje novih članova te demonstraciju moći i globalnog doseg.

Prvi značajan medijski događaj koji je ilustrirao različite pristupe i ciljeve ovih organizacija bio je nastup Osame bin Ladena na katarskom kanalu Al-Jazeera 2003. godine, kada je preuzeo odgovornost za napade 11. rujna. Taj je nastup u literaturi često analiziran kao primjer Al-Kaidine strategije korištenja masovnih medija za legitimiranje globalnog džihada i osnaživanje vlastitog narativa (Gerges, 2011.; Snow & Taylor, 2006.). Al-Kaida je svoje poruke usmjeravala prema širokoj muslimanskoj publici te ih oblikovala oko ideje „obrambenog džihada“, što je zahtijevalo stalnu ideološku argumentaciju i komunikaciju putem medija.

S druge strane, ISIL je od početka razvio izrazito profesionaliziranu, centraliziranu i vizualno sofisticiranu medijsku mašineriju, usmjerenu na demonstraciju brutalne moći i terora. Objavljivanje visoko produciranog videa pogubljenja 21 egipatskog Kopta 2015. godine – analiziranog u radovima Wintera (2015.) i Warricka (2015.) – poslužilo je kao snažan propagandni instrument za zastrašivanje protivnika, privlačenje radikaliziranih pojedinaca te poticanje osvetničkih i identitetskih emocija.

Al-Kaida je od 1990-ih koristila medije kao ključni alat za širenje svojih poruka, a središnju ulogu imao je Osama bin Laden. Njegova karizma, retoričke vještine i sposobnost artikuliranja globalnih političkih pritužbi omogućili su mu da oblikuje narativ organizacije i privuče mlade muslimane diljem svijeta (Gerges, 2011.; Kepel & Milelli, 2008.). Tematski se fokusirao na pitanja poput palestinske krize, Kašmira, te borbe protiv tzv. „dalekog neprijatelja“.

Bin Laden je preferirao satelitske kanale, posebno Al-Jazeera, koja je prema analizi Althausa (2004.) postala ključni kanal za prijenos poruka globalnoj publici. Al-Kaida je istovremeno širila propagandu putem interneta, uključujući blogove, forume, *chat roomove* i digitalne kampanje, čime je razvila rane oblike „*cyber-jihad*“ aktivnosti (Weimann, 2006.). Nakon 11. rujna, digitalni džihad obuhvatio je i hakiranje, sabotazu web stranica te kreiranje online priručnika i magazina poput *Inspire* (Klausen, 2015.). Ova strategija medijske prisutnosti omogućila je da ime i imidž bin Ladena ostanu neraskidivo povezani s organizacijom, čak i nakon njegove smrti. Za razliku od ISIL-a, gdje je moć proizlazila primarno iz teritorijalne kontrole i institucionaliziranog nasilja, Al-Kaidina snaga bila je u narativu, simbolici i globalnoj mreži (Gerges, 2011.).

ISIL je razvio medijsku infrastrukturu bez presedana među nedržavnim akterima. Njena sofisticiranost analizirana je u radovima Wintera (2015.), Stern & Bergera (2015.) i Ingrama (2016.). Medijski aparat uključivao je profesionalno uređene videozapise, časopise (Dabiq, Rumiyah), propagandne dokumentarce, radijske stanice (Al-Bayan) i visoko koordinirane kampanje na društvenim mrežama (Twitter, Telegram). ISIL nije samo proizvodio sadržaj – on je stvarao brend, čiji su ključni elementi bili brutalnost, religijska simbolika i apokaliptična ideologija (Wood, 2017.). Za razliku od Al-Kaide, koja je naglašavala religijsko-političku argumentaciju i karizmu lidera, ISIL je medije koristio za širenje straha i inspiriranje individualnih napada („*lone-wolf*“), što je dokumentirano u radovima Warricka (2015.) i Vidina (2017.). Uloga vođe Abu Bakra al-Baghdadija u medijskom prostoru ostala je minimalna; on je figurirao više kao religijski simbol nego kao javni glasnogovornik, što dodatno naglašava strukturalne razlike između ISIL-a i Al-Kaide.

Izneseni primjeri pokazuju kako su Al-Kaida i ISIL prepoznale medije kao ključni element u ostvarivanju svojih strateških ciljeva, iako su se njihove metode, stilovi i komunikacijski tonovi razlikovali u skladu s ideološkim, organizacijskim i operativnim prioritetima. Sveobuhvatna literatura potvrđuje da je medijska strategija jedna od ključnih dimenzija održavanja njihove operativne otpornosti i globalnog utjecaja.

Ideološka razilaženja između Al-Kaide i Islamske države

Iako Al-Kaida i Islamska država (ISIL) dijele salafijsko-džihadističku ideologiju, njihove metode primjene i ciljevi značajno se razlikuju. Ove razlike najbolje se očituju u strateškim pristupima, interpretaciji islamskih koncepata te ciljevima koje grupe žele ostvariti.

Jedna od ključnih razlika između ISIL-a i Al-Kaide odnosi se na praksu takfirizma i koncept „*al-wala' wal-bara*“ (odanost i odbijanje). ISIL sustavno koristi takfirizam za opravdanje genocidnih stavova prema šijitima, dok Al-Kaida, pod vodstvom Zawahiriya, naglašava osvajanje srca i uma sunitskog stanovništva i umjereniju primjenu takfirizma. Zarkawijeva i Baghdadijeva brutalnost prema šijitima, prema Al-Maqdisijevim i Zawahirijevim kritikama, narušava podršku lokalnih zajednica i otežava provođenje džihada. ISIL primjenjuje „*al-wala' wal-bara*“ selektivno, posebno protiv šijitske populacije, dok paralelno nastoji osvojiti srca i umove lokalnog sunitskog stanovništva kroz socijalne programe, obnovu infrastrukture, javne kuhinje i propagandne video materijale koji prikazuju “dobrotvorne aktivnosti” (Todenhöfer, 2016.; Gomes i dr., 2018.). Al-Kaida, s druge strane, fokusira se na političku propagandu protiv Zapada i njegovih saveznika, dok selektivno odbacuje one koje smatra nevjernicima (Blanchard, 2008.).

Iako obje organizacije koriste religijske argumente za opravdanje svojih djelovanja, njihovi stvarni ciljevi su politički i teritorijalni. ISIL traži neposrednu kontrolu nad teritorijem radi uspostave kalifata, dok Al-Kaida nastoji oslabiti Zapad i njegove saveznike, podrivati režime na Bliskom istoku i koristiti religiju kao legitimizacijski alat za ostvarivanje svojih strateških interesa (Napoleoni, 2014.; Mikac, 2008.).

Može se dakle zaključiti kako razilaženja između ISIL-a i Al-Kaide proizlaze iz njihovih različitih interpretacija i primjena salafijsko-džihadističkih principa. Dok se ISIL fokusira na lokalni teritorijalni konsolidacijski džihad i ekstremnu primjenu takfira, Al-Kaida teži globalnom džihadu protiv dalekih neprijatelja i umjerenijoj strategiji za osvajanje srca i umova muslimanskog stanovništva.

Tablica 3. Komparativni prikaz Al-Kaide i ISIL-a

	AL-KAIDA	ISLAMSKA DRŽAVA
Religijski temelj	Salafijski džihadizam	Salafijski džihadizam/ takfiristička ideologija
Ideološki neprijatelj	SAD, Izrael, njihovi zapadnjački saveznici (daleki neprijatelj)	U prvom redu šijiti (bliski neprijatelj), kršćani, Židovi, Jazidi, te suniti koji se ne priklanjaju ISIL-u
Ključni ideolozi	Said Kutb Abu Musab al Suri	Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi Abu Bakr Naji Said Kutb
Kratkoročni ciljevi	Borba protiv SAD-a; rušenje bliskoistočnih sekularnih režima; sukobljavanje s Izraelom	Teritorijalna konsolidacija kalifata
Dugoročni cilj	Uspostava kalifata (Plan 2020)	Uspostava transnacionalnog kalifata
Financiranje	Ispočetka bin Ladenovo osobno bogatstvo; kriminalne aktivnosti; donacije	Kriminalne aktivnosti; porezi nametnuti nemuslimanskom stanovništvu (<i>džizija</i>); resursi teritorija koje kontroliraju
Propaganda	Masovni mediji, posebno bin Ladenova obraćanja	Masovni mediji, posebno internet
Istaknuti vođe	Osama bin Laden Ayman al-Zawahiri	Abu Musab al-Zarkawi Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi
Trenutni vođa	Sayf al-Adl	Abu Hafs al-Hashimi al-Qurashi
Podružnice	AQIM, AQAP, AQIS, JNIM, Al-Shabaab	ISIL-Libija, ISIL-K, ISWAP, ISCAP, ISGS, ISIL-Jemen

Izvor: autor

Islamska država i Al-Kaida danas

ISIL i Al-Kaida, unatoč dugoj borbi protiv njih, nisu u cijelosti potisnute i pobijedene. Zasigurno se može tvrditi da nisu ni blizu onome stanju kao kad su bile na vrhuncu svoje moći, utjecaja, brojnosti i sredstava, međutim one i dalje nastoje opstati te proširiti svoj utjecaj koristeći se najnovijom i trenutno najrelevantnijom tehnologijom poput umjetne inteligencije, za radikalizaciju, novačenje i širenje sofisticiranije propagande, te dronova - u čemu su izrazito vješti, te tako sposobni stvoriti izniman utjecaj u regiji. Još uvijek djeluju u nestabilnim područjima i nastoje iskoristiti novonastale situacije i događaje u regiji u svoju korist (Marthisen, 2018.). Svakako i dalje predstavljaju prijetnju te pred međunarodnu zajednicu stavljaju zahtjev za razumijevanjem i predviđanjem njihova djelovanja kako bi ona mogla dati što kvalitetniji odgovor u borbi protiv terorizma.

ISIL-ov vrhunac moći i položaj danas

Vrhunac moći Islamske države bila je uspostava kalifata 2014. godine. Islamska je država tada u svojoj punoj snazi širila teror i utjecala na milijune stanovnika teritorija na kojemu je postojala. Na vrhuncu svoje moći, bila je to organizacija koju je predvodio samoprozvani kalif al-Baghdadi. Napadala je šijite kao prvog i najvažnijeg neprijatelja te je masovnim medijima širila svoju propagandu prikazujući krvava ubojstva i mučenja njezinih neprijatelja. Istovremeno je, uz ostale načine financiranja, od kriminalnih aktivnosti i vlastitih prihoda koje je pribavljala od prirodnih bogatstava teritorija koje je posjedovala, pružala mogućnost plaćanja poreza za one koji nisu muslimani, a žele ostati na njezinom teritoriju. Ovakvu vrstu poreza šijiti nisu imali obvezu plaćati (Napoleoni, 2014.). Do kraja 2017. godine Islamska je Država pretrpjela znatne teritorijalne gubitke. Posljednje ISIL-ovo uporište palo je 2019., a iste je godine ubijen i kalif Baghdadi, međutim time Islamska Država nije potpuno poražena. Ona je i dalje zadržala značajan broj sljedbenika i pričuvene baze. ISIL-ove najpoznatije podružnice su Islamska država Iraka i Levanta – Libija (ISIL-Libija), Zapadnoafrička provincija Islamske države (ISWAP), Srednjoafrička provincija Islamske države (ISCAP), Islamska država u Velikoj Sahari (ISGS), ISIL-Khorasan (ISIL-K), te ISIL-Jemen (Ryan, 2015.).

ISIL-Khorasan (ISIL-K)

ISIL-K je podružnica ISIL-a čija ideologija ne priznaje međunarodne granice. Ključni elementi ideologije ISIL-K su: uspostava kalifata, takfir koji im omogućuje da druge muslimane proglase nevjernicima i time opravdaju svoja djela, džihad kojim opravdavaju svoju ideologiju jer njime opravdavaju nasilje i teror, sektaštvo, apokaliptična vjerovanja i globalni džihad (Akram & Asif, 2024.). ISIL-K prisutan je diljem regije dok mu je Afganistan središte za novačenje. Jača svoje sposobnosti te iz Afganistana nastoji djelovati na zemlje Srednje Azije dok mu afganistanski farmeri istovremeno pružaju utočište kao osvetu talibanima zbog zabrane uzgajanja maka. Nakon napada na koncertnu dvoranu u Moskvi u ožujku 2024. godine, procijenjeno je da ISIL-K predstavlja najveću izvanregionalnu terorističku prijetnju (Gallego, 2024.). Procjene europskih država su da je ISIL-K trenutačno najznačajnija teroristička prijetnja Europi, a u posljednje je vrijeme nekoliko europskih zemalja pogođeno terorizmom kao što su Austrija, Njemačka te Švedska, u kojoj su incidenti spaljivanja Kurana potaknuli osvetničke napade radikaliziranih pojedinaca povezanih s ISIL-om (Ryan, 2024.). ISIL-K predstavlja prijetnju za *de facto* vlasti u Afganistanu te religijske i etničke manjine u toj zemlji. U svom djelovanju ISIL-K vidi talibane kao ideološkog neprijatelja i njegov je cilj umanjiti vjerodostojnost talibana među afganistanskom populacijom te predstaviti talibane kao one koji su zastranili od islamskih principa. Kratkoročno, ISIL-K će nastaviti s napadima niskog utjecaja zajedno s povremenim operacijama visokog utjecaja protiv mekih meta kako bi poboljšali i pojačali medijsku propagandu, potkopali ekonomske i političke interese *de facto* vlasti i ponizili talibane. Dugoročni je cilj za ISIL-K nastaviti izazivati u Afganistanu nemire te dobiti i zadržati teritorijalnu kontrolu u Afganistanu odakle bi širio svoj utjecaj (Marthisen, 2018.). Da bi se dao kvalitetan i učinkovit odgovor na ISIL-K i njegova djelovanja potreban je sveobuhvatan pristup međunarodne zajednice (Akram & Asif, 2024.).

ISIL u Arapskoj Republici Siriji

U prosincu 2024. godine naoružane su grupe terorističke organizacije Hay'at Tahrir al-Shama (HTS)⁸ nakon jedanaestodnevnje vojne ofenzive svrgnule s vlasti sirijskog predsjednika Bashara Al-Assada i njegovu vladu te zauzele glavni grad Damask. Ofenzivu je predvodio vođa HTS-a Ahmad Hussein al-Sharaa poznat kao i Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani. Pad vlade u Siriji zemlju je ostavio u nestabilnoj

⁸ Prethodno znana kao Al-Nusra.

i rizičnoj situaciji koju i ISIL i Al-Kaida nastoje iskoristiti s posebnim naglaskom na sirijski teritorij kao stratešku bazu iz koje mogu provoditi operacije čije će djelovanje biti usmjereno prema van. Nova se prijelazna vlada, vođena HTS-om, bori s nizom sigurnosnih izazova: nastojanjem da pod kontrolu stavi teritorij te različite naoružane frakcije i strane terorističke borce te da se bori protiv ISIL-ovog preporoda (Warrick, 2015.). ISIL je odlučan da iskoristi novonastalu situaciju u Siriji te će, ako podjele u zemlji ostave dovoljno prostora za njega, iz Sirije planirati i provoditi napade. ISIL iskorištava sigurnosnu situaciju u Siriji gdje su neki njihovi ključni vođe i pozicionirani. Ključan faktor zbog kojeg ISIL ostaje prijetnja u Siriji je nestabilno okruženje nakon al-Assadova pada, manjak kontrole prijelazne vlade te promjenjiva sigurnosna situacija što čini plodno tlo za ISIL da se postavi kao alternativna vlast te proširi svoj utjecaj.

U konačnici je vidljivo da ISIL-ov poraz ne znači i kraj njegova ideološkog i političkog utjecaja i djelovanja (Marthisen, 2018.). I dalje predstavlja prijetnju Siriji te se neumoljivo i dalje nastoji raširiti regijom Levanta. ISIL-ova je aktivnost na Bliskom istoku, a posebno u Iraku i dijelovima Sirije, ograničena protuterorističkim pritiskom zbog čega je ISIL, djelomice, i okrenuo svoj fokus ka Africi (Ryan, 2024.).

Al-Kaidin vrhunac moći i utjecaja i Al-Kaida danas

Al-Kaidin teroristički napad pod vodstvom bin Ladena 11. rujna 2001. godine predstavlja najbrutalniji teroristički čin ikada. On je bio predstavljen kao odgovor na američku vanjsku politiku prema arapskom svijetu. Takav je događaj imao presudne posljedice za američko društvo te je bio dokaz kako je „američku nacionalnu sigurnost moguće ugroziti s američkog teritorija“ (Bilandžić, 2005.). Nakon 11. rujna, pritisak na talibane da izruče bin Ladena koji je tada boravio u Afganistanu nije urodio plodom. Stoga je 7. listopada 2001. započeta operacija „*Enduring Freedom*“ u kojoj je koalicija predvođena SAD-om nastojala svrgnuti i uništiti talibanski režim koji je bio povezan s bin Ladenom i njegovom organizacijom (Mikac, 2008.).

Procjenjuje se da je Al-Kaida od pada talibana 2001. godine izgubila 80% članova i kampova za obuku. Iako je nakon toga Al-Kaidina sposobnost djelovanja umanjena, ona je i dalje imala ključnu ulogu u nizu terorističkih napada (Gomes i dr., 2018.).

Al-Kaida je decentralizirana organizacija gdje vodstvo diktira agendu, strategiju i glavne ciljeve grupe (Cristiani, 2022.). Za Al-Kaidu je bilo nužno da se de-

centralizira nakon rata u Afganistanu 2001. godine da bi preživjela i održala svoju sposobnost (Rumman, 2020.). Činjenica da je Al-Kaida decentralizirani pokret čije ćelije uživaju visok stupanj slobode, nije umanjila opasnost od te organizacije, a tu činjenicu potkrepljuju teroristički napadi s kojima je povezana. Štoviše, lokalne grupe pokazale su zadivljujuću sposobnost da se prilagode lokalnim uvjetima i da prilagode poruku koju odašilju, istovremeno uvažavajući socijalne, ekonomske i etničke probleme lokalnog stanovništva (Cristiani, 2022.).

Tek deset godina nakon američke intervencije operacijom „*Enduring Freedom*“ bin Laden je pronađen i ubijen u svibnju 2011. u Pakistanu, nakon čega na čelo Al-Kaide dolazi Ayman al-Zawahiri, vođa koji nije ni približno imao bin Ladenovu karizmu (Gomes i dr., 2018.). On je ubijen 2022. godine dronom u Kabulu. Trenutni vođa Al-Kaide je Sayf al-Adl koji često nailazi na neslaganje i nezadovoljstvo svojim vođenjem. Nastoji iskoristiti izraelsko-palestinski sukob koji je zapravo oduvijek bio dio Al-Kaidina narativa. Fokus takvog narativa je na svetosti al-Aksa džamije što je u skladu s Al-Kaidinim narativom o islamskim svetim mjestima još od njezina nastanka. I bin Laden i Zawahiri u svojim opsežnim spisima pišu o palestinskom pitanju. Al-Kaidina najsnažnija podružnica Al-Kaida na Arapskom poluotoku u svom djelovanju iskorištava sukobe, posebice izraelsko-palestinski kako bi regrutirala i potaknula pojedince da provode napade. AQAP je pokrenula i donatorsku kampanju krypto valutama tvrdeći kako će se ta zarada iskoristiti za pomoć Palestincima. ISIL se, s druge strane, tek u zadnje vrijeme u svojoj retorici okrenuo palestinskom pitanju.

Al-Kaida je danas organizacija čije je centralno vodstvo slabo. Neučinkovito teži uspostavi strateškog vodstva svojim podružnicama koje uvelike djeluju samostalno i neovisno o središnjoj Al-Kaidi istovremeno prilagođavajući svoj narativ kako bi se integrirale u lokalne zajednice. Ovakva im je vrsta ideološkog pragmatizma pomogla proširiti teritorij pod njihovom kontrolom koji sada zahvaća velike dijelove Afrike (JNIM na području Sahela i Al-Shabaab u Istočnoj Africi) i Siriju. Teritorijalne dobiti omogućavaju Al-Kaidi i njezinim podružnicama da tako skupljaju novac za aktivnosti te povećaju stopu novačenja. JNIM je dostigao zavidnu razinu sposobnosti manevriranja i provođenja zahtjevnih napada drogovima, improviziranim eksplozivnim napravama itd., te je tako sposoban predstavljati izravnu opasnost glavnim gradovima u regiji. Djeluje primarno u Maliju, Burkini Faso te Nigeru, a temeljna mu je ambicija stvaranje emirata koji bi mogao osporiti legitimitet vojnih režima, prisiliti ih da ustupe autoritet te implementiraju šerijat. AQAP je Al-Kaidina podružnica u Jemenu koja je primarno fokusirana na Jemen iako gaji aspiracije za provedbu operacija izvan te države. Održava veze

s Al-Shabaabom u Somaliji, s kojim razmjenjuje oružje i borce te koji ga financira, i s Hutima s kojima povremeno surađuje isključivo iz oportunističkih razloga.

ISIL i Al-Kaida nastavljaju iskorištavati teritorij Libije kao tranzitni koridor za borce, oružje, sredstva te ilegalnu trgovinu resursima. ISIL-Libija značajno je oslabio s procjenom boraca na samo 100 do 200 raspršenih u male ćelije na području južne Libije. Ima ograničene sposobnosti te nije provodio nikakve veće napade od veljače 2023. godine. Al-Kaida je u Libiji aktivna na jugozapadu zemlje gdje iskorištava plemenske veze kako bi održala svoje logističke i financijske platforme kako bi pružila potporu podružnicama na području Sahela. Isto čini i ISIL (Ryan, 2024.).

Al-Kaida i talibani nakon 2021. godine

Povratak talibana na vlast u kolovozu 2021. godine značajan je događaj jer od tada raste zabrinutost da Afganistan ima potencijal postati ponovno sigurno utočište Al-Kaidi, njezinim podružnicama i nizu drugih terorističkih organizacija. Upravo se navedeno i dogodilo unatoč Sporazumu iz Dohe iz prvog mandata američkog predsjednika Donalda Trumpa kojim se talibani obvezuju da neće dopustiti niti jednoj terorističkoj organizaciji djelovanje s afganistanskog tla. Unatoč navodnoj talibanskoj posvećenosti Sporazumu iz Dohe, talibani i Al-Kaida održali su bliske odnose iako su talibani težili tome da priroda tih odnosa bude tajna. Unatoč visokoj prisutnosti terorističkih organizacija (više od 20) u Afganistanu koje potkopavaju sigurnosnu situaciju u regiji, najveća prijetnja iz Afganistana ipak dolazi od ISIL-K, a ne od Al-Kaide što je i jedan od razloga radi kojeg talibani i dopuštaju Al-Kaidi da boravi u Afganistanu. Snaga i status Al-Kaide u Afganistanu ostali su nepromijenjeni od dolaska talibana na vlast te ona teži jačanju suradnje s regionalnim terorističkim organizacijama koje djeluju u zemlji, a nisu afganistanskog porijekla, kako bi proširila svoju prisutnost u susjednim zemljama, dok joj talibani istovremeno pružaju okruženje u kojem se može konsolidirati u sigurnim kućama i kampovima za obuku diljem Afganistana. Smatra se kako Al-Kaida u Afganistanu trenutno ne predstavlja prijetnju za države u regiji s obzirom na to da je drastično smanjena te posjeduje ograničene resurse. Unatoč navedenom, Sayf al-Adl ima namjeru ponovno aktivirati ćelije u Iraku, Siriji, Libiji i Europi što pokazuje Al-Kaidinu dugoročnu namjeru da provodi operacije prema vani.

Iako su Al-Kaidini korijeni u Afganistanu, ona sada traži saveznike u Africi, kao i ISIL, kako bi se uspjela održati. Neke od njezinih najpoznatijih podružnica su Al-Shabaab u Somaliji koji predstavlja veliku regionalnu prijetnju, AQIM, AQAP čije je primarno područje djelovanja Jemen iako gaji aspiracije da provodi operacije izvan Jemena, JNIM na području Sahela te AQIS.

