

THE SOFT AND SMART POWER OF SERBIA AS A MEANS TO SOLVE THE KOSOVO-METOHIIJA ISSUE

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The paper analyses the role of soft and smart power as a strategic means by which it is possible to defend the vital national interests of the Republic of Serbia regarding Kosovo and Metohija. These means of foreign policy gain particular importance in the context of turbulent and dynamic changes at global level, primarily in the sense of rearranging global power relations and shifting power towards new, growing centres, along with the reshaping of the world order towards multipolarity. In the introductory part of the paper, a theoretical approach is taken to consider the main terms and concepts covered by the subject of the research. The central part analyses the elements that make up the Serbian soft and smart power in the light of the aforementioned changes in international relations. In this regard, the most important documents related to the resolution of the issue of Kosovo and Metohija have been analysed. The position of Serbia in relation to the key factors at international level is also discussed, as well as their positioning in relation to this problem. In the final part of the paper, an effort has been made to clarify to what extent it is possible to combine hard and soft power in the issue of Kosovo and Metohija, viewed primarily through the prism of the strengthening influence of forces in favour of Serbia, primarily China and Russia, and also the still non-existent recognition of the so-called Kosovo as an independent state by five EU members.

Key words: Serbia, Kosovo and Metohija, challenges, perspectives, soft power, smart power, foreign policy, international relations, national interest, multipolarity

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Introduction

The paper emphasizes the perspectives of the soft and smart power of the Republic of Serbia, as well as their potential scope when it comes to solving the Kosovo-Metohija problem. The very concepts of soft and smart power have been theoretically conceptualized by the US political scientist Joseph Nye. Generally speaking, the concept of the state power, as still key actors at international level, occupies a central position in the research of the predominantly realistic trend in international relations. In the modern era, when there is a threat of the use of weapons of mass destruction, vital national interests cannot be achieved solely by threat or implementation of hard, military components of power, but foreign policy of state has to be based primarily on sophisticated actions, whose ultimate purpose is to gain support of as wide circle of actors as possible in order to achieve its goals in the most favourable possible way.¹

Nye's conceptualization of the new elements of power and the redefinition of position and changed role of state in international relations have become the subject of numerous research and theoretical discussions, whose ultimate goal was to indicate new directions and real ranges of both soft and smart power. The idea of soft power was developed by Nye during the 1980s, and scientifically substantiated in his book "Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power".² However, Nye will further explain and develop the concept of soft power in his book from 2004 "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics".³ According to this author, who is ranked among the most prominent theorists of international relations, soft power represents a set of values in the broadest social sense, whose goal is to attract others, before forcing them to act in the desired direction. Nye includes three components in that set of values and influences, whose end result should be the action that leads to the achievement of the interests of the state that projects soft power on others. The first one is related to the widest range of cultural values that have their origin in tradition, customs and style of behaviour within the social community. The second element is narrower and somewhat relies on the first, since it is based on the political values that a country cherishes, and is inextricably related to the political culture, which can also be subsumed under the segment of broader cultural values and intangible achievements of a society. Finally, the third element is related to foreign policy, which should be inclusive for other actors so that they can contribute to the achievement of national goals and interests of the state that projects soft power.⁴ In order to achieve national goals in an adequate way, their

¹ Petar Matić, "Rat za meku moć", *Srpska politička misao*, vol. 24, no. 2/2009, Institut za političke studije, Beograd, 2009, p. 31.

² Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, Art of Mentoring Series, Basic Books, New York, 1990.

³ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Hachette, UK, 2004.

⁴ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power*, Public Affairs, New York, 2011, p. 84.

legitimation in front of general public is necessary, and it primarily depends on the communication between state and citizens.⁵

The idea of soft power has initiated many controversies, created dilemmas and opened new approaches in researching the very concept of power. It has taken on paradigmatic proportions, both within the scientific and academic community and among political practitioners. Although soft power is viewed today as one of the main fronts of action in the international arena, primarily with great powers, hard power still remains one of the supporting pillars and factors that largely determine states in their policies towards others.