Al-Kaida u Siriji

Grupe povezane s Al-Kaidom u Siriji ostale su aktivne. Smatra se da je u Siriji više od pet tisuća stranih terorističkih boraca nad kojima prijelazna vlada nema kontrolu a koji održavaju veze s grupama koje su povezane s Al-Kaidom te dijele logističke platforme.

Nakon pada sirijske vlade i HTS-ovog preuzimanja vlasti, postoji zabrinutost da su neki njegovi članovi i dalje ideološki vezani za Al-Kaidu te imaju stavove koji su više ekstremistički nego oni novog šefa države Al-Sharaae. Iako vodstvo HTS-a promovira nacionalistički narativ, polovica članova HTS-a navodno su još uvijek sljedbenici Al-Kaidine ideologije (Ryan, 2024.).

Zaključak

Al-Kaida i ISIL danas nisu ni približno jake organizacije kao kada su bile na vrhuncu svoje moći i utjecaja. Međutim, one danas, kao i njihove podružnice, i dalje postoje, djeluju i zabrinjavaju međunarodnu zajednicu. Obje se organizacije još uvijek bore i u doglednoj budućnosti će se nastaviti boriti za opstanak, te će koristiti svaku nestabilnost na Bliskom istoku i svaki vakuum moći kako bi pronašle svoje mjesto među postojećim raskolima, kako u Siriji, tako i u drugim bliskoistočnim zemljama.

Deskriptivna usporedba Al-Kaide i ISIL-a pokazuje kako se njihove razlike u organizacijskom ustroju i ideološkoj orijentaciji mogu tumačiti kroz prizmu upravljačkih i organizacijskih teorija. Al-Kaida, sa svojim decentraliziranim modelom i naglaskom na ideološkoj koheziji, demonstrira primjer mrežnog upravljanja koje potiče autonomiju i prilagodljivost. Nasuprot tome, ISIL-ov centralizirani model, usmjeren na učinkovito upravljanje resursima i propagandnim aktivnostima, ilustrira hijerarhijski pristup koji privilegira operativnu kontrolu i standardizaciju procesa. Ideološke razlike između organizacija – Al-Kaidina strategija dugoročne mobilizacije u odnosu na ISIL-ovu težnju za brzim političkim ostvarenjem kroz uspostavu kalifata – dodatno utječu na njihovo strateško pozicioniranje i upravljanje rizicima u dinamičnom okruženju. Unatoč slabljenju institucionalnih kapaciteta, obje organizacije pokazuju sposobnost prilagodbe kroz reorganizaciju struktura i redefiniranje ciljeva, što se može promatrati kao oblik organizacijske otpornosti.

U nastojanju davanja odgovora na postavljena istraživačka pitanja, zaključuje se kako Al-Kaida održava svoju operativnu otpornost prvenstveno zahvaljujući decentraliziranoj mrežnoj strukturi. Ovakav ustroj omogućuje njezinim podružnicama širok stupanj autonomije – mogu djelovati samostalno, prilagođavati se lokalnim uvjetima i nastaviti operirati čak i kada je središnje vodstvo oslabljeno ili pod pritiskom. Iako se navodi da je organizacija „zastranila” pod vodstvom Sayf al-Adela te da su neke podružnice djelomično odvojene od Centralne Al-Kaide, upravo je ta fleksibilnost i difuzno upravljanje razlog dugoročne održivosti organizacije, unatoč operativnom slabljenju.

ISIL, s druge strane, počiva na centraliziranijoj i hijerarhijski uređenoj strukturi. Taj model omogućuje učinkovitu raspodjelu resursa, koordinirano strateško djelovanje i visoku propagandnu disciplinu. Međutim, za razliku od Al-Kaide, ISIL-ova otpornost počiva na sposobnosti brze reorganizacije i relokacije – primjerice, iskorištavanjem nestabilnosti u Siriji te širenjem utjecaja u afričke regije. Time ISIL pokazuje sposobnost prilagodbe unatoč gubitku teritorija i smanjenju kapaciteta, ali njegova ovisnost o centraliziranom upravljanju čini ga ranjivijim na udare koji pogađaju jezgru organizacije.

Nadalje, Al-Kaida se temelji na strategiji dugoročne, postepene mobilizacije. Fokus joj je na izgradnji globalne ideološke baze, održavanju mreže savezništava i poticanju lokalnih podružnica da djeluju prema zajedničkom ideološkom okviru. Cilj nije nužno brzo osvajanje teritorija, već dugotrajno preživljavanje i infiltracija u konfliktna područja. Ovaj pristup čini Al-Kaidu strpljivijom organizacijom s dugoročnom vizijom postepenog slabljenja zapadnog utjecaja i poticanja globalnog džihada. ISIL, nasuprot tome, slijedi ideologiju brzog političkog ostvarenja putem uspostave kalifata. Njegova ideologija zahtijeva stvaranje teritorijalne države kao dokaza božanske legitimnosti. Zbog toga je ISIL agresivniji, skloniji ekspanziji i koristi visokointenzivno nasilje kako bi brzo stvorio politički i vojni pritisak. Nakon gubitka teritorija u Iraku i Siriji, ISIL je svoju strategiju prilagodio, ali i dalje ostaje usmjeren na ponovno teritorijalno ukorjenjivanje i širenje, posebno u afričkim državama.

Iz perspektive upravljanja i suprotstavljanja ovakvim organizacijama, razumijevanje ovih modela pruža vrijedan okvir za analizu načina na koji sustavi s visokom razinom neizvjesnosti mogu održati funkcionalnost i kontinuitet. U tom smislu, zaključci ovog članka mogu doprinijeti razvoju učinkovitijih pristupa kriznom i sigurnosnom upravljanju i strateškom planiranju u složenim organizacijskim sustavima.

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Organizational Structure, Strategic Management and Ideology: A Comparison of Al-Qaeda and ISIL

SUMMARY

This paper analyzes the organizational structure and strategic management within two transnational networked organizations—Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)—with the aim of identifying the key factors that contribute to their operational resilience and adaptability. Using a comparative analysis approach, the study examines their organizational design, ideological foundations, short- and long-term objectives, funding models, and propaganda strategies. The results indicate significant differences in management approaches: while Al-Qaeda employs a decentralized model emphasizing ideological cohesion, ISIL is characterized by a more hierarchical structure and centralized resource management. Beyond interpreting the ideological similarities and differences between these two organizations and assessing the level of threat they currently pose, the findings of this analysis may also be applied in the fields of crisis and security management.

KEYWORDS: Al-Qaeda, ISIL, terrorism

Austrian Permanent Neutrality in the Legal Framework of the EU: A Normative-Legal Analysis from Accession in 1995 to Contemporary Security Crises

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines how Austria's membership in the EU from 1995 to 2025 has reshaped the constitutional and legal institution of permanent neutrality. Applying a normative-legal approach, it compares the key provisions of the Austrian Constitution with the primary and secondary law of the EU, particularly Article 42(7) of the TEU and Article 222 of the TFEU, as well as with the practice of the CSDP. The findings show that neutrality has retained its formal prohibitions on joining military alliances, hosting foreign troops and participating in combat operations, but has been functionally adapted to contemporary security challenges through instruments of "constructive abstention", logistical and humanitarian contributions and participation in PESCO and UN/EU peace missions. The Lisbon Treaty and the security crises in Kosovo (1999) and Ukraine (since 2022) have strengthened the practice of interpret-

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ing neutrality in accordance with EU law, whereby Vienna avoids automatic defence obligations but accepts political solidarity with the victim of aggression. The paper concludes that Austrian neutrality has evolved into a dynamic, EU law-conditioned concept whose effectiveness depends on a flexible interpretation of the constitutional law and the continuous redefinition of national security interests.

KEYWORDS: *Austria, neutrality, European Union, defence, law*

Introduction

The institutional status of Austria's permanent neutrality is founded on the Constitutional Law of 26 October 1955 (*Bundesverfassungsgesetz über die immerwährende Neutralität Österreichs*), adopted immediately after the conclusion of the State Treaty (*Österreichischer Staatsvertrag*), by which the Allied Powers committed to withdraw their troops stationed on Austrian territory after the Second World War. Neutrality is normatively defined by the following prohibitions: accession to military alliances and the stationing of foreign armed forces on Austrian territory, accompanied by the positive duty to defend neutrality that is, the obligation of non-participation in armed conflicts arising from international law. Although not formalised by a multilateral treaty, this constitutional and legal institution functioned during the bipolar order as a mechanism for preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Austria.

The transformation of the European security architecture after 1989 and Austria's accession to the European Union in 1995 raised the question of the compatibility of the traditional neutral status with new forms of collective security. Austria's gradual involvement in United Nations peacekeeping operations, the Partnership for Peace programme and projects of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) demonstrates that neutrality is operationalised flexibly, adapting to the functional requirements of international cooperation.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 further revitalised the debate on the scope of Austrian neutrality. Vienna supports sanctions against the Russian Federation and provides humanitarian assistance but refrains from direct military engagement, seeking to reconcile constitutional obligations with the prin-

ciple of European solidarity. Austrian neutrality is therefore today regarded as an evolving legal concept whose practical application is continuously reassessed in light of changing security circumstances.

Methodological Approach and Aim of the Paper

The methodological framework of this paper is based on a normative-legal approach. The legal implications of Austria's permanent neutrality within the law of the European Union from 1995 to the present are examined through a systematic review, comparison and critical synthesis of relevant secondary professional and academic literature. Primary normative acts (the Constitutional Law on Permanent Neutrality, the Treaty on European Union, the TFEU, and related EU decisions) are cited indirectly, insofar as they have already been referenced and interpreted in those sources, while the analytical focus remains on the interpretative patterns and lines of argumentation developed by academic doctrine, commentaries, and official legal manuals.

The research centres on doctrinal analysis of the primary and secondary law of the EU, above all the provisions of the Treaty on European Union (42(7) TEU), the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Art. 222 TFEU), the system of the CSDP, and relevant Council decisions, in correlation with Austria's Constitutional Law on Permanent Neutrality of 1955 and its subsequent constitutional amendments (e.g. Art. 23j B-VG). The method relies on a doctrinal-analytical review of relevant secondary literature in which legal norms are examined systematically, teleologically and historically, indirectly complemented by a comparative analysis of international customary law on permanent neutrality, with the aim of identifying legal collisions between the principle of solidarity in EU law and Austria's constitutional prohibitions on participation in military operations, joining military alliances, and hosting foreign armed forces. Particular attention is devoted to official doctrines, and practical applications (e.g. constructive abstention in financing military assistance to Ukraine), which illustrate the dynamic yet legally grounded reinterpretation of neutrality.

The aim of the paper is to determine, in normative terms, to what extent and in what way membership in the European Union has altered the legal nature

and scope of Austria's permanent neutrality, and whether given contemporary security challenges and the clauses on collective defence and solidarity it can still be considered fully effective, or rather a form of neutrality that is *de iure* preserved but *de facto* conditioned by Union law.

The central research questions are as follows: How have the normative content and legal effects of Austria's permanent neutrality changed, from its accession to the EU in 1995 to current security crises, under the influence of obligations arising from EU law, particularly in the area of the Common Security and Defence Policy, and what legal mechanisms does Austria employ to reconcile its constitutional neutrality with the European clauses on solidarity and collective defence?

Austria's neutrality in historical perspective

Austria's permanent neutrality is younger than Switzerland's: it emerged during the Cold War and is less deeply rooted in the consciousness of citizens and the international community. With the Moscow Memorandum of 1955, Austria committed itself to a neutrality declaration similar to Switzerland's, with some differences, and sought recognition from other states. This commitment was confirmed by the Constitutional Law of 26 October 1955, by which Austria "of its own free will declares its permanent neutrality". Neutrality was not based on an international treaty but on domestic legislation (Grlić Radman, 2004).

After liberation from Nazi rule in 1945, Austria came under four-power occupation. By November 1945 it had a democratically legitimised government, though still under strict Allied control. Neutrality was seen as a way out of bloc division and a means to speed up the State Treaty. Negotiations in the 1950s stalled, as the Western powers avoided risking wider conflict. After Stalin's death in 1953, the USSR adopted a softer approach but demanded continued troop stationing until the German question was resolved and a neutrality clause giving the Allies, especially the USSR, a supervisory role. Only in February 1955 did the USSR drop the German question, insisting instead that Austria not join a Western military alliance (Luif, 2017).

The Soviet fear of a renewed German-Austrian alliance led Vienna to view neutrality as a safeguard of independence and protection against another Anschluss. Chancellor Raab told Ambassador Wallinger that neutrality resolved

the Anschluss issue, arguing that a neutral Germany lacked credibility and made a new Anschluss impossible. Like the Swiss, Raab saw neutrality as strengthening Austrian identity, while critics such as Adenauer viewed it as neutralism, and a second-class status with limited identity value (Gehler, 2005).

At the 1954 Berlin Conference, the USSR proposed banning foreign bases and military alliances in Austria; Vienna issued a similar declaration, but no State Treaty followed. After renewed Soviet proposals and consultations in February–March 1955, the Moscow talks (12–15 April 1955) produced the Moscow Memorandum of 15 April 1955 (Kunz, 1956).

The USSR, the United States, France, and the United Kingdom recognised the Memorandum (Verdross, 1956). Austria thereby committed itself, through a special law, to declare permanent neutrality, adopted on 26 October 1955 stating it was undertaking this status “of its own free will” (Novaković, 2011; Grlić Radman, 2009).

The political practice of neutrality is legally codified, and its main foundation lies in the rather outdated 1907 Hague Conventions V and XIII on the Rights and Duties of Neutral States and Persons in Case of Land and Naval War, the 1949 Geneva Conventions, as well as the First and Second Additional Protocols of 1977. This legal characteristic distinguishes neutrality from most other foreign and security policies (Goetschel, 1999). From this it follows that neutral states have specific legal obligations toward belligerents. First, they are required to maintain abstention, meaning they must not favour either party in an armed conflict. This prohibition entails not supporting the armed forces of any side, not granting or guaranteeing loans to the belligerents, and not providing protection to their military units or warships within neutral territory. Second, neutral states have a duty of prevention, obliging them to prohibit any activities by belligerents on their soil, such as recruitment, preparation for war operations, or the conduct of hostilities. Finally, they are bound by the principle of acquiescence, which requires them to accept the legality of certain actions taken by belligerents against the commercial activities of their nationals and legal entities, provided such actions comply with the laws of war. This includes, for instance, the seizure of merchant vessels flying the neutral state’s flag if they transport contraband, violate a blockade, or otherwise provide hostile support, as well as recognition of the prize court decisions of belligerents concerning those vessels and their cargoes (Degan, 2011).

Austria legally prohibited joining military alliances and hosting foreign bases, and informed all states with which it had diplomatic relations about its new status, thereby securing international legal recognition of its neutrality. Some states explicitly recognised this neutrality, while others merely noted it. Permanent neutrality is governed by both international and Austrian constitutional law and was a political, though not legal, precondition for the State Treaty; its interpretation and possible termination remain Austria's sovereign prerogative. Unlike Switzerland, Austria viewed neutrality as compatible with UN membership and joined the organisation in December 1955, although it had applied as early as 2 July 1947 (Zemanek, 1961).

Austrian legal scholars formulated the “Verdross Doctrine,” which holds that Austria has a special passive status in implementing UN collective sanctions (Grlić Radman, 2009). Upon Austria's UN admission in 1955, the permanent Security Council members accepted that it would not participate in coercive measures in order to preserve its neutrality (Verdross, 1960). In the 1970s, this “active neutrality” enhanced Austria's international standing, but by the mid-1980s it shifted to “realistic neutrality,” marked by reduced engagement and a stronger focus on European integration. In 1989, Vienna applied for European Community membership, explicitly underscoring its perpetual neutrality (Popławski, 2020).

Austria's Path to Membership in the European Union

In the second half of the 1980s, amid the expansion of Western European integration, Vienna oriented its foreign policy toward full membership in the European Community (EC). The Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) led the initiative, soon joined by the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ). Foreign Minister Alois Mock and Chancellor Franz Vranitzky drafted a proposal committing Austria to adopt all EC obligations while preserving neutrality, which was subsequently approved by parliament. The negotiation mandate included clauses stipulating that integration must not endanger employment, social policy, or high environmental standards, and foresaw joint negotiations with the EEC. Opposition was led by the Greens, who feared the loss of sovereignty in defence matters and proposed closer cooperation with Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary as an alternative, while the Communist Party

(KPÖ) protested, citing Soviet opposition and Article 4 of the State Treaty². A broad extra-parliamentary coalition of former diplomats, certain politicians, academics, artists, environmentalists, and trade unionists shared these reservations (Polačková, 2007).

The collapse of the bipolar order and the crises in Iraq and the former Yugoslavia forced Vienna to redefine neutrality, now linked with solidarity, supporting the UN against Saddam Hussein and assisting Slovenia and Croatia during the breakup of the SFRY. At the same time, the Council of Europe and the EC Commission examined how to reconcile Austria's integration with the preservation of neutrality, while the dissolution of the USSR removed the principal obstacle to EC accession. The EC already regarded Austria as integrated, with a developed economy that would strengthen the Union. The political issue thus became the redefinition of neutrality within the framework of the future Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

In the 1993 negotiations, Austria was asked to participate actively and collectively in the CFSP, in accordance with the Maastricht Treaty. In its Foreign Policy Report 1993, Vienna stated that EU membership would contribute to: (1) international economic cooperation; (2) the resolution of issues concerning the environment, criminal law, migration and drugs; (3) the prevention of crises and conflicts in Europe; and (4) the creation of mechanisms for collective defence, while noting that the future relations between the EU, NATO and the WEU could not yet be foreseen (Ibid).

Austria's accession negotiations lasted from 1 February 1993 to 1 March 1994. The constitutionally required referendum was held on 12 June 1994, and a broad consensus – SPÖ, ÖVP, LIF, major interest groups, Sozialpartnerschaft and most media supported accession, while FPÖ, the Greens and KPÖ opposed it (Gehler & Kaiser, 1997: 96). With a turnout of 82.4%, 66.6% of voters supported membership, while 33.4% voted against (Falkner, 2016).

² Article 4 of the Austrian State Treaty (1955) prohibits any political or economic union between Austria and Germany, as well as the promotion of such a union.

Neutrality in the Context of European Security Policy

With its accession to the EU on 1 January 1995 and to NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP), Austria redefined its neutrality according to the principle of "three no's": no participation in wars, no joining of military alliances and no stationing of foreign troops (Brix, 2016). To enable full participation in the CFSP, Article 23f (now 23j³) was added to the Constitution. The 1997 Amsterdam Treaty incorporated the "Petersberg tasks" into the CFSP (Schmidl, 2013); Article 17(2) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) includes humanitarian, rescue, peacekeeping and combat crisis management operations (van Staden et al., 2000). Austria subsequently amended the Federal Constitution accordingly (Schmidl, 2013).

Austria's accession to the EU prompted debates about joining NATO, and for a time even senior Social Democrats supported the idea while maintaining neutrality. However, on 17 April 1998, the SPÖ and ÖVP failed to agree that the *Optionenbericht*⁴ should even mention NATO, although neutrality had already been limited by EU membership and the Amsterdam Treaty (1997/1999). The neutral status was difficult to explain abroad: during the Kosovo crisis in 1999, Austria politically supported NATO's air campaign but closed its airspace in accordance with the 1907 Hague Convention V (Schmidl, 2013). The Kosovo crisis demonstrated how difficult it is to maintain neutrality when large-scale military operations are needed to stop killings and ethnic cleansing. In 1999, NATO bombed Serbian forces without UN Security Council authorisation, prompting Vienna to ban overflights across Austria and forcing NATO aircraft to detour, meaning that Austria actively "obstructed" the operation. At the same time, Chancellor Viktor Klima, within the EU framework, supported the view that the military action had been "necessary and justified" (Luif, 2017). Vienna then sought to participate in stabilisation missions in the Balkans, Alba (1997), KFOR (since 1999), SFOR/EU-FOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and EUFOR Concordia in Macedonia (2003), believing that stopping the violence was in the regional interest. The majority of citizens supported these missions, and the Constitutional Court upheld the legal amendments allowing the deployment of troops abroad (Gressel, 2021).

³ Article 23j B-VG is a foreign and security policy clause that empowers Austria to participate in the EU's CFSP/CSDP.

⁴ The *Optionenbericht* was a planned report by the Austrian Federal Government on all further options in the field of security policy. The document was never adopted.

At the Cologne Summit (June 1999), despite the reservations of neutral member states, the EU appointed NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana as its first High Representative for the CFSP, signalling its ambition to further strengthen the common security policy. Austria's ban on NATO transit during the Kosovo crisis marked the culmination of a series of refusals in 1998-1999: in September 1998, Vienna denied France permission to transport tanks along the Danube, and in March 1999 blocked the passage of Czech, Hungarian, and Polish troops en route to the "Adventure Exchange 99" exercise in northern Italy, a move approved by the Social Democratic Interior Minister but criticised by ÖVP ministers (Luif, 2017).

After the formation of the government in February 2000, the SPÖ and ÖVP reached only a minimal agreement: Austria would remain neutral until the EU's CFSP became effective; the SPÖ would then reconsider, and the ÖVP would abandon neutrality only if the EU established a new security system. Due to the failure of the joint *Optionenbericht* in 1998 to produce a common position on NATO membership, expectations for a unified stance had significantly declined. Austria therefore focused on a "Petersberg + PfP" combination: it participated in Implementation Force (IFOR) and Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and by 1999 had over 1,000 troops deployed in 13 peacekeeping operations; since 1960, a total of 40,000 soldiers had taken part in more than 30 missions. Although it maintains neutrality, Austria is not a "free rider": in the absence of a major threat, it does not need collective guarantees, yet through PfP, EAPC, and observer status in the WEU it can participate in crisis management and peacekeeping activities. Its International Peace Support Command trains civilian and military personnel for such operations (Luif, 2016).

The 2001 Doctrine described Austria as "non-aligned," signalling political readiness to distance itself from neutrality, although neutrality remained constitutionally enshrined and was "rediscovered" in 2003 when Austria banned overflights of coalition aircraft bound for Iraq. During the negotiations on the European Constitution, Vienna supported the "Irish clause," and in 2003 Chancellor Schüssel proposed the formula "solidarity within Europe, neutrality in wars outside Europe", thereby declaring collective European defence compatible with neutrality. This was confirmed by the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in 2008 and the 2004 defence reform, which transformed the Armed Forces into expeditionary troops capable of performing the full range of Petersberg tasks, rendering neutrality only a marginal principle of security policy (Rickli, 2016).

Only the security obligations under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty are incompatible with Austria's Neutrality Act. The concept of neutrality is suffi-

ciently flexible to allow Austria's participation in the "Petersberg" tasks or the PfP without formal membership in NATO or the WEU (Gaertner & Hoell, n.d.).

Luif (2016) points out that Austria is not permitted to join a defensive military alliance, one containing a collective defence clause, such as Article 42(7) of the Lisbon Treaty⁵ or Article 5 of NATO, nor to consent to the establishment of foreign military installations on its territory.

In the same context, it is also important to mention Article 222 of the TFEU⁶, which likewise contains a solidarity clause but has no clear implications for defence, unlike Article 42(7) of the Lisbon Treaty (Duić, 2018).

But does the EU constitute a military alliance? Hussain (1979) defines a military alliance as an agreement between two or more states with the purpose of mutual defence in the event of an attack on a member state, a joint attack on third states, or both of these objectives. Müller (2023) argues that the EU meets the key criteria of a military alliance. Specifically, there is an explicit agreement among the Member States on mutual assistance in the event of armed aggression, and the Union has established military structures, including the European Union Military Staff (EUMS), the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), and battle groups that, by 2025, are expected to become operational forces with at least 5,000 troops. However, the EU does not possess centralised and permanent military headquarters, and most Member States rely primarily on NATO for their collective defence. The EU therefore functions more as a defence union with elements of a military alliance than as a classical military alliance.