The decline of the power of some of the leading actors on the international stage, primarily the US and its closest allies⁶, along with the strengthening of new global centres of power and its relocation to the former periphery and semi-periphery of the world events, with still undefined contours and a vision of a rearranged relation of forces, have inevitably led to the dispersion of influence and often uncritical manifestation of hard forms of power. The realisation that the excessive use of hard power, along with the hyperproduction of war by the declining powers at international level, inevitably leads to the weakening of the soft dimensions of power, has opened up space for additional research, whose end product is an innovative concept that contains elements of both hard and soft power, called – smart power. The idea of smart power was launched by several foreign policy experts and practitioners, so it is not known for sure who is the creator of the concept. Thus, some researchers attribute the credit for that term, which is becoming increasingly popular in wide literature, to the former Deputy of the US Ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrooke, Suzanne Nossel.⁷ On the other hand, this conceptual framework, based on the adequate and timely use of the components of soft and hard power, is inextricably related to Nye himself, as a supplement and expansion of his idea of soft power.⁸ That is why Nye believes that in order to achieve certain goals and meet vital national interests, it is necessary to use power through both soft and hard means, depending on situation, critical reflection and their concrete effectiveness.⁹ The discussion related to the topics of soft and hard power, which is still present in the theories of international relations and security, has contributed to the development of these concepts and ideas.

⁵ About communication as a means of strengthening soft power, see in detail in: Nenad Perić, Miroslav Mitrović, "Nova medijska strategija Vojske Srbije kao instrument meke moći", *Vojno delo*, vol. 73, no. 3, Institut za strategijska istraživanja, Beograd, 2021, pp. 60-72.

⁶ About the strength and peak of the US soft power at the end of the last century, see in more detail in: Dušan Nikoliš, "Nova vojna moć SAD za 21. vek - instrument (strategija) gospodarenja svetom bez rata", *Vojno delo*, vol. 50, no. 4-5, Institut za strategijska istraživanja, Beograd, 1998, pp. 47-61.

⁷ Suzanne Nossel, "Smart Power", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 2, March/April 2004, The Council on Foreign Relations, USA, 2004, pp. 131-142.

⁸ Joseph S. Nye, "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 4, July/August 2009, The Council on Foreign Relations, USA, 2009, pp. 160-163.

⁹ Ibid.

Although the real scope and potential for “soft” and “smart” actions are mostly present among the most powerful actors at international level, the time of globalized relations, accelerated and turbulent changes at the widest global level, especially the development in the field of information technology and increasingly complex networking, provide new opportunities for smaller states to engage more actively in meeting their interests through the attractiveness of their system and cultural achievements and values.

Serbia, which is still in the process of transition, is burdened by the legacy of the recent past and unfairly condemned in the public discourse of primarily Western powers. That condemnation and the negative stereotypes about it and the Serbian nation in general, which are present in the political West, have limited its opportunities for more active engagement in the pursuit of vital national interests in the period behind us. Nevertheless, the dynamics of international relations, the new rearrangement of power at global level, the increasingly frequent confrontations between the leaders in the new, multipolar order, leave wider room for the development and implementation of elements of both soft and hard power, so that Serbia can be as successful as possible in achieving its goals related to one of the most important interests - the preservation of Kosovo and Metohija as an integral part of its territory.

Kosmet at historical crossroads - soft and smart power as components of the Serbian actions in the light of the rearrangement of forces at global level

The geostrategic position of Serbia and its southern province of Kosovo and Metohija, as well as the war conflicts in its territory at the end of the 1990s, were marked by the actions of many important actors and factors in international relations. Both at internal and external political level, the issue of Kosovo and Metohija remains a critical point of action for the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

The public discourse on the issue of Kosovo and Metohija is dominated by many terms and definitions, and those that should lead to some form of recognition of the now “fulfilled”, and long-standing secessionist aspirations of Kosovo Albanians are quite often used. Therefore, it is about supporting the idea of recognising the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija. Thus, during 2018 and 2019, one of the key words present in official statements was “demarcation”. Such ideas did not receive wider public support, despite efforts to “insert” them and become legitimate during the work of the round tables related to the so-called internal dialogue on Kosovo and Metohija.¹⁰ It seems that the