⁵ The Lisbon Treaty introduces the solidarity clause in Article 42(7) of the Treaty: "If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States". Commitments and cooperation in this area shall be consistent with commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which, for those States which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence and the forum for its implementation (European Union, 2012).

⁶ "The Union and its Member States shall act jointly in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is the object of a terrorist attack or the victim of a natural or man-made disaster. The Union shall mobilise all the instruments at its disposal, including the military resources made available by the Member States." This provision refers only to the Member States, but it is clear that such situations also represent a threat to the Union as a whole. This is further confirmed not only by the introductory clause stating that "the Union and its Member States shall act jointly in a spirit of solidarity", but also by the fact that the Union plays a central role in such efforts when the affected Member States demonstrate that they are unable to manage the situation on their own (Hilpold, 2015).

Furthermore, the Irish clause ensures that neutral states can preserve the specific provisions of their security policies, distinguishing the EU from traditional military alliances. This normative-legal framework is also confirmed by Article 42(2) of the Treaty on European Union, which states that “the common security and defence policy shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defence policy. This will lead to a common defence, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides.” This means that, without amending the Treaties, a single unanimous decision of the European Council could establish a common defence, that is, a defence union, but only under the condition of respecting the “constitutional requirements” of the Member States.

This implies that Austria, before such a decision, would have to abolish its constitutional neutrality. The so-called “Irish clause” in Article 42(7) TEU allows exemptions, as it “shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States”. Moreover, the same article acknowledges that NATO “for those States which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence”. Müller therefore argues that the EU represents a defence union, an *ad hoc* military alliance, or a military pact weakened by the Irish clause, “without a central and permanent operational headquarters”, “whose military institutionalisation is still evolving”, and overshadowed by NATO, which most Member States regard as “the foundation of their collective defence”. Given that most Member States consider their security and defence guaranteed within NATO, and that the creation of a European army remains difficult to imagine in the near future, the EU does not constitute a military alliance in the strict sense. Nevertheless, it is emphasised that with the gradual development of a common defence union, the provisions on neutrality and non-participation in military alliances are being increasingly called into question (Müller, 2023).

It is important to note that the Lisbon Treaty threatens neutrality to a much greater extent than the Nice Treaty. While the Nice Treaty stated that the CSDP may lead to a common defence, the Lisbon Treaty explicitly declares that the common defence policy shall lead to common defence when the European Council so decides. At the same time, it is indisputable that common defence is incompatible with neutrality, regardless of how neutrality is interpreted (Poplawski, 2020). However, it should be emphasised that Article 42(7) of the TEU does not explicitly mention military means, which makes it acceptable even to EU Member States⁷ with neutral status. Nevertheless, the absence of any reference to military means does

⁷ The most prominent example is Denmark, which until 2022 opted out of the adoption and implementation of decisions with military and defence implications (Pedersen et al., 2023).

not imply that the article excludes military assistance, as that would contradict the very meaning of the solidarity clause. Furthermore, the duty of assistance under Article 42(7) TEU is defined by two relationships: the relationship with NATO and the “specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States” (Duić, 2018). In this context, the Treaty, which provides for an obligation of collective self-defence, does not take into account that two EU Member States (Austria and Malta) have an international legal status of permanent neutrality, meaning that their participation in fulfilling that obligation would place them in conflict with international law. However, since both states are members of the United Nations, whose Charter under Chapter VII contains a similar obligation, the practice of the European security and defence policy allows them a comparable position to that which they have within the UN, namely, an exemption from active participation in the implementation of the aforementioned obligation (Lapaš, 2009).

It should also be emphasised that the policy of military neutrality of EU Member States does not absolutely exempt those states from their legal obligation to provide assistance but allows them to choose means of assistance that are not incompatible with their status or domestic legal requirements (Duić, 2018).

In the case of the Lisbon Treaty, Austria invoked its specific safeguard clauses. First and foremost, these clauses include the possibility of abstaining from voting, in connection with the so-called second Irish clause, which ensures protection for the specific nature of the security and defence policy of the Member States. However, this clause is sometimes interpreted as allowing the complete exclusion of neutral states from the provisions relating to alliances. This is not only an overly far-reaching simplification but also inconsistent with the intentions of those countries, particularly Austria, which consistently advocated for the inclusion of such provisions. Undoubtedly, a more favourable interpretation for Austria is the concept of so-called asymmetric alliance obligations, which create rights for neutral states and obligations for other EU members. This interpretation appears closer to reality. Therefore, in specific cases, neutral states are expected to show “neutral” solidarity, but not “blind” solidarity. Such expectations can be formulated based on the opening words of Article 42(7), which refer to providing assistance “by all the means in their power”. Obligations arising from neutrality may, in this case, represent a limitation on freedom of action. The 2013 National Security Strategy advocates a comprehensive approach and European solidarity, but its implementation has been hampered by chronic underfunding: in 2009, the defence budget fell well below 1% of GDP, and by 2014, with an addition of only 0.5% of GDP, it was stated that the army was on the verge

of bankruptcy. The third ÖVP/FPÖ government then announced plans to restore neglected defence capabilities while simultaneously strengthening engagement in the CSDP and crisis management (Popławski, 2020).

An assessment by the interim government in 2018 concluded that the Austrian Armed Forces would require an additional €16 billion and a budget increase to at least €3.3 billion ($\approx 1\%$ of GDP) to cope with hybrid threats; participation in defence operations under Article 42(7) would require even greater investments. Austria chronically lacks key capabilities, for instance, aircraft to support ground forces – so extensive additional training would be necessary to achieve even minimal interoperability. In practice, only the Jagdkommando special forces are sufficiently trained and ready, but they would be overstretched in any scenario other than an isolated terrorist attack (Gressel, 2021).

The Austrian Armed Forces⁸ are currently participating in CSDP military operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mali⁹, Mozambique, and the Mediterranean (with staff stationed in Italy), as well as in a civilian mission in Georgia. From 2009 to 2024, Austria provided the Force Commander for the EUFOR Althea operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in the first half of 2022 it provided the Mission Commander for EUTM Mali. Austria primarily supports civilian missions in Kosovo, Georgia, Ukraine and Libya by deploying police officers (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, n.d.).

It is important to note that Vienna lost interest in high-intensity missions after several EU and NATO operations shifted away from the Balkans. The deployment of one company of special forces to EUFOR Chad in 2007–2008 marked the peak of Austria's contribution to robust EU missions. This deployment provoked harsh criticism from both the left and the right, such as: "How can the government dare expose soldiers to combat risk?" (Gressel, 2021). After it became publicly known that Austrian soldiers had fired upon and killed insurgents (in a legitimate act of self-defence), no Austrian defence minister ever again attempted to propose participation in a demanding military operation (Ibid.).

Austria is *de iure* neutral but has *de facto* integrated into the core mechanisms of the EU's common security policy. The Union recognises its neutrality but expects active engagement when common security is threatened. As Höller (2024)

⁸ Note: As of 13 October 2025, the official website of the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs had not been updated, and does not reflect subsequent changes in the status of individual CSDP missions.

⁹ Mission's mandate ended on 17 May 2024.

notes, constitutional neutrality and EU integration obligations coexist in Austria, with the latter legally overriding the old Constitutional Law on Neutrality. In cases of conflict, courts and authorities implement EU decisions, such as sanctions or missions, before the traditional interpretation of neutrality (Janik, 2022). As long as the EU does not wage war, this arrangement works; however, if the Union were to become directly involved in a conflict, Austria would have to choose between complete passivity and suspending neutrality. For this reason, legal experts argue that Austria's position regarding support in the event of activation of the EU defence clause should be defined in advance. A 2023 Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES) survey found that 86% of respondents believe it is necessary to clearly specify what kind of assistance Austria would provide to an attacked Member State, and 72% believe that the long-term tension between the EU's deepening defence solidarity and Austrian neutrality is unsustainable (Höller, 2024).

The Austrian Neutrality after the Russian Invasion on Ukraine

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Austrian authorities emphasised that the country's neutrality was not in question. Chancellor Karl Nehammer stated in early March 2022 that Austria “was, is, and will remain neutral”, declaring the debate closed (“Nehammer erklärt Neutralitätsdebatte für ‘beendet’”, 2022). SPÖ leader Pamela Rendi-Wagner also rejected joining NATO and called for strengthening national defence and European security cooperation (“Nehammer: Österreich bleibt neutral, Diskussion beendet”, 2022).

By adapting its neutrality to the new circumstances, Austria fully supported the EU's sanctions against the Russian Federation (as economic measures do not affect the “military” dimension of neutrality) but refused to send weapons to Ukraine. Instead of vetoing the European funding of armaments, it applied the principle of “constructive abstention”: when the decision was made to use EPF funds for the purchase of weapons, Austria formally abstained, negotiating that its contribution be allocated to humanitarian aid, logistics, demining and reconstruction. This preserved the principle that Austria does not directly finance war while not obstructing Member States willing to supply arms. Analysts therefore argue that neutrality functions more as a political stance than a legal barrier; had the EU Council's decision been unanimous, Vienna would have been obliged to implement it, but the domestic message was clear, “our

money is not going for rifles”. A similar strategy was applied by Ireland. Austria provided Ukraine with non-lethal aid (helmets, body armour, fuel) and accepted tens of thousands of refugees, stressing, in the words of President Alexander Van der Bellen, that “being neutral does not mean being unsolidary”. Alongside EU humanitarian initiatives, Vienna also allowed the transit of weapons through its territory, interpreting joint European actions aimed at preventing humanitarian catastrophes as compatible with neutrality. This was enabled by an amendment to the War Material Act of 2002, introduced after the 1999 Kosovo experience, which permits exceptional transit for international operations aimed at preventing serious human rights violations. In this way, Austria seeks to ensure that its neutrality does not become an obstacle to common European action in the face of clear aggression (Janik, 2022).

Austria supports sanctions and logistical and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine but rejects direct military engagement: it did not block the establishment of the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM) at the end of 2022 but decided not to send instructors or engineering units, since, in the government’s view, even demining could draw a neutral state into the conflict (Kirez, 2023).

The war in Ukraine prompted Vienna to accelerate defence reforms: the defence budget is to rise to 1.5% of GDP by 2027, with the armed forces undergoing modernisation (e.g., transport aircraft, air defence systems) and stronger participation in European projects (Gressani, 2024). Austria joined Germany’s “European Sky Shield”¹⁰ initiative along with about ten other countries; critics see this as a deviation from neutrality, while the government argues that cooperation with NATO does not violate neutrality, as each launcher battery remains under national command. The same logic applies to other PESCO projects and the future EU Rapid Deployment Capacity: Vienna participates in development phases and exercises but decides independently on the use of its troops. Austria is among the nine countries that have contributed troops for the first joint exercises, and legal experts warn that any actual combat deployment of the EU force could cross the line of neutrality; as long as activities are limited to exercises and readiness, neutrality is formally not breached (Höller, 2024).

¹⁰ The European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI) is a NATO-coordinated initiative aimed at building a layered, ground-based European air and missile defence system through joint procurement, standardisation, and networking of national systems (ranging from short to very long range), with the goal of strengthening interoperability, accelerating capability development and reducing costs.

Conclusion

It can be stated that Austria's permanent neutrality, from its accession to the European Union in 1995 to the present security crises, has gradually transformed from a firm, almost dogmatic institution of international law into a legal status that is ultimately conditioned by the obligations of Union law in the area of the CFSP/CSDP and by the constitutional basis of Article 23j of the BVG. This has created a hybrid, functional model of neutrality. On the one hand, Austria *de jure* still maintains the legal "shield" of 1955, with its three classical prohibitions: participation in wars, joining military alliances and the stationing of foreign troops. On the other hand, the state *de facto* accepts the binding effects of Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union and Article 222 of the TFEU, participating in solidarity mechanisms through constructive abstention.

The first step in this transformation was the act of joining the Union itself, which required constitutional adjustments, now consolidated in Article 23j B-VG to enable Austria's participation in the CSDP. The 1997 Amsterdam Treaty and, even more so, the 2009 Lisbon Treaty expanded this binding framework. Although the so-called *Irish clause* nominally protected neutral states, the new obligation to provide assistance "by all the means in their power" relativized the traditional interpretation of neutrality. Vienna responded with the doctrine of "solidarity within Europe, neutrality in wars outside Europe", shifting the focus from passive non-participation to the active fulfilment of European obligations through non-military instruments.

The reconciliation of these two normative layers developed gradually. Constructive abstention, for instance, in the 2022 decision on financing arms for Ukraine, allows Austria not to block majority decisions while redirecting its own contribution toward humanitarian and other purposes. A similar approach is applied in PESCO, the EUMAM mission and the development of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity. Material constraints, however, long limited the scope of military engagement: the defence budget remained below 1% of GDP until the most recent wave of reforms triggered by the 2022 Russian invasion, which aims to raise it to 1.5% by 2027 (subject to annual budget approvals).

The war in Ukraine demonstrated the operational nature of neutrality. Austria unreservedly implements EU sanctions, since economic measures do not undermine its neutral status, permits the transit of weapons as a contribution to collective security, but refuses to send instructors or combat units, focusing instead on logistics and humanitarian aid. Neutrality, therefore, has not yielded to solidarity; rather, the imperative of solidarity defines its limited yet still

relevant modes of action. It is no coincidence that 86% of experts in the AIES survey call for Austria to clarify in advance what forms of assistance it could provide in the event of activation of Article 42(7).

The answer to the central research questions are thus as follows: Austrian neutrality has evolved from a unilateral, permanent and absolute obligation into a relative status conditioned by Union law. Constitutional reforms, legal adjustments regarding the transit of arms and Austria's participation in the CFSP, PfP, PESCO and other mechanisms demonstrate that neutrality no longer prevents humanitarian, peacekeeping and crisis-management operations, but only excludes automatic collective defence. Reconciliation is achieved through constructive abstention, selective financing, asymmetric alliance obligations and the teleological interpretation of the Constitutional Law in accordance with the principles of *lex posterior* and *lex specialis*, while political communication persistently promotes the formula "neutral but in solidarity", thereby preserving domestic legitimacy.

If the European Union's defence integration deepens, Austria's neutrality will require targeted constitutional and statutory clarification to clearly define the mechanisms of solidarity, or an explicit constitutional decision, potentially through a referendum, should the Union take a decisive step towards a common defence, and if such a form of common defence were to require constitutional amendment. Such forward-looking planning is a prerequisite for preserving a neutrality that remains credible domestically, and reliable within the Union.

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Austrijska trajna neutralnost u pravnom okviru EU: normativno-pravna analiza od pristupanja 1995. do suvremenih sigurnosnih kriza

SAŽETAK

Rad istražuje kako je članstvo Austrije u EU od 1995. do 2025. godine preoblikovalo ustavnopravni institut trajne neutralnosti. Primjenom normativno-pravnog pristupa uspoređuju se ključne odredbe austrijskog ustava s primarnim i sekundarnim pravom EU, osobito člankom 42(7) UFEU-a i člankom 222. UFEU-a, te praksom ZSOP-a. Nalazi pokazuju da je neutralnost zadržala svoje formalne zabrane pristupanja vojnim savezima, stacioniranja stranih trupa i sudjelovanja u borbenim operacijama, ali se funkcionalno prilagodila suvremenim sigurnosnim izazovima kroz instrumente „konstruktivnog suzdržavanja“, logističke i humanitarne doprinose te sudjelovanje u PESCO-u i mirovnim misijama UN-a i EU-a. Lisabonski ugovor te sigurnosne krize na Kosovu (1999.) i u Ukrajini (od 2022.) dodatno su učvrstile praksu tumačenja neutralnosti u skladu s pravom EU-a, pri čemu Austrija izbjegava automatske obrambene obveze, ali prihvaća političku solidarnost sa žrtvom agresije. Rad zaključuje da se austrijska neutralnost razvila u dinamičan, pravom EU-a uvjetovan koncept čija učinkovitost ovisi o fleksibilnom tumačenju ustavnog zakona i stalnom redefiniranju nacionalnih sigurnosnih interesa.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: Austrija, neutralnost, Europska unija, obrana, zakon

The Trans-Caspian Pipeline: Turkmenistan's Path to EU Energy Security and Strategic Diversification

Elmir Badalov Murtaza¹ ID

ABSTRACT

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has intensified the European Union's (EU) need to diversify its energy sources, positioning Turkmenistan as a potential key supplier. With the world's fourth-largest natural gas reserves, Turkmenistan could play a pivotal role in global energy markets. However, governance challenges, an overreliance on China for gas exports, and infrastructural deficiencies hinder this potential. This study explores the strategic importance of the Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP), which could connect Turkmenistan's reserves to the EU's Southern Gas Corridor, enhancing Europe's energy security. The methodology involves a qualitative analysis of secondary data, including policy documents, academic literature, and geopolitical reports, to evaluate the challenges and opportunities associated with the TCP. The research highlights significant internal and external challenges, including geopolitical resistance from Russia and Iran, and economic and technical barriers to the pipeline's implementation. Despite these obstacles, regional collaborations, such as the 2021 Azerbaijan-Turkmenistan Memorandum of Understanding, indicate pathways forward. The analysis concludes that sustained investments, strong political

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will, and strategic international partnerships are essential for unlocking Turkmenistan's energy potential and addressing the EU's energy diversification goals.

KEYWORDS: *Turkmenistan, Energy Security, Trans-Caspian Pipeline, Geopolitics, EU*

Introduction

The global energy landscape has undergone profound transformations over the past decade, shaped by shifting geopolitical alignments, fluctuating market dynamics, and an accelerating global transition toward sustainability. Among these developments, the European Union's (EU) efforts to reduce its dependence on Russian natural gas have emerged as one of the most consequential geopolitical and economic shifts in recent years. The Russia–Ukraine conflict has starkly exposed Europe's vulnerability to energy disruptions, compelling the EU to diversify its energy imports and secure alternative suppliers capable of ensuring both stability and strategic autonomy (European Commission, 2023).

Turkmenistan, despite its relative isolation, occupies a unique position in this evolving context. With the world's fourth-largest natural gas reserves estimated between 14 and 19 trillion cubic meters (BP, 2023), and the Galkynysh field as one of its crown jewels, the country holds substantial potential to become a vital player in addressing global and European energy needs. Yet this potential remains largely unrealized due to enduring governance challenges, infrastructural deficiencies, and an economic model heavily dependent on a single buyer – China, which currently absorbs over 80% of Turkmenistan's gas exports (ADB, 2022). Consequently, the diversification of export markets has become both an economic necessity and a geopolitical imperative for Ashgabat (Pomfret, 2021).

Since independence in 1991, Turkmenistan's political and economic trajectory has been defined by centralized control, limited transparency, and the persistence of rentier-state dynamics (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987; Bohr, 2016). While this system has allowed the government to retain tight control over hydrocarbon revenues, it has simultaneously discouraged foreign investment and slowed the modernization of the energy sector. Nonetheless, the EU's pursuit of new energy partners, particularly within the Caspian region, has rekindled

interest in Turkmenistan as a potential contributor to Europe's diversification strategy. The Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP), a proposed subsea connection between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, represents the most tangible opportunity for Turkmen gas to reach European markets through the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) (European Commission, 2023; World Bank, 2023).

This article argues that the TCP constitutes both a strategic opportunity and a geopolitical test for Turkmenistan and the EU. It advances the hypothesis that while the TCP could significantly enhance the EU's energy security and Turkmenistan's economic autonomy, its realization depends on overcoming persistent structural, political, and technical constraints. The study adopts a qualitative approach, analysing secondary data from academic, institutional, and policy sources to evaluate the internal and external factors shaping the feasibility of the TCP.

By situating Turkmenistan's energy policy within the broader framework of post-2022 European energy realignments, this paper contributes to the literature on energy geopolitics and diversification. It argues that the successful implementation of the TCP would not only serve as a milestone in EU–Central Asia relations but also redefine Turkmenistan's role from a peripheral energy supplier to a pivotal actor in Eurasian energy security.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in interpretive analysis of secondary data. It draws upon a diverse range of sources, including official EU and Turkmen government publications, policy documents, energy industry reports, and scholarly works from peer-reviewed journals and institutional studies. The selection of materials follows a purposive sampling approach, prioritizing sources that directly address the geopolitical, economic, and infrastructural dimensions of the TCP. Analytical emphasis is placed on the intersection of energy security and regional politics, examining how internal governance structures, external pressures, and regional cooperation shape Turkmenistan's ability to engage with the EU's diversification strategy. The qualitative design allows for a context-sensitive interpretation of policy developments, recognizing that the feasibility of the TCP is not merely technical or economic, but deeply embedded in the geopolitical realignments of the post-2022 energy landscape.

Turkmenistan's Political, Economic, and Energy Context

Turkmenistan, often compared to North Korea for its isolation and closed political environment, remains one of the most enigmatic countries in the world. Information about the nation is tightly controlled, with international access and media freedom severely restricted (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Turkmenistan's political and economic trajectory has been shaped by its leaders' centralized authority and reliance on hydrocarbon revenues (Karrar, 2020).

Saparmurat Niyazov, Turkmenistan's first president, ruled from independence until his death in 2006. A former First Secretary of the Turkmen Communist Party, Niyazov made minimal changes to the Soviet-era political structure, rebranding the Communist Party as the Democratic Party and retaining much of its leadership (Kimmage, 2006). His presidency was characterized by a tightly controlled political system, marked by fraudulent elections. Niyazov was declared president for life in 1999 by the *Halk Maslahaty* (People's Council), a legislative body he created to consolidate power (Horák, 2014). Niyazov employed authoritarian tactics, including Stalinist purges, to maintain control. Following an assassination attempt in 2002, he restructured the national security apparatus, transferring significant authority to the Presidential Guard (Kimmage, 2006). The personality cult surrounding Niyazov was a defining feature of his rule. This pervasive control extended to all aspects of life, fostering an environment of loyalty and fear (Horák, 2014).

Following Niyazov's death, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, his former personal dentist and deputy prime minister, assumed power. His ascension involved sidelining the constitutional successor, Ovazgeldy Ataev, through criminal charges (Horák, 2014). In 2007, Berdimuhamedow was elected president, securing 89% of the vote. Although initially seen as a reformer, Berdimuhamedow maintained many of Niyazov's policies (Karrar, 2020). He dismantled the *Halk Maslahaty*, transferring its powers to parliament, but deepened clan-based politics by favouring his own Ahal Teke clan (Kimmage, 2006). His leadership style, described by diplomats as deceptive and theatrical, entrenched centralized authority while creating potential instability due to the marginalization of other clans (Horák, 2014).

Berdimuhamedow has continued state control over media and public life, with no opposition parties allowed. Internet access remains limited, and social media platforms are banned (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Despite initiating

a de-Niyazovization process, Berdimuhamedow mirrored many of his predecessor's methods, blending state control with selective modernization efforts. In March 2022, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow transferred power to his son, Sardar Berdimuhamedow, through an orchestrated election (Karrar, 2020). This marked the establishment of Turkmenistan's first dynastic succession, solidifying the Berdimuhamedow family's grip on the country's political system (Horák, 2014).

Turkmenistan's economic structure aligns closely with the characteristics of a rentier state, a concept originally coined by Hussein Mahdavi and later expanded by Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani. A rentier state derives most of its revenue from external rents, primarily hydrocarbon exports, and is characterized by several key features (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987). In Turkmenistan, these include the dominance of oil and gas revenues, limited industrialization, a small workforce in the energy sector, and the concentration of resource wealth in the hands of the government, particularly the presidency (Pomfret, 2021).

The Turkmen economy is heavily reliant on natural gas exports, with oil playing a secondary role. The country's industrial base remains underdeveloped, making Turkmenistan one of the least industrialized nations in Central Asia (ADB, 2022). Employment in the hydrocarbon sector is limited to a small portion of the population, despite the sector's outsized role in generating national income (Pomfret, 2021). Crucially, the financial benefits from oil and gas exports are almost exclusively controlled by the government, with the president exercising significant authority over revenue allocation and management (ADB, 2022).