¹⁰ We are talking about a great and very ambitious project of the Serbian state leadership in relation to the implementation of the national dialogue on the issue of Kosovo and Metohija (the initiative was personally presented by the President of the country, A. Vučić, who proposed the establishment of a working group to support this process), announced during July 2017.

scientific public is still dominated by expert opinion, stating that the moment is still not suitable for some kind of final status solution.¹¹ However, it should be emphasized that this does not automatically mean advocating for maintaining some kind of a frozen conflict or, as this phenomenon is also called in literature, a post-violent conflict. Firstly, although the concept of a frozen conflict is often a part of the Kosmet narrative, even the official one, in addition to the question whether the Kosmet case even fits into that conceptual framework, such a situation cannot be a long-term sustainable solution or a part of an exit strategy, but it is rather only a part of crisis management, therefore, a way of managing a crisis that can escalate again at any moment, with the reactivation of the conflict. Therefore, instead of freezing a conflict - which is particularly worth highlighting - the solution for the Serbian party and its vital national and state interests, even of a temporary character, can only be freezing the situation, but one that would be established only after the fulfillment of all assumed obligations and legally binding norms by the Prishtina authorities (which primarily refers to the establishment of the Community of Serb Municipalities).

Thus, it can be said that during the aforementioned process of internal dialogue, organized for the purpose of defining and harmonising positions on the issue of Kosovo and Metohija, no agreement has actually been reached on this crucial issue for the future of Serbia. Ljubiša Despotović claims that the state structures in Serbia are not ready to clearly inform the citizens that the area of Kosovo and Metohija is an inseparable part of the territory of Serbia, and that this territory is occupied, and the official authorities are completely prevented from implementing relevant norms and regulations in this area.¹² As many authors state, and this can also be seen in relevant public opinion surveys, the dominant attitude of the wider public in Serbia is based on the aspiration to preserve Kosovo and Metohija as an integral part of

On the other hand, critics viewed this idea primarily as a monologue of the regime, and not a true dialogue within the nation, and as a legitimising instrument for allegedly already prepared decisions of the Government, etc.

¹¹ Let's say, such an opinion was clearly expressed and, it can be freely said, dominant during a series of scientific conferences and round tables organized by the Institute for Political Studies (IPS) from Belgrade, after the initiation of the internal dialogue on KiM, thus taking on an active role in the process. As a result, a great number of scientific papers, proceedings and monographs have been written, which represent documented evidence of such a school of thought in the Serbian political science and beyond, when it comes to Kosovo and Metohija as the important political, economic, geopolitical, security, geostrategic, and also geosymbolic issue of contemporary Serbia and the Serbian nation, as well as the entire Serbian society. See, for example, the 2017 special edition of the scientific journal *National Interest: National Interest*, issue topic: "The historical and theoretical approaches in the dialogue on models of solutions to the status of Kosovo and Metohija", vol. 30, no. 3/2017, Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade, 2017.

¹² Ljubiša Despotović, "Geopolitička sudbina Kosova i Metohije – između evroatlantske okupacije i projekta velike Albanije", *Politika nacionalne bezbednosti*, year VIII, no. 2/2017, Institut za političke studije, Beograd, 2017, p. 31.

Serbia, which can be achieved precisely by long-term postponing the status solution, and in the light of the global rearrangement of power relations.¹³