This dependency on hydrocarbon exports makes Turkmenistan vulnerable to external economic shocks. The lack of economic diversification exacerbates the country's reliance on a few key trading partners, limiting its geopolitical flexibility (Pomfret, 2021). Until 2009, Russia was Turkmenistan's largest energy customer. However, following a shift in trade dynamics, China has become Turkmenistan's dominant partner (BP, 2023). Hydrocarbon exports constitute 90% of total exports, 50% of government revenue, and 30% of GDP. Despite this wealth, the country remains economically fragile due to a lack of diversification and an overreliance on the Chinese market, which accounts for 44% of Turkmenistan's trade. Exports to China rose from \$6.6 billion in 2017 to \$8.8 billion in 2023, reflecting the country's deep economic dependency (ADB, 2022).

Corruption and an inhospitable business environment deter foreign investment, with companies frequently encountering difficulties repatriating prof-

its (Karrar, 2020). Turkmenistan's unwillingness to sign production-sharing agreements with Western firms further limits its economic potential (Pomfret, 2021). Declining hydrocarbon revenues between 2013 and 2016, coupled with inflation reaching 294% in 2017, have exacerbated economic hardships, including food shortages and the abolition of state subsidies for gas, electricity, and water (ADB, 2022).

Following independence, Turkmenistan's economic strategy centred on the extraction and export of energy resources, particularly natural gas. However, the country's landlocked geography, coupled with limited energy infrastructure, posed challenges for accessing international markets (Pomfret, 2021). The discovery of the Galkynysh field in 2006, the world's second-largest gas reserve with reserves of 4–14 trillion cubic meters, significantly boosted Turkmenistan's resource base (BP, 2018). The government outlined ambitious plans to increase gas production to 250 billion cubic meters (bcm) annually by 2030 under its oil and gas development program (ADB, 2022).

Initially reliant on Soviet-era pipelines, Turkmenistan's export routes were limited. The collapse of agreements with Russia in the 1990s left Turkmenistan dependent on exports through the Central Asia Center (CAC) pipeline to Ukraine (Horák, 2014). Payment difficulties in Ukraine and regional competition from neighbouring gas-rich countries such as Russia and Kazakhstan further complicated Turkmenistan's energy strategy (Karrar, 2020). The 2009 CAC pipeline explosion marked a turning point, pushing Turkmenistan to pivot towards China. The construction of the Central Asia-China Pipeline (CACP) allowed Turkmenistan to diversify its exports, although this shift resulted in heavy reliance on a single buyer. Exports to China accounted for over 80% of Turkmen gas sales, underscoring the country's urgent need for diversification (BP, 2023).

Domestically, outdated infrastructure and limited technological capacity remain significant obstacles. Despite Berdimuhamedow's open-door foreign policy, which aimed to diversify exports, the absence of LNG facilities and strained relationships with some neighbours constrained progress (Pomfret, 2021). However, improvements in regional diplomacy, particularly with Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, offered avenues for collaboration (ADB, 2022).

Under Saparmurat Niyazov's leadership, Turkmenistan's gas policies were characterized by rigid state control. Niyazov personally approved all energy-related agreements, ensuring that decisions aligned with his administration's political objectives (Horák, 2014). His successor, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow,

has maintained this approach, with the presidency retaining ultimate authority over critical gas sector decisions (Kimmage, 2006). Although several state bodies nominally manage Turkmenistan's energy sector, decision-making is concentrated in the hands of the president.

The management of the gas sector also reflects the influence of clan-based politics. During Niyazov's era, the Yomud clan from the Balkan region dominated the industry due to its proximity to the Gubkin State University of Oil and Gas, which trained much of the sector's workforce. However, Berdimuhamedow gradually replaced the Yomud clan with members of the Ahal Teke clan, consolidating his political power. The Ahal Teke clan now oversees most aspects of the gas industry, from planning to execution (Horák, 2014).

For years, subsidies such as free gas, electricity, and water formed part of a social contract between the government and citizens, ensuring political compliance in exchange for economic benefits (Karrar, 2020). However, the state's overreliance on hydrocarbons leaves it vulnerable to market fluctuations and external pressures. Turkmenistan's gas strategy prioritizes maximizing export revenues by diversifying its customer base. Initially focused on post-Soviet states, particularly Russia and Ukraine, Turkmenistan has shifted toward new markets, with China now serving as its primary customer (BP, 2023). While this strategy has broadened its export horizons, it also reflects a pragmatic approach to depoliticizing energy deals, as Turkmenistan seeks to avoid entangling its gas trade in international disputes (Pomfret, 2021).

Turkmenistan possesses some of the largest natural gas reserves in the world. According to BP's 2018 Statistical Review of World Energy, the country holds an estimated 14–19.5 trillion cubic meters (tcm) of gas reserves, with the Galkynysh field alone accounting for 4–14 tcm (BP, 2018). The country also boasts over 20,000 kilometres of pipelines, with most of its reserves located in the eastern regions, including the Amu Darya and Murgab basins. Offshore reserves in the Caspian Sea, such as the Magtymguly deposit, further enhance Turkmenistan's energy potential (ADB, 2022).

Gas production in Turkmenistan has fluctuated significantly over the years. During the Soviet era, the country produced as much as 81.9 billion cubic meters (bcm) annually. However, production declined sharply in the 1990s due to reduced exports and economic instability, reaching a low of 11 bcm in 1998 (Pomfret, 2021). By 2008, production had rebounded to 50 bcm, driven by rising exports. In 2017, Turkmenistan produced 62 bcm, with plans to increase

Table 1: Turkmenistan's Gas Pipelines

Pipeline Name	Countries Connected	Operational Capacity
Central Asia-Central Pipeline (CAC)	Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Russia	45 bcm annually
Korpedzhe-Kurt Koi Pipeline (KKKP)	Turkmenistan, Iran	8 bcm annually
Dauletabad-Khangiran Pipeline	Turkmenistan, Iran	12 bcm annually
Central Asia-China Pipeline (CACP)	Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, China	55 bcm annually (existing lines); proposed additional 30 bcm through Line D
East-West Pipeline (EWP)	Domestic (Eastern gas fields to Caspian Sea within Turkmenistan)	30 bcm annually
TAPI Pipeline	Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India	33 bcm annually

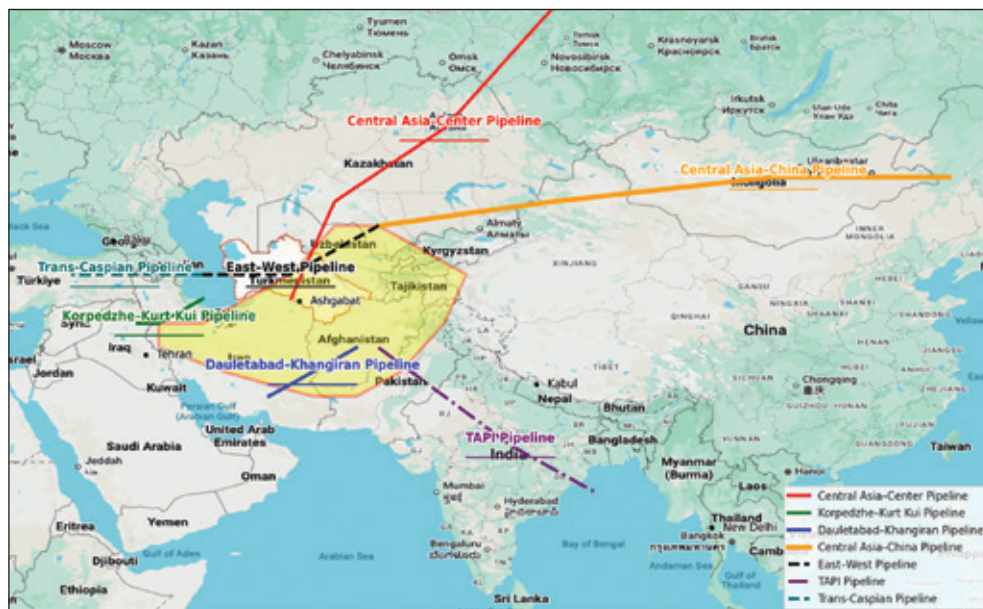
Source: author

output to 187.7 bcm by 2020. However, Turkmenistan increased its gas production only by 6.9% and exports by 12.6% in 2023, achieving a total production of 80.6 bcm (BP, 2023). The primary markets for Turkmen gas included China, Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan (ADB, 2022).

Turkmenistan's energy policies are shaped by strict state control and regulations that limit foreign involvement. By law, international companies must sell gas to Turkmengaz, the state-owned entity, at fixed prices that are often below global market rates (Pomfret, 2021). Foreign companies are required to process gas within Turkmenistan, and production-sharing agreements (PSAs) are rarely issued. Instead, the government prefers joint activity agreements, which allow limited collaboration while maintaining state control (Horák, 2014).

To date, only two foreign companies have received PSAs for onshore fields. British Burren Energy, later acquired by Italy's ENI, and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) were granted contracts to develop gas fields in the Burun area of the Nebit Dag region and Bagtyyarlyk, respectively. CNPC's involvement reflects Turkmenistan's growing reliance on Chinese investments and expertise (BP, 2023).

Figure 1: Turkmenistan's Gas Pipelines and Export Routes



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan has historically avoided building pipelines for its customers, adhering to a “selling gas at borders” policy. This approach shifts the responsibility of transportation and infrastructure development to buyers, reducing the state’s financial burden but limiting its influence over downstream markets (ADB, 2022).

In the early years of independence, Turkmenistan relied on third-party intermediaries like ITERA to manage gas exports to post-Soviet countries. Founded in 1992 by Igor Makarov, an ethnic Russian from Turkmenistan, ITERA facilitated barter and cash transactions during a period of economic instability in the region. In 2015, the company was rebranded as ARETI International Group, which continues to play a prominent role in Turkmenistan’s gas industry. Reports suggest that ARETI’s CEO maintains close ties with Berdimuhamedow, reflecting the intertwining of business and political interests in the sector (Horák, 2014).

Turkmenistan’s landlocked geography necessitates the use of pipelines for exporting its vast natural gas reserves. The country has developed an extensive pipeline infrastructure to connect its resources to international markets. Currently, Turkmenistan operates four major pipelines and is involved in discussions for constructing additional routes (Pomfret, 2021; ADB, 2022).

1. Central Asia-Central Pipeline (CAC)

The Central Asia-Central Pipeline (CAC) is one of the oldest and most significant gas export routes for Turkmenistan. Built by the Soviet Union, construction began in 1967 and was completed in the 1980s. The pipeline connects Turkmenistan's gas fields to Russia's Siberian pipeline network and spans 5,000 kilometres (Horák, 2014; Kimmage, 2006).

The CAC pipeline comprises five branches and serves as an export route for both Turkmen and Uzbek gas. It is divided into two main sections: the first runs from the Caspian Sea region to Russia, while the second links Turkmenistan to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and eventually Russia. The pipeline's maximum capacity is 90 billion cubic meters (bcm) annually, but due to aging infrastructure, its operational capacity is limited to 45 bcm (Karrar, 2020).

In 2003, Gazprom and Turkmenistan signed a 25-year agreement under which Gazprom would purchase up to 80 bcm of Turkmen gas annually. Gazprom also committed \$1 billion to maintain the pipeline (BP, 2023). Turkmenistan gradually negotiated higher prices for its gas, from \$44 per 1,000 cubic meters in the early 2000s to European rates of \$240–350 per 1,000 cubic meters by 2009. However, an explosion on April 9, 2009 halted exports, with some experts attributing the incident to Russia's reluctance to pay high prices amid declining European demand (Energy Institute, 2023; Pomfret, 2021).

The 2009 explosion and subsequent termination of gas contracts with Russia in 2016 severely impacted Turkmenistan's economy, highlighting the vulnerabilities of over-reliance on a single export route. By 2016, Turkmenistan faced significant financial challenges, including a 19% currency devaluation. The Energy Institute's statistical reference book reports that Turkmenistan exported 4.7 billion cubic meters of gas to Russia in both 2022 and 2023 through CAC (Energy Institute, 2023).

2. Korpedzhe-Kurt Koi Pipeline (KKKP) and Dauletabad-Khangiran Pipeline

The Korpedzhe-Kurt Koi Pipeline (KKKP) marked Turkmenistan's first significant attempt to bypass Russian-controlled routes. Built in 1995 and operational by 1997, the pipeline connects Turkmenistan's Korpedzhe field to Iran's northern regions, addressing Iran's domestic supply gap between its

southern reserves and northern population centres. The pipeline has an annual capacity of 8 bcm, and its construction was 80% financed by Iran (Kimmage, 2006; ADB, 2022).

The Dauletabad-Khangiran Pipeline, completed in 2010, supplements the KKKP by connecting the Dauletabad field in Turkmenistan to Iran's Khangiran gas refinery. This pipeline has a maximum capacity of 12 bcm (Pomfret, 2021; BP, 2023).

Gas exports to Iran have been fraught with challenges. In 2007, Turkmenistan demanded price increases, which led to a temporary halt in exports. While deliveries resumed in 2009 after renegotiations, disputes over unpaid debts and pricing escalated in 2017. Turkmenistan claimed Iran owed \$1.8 billion, while Iran filed a complaint with international arbitration, citing high prices and quality issues. These disputes effectively ended Turkmen gas exports to Iran (Horák, 2014; Karrar, 2020).

3. Central Asia-China Pipeline (CACP)

The Central Asia-China Pipeline (CACP) is Turkmenistan's most significant recent pipeline project. Built by the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) at an investment of over \$14 billion, the pipeline became operational in 2009. Described by president Berdimuhamedow as the "pipeline of the century", the CACP connects Turkmenistan's eastern gas fields to China's West-East gas pipeline system (BP, 2023; Energy Institute, 2023).

The CACP includes three operational lines (A, B, and C) with a combined capacity of 55 bcm per year, sourced primarily from Turkmenistan. A proposed fourth line (D) would pass through Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan to increase capacity by an additional 30 bcm, though construction has been delayed (ADB, 2022).

Turkmenistan exported over 30 bcm of gas to China in 2023, but the total revenue declined to \$9.6 billion compared to \$10.25 billion the previous year. CNPC plays a vital role in Turkmenistan's gas sector, holding a production-sharing agreement for the Bagtyyarlyk field, which contains 1.3 tcm of reserves (BP, 2023; Kimmage, 2006).

Turkmenistan faces mounting competition from Russia in the Chinese gas market. Over 76% of Turkmenistan's gas exports are directed to China, primarily delivered through the Central Asia-China pipeline, an infrastructure project financed jointly by Turkmenistan and China that also transports gas from Ka-

zakhstan and Uzbekistan. Following the Russia-Ukraine war, the damage to the Nord Stream pipelines and the EU's strategic plan to phase out Russian gas imports by 2027 have compelled Russia to seek dominance in alternative markets, particularly China (Energy Institute, 2023; Pomfret, 2021).

4. East-West Pipeline (EWP)

The East-West Pipeline (EWP) is a strategic domestic project designed to connect Turkmenistan's eastern gas fields to the Caspian Sea. Construction began in 2010 and was completed in 2015, with the Turkmen government investing \$2 billion. The pipeline has a capacity of 30 bcm and serves as a precursor to the proposed Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP), which aims to transport Turkmen gas to European markets via Azerbaijan (ADB, 2022; BP, 2023).

Although the EWP currently lacks an export component, its construction aligns with Turkmenistan's goal of diversifying gas exports (Pomfret, 2021; Horák, 2014).

5. Projected Pipeline: TAPI - Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Pipeline

The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline is an ambitious project aimed at transporting Turkmen gas to South Asia, connecting Turkmenistan's Dauletabad field with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. Proposed in the early 1990s, the pipeline represents a significant step in diversifying Turkmenistan's export markets while promoting regional energy cooperation (ADB, 2022; Energy Institute, 2023).

Initially proposed by Bridas, an Argentine energy firm, in 1993, the TAPI project faced early challenges, including disagreements with the Turkmen government. These issues culminated in the termination of Bridas' contracts and property confiscation. Subsequently, Turkmenistan engaged the American energy company Unocal in 1995. However, Unocal withdrew in 1998 due to concerns over instability in Afghanistan following U.S. military strikes against Al-Qaeda (Kimmage, 2006; BP, 2023).

The pipeline is designed to transport 33 bcm of gas annually: 5 bcm for Afghanistan and 14 bcm each for Pakistan and India. The 1,700 km pipeline is projected to provide Afghanistan with \$500 million in annual transit fees, contributing to its economic stability. The estimated cost is \$7.6 billion (Energy Institute, 2023).

However, the pipeline's route through Afghanistan poses significant security challenges due to ongoing political instability and the presence of insurgent groups. Ensuring the safety of the pipeline in these regions remains a critical concern. Tensions between India and Pakistan over Kashmir further complicate the project's realization. Additionally, Turkmenistan's limited experience in building international pipelines raises concerns about its ability to lead such a complex venture (Pomfret, 2021; Karrar, 2020).

Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP)

The Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP) is central to Turkmenistan's aspirations to connect its vast gas reserves to European markets. Envisioned as a 300 km subsea pipeline linking Turkmenistan's Turkmenbashi port to Baku, Azerbaijan, the TCP would integrate Turkmen gas into the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC), ultimately reaching Europe via Turkey (Pirani, 2018; European Commission, 2021).

Introduced by the United States in 1996, the TCP was initially estimated to cost \$3 billion, with a proposed capacity of 30 bcm – 14 bcm for Europe and 16 bcm for Turkey. Supported by U.S. financing, American companies Enron and Unocal completed a feasibility study in 1999, a consortium including General Electric and Bechtel was formed. However, disputes over the Kapaz/Sardar oil field in the Caspian Sea between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan halted progress. The discovery of Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz gas field further shifted investor interest away from the TCP (Roberts, 2003; Cohen, 2019).

Efforts to revive the project intensified in the 2000s. The EU's introduction of the Nabucco pipeline project in 2002 renewed interest in Turkmen gas as a supply source. In 2007, Berdimuhamedow visited Brussels to discuss potential cooperation, leading to a pledge from Turkmenistan to supply 10 bcm of gas to Europe. However, Ashgabat's reluctance to formalize agreements and the unresolved Kapaz/Sardar dispute with Azerbaijan impeded progress (European Commission, 2015; BP, 2023).

The EU granted the European Commission a mandate to negotiate the TCP in 2011, recognizing it as a Project of Common Interest (PCI). This designation enabled EU budgetary support for the project. The TCP is envisioned as a critical extension of the SGC, connecting Turkmen gas to the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline, the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP), and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP). TANAP and TAP have capacities of 23 bcm and 10 bcm, respective-

ly, with planned expansions to accommodate additional volumes (Pirani, 2018; European Commission, 2021).

The TCP is crucial for Europe's energy diversification strategy, particularly following the Russia-Ukraine conflict. However, the high cost of Turkmen gas – estimated at \$400 per 1,000 cubic meters due to production and transit expenses – poses challenges. Alternatives, such as LNG or CNG, have been considered but are deemed less viable due to higher costs (Horák, 2014; Roberts, 2020).

The TCP has faced staunch opposition from Russia and Iran, which view it as a threat to their energy dominance. Historically, the unresolved legal status of the Caspian Sea hindered progress. The 2018 Caspian Sea Legal Convention, clarifying pipeline construction rights, marked a turning point, enabling bilateral agreements between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. Despite these developments, Turkmenistan's approach remains cautious. Ashgabat has not committed to funding the TCP, instead adopting a “wait-and-see” strategy. Turkmenistan expects external parties to finance and construct the pipeline before committing to gas exports. Additionally, scepticism about the EU's coherence and commitment to the project persists in Ashgabat (Pomfret, 2021; Energy Institute, 2023).

The construction of the East-West Pipeline (EWP) within Turkmenistan has bolstered hopes for the TCP's realization. The EWP connects eastern gas fields to the Caspian Sea, positioning Turkmenistan for eventual integration into the SGC. Azerbaijan's expansion of the South Caucasus Pipeline to 26 bcm further supports this potential (Kimmage, 2006; BP, 2023).

Joint working groups involving Azerbaijan, Turkey and Turkmenistan signal renewed interest in the TCP. However, significant political will and financial commitment from both Turkmenistan and the EU are required to overcome logistical and geopolitical challenges (Cohen, 2019; Pirani, 2018).

Internal Challenges

- a) One of the most critical internal challenges is Turkmenistan's reputation for failing to respect contractual obligations under international law. Numerous cases have been documented where Turkmenistan unilaterally cancelled contracts with foreign companies, seized their assets, or refused to pay for services rendered. In some instances, top managers of international firms operating in Turkmenistan faced imprisonment or

met suspicious ends. This behaviour has led to a lack of trust among international investors, further exacerbated by a judicial system that prioritizes political directives over adherence to national and international laws (Horák, 2014; Pomfret, 2021).

- b) Turkmenistan's official communications also suffer from inconsistency and unreliability, creating significant barriers to collaboration. Contradictory statements from government officials, as seen in the case of the TAPI pipeline, make it difficult to verify information. Limited access for international journalists further compounds this issue, restricting independent reporting and analysis. This lack of transparency undermines confidence in the country's ability to deliver on large-scale projects like the TCP (Roberts, 2003; Cohen, 2019).
- c) A lack of sufficient investment in Turkmenistan's gas industry is another major obstacle. Despite possessing vast gas reserves, Turkmenistan's gas infrastructure remains underdeveloped, requiring substantial financial and technological investments. The absence of a favourable business climate and high levels of corruption deter foreign companies from investing in the sector, leaving Turkmenistan without the resources needed to exploit its potential (European Commission, 2015; Kimmage, 2006).
- d) The country also suffers from a shortage of skilled labour due to the legacy of former President Saparmurat Niyazov's restrictive educational policies, which led to the closure of universities and faculties. This brain drain has left Turkmenistan without the expertise necessary to operate and manage its gas fields effectively. To address this gap, Turkmenistan must rely on foreign specialists, increasing project costs and complicating collaboration with international partners (Pirani, 2018; Roberts, 2020).
- e) Technical barriers further exacerbate the challenges. Many of Turkmenistan's onshore gas fields contain significant amounts of hydrogen sulphide and carbon dioxide, making extraction both technically difficult and prohibitively expensive. Without advanced technology, these fields cannot be exploited efficiently, limiting Turkmenistan's ability to meet its gas export potential (BP, 2023; Pomfret, 2021).
- f) Turkmenistan's political system remains fragile due to intense competition among clans vying for dominance in key economic sectors. The complete domination of the Ahal Teke clan in critical industries has marginalized other groups, increasing the risk of internal power struggles.

Amid worsening economic conditions, these tensions could escalate into serious political instability, potentially threatening the country's ability to deliver on international commitments like the TCP (Horák, 2014; Pirani, 2018).

External Challenges

Externally, Turkmenistan faces staunch opposition from Russia and Iran, both of which view the TCP as a threat to their energy dominance. For decades, these two countries used the unresolved legal status of the Caspian Sea as a pretext to block pipeline projects. Although the signing of the Caspian Sea Convention in 2018 resolved key legal ambiguities, Russia and Iran retain the ability to raise objections based on environmental concerns. This provision allows them to delay or obstruct the TCP under the guise of ecological protection (Pomfret, 2021; Energy Institute, 2023).

- a) In the past, Russia viewed the TCP as a direct challenge to its dominance in the European energy market, as it would provide an alternative source of gas to EU countries. Gazprom, Russia's state-owned energy giant, relied on maintaining its monopoly in Europe. Moscow has taken various steps to counter the TCP, including promoting alternative projects like the Turkish Stream pipeline and leveraging its military presence in the Caspian Sea. Russia's Caspian Flotilla, comprising 26 warships, has demonstrated its capabilities in regional conflicts, signalling to Turkmenistan and the EU that Moscow will act decisively if its interests are threatened (Roberts, 2003; Cohen, 2019).
- b) Iran, similarly, opposes the TCP and any U.S.-backed energy project in the region. Tensions between Iran and Turkmenistan, particularly over unpaid gas debts, have further strained relations. Despite the Caspian Sea Convention theoretically resolving legal disputes, Iran continues to cite environmental risks as a reason to block the TCP, delaying progress on the project (Horák, 2014; BP, 2023).
- c) Geopolitical tensions further complicate the TCP's prospects. Russia's aggression in Ukraine demonstrates its willingness to use ethnic minorities as a pretext for intervention in neighbouring states. Turkmenistan's population includes approximately 300,000 ethnic Rus-

sians (4.25% of the population)², giving Moscow a potential lever to destabilize the country if it perceives its interests are under threat. Additionally, instability along Turkmenistan's border with Afghanistan, fuelled by Taliban activity, raises security concerns for the region (Energy Institute, 2023; Pirani, 2018).