In spite of such a predominant mood of the public in Serbia, there are, of course, different opinions. They can often be heard in the international and national discourse on this issue, and they are on the line of rejecting the “Kosmet idea” as a kind of conglomerate of fundamental Serbian national myths, considering that, as such, it represents an essentially disruptive factor in the development of Serbia and the Serbian society, keeping them in the “captivity” of the past and maintaining their pre-modern character. It is important to emphasize, and many examples of comparative practice show this, that national and political myths, if they are not misused for the purpose of implementing regressive and extremist policies, represent legitimate and common categories when it comes to modern nations, and they play an important role in their construction and the development of national awareness, as well as that they are also characteristic of the so-called old democracies.¹⁴ Such a thesis is the one that generally interprets the Serbian Kosmet policy as “a form of technology of pastoral power” that is exercised over the population, not over the territory.¹⁵ According to this understanding, namely, Kosmet is not only a territorial issue, in terms of physical security and specific territorial demands, but it is primarily about the fact that the myth of Kosmet as the “territorial epicentre” of the Serbian national identity is used as a means of control over its population and instrument of legitimisation of every political power, regardless of the current regime. In this context, the problem of Kosovo and Metohija represents a challenge, both for the state and social security, and the distinction between these two vital concepts can be seen in the books by Radoslav Gaćinović.¹⁶

Since KiM is the area where the key battle took place that largely defined the past of the Serbian state and nation, Kosmet is truly the territorial core of the Serbian national, as well as cultural and spiritual identity. Therefore, even if, for analytical

¹³ Vladan M. Kutlešić, “O nekim modelima za rešenje statusa Kosova i Metohije”, *Strani pravni život*, no. 2/2019, Institut za uporedno pravo, Beograd, 2019, p. 7.

¹⁴ Professor Milan Matić once explained that all states and nations, as well as all political cultures, in order to be complete and rounded as such, have their national and political myths, including the founding ones, that is, constitutive or state-forming myths that occupy a special place. See about it: Milan Matić, *Mit i politika: Rasprava o osnovama političke kulture*, Second Updated Edition, Faculty of Political Sciences, Čigoja Press, Belgrade, 1998.

¹⁵ Filip Ejodus and Jelena Subotić talk about it, relying on the famous French philosopher Michel Foucault and his concept of government. See: Filip Ejodus, Jelena Subotić, “Kosovo as Serbia’s sacred space: Governmentality, pastoral power and sacralization of territories”, in: Gorana Ognjenović, Jasna Jozelić (eds.), *Politicization of Religion, the Power of Symbolism: The Case of Former Yugoslavia and its Successor States*, Palgrave Macmillan, US, 2014, pp. 159–184; as well as: Jelena Subotić, “Narrative, ontological security, and foreign policy change”, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2016, pp. 610–627.

¹⁶ Radoslav Gaćinović, “Nacionalna bezbednost kao ključni faktor u funkcionisanju moderne države”, *Vojno delo*, vol. 69, no. 1, Institut za strategijska istraživanja, Beograd, 2017, p. 91.

purposes, the relevant Constitution and clear constitutional provisions on KiM are left aside, the abovementioned is a sufficient legitimising basis for Serbia to engage all its capacities and use all available means, which are within the limits of what is possible and permitted, in order to protect and maximize its national interests in relation to the Kosmet issue. And as an important means of action in that direction is precisely the so-called new public diplomacy that can play a key role in shaping and implementing various forms of the Serbian soft power, such as cultural, scientific, educational, exchange diplomacy, etc., especially in the development of the so-called cyber power, which plays an increasingly important role today and represents nothing more than the implementation of soft power in cyberspace.

One of the initiatives directly related to the strengthening of the Serbian soft power, primarily in the regional context, is the "Open Balkans" initiative, which effectively abolishes the existing borders between Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia. However, one of the possible "hidden" goals of this form of regional cooperation is the potential recognition of the so-called sovereignty of Kosovo, with the inclusion of this part of the Serbian territory within the aforementioned initiative and the subsequent abolition of the border barriers between Serbia and Kosovo and Metohija.