- d) The EU's internal divisions also hinder progress on the TCP. Turkmenistan perceives the EU as lacking a unified strategy, with member states often holding divergent priorities. This incoherence undermines the EU's ability to negotiate effectively, leading Ashgabat to question the seriousness of European commitments (European Commission, 2021; Roberts, 2020).
- e) Economic feasibility poses another challenge for the TCP. The high cost of transporting Turkmen gas to Europe, estimated at \$400 per 1,000 cubic meters, makes it less competitive than Russian, Azerbaijani or Algerian gas. These price disadvantages reduce the attractiveness of Turkmen gas for European buyers and complicate efforts to secure funding for the pipeline (Horák, 2014; BP, 2023).
- f) Turkmenistan's dependence on transit and export partners further complicates its external energy strategy. More than 80% of Turkmen gas exports currently go to China via the Central Asia–China pipeline, creating an asymmetric relationship in which Ashgabat is highly dependent on a single buyer (BP, 2023; ADB, 2022). This reliance limits Turkmenistan's bargaining power, as Beijing is able to dictate pricing terms and delay expansion projects such as Line D of the Central Asia–China pipeline. Moreover, Turkmenistan lacks independent access to international markets due to its landlocked geography and must rely on transit countries, including Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Iran and potentially Azerbaijan, to deliver gas abroad. This dependence not only constrains its energy sovereignty but also increases exposure to geopolitical frictions beyond its direct control (Pomfret, 2021; European Commission, 2023).

² Official demographic data published by the Government of Turkmenistan is widely regarded as unreliable and often contested in scholarly and policy analyses. For this reason, the present study employs alternative estimates concerning the size of the Russian minority in Turkmenistan, drawing on secondary sources and expert assessments rather than official statistics.

Turkmenistan-EU Relations

The EU has pursued a dual strategy of bilateral and multilateral engagement with Central Asian countries, aiming to deepen economic and political ties. Turkmenistan, with its vast natural gas reserves and strategic location, occupies a crucial position in this framework. However, EU-Turkmenistan relations are shaped by a delicate balance of energy interests, human rights concerns, and geopolitical complexities (European Commission, 2007; Pirani, 2018).

The EU launched its first comprehensive strategy for Central Asia in 2007 under the German EU Council Presidency, marking a significant step toward stronger regional engagement. The *Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia* emphasized energy and transportation cooperation as priority areas. With Central Asia being home to significant oil and gas resources – particularly in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – the EU has sought to support these nations in connecting their energy supplies to global markets. This approach aligns with the EU's broader goal of fostering economic growth and stability in the region (Horák, 2014; European Commission, 2007).

High-level diplomatic interactions have reinforced the EU's commitment to Central Asia. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy meets with Central Asian foreign ministers annually. The most recent EU–Central Asia Ministerial Meeting, held on October 23, 2023 in Luxembourg, marked an active engagement between Turkmenistan and the EU. Turkmen Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov participated in the meeting, emphasizing cooperation priorities and long-term partnership goals. The meeting reinforced the EU's commitment to strengthening ties with Central Asia, including Turkmenistan, by addressing shared challenges in security, connectivity, trade, environmental issues and education, in alignment with the updated EU Central Asia strategy announced in 2019 (European Commission, 2023; Pomfret, 2021).

Bilateral relations between the EU and Turkmenistan are governed by an interim agreement on trade and trade-related matters, which came into force in 2010. However, the broader Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), signed in 1998, remains unratified by the European Parliament due to concerns over Turkmenistan's human rights record. The EU has set specific conditions for ratification, including the release of political prisoners, greater civil liberties, and access for the International Committee of the Red Cross to Turkmenistan (Cohen, 2019; Roberts, 2003).

Despite these challenges, energy cooperation has been a cornerstone of EU-Turkmenistan relations. In 2008, the two parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on energy cooperation, underscoring Turkmenistan's potential role in the EU's energy diversification strategy. In July 2019, the EU officially inaugurated a full Delegation in Turkmenistan, making it the 142nd such office globally. The formal agreement to establish this Delegation was signed in Ashgabat by Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy at the time, and Turkmen Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov. Prior to this development, the EU's activities in Turkmenistan were managed through a Liaison Office (Pirani, 2018; European Commission, 2015).

The EU's efforts to reduce reliance on Russian gas have amplified its interest in Turkmenistan's energy potential. The TCP, an undersea pipeline project connecting Turkmenistan's Turkmenbashi port to Azerbaijan's Sangachal terminal, is central to this vision. In 2011, the EU initiated negotiations with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to advance the TCP project. High-profile visits by European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and EU Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger to Ashgabat reaffirmed the EU's commitment to the pipeline. In 2015, the Ashgabat Declaration was signed by representatives from Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Turkey and the EU, signalling broad support for the TCP and financing initial environmental studies (European Commission, 2021; Horák, 2014).

The TCP has been designated a Project of Common Interest (PCI) by the EU, aligning it with the EU's Energy Security and Solidarity Plan. As an eastern extension of the SGC, the TCP is a strategic priority for the EU. Turkmenistan's participation in the SGC Advisory Council meetings further underscores its potential role in the corridor. However, geopolitical and logistical obstacles have delayed the pipeline's realization (BP, 2023; Pomfret, 2021).

In 2024, significant progress was made in EU-Turkmenistan energy cooperation through high-level engagements. The 7th EU-Turkmenistan Interparliamentary Meeting, held in Brussels in November, emphasized a shared commitment to strengthening collaboration in the energy and trade sectors, highlighting the importance of fostering deeper ties. Earlier in April, the Turkmenistan-EU Energy Dialogue brought together a working group in Brussels to focus on critical issues such as technology exchange, diversification of gas supply routes and environmental considerations, including methane emission standards. These developments reflect a mutual dedication to advancing their energy partnership and addressing shared challenges (Roberts, 2020; Energy Institute, 2023).

Annual Joint Committee meetings between the EU and Turkmenistan serve as a platform for reviewing progress in bilateral cooperation. The 22nd EU-Turkmenistan Joint Committee meeting, held on December 19, 2023 in Brussels, brought together key representatives from both sides to discuss Turkmenistan's macroeconomic status, its pursuit of World Trade Organization membership, energy export strategies, environmental efforts and collaboration in transport, education, and research. The Turkmen delegation, led by Finance and Economy Minister S. Joraev, included officials from significant national sectors, while the EU delegation comprised representatives from the European External Action Service and relevant European Commission directorates (European Commission, 2023; Pirani, 2018).

However, the EU's concerns over Turkmenistan's human rights record remain a significant barrier to deepening ties. In 2006, the EU imposed an embargo on purchasing Turkmen gas, citing these concerns. While negotiations on the TCP resumed in 2011, progress has been contingent on Turkmenistan addressing issues such as political repression and lack of civil liberties (Cohen, 2019; Roberts, 2003).

Azerbaijan's Role in Unblocking Challenges for the Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP)

Azerbaijan holds a critical yet ambivalent role in the realization of the TCP project. As a geographically indispensable transit country and a key player in the Caspian region, Azerbaijan's decisions and policies significantly influence the feasibility of this pipeline. However, the history of tensions, unresolved disputes and conflicting interests between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, coupled with external geopolitical pressures, complicates Azerbaijan's involvement in unblocking challenges for the TCP (Horák, 2014; Roberts, 2020).

Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have a contentious history regarding territorial disputes in the Caspian Sea, particularly over the Kapaz/Sardar field, which both countries claim. Despite Azerbaijan's agreements with Russia and Kazakhstan in 2001 and 2003 on dividing their respective Caspian waters, no similar agreement was reached with Turkmenistan. This unresolved dispute has repeatedly hampered cooperation between the two countries (Cohen, 2019; Pomfret, 2021).

In 2001, tensions escalated when Turkmenistan accused Azerbaijan of operating the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli fields, which Turkmenistan claimed ownership of. Diplomatic relations soured, leading Turkmenistan to close its embassy in Baku, citing financial difficulties. During the 2002 Caspian Sea Summit, this animosity became public, with Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov and Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev engaging in a heated verbal exchange (Pirani, 2018; European Commission, 2007).

Azerbaijan has repeatedly proposed joint development of disputed fields to mitigate tensions and foster cooperation. Heydar Aliyev extended such an offer to Niyazov in 2001, and the same proposal was reiterated by Azerbaijan in 2009 under Ilham Aliyev's presidency. However, these offers were consistently rejected by Turkmenistan, which instead sought resolution through international arbitration. The conflict intensified in 2012 when Azerbaijan's border patrol blocked a Turkmen vessel attempting geological sampling in the Kapaz/Sardar field, further straining relations (Roberts, 2020; Horák, 2014).

A significant breakthrough occurred on January 21, 2021 when the presidents of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan signed a MoU to jointly develop the field, now renamed "Dostluk", meaning "friendship" in both languages. This agreement marked a pivotal step toward resolving the protracted dispute and opened avenues for collaborative energy projects in the Caspian region. The MoU outlines the framework for joint exploration and exploitation of the Dostluk field, emphasizing mutual benefits and regional energy security. The agreement also reflects a broader commitment to enhancing bilateral relations and economic cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan (Cohen, 2019; BP, 2023).

The resolution of this dispute through the MoU has the potential to facilitate further collaborative ventures in the Caspian Sea, contributing to regional stability and economic development. It also underscores the importance of diplomatic engagement in addressing complex territorial and resource-related disputes (Pomfret, 2021; Energy Institute, 2023).

Despite its critical role as a transit country for the TCP, Azerbaijan has demonstrated limited enthusiasm for the project. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has emphasized that the TCP's success hinges on Turkmenistan's initiative. At a press conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2018, Aliyev stated that as the owner of the gas, Turkmenistan must take the lead in advancing the project. He highlighted Azerbaijan's proactive role in developing its energy infrastructure, such as the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC), and indi-

cated that Turkmenistan should follow a similar path if it seeks to export gas through Azerbaijan (Pirani, 2018; Roberts, 2020).

Azerbaijan's Energy Minister Parviz Shahbazov further underscored this position, asserting that the supplier country, Turkmenistan, must negotiate agreements with consumer nations. Azerbaijan, as a transit state, views its role as secondary and contingent on Turkmenistan's readiness to commit to the project. Economic considerations also play a significant role in Azerbaijan's cautious approach. The price of Turkmen gas in European markets is expected to be higher than Azerbaijani gas due to production and transit costs. This economic disadvantage diminishes Azerbaijan's incentive to actively promote the TCP, as Turkmen gas could compete with Azerbaijani gas exports in the European market (Cohen, 2019; European Commission, 2023).

Despite these challenges, Azerbaijan remains an essential partner for the TCP. Its existing infrastructure, including the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP), the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), forms the backbone of the Southern Gas Corridor, which Turkmen gas would need to connect to European markets. Azerbaijan's willingness to increase the capacity of these pipelines demonstrates its capability to facilitate the TCP if political and economic obstacles are overcome (BP, 2023; Pomfret, 2021).

Azerbaijan's strategic location and established energy partnerships with the EU position it as a key intermediary in negotiations between Turkmenistan and European stakeholders. Its participation in regional dialogues and initiatives, such as the Joint Working Group with Turkmenistan and Turkey, indicates its potential to play a constructive role in addressing logistical and technical challenges for the TCP. In May 2024, Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar and Azerbaijani Economy Minister Mikayil Jabbarov signed an agreement to strengthen cooperation in the gas sector. A key component of this agreement is the transit of Turkmen gas to Turkey through Azerbaijan and Georgia, underscoring both nations' commitment to facilitating the TCP's realization (Roberts, 2020; Energy Institute, 2023).

In November 2021, Turkmenistan, Iran and Azerbaijan entered into a tri-lateral gas swap agreement, facilitating the annual transfer of 1.5 to 2 bcm of Turkmen gas to Azerbaijan via Iran. Under this arrangement, Turkmenistan supplied gas to Iran's northeastern regions, and Iran delivered an equivalent volume to Azerbaijan. Deliveries commenced in January 2022, with initial volumes of 5–6 million cubic meters (mcm) per day, increasing to 7 mcm per day by March 2022. In 2023, Azerbaijan imported approximately 1.517 bcm of natu-

ral gas from Turkmenistan, marking a 77% increase from the 857 million cubic meters imported in 2022 (BP, 2023; Horák, 2014).

An alternative option to the TCP is a sub-sea pipeline between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan's offshore platforms. Malaysian company Petronas operates offshore blocks in Turkmenistan's part of the Caspian Sea. The proposed project would involve constructing a 78-kilometer connector pipeline linking the Petronas-operated Magtymguly field in Turkmenistan's waters to the BP-operated oil and gas gathering facilities at the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli (ACG) field in Azerbaijani waters (Roberts, 2020; European Commission, 2021).

This pipeline system is expected to transport approximately 5 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas annually to Azerbaijan's existing gas processing facilities at Sangachal, with an estimated cost of \$400–600 million, thereby integrating Turkmen gas into the Southern Gas Corridor and enhancing the energy supply to European markets. The proposed subsea pipeline represents a strategic effort to diversify energy export routes from the Caspian region, reducing reliance on traditional transit countries and contributing to regional energy security (Cohen, 2019; Energy Institute, 2023).

Conclusion

This study set out to examine whether the Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP) represents a viable and strategic mechanism for enhancing both Turkmenistan's energy diversification and the European Union's energy security. The analysis has confirmed the initial hypothesis: while the TCP embodies significant strategic potential, its realization depends less on resource availability than on overcoming entrenched political, technical and geopolitical constraints. Turkmenistan's vast gas reserves and geographical position give it the capacity to become an essential energy partner for Europe; however, its rentier-state structure, lack of transparency and limited infrastructural capacity continue to impede meaningful progress.

The findings underscore that the main barriers to the TCP's implementation lie in governance weaknesses within Turkmenistan and the persistent geopolitical resistance from Russia and Iran. Moscow and Tehran's opposition, framed under environmental or legal pretexts, reflects their broader strategic interest in maintaining regional dominance and preventing the EU from gaining direct access to Caspian energy resources. At the same time, the EU's fragmented pol-

icy approach and slow decision-making process undermine the credibility of its commitments in Ashgabat's eyes, further delaying progress.

Nevertheless, the study demonstrates that the regional environment is not static. Initiatives such as the 2021 Azerbaijan–Turkmenistan Memorandum of Understanding and trilateral cooperation frameworks with Turkey signal emerging opportunities for pragmatic engagement. The construction of Turkmenistan's East–West Pipeline and Azerbaijan's integration within the Southern Gas Corridor provide the physical and diplomatic foundations for a future connection to Europe. These developments validate the argument that the TCP's feasibility will depend on a cumulative process of confidence-building, incremental technical cooperation and sustained political will rather than a single diplomatic breakthrough.

Ultimately, the TCP stands as both a test and an opportunity for Eurasian energy governance. For the EU, it represents a critical pathway to achieve strategic autonomy and energy diversification beyond Russian gas. For Turkmenistan, it offers a chance to reorient its economic dependence away from China and integrate more deeply into global markets. The analysis confirms that the success of the TCP – and by extension Turkmenistan's emergence as a credible supplier for Europe – will rely on aligning domestic reform, regional cooperation and coherent international engagement. In this respect, the TCP remains not only a pipeline project but a litmus test of political maturity, regional trust, and the evolving architecture of Eurasian energy interdependence.

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Transkaspijski plinovod: Put Turkmenistana prema energetskej sigurnosti Europske unije i strateškoj diversifikaciji

SAŽETAK

Rusko-ukrajinski sukob intenzivirao je potrebu Europske unije da diversificira svoje energetske izvore, čime se za Turkmenistan otvara mogućnost da postane njezin ključni dobavljač. Sa četvrtim najvećim zalihama prirodnog plina na svijetu, Turkmenistan bi mogao odigrati središnju ulogu na globalnom energetske tržištu. Ipak, izazovi upravljanja, prevelika ovisnost o izvozu plina u Kinu, te infrastrukturne manjkavosti ometaju ostvarenje ovog potencijala. Ova studija istražuje stratešku važnost transkaspijskog plinovoda (TKP), koji bi mogao povezati turkmenistanske zalihe s Južnim plinskim koridorom Europske unije, osnažujući europsku energetske sigurnost. Korištena metodologija podrazumijeva kvalitativnu analizu sekundarnih izvora, uključujući policy dokumente, akademsku literaturu i geopolitičke izvještaje, kako bi procijenila izazove i prilike povezane s TKP-om. Istraživanje naglašava značajne unutarne i vanjske izazove, koji uključuju geopolitički otpor Rusije i Irana, te ekonomske i tehničke barijere implementaciji plinovoda. Unatoč ovim preprekama, regionalna suradnja – poput Memoranduma o razumijevanju potpisanog 2021. između Azerbajdžana i Turkmenistana – pokazuje put prema naprijed. Analiza zaključuje da su kontinuirane investicije, snažna politička volja, kao i strateška međunarodna partnerstva presudni za otključavanje turkmenistanskog energetskeg potencijala i ispunjavanje ciljeva energetske diversifikacije Europske unije.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: Turkmenistan, energetske sigurnost, Transkaspijski plinovod, geopolitika, Europska unija

Ishodišta suvremene srpske geopolitike: strateški vakuum i identitetski konflikt

Hrvoje Vuković¹

SAŽETAK

Rad analizira suvremenu srpsku geopolitiku kroz prizmu strateškog vakuuma i identitetskog konflikta. Polazeći od teorijskih pretpostavki o političkoj volji, vanjskopolitičkoj koherentnosti i narativima kolektivnog identiteta, ukazuje se na raskorak između deklariranog opredjeljenja za europske integracije i trajne orijentacije prema Rusiji. Kritičkim pregledom vanjsko-političkih poteza Srbije nakon 2000. godine, kao i kulturnih i povijesnih obrazaca koji oblikuju nacionalnu samopercepciju, pokazuje se da Srbija ne balansira između Istoka i Zapada iz pragmatičnih razloga, već zbog izostanka jasne i održive strategije. Strateški vakuum intenziviran je identitetskim konfliktom između proeuropskih težnji i mitologizirane slike Srbije kao povijesne žrtve Zapada. Analiziraju se tri empirijska slučaja – Kosovo, BiH (Republika Srpska) i Crna Gora – te praksa multivektorske politike nakon 2012. godine, koje zajedno potvrđuju da elita reproducira stanje neodlučnosti kao politički resurs. U komparativnom okviru Srbija se uspoređuje s Hrvatskom, Mađarskom i Turskom, čime se naglašava razlika između multivektorizma sa sidrom i bez sidra. Zaključuje se da suvremena srpska geopolitika počiva na kombinaciji strateškog vakuuma i identitetskog konflikta, što proizvodi kontradikcije, institucionalnu neusklađ-

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nost i simboličku konfuziju, a time i ograničava dugoročnu sposobnost Srbije da definiira održivu vanjskopolitičku orijentaciju.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: *Srbija, geopolitika, strateški vakuum, identitetski konflikt, multivektorizam*

Uvod

U novijoj srpskoj akademskoj literaturi razvija se interpretacija prema kojoj Srbija posjeduje oblik „velike strategije“ – *grand strategy* – u vidu „strateške pragmatičnosti“ i politike „četiri stupa“, pri čemu se taj multivektorizam tumači kao svjesni oblik *hedginga*,² a ne kao simptom neodlučnosti (Pavić i Beriša, 2025.; Dragišić, 2021.).

No, tri desetljeća nakon raspada Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije, Republika Srbija i dalje se suočava s neriješenim pitanjem vlastitog strateškog identiteta. Dok su pojedine države nastale na prostoru bivše Jugoslavije relativno brzo definirale svoj geopolitički smjer – primjerice Slovenija i Hrvatska putem euroatlantskih integracija – Srbija je ostala zarobljena u stanju trajne geopolitičke neodlučnosti.

Ovo stanje moguće je teorijski opisati pojmom *strateškog vakuuma*, koji u ovom radu ne označava manjak moći ili utjecaja, već diskurzivnu prazninu – nepostojanje stabilnog identitetskog okvira koji bi usmjeravao vanjsku politiku. U smislu kritičke geopolitike (Ó Tuathail, 1996.; Agnew, 1998.), geopolitika se ne shvaća kao objektivna znanost o prostoru, nego kao jezik moći kojim politički akteri stvaraju slike svijeta i određuju vlastiti položaj unutar njega. U tom okviru, strateški vakuum Srbije ne proizlazi iz strukturalne slabosti, nego iz konfliktne proizvodnje identiteta koja istodobno održava i destabilizira državni legitimitet.

² Multivektorizam podrazumijeva strukturni model vanjske politike u kojem država paralelno razvija intenzivne političke, ekonomske i sigurnosne odnose s različitim, katkad međusobno suprotstavljenim centrima moći, s ciljem povećanja strateške autonomije. Nasuprot tome, *hedging* označava taktičku strategiju ponašanja u uvjetima geopolitičke neizvjesnosti, pri kojoj država istodobno kombinira suradnju i mjere osiguranja prema konkurentnim akterima kako bi smanjila rizike i izbjegla potpunu vezanost za jednu stranu. Drugim riječima, multivektorizam definiira širinu i smjerove vanjskopolitičkih veza (arhitekturu), dok *hedging* opisuje način na koji se takvi odnosi upravljaju (ponašanje).

U Srbiji je taj vakuum dodatno produbljen *identitetskim konfliktom* koji se proteže od mitologiziranog poimanja prošlosti (Kosovo, „srpski svet“, „pravoslavno bratstvo s Rusijom“) do ambivalentnog odnosa prema Zapadu i Istoku. Umjesto da djeluje kao jasno profiliran međunarodni subjekt, Srbija često instrumentalizira vanjsku politiku za unutarnju političku mobilizaciju i očuvanje autoritarnih obrazaca vladanja. Posljedica je dugotrajna geopolitička nekonzistentnost koja podriva društvenu stabilnost i proizvodi stanje „kontrolirane nestabilnosti“ – situaciju u kojoj vlast održava razinu političke napetosti dovoljno visoku da potiče homogenizaciju i legitimizira centraliziranu kontrolu, ali nedovoljnu da dovede do otvorenog sloma poretka.

U tom kontekstu, pitanja Kosova, odnosa prema Bosni i Hercegovini (s naglaskom na Republiku Srpsku) i pozicioniranja prema Crnoj Gori (uključujući status srpskog identiteta unutar nje) predstavljaju ključne empirijske točke u kojima se prepliću strateški vakuum i identitetski sukobi. Ona nisu samo vanjskopolički izazovi, nego i simbolički resursi kojima vlast strateški oblikuje unutarnju i vanjsku politiku.

Analiza se oslanja na uvide kritičke geopolitike (Agnew, Ó Tuathail) te na teorije identiteta i elita (Anderson, Taylor, Mosca, Pareto). Kombinira povijesni, diskurzivni i komparativni pristup kako bi pokazala da Srbija nije pasivna žrtva među-narodnih okolnosti, nego aktivni tvorac vlastite nestabilnosti kroz strateško održavanje neodlučnosti kao političkog resursa.

Središnja teza ovoga rada glasi: suvremena srpska geopolitika oblikuje se u dinamičnom međuodnosu strateškog vakuuma i instrumentaliziranog identitetskog konflikta, pri čemu neodlučnost nije puka posljedica vanjskih pritisaka, nego strateški održavan politički alat koji služi očuvanju unutarnje kontrole i reprodukciji simboličkog legitimiteta vlasti. Vanjska politika Srbije ne promatra se izolirano, nego kao empirijski izraz šire geopolitičke matrice. Geopolitika se pritom razumijeva kao skup diskurzivnih struktura – identitetskih narativa, povijesnih obrazaca i strateških pozicioniranja – koji uvjetuju i ograničavaju donošenje vanjskopoličkih odluka. Time analiza pokazuje da su kontradikcije srpske vanjske politike razumljive tek kada se smjeste u okvir strateškog vakuuma i identitetskog konflikta.