Considered from the point of view of soft power, as the value of culture and achievements of a community, which it uses to project its influence on others, during the past decades it has been displaced and dispersed to different centres of power. It is gradually shifting and becoming a pattern of action not only of national actors, i.e. states, but also of new, both global and regional, as well as subnational, i.e. substate, actors and subjects. The process of globalisation has radically changed the international landscape, leading to accelerating history that inevitably leads to the compression of time needed to change the balance of power at global level.¹⁷ The impact of the Kosovo-Metohija problem on the collapse of unipolarism in international relations, as the predominant form until recently, and the rebirth of a bipolar and even multipolar structure, is evidenced by many analyses carried out by members of the academic community.¹⁸

Taking into account all the mentioned circumstances, which primarily give an advantage to those powers more favourable to Serbia over time, room is opened for the implementation of the elements of both soft and smart power. The recent events that were largely shaped by the actions of the so-called Kosovo Security Force in the north of the southern Serbian province, have shown that the Albanian party is not interested in reaching a compromise and that the current government in Prishtina does not give up its maximalist aspirations and demands. The most impressive

¹⁷ The British historian Niall Ferguson shows that, over time, there has been radical shortening of the period required for dominant powers to lose their pedestal, Niall Ferguson, "Empires with Expiration Dates", *Foreign Policy /online/*, October 14, 2009, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/14/empires-with-expiration-dates/>, accessed: November 9, 2021).

¹⁸ Milomir Stepić, "Kosovo i Metohija kao indikator novog bipolarizma", *Srpska politička misao*, vol. 61, number 3/2018, Institut za političke studije, Beograd, 2018, pp. 27-49.

example is certainly the refusal of the Albanian party to implement the key provisions of the Brussels Agreement, primarily those that are related to the interests of the Serbian party and the establishment of the Community of Serb Municipalities. On the other hand, during the recent crisis, which was caused by the decision of the so-called Kosovo Government not to allow the crossing of the administrative border by vehicles with the registration plates of the Republic of Serbia, Serbia has raised the level of combat readiness of its Armed Forces near the administrative border, thereby showing that it also has hard means that can be used in the event of further escalation of the situation related to the southern Serbian province.

After the NATO aggression against FRY in 1999 and the signing of the Kumanovo Agreement, the security forces of the Republic of Serbia are no longer in the territory of the southern Serbian province. This territory is de facto occupied and forcibly separated from Serbia. Since then, a great number of documents has been adopted in order to more precisely define the Serbian strategic policy and actions in relation to this vital national problem. The latest strategic document of the Republic of Serbia, which emphasizes the special importance of preserving Kosovo and Metohija as an integral part of Serbia, is the National Security Strategy from 2019.¹⁹ It highlights the Serbian potential directions of action in a complex international environment, in the light of growing interdependence, and emphasizes the growing multipolarity in international relations. As a key regional problem, the issue of the AP of Kosovo and Metohija is particularly highlighted, and the emphasis is placed on the separatist aspirations of Kosovo Albanians, the illegal and unilateral declaration of independence, and the effort to annul those provisions of the Brussels Agreement that protect the interests of Serbs in the province. The cooperation with both the East and the West is strengthened, as well as the cooperation with the existing military alliances and international organizations.

The document in which the provisions on Kosovo and Metohija were previously included and which preceded the current strategic document in the field of security is the National Security Strategy from 2009.²⁰ Since this strategy was adopted in the year that followed the unilateral declaration of independence, the authors and the Government tried to emphasize this problem in the document itself.²¹ However, this Strategy, which emphasized the security importance of the issue of Kosovo and Metohija, was preceded by the Declaration on Kosovo and Metohija adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia in mid-2003, at the time when Montenegro was still in the state union with Serbia.²² The Declaration emphasizes

¹⁹ National Security Strategy, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 94/2019, Belgrade, 2019.

²⁰ National Security Strategy, "Official Gazette of RS", no. 88/2009, Belgrade, 2009.

²¹ Branko Krga, "Problem Kosova i Metohije i politika nacionalne bezbednosti Republike Srbije", *Politika nacionalne bezbednosti*, year VIII, no. 2/2017, Institut za političke studije, Beograd, 2017, p. 50.