U skladu s tom istraživačkom agendom, rad je strukturiran na sljedeći način: nakon uvodnog teorijskog okvira slijedi metodološko razgraničenje analitičkih razina i povijesno-kontekstualni pregled razvoja srpske vanjske politike, zatim analitičko poglavlje posvećeno međuodnosu strateškog vakuuma, identitetskog konflikta i pseudosidra, potom komparativna perspektiva kroz usporedbu s Hr-

vatskom, Mađarskom i Turskom, te zaključni osvrt o dugoročnim implikacijama uočenih obrazaca.

Metodološko razgraničenje analitičkih razina

Analiza u ovom radu odvija se na četiri međusobno povezane, ali analitički razlikovane razine. Teorijska razina polazi od pristupa kritičke geopolitike i konceptualizacije strateškog vakuuma i identitetskog konflikta kao diskurzivnih procesa koji strukturiraju vanjsku politiku Srbije. Povijesna razina rekonstruira razvoj srpske vanjske politike kroz četiri faze – predratni nacionalizam (1986.–1991.), ratni nacionalizam (1991.–2000.), postmiloševićevsku europeizaciju (2000.–2012.) i suvremeni multivektorizam (2012.–danas) – te pokazuje kontinuitete i diskontinuitete identitetskih narativa. Empirijska razina analizira tri reprezentativna slučaja – Kosovo, BiH (Republiku Srpsku) i Crnu Goru – u kojima se na različite načine prelamaју procesi strateškog vakuuma i identitetskog konflikta. Analitička razina povezuje teorijski i empirijski materijal u sintezu, te pokazuje mehanizme reprodukcije neodlučnosti kao političkog resursa i razotkriva funkcionalnu povezanost identitetskog diskursa i održavanja moći.

Iako su te razine analitički razlikovane radi jasnoće prikaza, u interpretativnom smislu one se međusobno isprepliću, budući da diskurzivne strukture istodobno oblikuju i teorijski okvir, i povijesne narative, i empirijske fenomene vanjske politike. Takva višerazinska struktura omogućuje cjelovito razumijevanje suvremene srpske geopolitike kroz međuodnos diskursa, povijesnih obrazaca i konkretnih vanjskopolitičkih praksi.

Rad polazi od istraživačkog pitanja: na koji način međuodnos strateškog vakuuma i identitetskog konflikta oblikuje suvremenu srpsku geopolitiku? Teorijski doprinos rada temelji se na konceptualizaciji strateškog vakuuma, identitetskog konflikta i pseudosidra kao specifičnih oblika geopolitičke neodlučnosti i diskurzivne konstrukcije vanjske politike.

Metodološki, rad se oslanja na teorijsko-interpretativni pristup: umjesto kvantitativne provjere hipoteza na reprezentativnom uzorku podataka, razvija navedene koncepte kroz kvalitativnu analizu diskursa i ilustrativnih empirijskih primjera (Kosovo, Republika Srpska, Crna Gora). Empirijski doprinos ogleda se u povezivanju tih koncepata s analizom triju ključnih slučajeva, te njihovom komparacijom s primjerima Hrvatske, Mađarske i

Turske, što omogućuje prepoznavanje specifičnosti i granica srpskog multivektorizma.

Povijesni i kontekstualni okvir

U ovom radu *strateški vakuum* označava odsustvo stabilne i dugoročne vanjskopolitičke orijentacije, pri čemu je neodlučnost svjesno održavan mehanizam unutarnje političke kontrole. *Identitetski konflikt* odnosi se na napetost između proeuropskih težnji i mitologizirane samopercepcije Srbije kao povijesne žrtve Zapada, koja proizvodi kontradiktorne signale i trajnu simboličku ambivalenciju. Ove kategorije čine analitički okvir za povijesni pregled koji slijedi. Pritom se uvodi i pojam *pseudosidra* koji označava deklarativno strateško sidro (najčešće „europski put“) koje se nominalno afirmira, ali se istodobno potkopava niskom normativnom usklađenošću i paralelnim jačanjem veza s alternativnim centrima moći. Time pseudosidro funkcionira kao instrument održavanja geopolitičke neodlučnosti, a ne kao stvarno strateško usmjerenje.

Faza predratnog nacionalizma (1986.-1991.)

Početkom druge polovice 1980-ih u SFRJ dolazi do postupne erozije zajedničkog političkog identiteta i jačanja nacionalnih diskursa unutar republičkih elita. Ključni preokret dogodio se objavom Memoranduma Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti (SANU) 1986. godine, koji je tvrdio da je Srbija nepravedno decentralizirana Ustavom iz 1974. te da Srbi u Hrvatskoj, BiH i na Kosovu trpe nacionalnu diskriminaciju, čime je artikulirao narativ o ugroženosti srpskog naroda unutar federacije i potaknuo formiranje nove paradigme srpske političke misli. Iako formalno nije bio službeni politički dokument, njegova recepcija unutar Saveza komunista Srbije i medijskog prostora dovela je do njegove pretvorbe u ideološki okvir za reafirmaciju srpskog nacionalizma (Ramet, 2005.).

Ubrzo nakon toga, uspon Slobodana Miloševića na čelo srpske partijske strukture (1987.) označio je prijelaz iz unutarpartijskog reformizma prema autoritarnom populizmu, koji je nacionalnu homogenizaciju pretvorio u glavni instrument političke mobilizacije. „Anti-birokratska revolucija“ 1988.-1989. i smjena rukovodstava u Vojvodini, Crnoj Gori i na Kosovu pokazali su kako je

Beograd počeo konsolidirati moć unutar federacije putem manipulacije nacionalnim pitanjem (Vladislavljević, 2008.).

Na diskurzivnoj razini, Milošević je vješto spajao jezik socijalne pravde i nacionalnog ponosa, stvarajući sintezu koja je privlačila različite društvene slojeve. Uloga medija i intelektualnih elita u tom procesu bila je presudna: dnevni listovi i televizijski programi sustavno su oblikovali percepciju o Srbiji kao žrtvi federalne nepravde i vanjskih pritisaka (Thompson, 1999.).

Kosovo je postalo simbol tog novog političkog imaginarija. Uvođenje izvanrednog stanja 1989. godine i ukidanje autonomije pokrajine predstavljali su kulminaciju procesa centralizacije. Na 600. obljetnicu Kosovske bitke iste godine, Miloševićev govor na Gazimestanu postao je retorički temelj nove epohe – onaj u kojem je povijesna mitologija služila kao legitimacija političke moći i kao ideološki most prema nadolazećim sukobima.

Ova faza označila je transformaciju jugoslavenkog federalizma u arenu nacionalnih projekata, a Srbija je u tom kontekstu preuzela ulogu „zaštitnika“ Srba izvan svojih granica. Takva pozicija bila je inicijalni moment strateškog vakuuma: dok je nominalno zagovarala očuvanje Jugoslavije, Srbija je istodobno poticala procese koji su dovodili do njezina raspada. Time su postavljeni temeljni obrasci instrumentalizacije identiteta i neodlučnosti koji će se nastaviti i nakon 1991. godine.

Faza ratnog nacionalizma (1991.–2000.)

Nakon raspada SFRJ 1991. godine, Srbija ulazi u razdoblje obilježeno ratnim nacionalizmom i autoritarnim političkim strukturama. Srbija pod vodstvom Miloševića bila je glavni protagonist raspada Jugoslavije, kroz političke i vojne projekte provodeći vlastite teritorijalne pretenzije prema susjednim državama, posebno prema Hrvatskoj i BiH, podupirući stvaranje paradržavnih srpskih entiteta (Ramet, 2005.; Bieber, 2006; Gow, 2003.).³ Tijekom ovog razdoblja, domi-

³ Termin „Srbija pod vodstvom Miloševića“ koristi se u znanstvenoj literaturi kako bi se označila faktička kontrola koju je Slobodan Milošević imao nad političkim, vojnim i sigurnosnim strukturama tijekom 1990-ih godina. Iako je SFRJ formalno postojala do 1992. godine, a potom Savezna Republika Jugoslavija (SRJ) (1992.–2003.), Srbija je unutar tih zajednica dominirala i donosila ključne odluke. Milošević je kroz institucije Srbije i Saveznog izvršnog vijeća imao presudni utjecaj na Jugoslavensku narodnu armiju (JNA), policijske snage i para-vojne formacije. Ovakva interpretacija potvrđena je i u presudama Međunarodnog kaznenog suda za bivšu Jugoslaviju (ICTY), a široko je prihvaćena i u znanstvenim radovima. Upotreba ovog termina stoga reflektira političku realnost moći, a ne isključivo formalno-ustavni okvir.

nantan diskurs bio je usmjeren na obranu „srpskih teritorija“ i očuvanje nacionalnog jedinstva. Ove politike rezultirale su međunarodnom izolacijom Srbije, ekonomskim sankcijama i dubokom društvenom krizom, koja je kulminirala prosvjedima i padom Miloševićevog režima u listopadu 2000. godine.

Ovaj period također je postavio temelje obrascu instrumentalizacije vanjske politike u svrhu unutarnje političke mobilizacije, što će ostati trajna karakteristika srpske geopolitike i u kasnijim fazama.

Post-miloševićevska europeizacija (2000.–2012.)

Pad Miloševića otvorio je prostor političke liberalizacije i usmjeravanja Srbije prema europskim integracijama. Vlada Zorana Đinđića proklamirala je ambicioznu reformsku i europsku agendu, naglašavajući potrebu za demokratizacijom, ekonomskom transformacijom i normalizacijom odnosa sa susjednim državama. Iako su kasnije demokratske koalicije nominalno zadržale europski kurs, njihov reformski kapacitet bio je ograničen zbog dubokih institucionalnih i kulturnih kontinuiteta iz devedesetih (Gordy, 2013.).

U tom periodu Srbija je započela proces suradnje s Haškim sudom za bivšu Jugoslaviju (ICTY), uvela prve gospodarske reforme tržišnog tipa i otvorila pregovore o Sporazumu o stabilizaciji i pridruživanju s Europskom unijom (Sutubić, 2010.).

Međutim, iako je europska retorika bila dominantna, politički krajolik obilježavali su česti unutarnji sukobi, nestabilne koalicije i sporadična oscilacija prema nacionalističkim narativima. Duboko ukorijenjene „samozaštitne strukture“ – sigurnosni aparat, bivše obavještajne mreže i kriminalne skupine povezane s političkim elitama – sustavno su opstruirale reformske procese i kroz korupciju dodatno destabilizirale politički sustav, usporavajući napredak prema EU. Vrhunac tog otpora bio je atentat na premijera Đinđića 2003. godine, što je simbolično i praktično pokazalo dubinu konflikta između deklarativnog europskog puta i realnih interesa unutarnjih struktura moći (International Crisis Group, 2003.).

Multivektorizam bez sidra (2012.–danas)

Dolaskom na vlast Srpske napredne stranke (SNS) 2012. godine započinje novo razdoblje srpske politike, definirano tzv. politikom multivektorizma. Srbija formalno nastavlja proces europskih integracija, potvrđujući europski put

kroz otvaranje pregovaračkih poglavlja s EU, ali istodobno aktivno jača strateške i ekonomske veze s Rusijom, Kinom i drugim ne-zapadnim akterima (Proroković, 2023.).⁴

U praksi, ovaj pristup rezultirao je politikom balansiranja između Istoka i Zapada. Srbija nastoji zadržati poziciju „neutralnog posrednika“ kako bi maksimizirala političke i gospodarske koristi, promovirajući istodobno retoriku europske budućnosti i „tradicionalnog prijateljstva“ s Rusijom, uz rastuću suradnju s Kinom kroz infrastrukturne projekte i ulaganja u strateške sektore.

Kako predsjednik Republike Srbije Aleksandar Vučić navodi u svom najnovijem govoru pred Glavnom skupštinom Ujedinjenih naroda, Srbija nastoji da „angažman sa svim partnerima ne znači slijepo slaganje“ (Vučić, 2025), čime se multivektorizam promovira kao principijelan, a ne taktički izbor. Ova pozicija dodatno je artikulirana kroz istovremeno naglašavanje „nepokolebljivog“ strateškog opredjeljenja za EU i opredjeljenja za „produbljivanje suradnje sa državama iz svih krajeva svijeta“, što predstavlja jezgru paradoksa srpske vanjske politike.

Taj model vlastima omogućuje održavanje fleksibilnosti u međunarodnim odnosima, ali i kreiranje narativa o „suverenoj politici“ koja navodno odolijeva vanjskim pritiscima. Istodobno, služi kao učinkovito sredstvo unutarnje političke mobilizacije – jačanja društvene homogenizacije i legitimiranja koncentracije moći (Bieber, 2018.; Bieber, 2020.).

Unutar zemlje, razdoblje nakon 2012. obilježeno je rastućom autoritarnom konsolidacijom: centralizacijom političke vlasti oko predsjednika i uskog kruga povezanih elita, slabljenjem institucija, te medijskim i pravosudnim nadzorom. Vanjska politika, formalno usmjerena na „stabilnost i suverenitet“, u praksi postaje instrument unutarnje kontrole i održavanja režimskog legitimiteta.

Ovo razdoblje također karakterizira intenzivna upotreba simboličkih gesta – vojnih parada s ruskim i kineskim predstavnicima, potpisivanja „strateških partnerstava“ i nabave oružja iz Moskve i Pekinga – kojima se učvršćuje slika Srbije kao „nezavisnog“ i „ponosnog“ aktera.

Poseban izazov za politiku multivektorizma nastupio je nakon ruske agresije na Ukrajinu 2022. godine. Pod pritiskom EU i zapadnih partnera da uvede sank-

⁴ Koncept „četiri stupa vanjske politike“ nije formaliziran u službenim strateškim dokumentima Republike Srbije, već proizlazi iz političkog diskursa vrha vlasti i praktične diplomacije posljednjih desetljeća. Ova operativna doktrina najčešće uključuje oslanjanje na EU, Rusiju, Kinu i Sjedinjene Američke Države, pri čemu Srbija nastoji balansirati i održavati multivektorsku vanjsku orijentaciju.

cije Rusiji, Srbija je odbila to učiniti, pozivajući se na povijesne i energetske veze te na „zaštitu nacionalnih interesa“. Takav stav dodatno je razotkrio unutarnje proturječe multivektorske politike: istodobno održavanje europske retorike i proruske orijentacije dovelo je u pitanje njezin međunarodni kredibilitet i vjerodostojnost europskog puta.

Time se u razdoblju nakon 2012. godine oblikuje obrazac multivektorske politike, u kojem se europske integracije kombiniraju s intenziviranjem veza s Rusijom i Kinom. Funkcionalne implikacije takvog pristupa razrađuju se u analitičkom poglavlju.

Kosovo kao neuralgična točka i simbol gubitka

Kosovo se od kraja 20. stoljeća nameće kao središnje političko, društveno i simboličko pitanje u Srbiji. Sukobi tijekom 1990-ih kulminirali su NATO bombardiranjem 1999. godine, nakon čega Kosovo prelazi pod privremenu upravu Ujedinjenih naroda (UNMIK) temeljem Rezolucije 1244 Vijeća sigurnosti UN-a (10. lipnja 1999.). Ta je promjena u Srbiji percipirana kao težak udarac i gubitak kontrole nad „svetom zemljom“, što je dodatno usidreno u kolektivnom identitetu kroz Kosovski mit.⁵

Tijekom Miloševićeva režima, Kosovo je bilo predstavljano kao ključno pitanje očuvanja državnog suvereniteta i nacionalnog identiteta. Početkom 1990-ih albansko stanovništvo uglavnom je pružalo nenasilan otpor kroz paralelne političke i društvene strukture, dok se krajem desetljeća pojavio oružani otpor u obliku Oslobođilačke vojske Kosova (OVK). Kao odgovor, srpske su snage provodile široke sigurnosne operacije, često praćene represijom i masovnim kršenjima ljudskih prava, dok je i OVK počinila zločine protiv čovječnosti. Retorika „obrane Kosova“ služila je kao ključni instrument homogenizacije stanovništva i održavanja Miloševićeve vlasti (Vladisavljević, 2008.; Judah, 2008.; Human Rights Watch, 2001.).

U postmiloševićevskom razdoblju (2000.–2012.) srbijanske su vlasti formalno prihvatile dijalog s međunarodnom zajednicom o statusu Kosova, započevši tehničke pregovore pod pokroviteljstvom UN-a i EU. No unatoč proklamiranoj

⁵ Kosovski mit, utemeljen na povijesnoj i simboličkoj interpretaciji Bitke na Kosovu (1389.), predstavlja temeljni narativ srpskog nacionalnog identiteta. Kroz prizmu žrtvovanja, mučeništva i moralne superiornosti, mit transformira povijesni poraz u snažan simbol kolektivnog identiteta i političke mobilizacije. U modernom diskursu Kosovo se često metaforički naziva „srpski Jerusalim“, što naglašava njegovu duboku simboličku i duhovnu važnost, iako izraz nije službena doktrina Srpske pravoslavne crkve (RTS, 2018., para. 2).

otvorenosti, stav prema Kosovu ostao je rigidan: neovisnost nije priznavana, a Ustavom iz 2006. godine Kosovo je definirano kao neotuđivi dio Srbije. Vanjska retorika povremeno je naglašavala europsku budućnost, dok je Kosovo i dalje predstavljano kao simbol „povijesne nepravde“ (Bieber, 2015.). Proglašenje neovisnosti 2008. godine doživljeno je kao nacionalni poraz i potvrda gubitka „kolektivnog teritorijalnog svetišta“.⁶

U razdoblju vladavine Srpske napredne stranke (od 2012.), Kosovo ostaje ključno uporište političke mobilizacije. Iako su tehnički pregovori intenzivirani kroz Bruxelleski dijalog, dominantna poruka u javnosti ostala je nepriznavanje neovisnosti i inzistiranje na formalnom suverenitetu Srbije. Tako govor predsjednika Republike Srbije Vučića pred Glavnom skupštinom UN-a u rujnu 2025. godine eksplicitno opisuje Kosovo kao „glavni stub srpskog identiteta, kulture i duhovnog nasljeđa“ (Vučić, 2025.), što potvrđuje kontinuitet instrumentalizacije ovog pitanja koja opstaje kao funkcionalan resurs unatoč promjenama režima. Time se pitanje Kosova održava kao trajni izvor političkog legitimiteta i jedan od temeljnih simbola srpske vanjske i unutarnje politike.

Povijesni razvoj pokazuje da je Kosovo od ratnog razdoblja do suvremene politike multivektorzima ostalo stabilan oslonac identitetskog narativa i instrument političke homogenizacije. Ova instrumentalizacija posebno dolazi do izražaja u kontradikciji između službene retorike o neotuđivosti Kosova i praktične nesposobnosti da se postigne bilo kakav realan napredak ka reintegraciji, što dodatno osnažuje tezu o strateškom vakuumu.

BiH i Republika Srpska kao produžetak identitetske geopolitike

Republika Srpska unutar BiH ostaje ključan vanjskopolitički i identitetski oslonac Srbije. Tijekom 1990-ih godina, Srbija pod vodstvom Slobodana Miloševića pružala je političku, vojnu i logističku podršku bosanskim Srbima, čime

⁶ Proglašenje neovisnosti Kosova 2008. godine često se u međunarodnoj literaturi tumači kao slučaj *sui generis*, odnosno jedinstven i neusporediv presedan. Međunarodni sud pravde (ICJ) u savjetodavnom mišljenju iz 2010. godine zaključio je da deklaracija neovisnosti nije prekršila međunarodno pravo, budući da opća zabrana takvih deklaracija ne postoji (ICJ, Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo, 2010). Iako Rezolucija 1244 Vijeća sigurnosti UN-a potvrđuje suverenitet i teritorijalni integritet tadašnje SRJ, Sud je ocijenio da ona nije izričito zabranila deklaraciju neovisnosti, već je ostavila otvoren prostor za politički proces odlučivanja o statusu. Stoga, neovisnost Kosova formalno nije bila zabranjena međunarodnim pravom, iako ostaju snažni pravni i politički argumenti koji je osporavaju.

je izravno doprinijela stvaranju paradržavne strukture koja je kasnije formalizirana kao entitet u okviru Daytonskog mirovnog sporazuma 1995. godine (Bieber, 2006.; Gow, 2003.; International Crisis Group, 2007.).

Daytonski sporazum omogućio je očuvanje teritorijalne cjelovitosti BiH, ali je istodobno institucionalizirao postojanje Republike Srpske kao entiteta s visokim stupnjem autonomije. Od završetka rata, Republika Srpska ostaje čvrsto povezana s Beogradom kroz „specijalne i paralelne veze“, formalno priznate u okviru Daytonskog ustavnog poretka (Bose, 2002.). Te veze omogućuju Srbiji trajnu prisutnost u političkoj dinamici BiH, čime Republika Srpska funkcionira kao kanal regionalnog utjecaja i simbol transnacionalne srpske zajednice.

U srpskom političkom i društvenom diskursu Republika Srpska postupno je dobila simboličku ulogu „dijela srpskog nacionalnog prostora“, što je posebno vidljivo kroz narrative o nacionalnom jedinstvu i zaštiti srpskog naroda izvan granica Srbije (Gow, 2003.). U tom okviru pojavljuje se i koncept „srpskog sveta“, koji označava ideju kulturnog, jezičnog i identitetskog zajedništva Srba u regiji i dijaspori. Premda nije formalizirana doktrina, taj koncept ima političku rezonancu i često se koristi kao retorički okvir u kojem se Republika Srpska prikazuje kao važan element ukupnog srpskog identitetskog prostora (Ljubomirović, 2024.).

U širem političko-kulturnom kontekstu, koncept „srpskog sveta“ povremeno se uspoređuje s ruskim pojmom *russkij mir*, koji također označava kulturno i jezično zajedništvo izvan matične države, premda oba pojma imaju različite povijesne, institucionalne i geopolitičke temelje.⁷

Nakon 2000. odnosi između Beograda i Banje Luke dodatno su ojačani kroz redovite političke sastanke, ekonomske sporazume i zajedničke kulturne projekte. U posljednjem desetljeću retorika o „očuvanju Republike Srpske“ sve češće se koristi u kampanjama u Srbiji, čime entitet postaje sredstvo unutarnje političke mobilizacije (Bieber, 2020.).

U kriznim situacijama unutar BiH – poput prijetnji secesijom ili blokada državnih institucija – Beograd zauzima ambivalentan stav: formalno podržava teritorijalni integritet BiH, dok istodobno implicitno podupire rukovodstvo Re-

⁷ Mnogi autori u regionalnim sigurnosnim analizama ističu da se koncept „srpskog sveta“ može promatrati kao suvremena modifikacija ideje „Velike Srbije“, pri čemu se upozorava da bi njegovo političko ostvarivanje moglo dovesti do destabilizacije regije i pogoršanja sigurnosne situacije u državama u okruženju. (Digitalni forenzički centar, 2021).

publike Srpske. Na taj način Republika Srpska postaje važan element identitetskog diskursa koji nadilazi državne granice i reproducira ideju transnacionalne „srpske zajednice“.⁸

Crna Gora i transnacionalno srpsko pitanje

Od obnove crnogorske neovisnosti 2006. godine, odnosi između Srbije i Crne Gore prolaze kroz razdoblja napetosti, povremenih normalizacija i izraženih identitetskih sukoba. Referendum o neovisnosti označio je kraj državne zajednice Srbije i Crne Gore, čime je Beograd po prvi put ostao bez formalnog političkog i institucionalnog utjecaja na crnogorsku unutarnju politiku.

Pitanje položaja srpske zajednice u Crnoj Gori, statusa Srpske pravoslavne crkve (SPC) i sporovi oko ključnih identitetskih tema – poput jezika, državnih simbola i povijesnih interpretacija – ubrzo su postali dominantne točke prijepora. Srbija je kroz službene i neslužbene kanale redovito izražavala „brigu“ za prava Srba u Crnoj Gori, često intervenirajući verbalno i diplomatski u unutarnje političke rasprave u Podgorici (Morrison, 2008.; Morrison i Garčević, 2025.).

Vrhunac napetosti uslijedio je 2019. i 2020. godine tijekom masovnih litija⁹ koje je organizirala SPC, potaknutih donošenjem *Zakona o slobodi vjeroispovijesti*. Ti su događaji mobilizirali velik broj građana, ne samo zbog pitanja crkvene imovine, nego i zbog sveopće frustracije korupcijom, nepotizmom i društvenom nejednakošću (Popović i Ećimović, 2023.).

Crna Gora u srpskom političkom diskursu često se prikazuje kao „izdvojeni dio srpskog nacionalnog prostora“, dok se crnogorski narod u ekstremnijim narativima opisuje kao „izmišljena nacija“. Takve formulacije potiču političke podjele unutar Crne Gore, osnažuju proruske i prosrpske političke opcije te služe kao instrument unutarnje političke mobilizacije u Srbiji (Morrison, 2009.; Mrduljaš, 2023., Đuranović, 2023.).

⁸ Ovaj diskurs dodatno je učvršćen navedenom strategijom prema dijaspori i Srbima u „regionu“, koja Srbiju eksplicitno definira kao matičnu državu svih Srba u susjednim državama, čime se transnacionalna srpska zajednica pretvara u jasno artikulirani državni interes (Vlada Republike Srbije, 2011).

⁹ Litije su ritualizirani, procesijski prosvjedi s religijskim obilježjima koji su u Crnoj Gori 2019.–2020. mobilizirali desetine tisuća građana, strukturirani oko diskursa obrane „ugroženog pravoslavnog i srpskog identiteta“. One predstavljaju jedinstven primjer spajanja vjerske prakse, političkog aktivizma i geopolitičkih utjecaja u suvremenom balkanskom kontekstu.

Za razliku od Kosova i Republike Srpske, Crna Gora se nakon 2006. profilirala kao članica NATO-a (od 2017.) i kandidatkinja za članstvo u EU, što ograničava mogućnosti Beograda da formalno djeluje kao zaštitnik „srpskog pitanja“. Umjesto izravne političke intervencije, Srbija razvija instrumente meke moći – prvenstveno SPC, medijske kanale i kulturne organizacije – čime održava simbolički narativ o „srpskom svetu“ i zajedništvu izvan vlastitih granica.

Ovakav pristup dodatno otežava proces normalizacije bilateralnih odnosa i dovodi do periodičnih eskalacija, osobito u predizbornim razdobljima. Istodobno, transnacionalno „srpsko pitanje“ u Crnoj Gori funkcionira kao produžetak unutarnje politike Srbije, omogućujući vlastima da kroz vanjskopolitički diskurs održavaju simboličku homogenizaciju biračkog tijela.

Na taj se način oblikuje kontinuitet srpske vanjske politike, u kojoj pitanja Kosova, Republike Srpske i Crne Gore zajedno s praksom multivektorizma čine ključne alate održavanja identitetskog diskursa i strateškog vakuuma.

Analitički dio: Strateški vakuum i identitetski konflikt

Povijesni i kontekstualni okvir prethodnog poglavlja pružio je uvid u kronološki razvoj ključnih vanjskopolitičkih i unutarnjopolitičkih obrazaca Srbije od raspada Jugoslavije do suvremenog razdoblja. Na temelju tog pregleda, u ovom poglavlju ulazi se u dublju analizu mehanizama koji oblikuju srpsku geopolitiku, s posebnim naglaskom na identitetski konflikt i strateški vakuum.

Kroz analizu mitova i narativa, odnosa prema Kosovu, Republici Srpskoj i Crnoj Gori, te prakse multivektorske vanjske politike, u nastavku se istražuju načini na koje se identitetski konflikt i strateški vakuum međusobno isprepliću i oblikuju suvremenu srpsku geopolitiku.

Mitovi i narativi kao instrumenti vanjske i unutarnje politike

Kao što je rečeno, u suvremenoj srpskoj geopolitici, mitovi i narativi igraju ključnu ulogu ne samo kao simbolički izrazi kolektivnog identiteta, već kao aktivni instrumenti unutarnje političke mobilizacije i legitimiranja vanjske politike. Ovi narativi ne djeluju samo na razini „kulturnog sjećanja“, već služe

kao dinamičan resurs kojim političke elite oblikuju percepciju prijatelji, prijatelja i neprijatelja, te opravdavaju svoje postupke i strategije (Anderson, 1983.; Gordy, 2013.).

Naglašavanje dokumenata poput Rezolucije 1244 i Daytonskog sporazuma u diskursu o „strateškoj pragmatičnosti“ pokazuje da se navodno realpolitički pristupi često oslanjaju na identitetske kote, a ne na konzistentne kriterije odluka (Pavić i Beriša, 2025.).

Najistaknutiji primjer ovakvog narativa jest spomenuti mit o Kosovu kao „srpskom Jerusalimu“, koji prelazi granice običnog povijesnog sjećanja i funkcionira kao ključna identitetska matrica (Perica, 2002.; Perica, 2017.; Judah, 2008.; Bieber, 2020.). Ovaj mit omogućava političko pozicioniranje prema unutra – homogenizacijom društva oko „svetog pitanja“ – i prema van – kroz prikazivanje Srbije kao „žrtve povijesne nepravde“ i čuvara „duhovne civilizacije“.

Sličnu funkciju ima i koncept „srpskog sveta“, koji se koristi za održavanje osjećaja transnacionalnog srpskog jedinstva i kulturno-političke solidarnosti sa Srbima u BiH (Republika Srpska), Crnoj Gori i dijaspori.¹⁰ Ovaj narativ u praksi služi za stvaranje „mentalnih granica“ koje nadilaze državne okvire, čime se proizvodi stalna atmosfera ugroženosti i legitimizira intervencionizam Beograda u unutarnja pitanja susjednih država (Bieber, 2020.; Ramet, 2005.; Gordy, 1999.).

Još jedan ključan narativ predstavlja mit o „tradicionalnom prijateljstvu i pravoslavnoj braći“ s Rusijom, koji služi kao simbolički oslonac za legitimizaciju multivektorske vanjske politike i unutarnju homogenizaciju.¹¹ Ovaj diskurs, premda historijski više puta demantiran (npr. Rusija je na Berlinskom kongresu 1878. godine formalno priznala okupaciju BiH od strane Austro-Ugarske), upor-

¹⁰ Iako se sintagma „srpski svet“ ne pojavljuje u službenim strateškim dokumentima Republike Srbije, njezina programska i institucionalna osnova uvelike je postavljena *Strategijom očuvanja i jačanja odnosa matične države i dijaspore i matične države i Srba u regiji*, koju je Narodna skupština usvojila 24. veljače 2011. godine (Službeni glasnik RS, br. 4/2011). Ovaj dokument definira ciljeve očuvanja nacionalnog identiteta Srba izvan granica Republike Srbije, kao i razvoj političke, gospodarske, obrazovne i kulturne povezanosti sa srpskom dijasporom i Srbima u susjednim državama. Neki autori ističu se da je upravo ova strategija, iako u formalnom okviru politike prema dijaspori, stvorila normativne i organizacijske pretpostavke za ono što je kasnije u političkom diskursu i publicistici nazvano „srpskim svetom“.

¹¹ Prema nalazima istraživanja Beogradskog centra za bezbednosnu politiku iz listopada 2019., 40% građana Srbije doživljava Rusiju kao najvećeg prijatelja zemlje, dok 72% ispitanih ocjenjuje ruski utjecaj u zemlji pozitivnim, što predstavlja porast od 11% u odnosu na 2017. godinu (Bjeloš, Vuksanović i Šterić, 2022.).

no se reproducira kroz politički govor, obrazovanje i medije. On Srbiji omogućuje da održava „mentalno sidro“ prema Istoku, opravdavajući multivektorsku vanjsku politiku i istovremeno potičući otpornost prema zapadnim pritiscima (Judah, 2008.; Ramet, 2005.; Bieber, 2020.). Mit o Rusiji funkcionira kao simbolički oslonac koji jača kolektivni osjećaj sigurnosti i kulturne posebnosti, a istodobno služi kao instrument unutarnje mobilizacije i opravdanja za izbjegavanje euroatlantskih integracija. Ovakav raskorak dodatno potvrđuju recentna empirijska istraživanja, koja pokazuju snažnu emocionalnu naklonost prema Rusiji i istodobno ambivalentan odnos prema EU.¹²

Pored toga, mitovi o „vekovnim neprijateljima“ i „istorijskoj misiji Srbije“ stalno se obnavljaju kroz politički diskurs, obrazovne programe i medije, čime se jača kolektivni osjećaj misije i opravdava kontinuirano balansiranje u vanjskoj politici. Ovi narativi omogućuju elitama da preusmjere pažnju s unutarnjih socio-ekonomskih problema na simboličke borbe, čime se stvara privid nacionalnog jedinstva i skreće fokus sa stvarnih izazova poput korupcije, demokratskog deficita i ekonomske stagnacije (Gordy, 1999.; Subotić, 2010.).

Kritičari bi mogli tvrditi da narativi sami po sebi nemaju dovoljnu mobilizacijsku moć bez konkretnih socio-ekonomskih faktora i institucionalne infrastrukture. Međutim, iskustvo Srbije pokazuje da mitovi, kada su sustavno integrirani u političke strukture i potkrijepljeni medijskom podrškom, mogu djelovati kao izuzetno snažan mehanizam političke kontrole i dugoročne stabilizacije režima.

Na taj način, mitovi i narativi ne samo da reproduciraju postojeći identitetski okvir, već aktivno oblikuju i održavaju strateški vakuum – omogućujući političkim elitama da izbjegnu donošenje jasnih i dugoročnih vanjskopolitičkih odluka, dok istovremeno učvršćuju unutarnju legitimaciju. Ovaj mehanizam predstavlja osnovni sloj u analizi identitetskog konflikta kao izvora geopolitičke neodlučnosti Srbije.

¹² Prema ekskluzivnom istraživanju Ipsosa za RTS iz srpnja 2023. godine, 45% građana Srbije izjasnilo bi se za ulazak u EU, dok bi 30% bilo protiv, a 12% neodlučno. Istovremeno, Rusija je percipirana kao najpouzdaniji prijatelj Srbije (najpovoljnije ocjene), dok NATO uživa izrazito nepovoljno mišljenje kod 74% građana. Ovi podaci ukazuju na ambivalentan odnos prema Zapadu i snažnu emocionalnu povezanost s Rusijom, oblikovanu povijesnim i medijskim faktorima. Izvor: Ipsos Serbia, Ekskluzivno istraživanje za RTS – kome su Srbi naklonjeni i da li bi danas ušli u EU, srpanj 2023. Dostupno na: <https://www.rts.rs/lat/vesti/drustvo/5605848/ekskluzivno-istrazivanje-ipsosa-za-rtss-kome-su-srbi-naklonjeni-i-da-li-bi-danas-usli-u-eu.html> [pristupljeno 14. srpnja 2025.].

Kosovo: mit, pregovarački resurs i identitetski "stijeg"

Analitički pristup Kosovu razotkriva njegove funkcionalne dimenzije unutar suvremene srpske geopolitike. Umjesto da bude tek teritorijalno pitanje, Kosovo djeluje kao višeslojni politički konstrukt – mitološki simbol, pregovarački resurs i identitetski „stijeg“.

Mit o Kosovu kao „srpskom Jerusalimu“ nadilazi povijesnu naraciju i postaje temeljna komponenta nacionalne mitologije (Gordy, 1999.). U kolektivnoj svijesti simbolizira moralnu obvezu i vječnu dužnost očuvanja „svetog tla“. Taj mit se koristi za unutarnju homogenizaciju društva, gdje svako odstupanje od nepopustljivog stava prema Kosovu poprima značenje izdaje nacionalnog identiteta. Time se stvara trajni okvir političke mobilizacije, u kojem su kompromis i pragmatizam percipirani kao moralna slabost.

NATO intervencija 1999. godine, duboko utisnuta u kolektivno pamćenje kao potvrda narativa o Srbiji kao „žrtvi Zapada“, dodatno je ojačala mitološku dimenziju Kosova i legitimirala dugotrajno nepovjerenje prema euroatlantskim institucijama (Ramet, 2005.; Judah, 2008.). Time je stvoren psihopolitički okvir u kojem se svaka suradnja sa Zapadom mora opravdavati kroz retoriku očuvanja „suvereniteta“ i „nezavisnosti“.¹³

Na vanjskopolitičkom planu, Kosovo se koristi kao pregovarački resurs u odnosima sa Zapadom. Srbija nominalno izražava opredjeljenje za europske integracije, ali istodobno koristi pitanje Kosova kao sredstvo pritiska i legitimiranja vlastite pozicije u međunarodnim pregovorima. Ova „Kosovo karta“ omogućuje održavanje stalne diplomatske napetosti i jača percepciju otpornosti na vanjske pritiske (Vuksanović, 2025.; European Commission, 2024.).

Kosovo istodobno funkcionira kao identitetski stijeg – simbol otpora globalizacijskim i zapadnim integracijskim procesima. Kroz stalno oživljavanje narativa o „vekovnim neprijateljima“ i „istorijskoj misiji“, kosovsko pitanje postaje sredstvo legitimiranja autoritarnih praksi i održavanja društvene kohezije kroz antagonizam prema vanjskom „Drugom“.

Unutar te strukture Kosovski mit djeluje kao oblik simboličkog kapitala (Bourdieu, 1991.) koji omogućuje političkim elitama da redistribuiraju društvene

¹³ NATO bombardiranje 1999. u međunarodnopravnoj je literaturi često opisano kao „simbolički presedan“: s jedne strane kao nezakonita ali legitimna humanitarna intervencija (Cassese, 1999.), a s druge kao nezakonita upotreba sile i opasan presedan za buduće zaoblazanje UN-a (Simma, 1999.; Gray, 2008.). Upravo ta pravna ambivalencija dodatno je učvrstila srpski identitetski narativ o „žrtvi Zapada“.

frustracije i učvrste vlastiti autoritet. Preusmjeravanjem kolektivne energije na vanjske „neprijatelje“, sužava se prostor za unutarnju političku konkurenciju i kritički diskurs. Kroz takvu funkcionalizaciju mita geopolitika postaje produžena arena identitetskog sukoba, gdje teritorij prestaje biti isključivo prostor, a postaje simbolička matrica identiteta (Ó Tuathail, 1996.).

Iako mitovi sami po sebi nisu negativni fenomeni, u srpskom slučaju njihova se politička upotreba pretvara u mehanizam održavanja strateškog vakuuma: država deklarativno teži „očuvanju Kosova“, ali bez stvarne volje ili mogućnosti da taj cilj provede, čime perpetuira stanje permanentne neodlučnosti. Kosovo tako postaje paradigmatički primjer međugre identitetskog konflikta i strateškog vakuuma – istodobno središnji simbol, pregovarački instrument i alat unutarnje stabilizacije.¹⁴

U suvremenom međunarodnom kontekstu, činjenica da je Kosovo 2008. godine proglasilo neovisnost, priznatu od strane većine država članica UN-a, nameće dodatno ograničenje srpskoj vanjskoj politici. Ta realnost dodatno potvrđuje kako je srpski odnos prema Kosovu manje pitanje teritorijalne kontrole, a više pitanje simboličkog opstanka i identitetske samopotrde.

BiH: Republika Srpska i „srpski svet“

Koncept „srpskog sveta“ označava simboličko-političku ideju o kulturnom, jezičnom i identitetskom jedinstvu srpskog naroda u regiji i dijaspori. Iako nema formalno-pravni status, on funkcionira kao retorički okvir političke mobilizacije, usporediv s ruskim konceptom *russskij mir*. U tom kontekstu, Republika Srpska predstavlja središnji, praktični i simbolički izraz te ideje.

Jedan od najeksplicitnijih političkih iskaza u vezi sa „srpskim svetom“ dao je tadašnji ministar obrane Aleksandar Vulin, koji je 2020. izjavio da „Vučić treba stvarati Srpski svet“, naglasivši pritom da je „predsjednik Srbije predsjednik svih Srba“. U istom obraćanju Vulin je ustvrdio da se „Srbi nemaju nikome nizašto pravdati“ zbog težnje političkom jedinstvu (Danas, 2020.). Takve izjave potvrđuju da „srpski svet“ nije tek analitička kategorija, nego samopercepcijski i politički artikuliran projekt koji nadilazi državne granice.

¹⁴ Za razliku od inkluzivnih mitova koji potiču otvorenost i izgradnju proaktivnog identiteta (npr. američki „frontier spirit“, „Poljska kao Krist među narodima“ ili francuski revolucionarni mit „*République une et indivisible*“), kosovski mit u suvremenom kontekstu funkcionira kao ekskluzivni mit, usmjeren na jačanje unutarnje kohezije putem narativa stalne ugroženosti. Upravo ta dinamika povezuje se s pojmom „*victimhood nationalism*“, gdje kolektivna percepcija žrtve postaje centralni resurs političke mobilizacije i očuvanja režimske stabilnosti.

Od svoga nastanka tijekom rata 1990-ih i institucionalizacije u Daytonu 1995., Republika Srpska u Srbiji se percipira kao simbol „očuvanja srpstva“ izvan matične države (Bieber, 2020.; Ramet, 2005.; Gow, 2003.). Narativ o Republici Srpskoj funkcionira kao produžetak mitskog diskursa o „vjekovnim srpskim teritorijima“ i predstavlja ključni element transnacionalne identitetske politike. Kroz retoriku „specijalnih i paralelnih veza“, Republika Srpska se koristi za jačanje osjećaja nacionalnog jedinstva i transgranične solidarnosti, čime se reproducira imaginarna zajednica koja nadilazi formalne granice (Ramet, 2005.; Mujanović, 2020.).

Ovakva institucionalizirana bliskost ima i funkcionalnu dimenziju. *Sporazum o specijalnim i paralelnim odnosima* iz 1997. godine uspostavlja okvir trajne političke i kulturne koordinacije između Beograda i Banje Luke, čime se formalizira njihova međusobna ovisnost. Republika Srpska tako djeluje kao „živi dokaz“ postojanja šireg srpskog prostora.¹⁵

Kao rezultat, Republika Srpska omogućava Beogradu da zadrži politički utjecaj u BiH i da istodobno koristi taj odnos kao unutarnjopolitički resurs. U praksi, Republika Srpska postaje dvostruki instrument: sredstvo vanjskopolitičke projekcije moći i unutarnje konsolidacije kroz narativ „zaštite nacionalnih interesa“. Time se održava stabilna neodlučnost – Srbija formalno priznaje suverenitet BiH, ali ga istodobno podriva kroz simboličku i političku podršku srpskom entitetu.

Takva strategija produbljuje identitetski konflikt unutar BiH i istodobno perpetuira strateški vakuum Srbije: neodlučnost između regionalne suradnje i transnacionalne homogenizacije postaje trajni modus političkog djelovanja. Republika Srpska, u tom smislu, funkcionira kao ključan primjer međuigre diskurzivne kontrole i geopolitičke neodlučnosti, kojom se istodobno reproducira identitetsko jedinstvo i izbjegava jasno definirano vanjskopolitičko usmjerenje.

¹⁵ Sporazum o specijalnim paralelnim vezama je sporazum između Republike Srbije i Republike Srpske (BiH), prvi put potpisan 28. veljače 1997. godine. Sporazum je implementiran u prosincu 2010. godine. Ovaj sporazum je potpisan radi razvijanja suradnje između Republike Srbije i BiH entiteta Republike Srpske u područjima privrede i korištenja privrednih resursa, planiranja, privatizacije i denacionalizacije, znanosti i tehnologije, obrazovanja, kulture i sporta, zdravstva i socijalne politike, turizma i zaštite okoliša, informiranja, zaštite sloboda i prava građana, kao i suzbijanje kriminala.

Crna Gora: litije i transnacionalna instrumentalizacija identiteta

Crna Gora predstavlja jedan od najsloženijih i najosjetljivijih slučajeva u suvremenoj srpskoj geopolitici, gdje se isprepliću pitanja nacionalnog identiteta, crkvene pripadnosti i vanjsko-političkog utjecaja. Nakon obnove neovisnosti 2006. godine i ulaska u NATO 2017., Crna Gora je formalno usmjerena prema euroatlantskim integracijama, ali u društvu su ostali snažni rasjedi vezani uz položaj Srpske pravoslavne crkve i percepciju nacionalne pripadnosti velikog dijela stanovništva (Morrison i Garčević, 2025.).

Masovne litije 2019. i 2020. godine postale su diskurzivni katalizator srpskog identitetskog preporoda. Iako su službeno bile usmjerene protiv *Zakona o slobodi vjeroispovijesti*, njihov stvarni politički učinak bio je redefiniranje identitetskog pejzaža Crne Gore.¹⁶ Kako pokazuju Popović i Ećimović (2023.), litije su erodirale povjerenje u dotadašnju vlast, pridonijele padu Demokratske partije socijalista i transformirale SPC u transnacionalnog aktera srpske politike.

Uloga SPC-a nadilazila je religijski okvir: crkva je postala instrument diskurzivne mobilizacije, povezujući unutarnju političku homogenizaciju Srbije s vanjskom projekcijom utjecaja u regiji. Takva strategija potvrđuje logiku „srpskog sveta“, u kojem identitet i religija djeluju kao paradiplomatski resursi u službi očuvanja unutarnje stabilnosti i vanjske fleksibilnosti.

Crna Gora se u tom diskursu konstruira kao „iznevjerena sestra“ – simbolički prostor izgubljenog jedinstva. Taj narativ ima dvostruku funkciju: unutar Srbije potiče osjećaj zajedničke ugroženosti i služi konsolidaciji biračkog tijela, dok prema Crnoj Gori djeluje kao sredstvo osporavanja njezine državne samobitnosti i euroatlantskog puta.

Analiza pokazuje da ovi procesi nisu spontani, već svjesno vođena strategija instrumentalizacije identiteta. Politički diskurs, medijsko umrežavanje i simboličko legitimiranje crkvenih aktera iz Beograda djeluju kao sustav meke moći koji proizvodi „trans-nacionalnu lojalnost“. Takva strategija omogućuje Srbiji održavanje strateškog vakuuma: odgađanje jasnog vanjskopolitičkog opredjeljenja uz istodobno jačanje osjećaja identitetske misije u regiji.

¹⁶ Vjersko pitanje u Crnoj Gori, osobito sukob između SPC-a i obnovljene Crnogorske pravoslavne crkve (CPC), imalo je ključnu mobilizacijsku ulogu u događajima 2019.–2020. godine (litije). SPC se pritom pojavljuje kao transnacionalni instrument srpske politike, čime se identitetski konflikt dodatno produbljuje i prelazi granice nacionalne države (Morrison i Garčević, 2025.).

Crna Gora je stoga još jedan paradigmatički primjer pretvaranja identitetskog konflikta u geopolitički alat. On služi ne samo vanjskopolitičkoj projekciji, nego i unutarnjoj reprodukciji moći, čime se potvrđuje temeljna teza rada o međudnosu strateškog vakuuma i instrumentaliziranog identiteta.

Balansiranje između Istoka i Zapada: multivektorizam bez sidra¹⁷

Dok je u povijesno-kontekstualnom okviru prikazano kako se politika multivektorizma razvila i institucionalizirala pod SNS-om, analitički fokus ovdje je na njezinoj funkcionalnoj ulozi: umjesto da djeluje kao promišljena strategija *hedginga*, multivektorizam u srpskom slučaju postaje mehanizam održavanja strateškog vakuuma i reprodukcije identitetskog konflikta.