²² The Declaration on Kosovo and Metohija was adopted at an extraordinary session of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia on August 27, 2003.

that the vital national interests of Serbia are threatened by the actions of Kosovo Albanians and highlights the non-compliance with all relevant international documents related to the problem of Kosovo and Metohija, such as the Resolution 1244 of the United Nations Security Council and the Military Technical Agreement from Kumanovo. The objective of the document itself was to point out the inadequate actions of international missions in Kosovo and Metohija, which resulted in a great number of internally displaced persons (250,000). At that time, the Assembly expressed the Serbian permanent commitment and orientation towards the European and Euro-Atlantic integration. This orientation of the state towards the European and Euro-Atlantic integration (NATO) was defined by the pro-Western policy of the Government at that time and the still unrecognized status of Kosovo and Metohija as an independent state.

The strengthening of the state military potential, which has been present recently, is in accordance with the global rearrangement of power that is shifting from the West to the East, which strengthens the position of Serbia, since the influence of China and Russia is drastically increasing. Samuel Huntington also spoke about the existence of several centres of power in his article "Lonely Superpower". He pointed out, as far back as 1999, the existence of several centres of power and regional powers that have the potential to become equal actors and to successfully oppose the hegemony of the US.²³ Of course, these power transition processes²⁴ are not short-lived, so the US still remains the most influential world power in every respect. However, that power is threatened, both by the actions of other major players on the international stage, and by the US itself, which often resorted to the use of hard components of power, damaging its image and its soft power. This "imperial overstretching" - the term conceptualized by Paul Kennedy - is an indication that the US power is in deep crisis. Thus, for example, Victoria de Grazia believes that the US at the peak of its power was governed by the holy power of its market and the supremacy of its model, and very little by force of weapons.²⁵

All the mentioned circumstances, the new constellation of forces and the process of transition of power have strengthened the position of Serbia, which has already succeeded in obtaining the withdrawal of the so-called recognition of the independence of Kosovo with several, primarily African and Asian countries. It is necessary to continue strengthening the position of military neutrality because further rapprochement with the Atlantic structures would inevitably lead to the

²³ Samuel Huntington believed that at the end of the 20th century and during the transition to the new millennium, there was a shift in power, at the time of the existence of one superpower and several regional powers. See: Samuel P. Huntington, "Lonely Superpower", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 2, Mar/Apr 1999, pp. 35-49.

²⁴ A. F. K. Organski, Jacek Kugler, "The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation", in: Manus I. Midlarsky (ed.), *Handbook of War Studies*, Unwin Hyman, Boston, MA, 1989, pp. 171-194.

²⁵ Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2006.

distance from China and Russia, in the light of the increasingly obvious confrontation in the East-West relation. It is necessary to make additional efforts on the further development of public diplomacy, as the best way of acting to transform and overcome negative images and stereotypes in the public discourse of the Western countries. The Government of the so-called Kosovo, through various initiatives and programmes, continuously works to strengthen its soft power, primarily in those countries that still do not recognise its independence. More than an indicative example of an attempt of the so-called Kosovo to improve its soft power is a document called "This is how we achieve soft power: A practical guide through the public and digital diplomacy of the small Republic", which was developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Prishtina Government, the British Council and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²⁶

Concluding considerations

Taking into account all the mentioned elements, it can be concluded that there is still a lot of room for the Serbian soft action, but with the strengthening of its military potential, which would emphasize the country's position as a regional leader. The strengthening of relations with as many countries as possible and additional networking at international level would inevitably lead to the strengthening of the Serbian position regarding its southern province. There are assessments that the current covid crisis has further accelerated the process of power transition from the West to the East, and accordingly, it is predicted that tectonic changes in the world order will occur very soon. The estimates by the world leading economists, such as Thomas Piketty, say that China will reach the US in terms of GDP in 2025, and that in terms of GDP per capita it will achieve this in 2050.²⁷ Today, China acts as a soft power which, with the attractiveness of its cultural values and the specificity of its socio-economic and political pattern, is gaining an increasing number of allies at international level. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain strong relations with the most populous country in the world, and also with Russia, in order to protect and maximize the Serbian national interests with the support of these "veto players" and relying on the concept of multipolarity in the international constellation of forces. Special emphasis should be directed to many segments in different spheres of public policies, such as greater investment in culture, public diplomacy, science and education, sports, along with the development of organizational and institutional capacities in these fields, which can play an important role in branding the nation

²⁶ Nevenka Stojčević, "Kosovska 'meka moć' u Španiji i diletantizam srpske kulturne diplomatije", *Nova srpska politička misao (online)*, June 25, 2018, <http://www.nspm.rs/kulturna-politika/kosovska-meka-moc-u-spaniji-i-dilentrantism-srpske-kulturne-diplomatije.html?alphabet=l>, accessed: January 26, 2022.

²⁷ Toma Piketi, *Kapital u XXI veku*, Akademska knjiga, Beograd, 2015.

and creating a more favourable image of Serbia in the international environment. Along with this focus on the soft components of power, it is also necessary to continuously strengthen military potential, both through the acquisition of modern military weapons and equipment, and by improving the position of the military sector in the society, which would enable Serbia to occupy the position of a smart power in the regional framework.

Conflicts in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and the anti-Serb actions of the previously unknown global propaganda machine led to the creation of a negative image of Serbia, mainly through the narratives that dominated public opinion in the political West, which greatly undermined the soft power of our country. On the other hand, Serbia has so far inadequately used its resources and components of soft power, which facilitated the creation of the mentioned stereotypes and a negative image, and contributed to their resistance and duration.²⁸ Emphasizing the most important cultural and national components, along with national branding and strengthening cooperation with the widest circle of actors at international level, can bring Serbia the status of a leading regional soft power. However, this "growth" of the Serbian soft power has to be accompanied by the strengthening of military potential, so that Serbia does not fall behind the countries in its immediate environment in this segment either. All the mentioned elements, perspectives of strengthening both soft and hard components of power, forecast of future events at global level, changes in the power relations of the leading actors in the world politics, require a continuous, multi-level and careful analysis in order to respond in a timely and adequate manner to the challenges that Serbia is facing regarding Kosovo and Metohija.

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²⁸ Iva Bubanja, "Meka moć kao instrument za poboljšanje položaja Srbije u međunarodnom okruženju", *Tehnika*, vol. 73, no. 6, 2018, p. 885.

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Summary

In this paper, the authors analyze the role of soft and smart power as a strategic means by which it is possible to defend the vital national interests of the Republic of Serbia on the issue of Kosovo and Metohija. These foreign policy means are gaining in importance in the context of turbulent and dynamic changes at global level, primarily in terms of rearranging global power relations and shifting power to its new, growing centers. As a result, there is reshaping of the world order no longer dominated by the United States as a hegemonic power, but it has already been transforming into a multipolar one. The authors investigate this new and transforming world order and its potential consequences on solving the Kosovo and Metohija problem. The authors process and analyze all parameters of the Serbian foreign and internal policy related to the issue and status of the southern Serbian province. The potential of both soft and hard power is considered in detail in order to find realistic proposals in resolving the complex issue of Kosovo and Metohija. In the introductory part, the authors theoretically approach the consideration of the main concepts covered by the subject of the research. It includes the main ideas, concepts and theories on soft and smart power as a combination of both soft and hard means. The central part of the paper analyzes the elements that make up the soft and smart power of Serbia in the light of the aforementioned changes in international relations. The authors are guided by the analysis of the content of the most important

documents related to resolving the issue of Kosovo and Metohia. The Serbian position in relation to the key factors at international level and their positioning in relation to this problem are also discussed. It provides insights in all key words regarding the problem of Kosovo and Metohija that were and are still present in public discourse. In the final part of the paper, the authors try to shed light on the extent to which hard and soft power can be combined when it comes to the problem of Kosovo and Metohia, viewed primarily through the prism of the growing influence of powers in our favour, especially China and Russia, and also of the still non-existent recognition of the so-called Kosovo as an independent state by five EU members. The authors conclude that it is of utmost importance for the Republic of Serbia to continuously strengthen both soft and hard means of power in order to achieve its goals on the issue of Kosovo and Metohija.

Key words: Serbia, Kosovo and Metohija, challenges, perspectives, soft power, smart power, foreign policy, international relations, national interest, multipolarity

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