Dio literature multivektorizam prikazuje kao „stratešku pragmatičnost“ (Pavić i Beriša, 2025.), a sličnu tezu iznosi i Dragišić (2021.), koji argumentira da se elementi „velike strategije Srbije“ mogu identificirati u nizu dokumenata i narativa nacionalnih elita, pri čemu *Strategiju nacionalne sigurnosti* (2019) smatra jednim od ključnih oslonaca takve strategijske samopercepcije (Dragišić, 2021.).¹⁸

Ovaj rad, međutim, polazi od suprotne pretpostavke: umjesto dosljedne strategijske pragmatičnosti, srpski multivektorizam pokazuje obilježja pseudo-sidra. Ključni kriterij razlike jest odsutnost konzistentnih normativnih i institucionalnih posljedica – umjesto stabilizacije, multivektorizam proizvodi akumu-

¹⁷ Jugoslavija je u hladnoratovskom poretku igrala nerazmjerno veliku ulogu kao suosnivačica Pokreta nesvrstanih i domaćin prvog samita u Beogradu 1961. (Kullaa, 2012.; Jović, 2009.). Takvu ulogu omogućavali su specifični odnosi u svijetu i položaj same Jugoslavije – njezin geopolitički razmještaj između dvaju blokova, aktivna uloga u dekolonizacijskim procesima te relativna unutarnja kohezija i vojna moć. Današnja Srbija se često simbolički poziva na to nasljeđe, primjerice kroz organizaciju 60. obljetnice Pokreta nesvrstanih 2021. u Beogradu, no realne pretpostavke za takvu globalnu ulogu više ne postoje, budući da joj nedostaju demografski, ekonomski i institucionalni kapaciteti.

¹⁸ Dodatnu težinu takvoj interpretaciji daje sadržaj same *Strategije nacionalne sigurnosti Republike Srbije*, koja istodobno afirmira tri međusobno teško uskladive orijentacije. S jedne strane, dokument navodi „članstvo u Evropskoj uniji kao strateški cilj Republike Srbije“ (Republika Srbija, Narodna skupština, 2019a). Istodobno potvrđuje „politiku vojne neutralnosti“ kao trajni princip, dok posebno naglašava „tradicionalno dobre odnose i saradnju u oblasti bezbednosti s Ruskom Federacijom te saradnju od posebnog značaja s Kinom“. Ovakva normativna konfiguracija pokazuje da je multivektornost institucionalizirana u samim strateškim dokumentima države, čime se reproducira upravo ona neodlučnost koju političke elite zatim aktivno koriste.

laciju kontradikcija, slabljenje međunarodnog kredibiliteta i trajnu unutarnju mobilizaciju. Drugim riječima, ono što Pavić, Beriša i Dragišić vide kao „veliku strategiju“, ovdje se interpretira kao svjesno održavan strateški vakuum.

Ovakav multivektorizam institucionalno utjelovljen i u *Strategiji obrane Republike Srbije* (2019.) istodobno afirmira „članstvo u Evropskoj uniji kao strateški cilj“, potvrđuje „politiku vojne neutralnosti“, te implicitno naglašava produbljivanje sigurnosne i obrambene suradnje s Rusijom i Kinom.¹⁹ Ova kombinacija teško spojivih orijentacija pokazuje da je multivektorizam ugrađen u sam normativni okvir države.

No, empirijski obrasci upućuju na odsustvo kriterija koji bi razlikovali planiranu strategiju od politički korisne neodlučnosti. Niska stopa usklađenosti Srbije sa ZVSP-om EU (54% u 2023., 51% u 2024.) pokazuje kontinuirano normativno udaljavanje od europskog okvira (European Commission, 2024.). Paralelno, Srbija produbljuje ekonomsko i političko partnerstvo s Kinom – sporazum o slobodnoj trgovini stupio je na snagu 1. srpnja 2024., a tijekom posjeta Xi Jinpinga potpisano je 28 novih dokumenata i partnerstvo podignuto na razinu „zajedničke budućnosti“ (AP News, 2024.). Projekti poput modernizacije pruge Beograd–Budimpešta dodatno učvršćuju taj smjer (Railway Technology, 2023.).

Ovakav multivektorizam nije tek posljedica pragmatične geopolitike, nego dio unutarnjo-političke strategije: Zapad se u domaćem diskursu prikazuje kao izvor „pritisaka“, dok se Rusija i Kina predstavljaju kao jamci suvereniteta. Ovaj dualni narativ omogućuje vlastima održavanje permanentne političke mobilizacije i legitimiranje autoritarnog upravljanja.²⁰

Ruska agresija na Ukrajinu 2022. godine pokazala je granice takve politike. Odbijanje Srbije da uvede sankcije Rusiji nije odraz neutralnosti, nego učinak identitetskog diskursa i političke ovisnosti o istočnim akterima (Beckmann-Dierkes i Rankić, 2022.; Reuters, 2022.). Istodobno, Srbija je preko trećih zemalja omogućila isporuke streljiva koje su završile u Ukrajini, procijenjene na

¹⁹ *Strategija obrane Republike Srbije* istodobno navodi „vojnu neutralnost Republike Srbije“ kao trajno opredjeljenje, obvezu „unapređenja učešća u sistemu ZBOP EU“, uključujući borbene grupe EU, te „razvijanje i jačanje saradnje sa Ruskom Federacijom“ i „saradnju od posebnog značaja sa NR Kinom u oblasti odbrane“. (Republika Srbija, Narodna skupština, 2019b)

²⁰ Ovakav dvojni narativ – Zapad kao izvor „pritisaka“, a Rusija i Kina kao jamci suvereniteta – nije tek analitička konstrukcija, nego je jasno vidljiv u javnim istupima najviših državnih dužnosnika. To potvrđuju brojne izjave srpskih predstavnika, uključujući i tvrdnju predsjednika Vučića da se u Srbiji „vodi proxy rat između Istoka i Zapada“, čime se proizvodi percepcija vanjske ugroženosti i legitimizira multivektorska vanjska politika (Al Jazeera Balkans, 2022.).

oko 800 milijuna eura (Financial Times, 2024.) – što dodatno potvrđuje nedostatak koherentne strategije.

Treći element koji produbljuje strateški vakuum jest slabljenje kredibiliteta politike proširenja EU. „Zamor od proširenja“, unutarne krize EU i geopolitička nestabilnost smanjuju atraktivnost eurointegracija, čime se otvara prostor da vlasti u Beogradu multivektorsku politiku predstavljaju kao racionalnu „strategiju fleksibilnosti“, iako ona u praksi funkcionira kao instrument izbjegavanja jasnog strateškog sidra (European Commission, 2024.).

Dakle, na razini ponašanja srpski multivektorizam ne proizvodi stabilizacijske ishode karakteristične za *hedging*, nego akumulira kontradikcije. Spoj normativnog udaljavanja od EU, ekonomske integracije s Kinom i „tihe“ potpore Ukrajini preko trećih zemalja pokazuje da je riječ o pseudosidru – politički korisnoj neodlučnosti, a ne dosljednoj *grand strategy*.

Elite i održavanje geopolitičkog vakuuma

Uloga političkih elita ključna je u održavanju geopolitičke neodlučnosti i identitetskog konflikta u Srbiji. U skladu s klasičnim teorijama elita Gaetana Mosce i Vilfreda Pareta, političke elite reproduciraju svoju moć kombinacijom simboličke kontrole, manipulacije narativima i sprečavanja nastanka alternativnih političkih opcija (Mosca, 1939.; Pareto, 1968.).

U srpskom kontekstu, elite aktivno proizvode i održavaju ono što se u ovom radu naziva strateški vakuum. Kroz fluidnu i kontradiktornu retoriku, selektivno prizivanje povijesnih mitova i balansiranje između međunarodnih aktera, one izbjegavaju jasno definiranje strateških ciljeva (Subotić, 2010.; Kapidžić i Stojarová, 2023.; Bieber, 2020.). Takvo djelovanje u javnosti stvara privid „suverene fleksibilnosti“, dok u praksi vanjska politika funkcionira prvenstveno kao instrument unutarne stabilizacije i kontrole. Stalna mobilizacija protiv „vanjskih neprijatelja“ i „unutarnjih izdajnika“ održava osjećaj permanentne ugroženosti, čime se legitimiraju autoritarne tendencije i koncentracija moći.

Ovakvi diskurzivni mehanizmi nisu samo retorička praksa političkih elita, nego su institucionalizirani i u strateškim dokumentima države. *Strategija nacionalne sigurnosti Republike Srbije* naglašava „očuvanje duhovnog identiteta naroda“ kao je-

dan od ključnih nacionalnih interesa, uz isticanje prijtnji koje dolaze kroz „tuđe obaveštajne službe, propagandne aktivnosti i politički pritisak spolja“²¹

Iako se ponekad tvrdi da je odsustvo strateške orijentacije posljedica objektivnih ograničenja male države, dostupne analize pokazuju da je riječ o svjesno konstruiranoj političkoj tehnologiji koja služi očuvanju hegemonije i reprodukciji *statusa quo* (Gordy, 2013.; Bieber, 2020.). Time strateški vakuum i identitetski konflikt postaju funkcionalni alati u rukama elita, a ne samo refleks strukturalnih slabosti.

Ovaj mehanizam posebno je vidljiv u unutarnjem političkom životu Srbije. Parlamentarni proces obilježen je ciklusima akutnih kriza, prividnih stabilizacija i ponovnih destabilizacija, uz gotovo neprestano raspisivanje izvanrednih izbora tijekom posljednjih dvanaest godina. Izvješća OSCE/ODIHR-a kontinuirano bilježe probleme s medijskim pluralizmom, zloupotrebom javnih resursa, pritiscima na birače i sistematskim narušavanjem jednakosti političkog natjecanja (OSCE/ODIHR, 2012., 2014., 2016., 2020., 2022.). Ovaj obrazac potvrđuje da kronična neodlučnost nije spontana posljedica međunarodnog okruženja, već rezultat režimskog oportunizma i institucionalno održavane nestabilnosti.

Takav model djelovanja izravno se odražava na vanjsku politiku. Kao što je pokazano na primjerima Kosova, Republike Srpske i Crne Gore, elita koristi ključna geopolitička pitanja kao simboličke resurse za unutarnju konsolidaciju moći, čime se dodatno produbljuje strateški vakuum i perpetuira identitetski konflikt.

Javno mnijenje: ambivalencija između Istoka i Zapada

Obrasci strateškog vakuuma i identitetskog konflikta jasno se reflektiraju i u srpskom javnom mnijenju. Istraživanje Beogradskog centra za sigurnosnu politiku pokazuje da se većina građana protivi uvođenju sankcija Rusiji, pri čemu se gotovo 80% ispitanika protivi takvom potezu, a više od polovice navodi „iskustvo sankcija iz 1990-ih“ kao ključni razlog tog stava (Bjeloš, Vuksanović i Šterić, 2022.).

²¹ *Strategija nacionalne sigurnosti Republike Srbije*, usvojena 2019., izričito uključuje identitet u kategoriju nacionalnih interesa te u poglavlju o prijtnjama naglašava djelovanje „stranih obaveštajnih službi“, „specijalnih propagandnih aktivnosti“ i „političkog pritiska spolja“. Time se diskurs identitetske ugroženosti ne reproducira samo u političkoj retorici, nego i u institucionalnom okviru sigurnosne politike države, što potvrđuje tezu o strateškom vakuumu kao svjesno održavanom političkom resursu.

Podaci IPSOS-a iz prosinca 2024. pokazuju da bi 46% građana podržalo članstvo Srbije u EU, dok bi se njih 30% tome protivilo, što upućuje na rast, ali i trajnu podijeljenost (Ipsos, 2024.). Regionalni podaci Balkan Barometra 2024 dodatno potvrđuju ambivalentnost: samo 34% građana Srbije vjeruje da bi članstvo u EU bilo dobro za ekonomiju, dok 26% smatra da bi imalo negativne posljedice (Regional Cooperation Council, 2024.).

Ovi nalazi pokazuju da se srpsko društvo nalazi u stanju permanentnog identitetskog rascjepa: s jedne strane postoji svijest o ekonomskim i sigurnosnim prednostima europskih integracija, a s druge duboka simbolička vezanost uz Rusiju i narativ „istočne zaštite“. Takva ambivalencija proizvodi dvostruki pritisak na političke elite: svako jasno strateško opredjeljenje prema Zapadu ili Istoku riskira gubitak dijela biračkog tijela.

Javno mnijenje stoga ne djeluje kao stabilizacijski faktor, nego kao generator strateškog vakuuma – ono održava stanje neodlučnosti i legitimizira multivektorski pristup kao „narodno očekivanje“, a ne samo kao političku taktiku režima. Multivektorizam tako nije tek svjesni izbor političkih elita, nego izraz duboko ukorijenjenog identitetskog konflikta u samom društvu, koje oscilira između racionalnih koristi i simboličkih lojalnosti.

Komparativna perspektiva

U komparativnom dijelu analiziraju se tri različita tipa vanjskopoličkog sidra: Hrvatska kao primjer čvrstog euroatlantskog sidra, Mađarska kao formalno usidrena ali ambivalentna prema Istoku, te Turska kao slučaj policentričnog sidra, što omogućuje jasnije sagledavanje srpskog multivektorizma bez sidra.

Hrvatska: euroatlantska konsolidacija

Hrvatska predstavlja primjer države koja je nakon raspada Jugoslavije uspješno provela proces euroatlantske konsolidacije, definirajući jasan vanjskopolički cilj – članstvo u EU i NATO savezu. Ovaj strateški smjer bio je rezultat kombinacije povijesnih, kulturnih i sigurnosnih čimbenika, ali i političke volje domaćih elita (Tatalović, Grizold, i Cvrtila, 2008.). Članstvom u NATO-u 2009. godine i u EU 2013., Hrvatska je formalno „usidrila“ svoju vanjsku politiku unutar euroatlantskog okvira, čime je značajno smanjila prostor za vanjskopoličku neodlučnost i unutarnju instrumentalizaciju identitetskih pitanja.

Naravno, ni Hrvatska nije imuna na unutarnje identitetske sporove, osobito u kontekstu interpretacije ratne povijesti i odnosa prema manjinama. Međutim, ovi konflikti ne utječu na temeljnu vanjskopolitičku orijentaciju.²² U tom smislu, Hrvatska pokazuje kako jasno strateško sidro može ograničiti instrumentalizaciju identitetskih narativa u vanjskoj politici, istodobno jačajući međunarodni kredibilitet.

Mađarska: iliberalizam s jasno definiranim sidrom

Mađarska pod vodstvom Viktora Orbána razvila je koncept „iliberalne demokracije“, koji se temelji na jakom nacionalnom identitetu i kontroli nad političkim institucijama (Buzogány, 2017.; Scheppele, 2018.). Unatoč čestim konfliktima s Bruxellesom, Mađarska zadržava formalno sidro u EU i NATO-u. Orbánova vanjska politika koristi retoriku suverenizma i kritike liberalnog poretka, ali istodobno jasno prepoznaje stratešku i sigurnosnu važnost euroatlantskog okvira. Ova „iliberalna stabilnost“ omogućuje Budimpešti da balansira unutarnje autoritarne prakse s međunarodnim obvezama, koristeći EU fondove i sigurnosne mehanizme kao praktične resurse.

Mađarska tako pokazuje da je moguće zadržati visoku razinu unutarnje političke kontrole i autokratskih elemenata, a da se pritom ne odustaje od temeljnog vanjskopolitičkog sidra. U tom smislu, za razliku od Srbije, Mađarska posjeduje jasno definirani dugoročni geopolitički okvir unatoč unutarnjem iliberalizmu.

Turska: aktivni multivektorizam s jasnim interesom

Turska je primjer države koja prakticira aktivni multivektorizam, ali s jasno definiranim nacionalnim interesom i dugoročnom strategijom. Koncept „strateške dubine“, razvijen od strane Ahmeta Davutoğlua²³, omogućio je Ankari da

²² Istina je da se u hrvatskom političkom prostoru pojavljuju i disonantni glasovi, poput povremenih odstupanja predsjednika Zorana Milanovića od *mainstream* vanjskopolitičkog konsenzusa, osobito u pogledu rata u Ukrajini. Međutim, ti izuzeci imaju ograničen institucionalni domet i ne mijenjaju stratešku orijentaciju Republike Hrvatske, koja ostaje čvrsto usidrena u euroatlantskim strukturama.

²³ Ahmet Davutoğlu je turski politolog i teoretičar međunarodnih odnosa, dugogodišnji profesor na Sveučilištu Marmara i autor utjecajne geopolitičke doktrine „strateške dubine“. Od 2009. do 2014. obnašao je funkciju ministra vanjskih poslova Republike Turske, a potom premijera (2014.–2016.), gdje je nastojao operacionalizirati svoje akademske koncepte u oblikovanju turske vanjske politike. Njegov pristup povezuje osmansko i republikansko nasljeđe s idejom regionalnog aktivizma i višesmjernje diplomacije.

koristi povijesne, kulturne i geopolitičke resurse za oblikovanje regionalne politike (Davutoğlu, 2001.).

Unatoč turbulentnim odnosima s EU, SAD-om i Rusijom, Turska ne prakticira multivektorizam zbog unutarnje neodlučnosti, nego kao instrument za povećanje manevarskog prostora i regionalnog utjecaja. Primjerice: iako su Ankara i Moskva u sirijskom ratu podupirale suprotstavljene strane, obje su istodobno održavale intenzivne kanale koordinacije (npr. Astanski proces) te razvijale suradnju u energetsom i sigurnosnom sektoru. Takva sposobnost simultanog sukobljavanja i suradnje ilustrira pragmatičnu, interesno vođenu logiku turske vanjske politike, koja nije ukorijenjena u identitetskim narativima, već u strateškom kalkuliranju.

Turski model pokazuje kako multivektorizam može funkcionirati kao proaktivna strategija, a ne simptom strateškog vakuuma. U tom kontekstu, Turska je, za razliku od Srbije, uspjela preoblikovati povijesne narative u funkcionalni resurs regionalnog liderstva – djelomično i kroz koncept neoosmanizma, koji reinterpreтира osmansko nasljeđe kao kulturno-diplomatski kapital u suvremenom međunarodnom okruženju.

Srbija: multivektorizam bez strateškog sidra

Usporedba s prethodnim primjerima ukazuje na specifičnost srpskog multivektorizma. Dok Hrvatska i Mađarska, unatoč različitim unutarnjim modelima vlasti, održavaju jasno vanjskopolitičko sidro, a Turska multivektorizam koristi za aktivnu projekciju moći, Srbija ostaje zarobljena u strateškom vakuumu, gdje multivektorizam funkcionira primarno kao unutarnjopolitički resurs.

Dio literature nastoji ovu praksu prikazati kao oblik dosljednog *hedginga* i „strateške pragmatičnosti“ (Pavić i Beriša, 2025.), a sličan argument nudi i Dragišić (2021.), koji tvrdi da se elementi „velike strategije Srbije“ mogu identifikirati u strateškim dokumentima i narativima nacionalnih elita. Međutim, komparativna analiza pokazuje da u srpskom slučaju multivektorizam djeluje kao pseudosidro kako je definirano u ovom radu. Takav model sprječava formiranje stabilnih međunarodnih savezništava, održava stanje permanentne političke mobilizacije te produžava unutarnju autoritarnu dinamiku, uz istodobno slabljenje međunarodnog kredibiliteta Srbije.

Zaključak

Kroz prizmu kritičke geopolitike, analiza suvremene srpske geopolitike pokazala je da su strateški vakuum i identitetski konflikt međusobno povezani i da ih političke elite ne tretiraju kao slabost, nego kao funkcionalan resurs za održavanje unutarnje stabilnosti i vlastite moći. Umjesto jasne strategije, reproducira se stanje neodlučnosti koje zamagľuje stvarne vanjskopolitičke opcije.

Empirijski slućajevi Kosova, Republike Srpske i Crne Gore potvrđuju da identitetski narativi ostaju ključne toćke političke mobilizacije, dok multivektorizam bez ćvrstog sidra održava institucionalnu nesigurnost i simbolićku konfuziju. Usporedba s Hrvatskom, Mađarskom i Turskom jasno pokazuje razliku između konzistentnih geopolitićkih usidrenja. Srbija pritom ostaje zarobljena u paradoksu pseudosidra.

Nasuprot interpretaciji suvremene srpske geopolitike kao oblika pragmatićnog *hedginga*, ovaj rad – oslonjen na empirijske slućajeve i komparativni okvir – jasno pokazuje veću uvjerľjivost perspektive strateškog vakuuma i identitetskog konflikta, ćime se uključuje u širu akademsku raspravu o stremljenjima srpske geopolitike.

Time se istraživacko pitanje – na koji naćin međuodnos strateškog vakuuma i identitetskog konflikta oblikuje suvremenu srpsku geopolitiku – može saćzeti u sljedećem odgovoru: taj međuodnos proizvodi i održava pseudosidro koje zamjenjuje stvarnu strategiju, pri ćemu vanjska politika slući prvenstveno unutarnjoj konsolidaciji rećima.

Dugoroćne implikacije takvog modela su izostanak stabilnih savezništava, trajna regionalna napetost i ogranićeni kapacitet za ostvarenje odrćive vanjskopolitićke orijentacije. Javno mnijenje, obiljećeno trajnom ambivalencijom između Istoka i Zapada, dodatno ućvrććuje ovu matricu jer onemogućava politićke elite da artikuliraju jasno sidro bez rizika od unutarnjeg gubitka legitimiteta. Prevladavanje identitetskog konflikta i uspostava koherentnog geopolitićkog sidra nućni su uvjeti da Srbija izaće iz paradigme strateškog vakuuma. U protivnom, ostat će zarobljena u simbolićkoj „magli“ – nedorasla unutarnjoj konsolidaciji i bez vjerodostojne međunarodne uloge. Kako prevladati taj identitetski konflikt i artikulirati stabilno sidro predstavľjaju otvorena pitanja i predmet su budućih istraćivanja.

Koncepti strateškog vakuuma i identitetskog konflikta nisu samo analitićki okvir za razumijevanje suvremene srpske geopolitike, nego i heuristićki alat primjenjiv na šire regionalne obrasce, s neposrednim implikacijama za oblikovanje učinkovitije politike EU prema Zapadnom Balkanu.

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The Origins of Contemporary Serbian Geopolitics: Strategic Vacuum and Identity Conflict

ABSTRACT

This article analyses contemporary Serbian geopolitics through the lens of strategic vacuum and identity conflict. Building on theoretical assumptions regarding political will, foreign policy coherence, and narratives of collective identity, it highlights the gap between Serbia's declared commitment to European integration and its persistent orientation towards Russia. By critically examining Serbia's foreign policy moves since 2000, as well as the cultural and historical patterns shaping national self-perception, the article argues that Serbia does not balance between East and West out of pragmatic geopolitical reasoning, but rather due to the absence of a clear and sustainable strategy. The strategic vacuum is further intensified by an identity conflict between pro-European aspirations and a mythologized image of Serbia as a historical victim of the West. Three empirical cases are analysed—Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska), and Montenegro—along with the practice of multi-directional foreign policy after 2012, which together confirm that Serbian elites reproduce indecisiveness as a political resource. In a comparative framework, Serbia is contrasted with Croatia, Hungary, and Turkey, underscoring the difference between multi-vector policies with an anchor and multi-vectorism without one. The article concludes that contemporary Serbian geopolitics rests on the combination of strategic vacuum and identity conflict, producing contradictions, institutional misalignments, and symbolic confusion, thereby limiting Serbia's long-term capacity to define a sustainable foreign policy orientation.

KEYWORDS: *Serbia, geopolitics, strategic vacuum, identity conflict, multivectorism*

IVAN BOBAN

Requirements of Modern Air Defence

ANTONIA VODANOVIĆ, IVANA POKRAJČIĆ, TINA MARINIĆ KULIŠ

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usporedba Al-Kaide i ISIL-a**

MARIN JAŠIĆ

**Austrian Permanent Neutrality in the Legal Framework
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to EU Energy Security and Strategic Diversification**

HRVOJE VUKOVIĆ

**Ishodišta suvremene srpske geopolitike: strateški
vakuum i identitetski konflikt**