THE PAPER ON THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION ON THE KOSOVO-METOHIJA SECURITY ISSUE

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Strategic communication is an expression of the state soft power, which expresses its strategic commitments, supports the state influence on the international scene and enables a more favourable status in providing national interests. It is the subject of strategic studies of all developed countries that strive to achieve their interests in international relations. It also represents a systemic approach to crisis response, as well as support to managing crisis and conflicts. A synergistic approach to the accomplishment of national interests and support in crisis management and post-conflict relations is the basis of the idea of this paper. Its general framework is based on the analysis of the genesis of the Kosovo-Metohija conflict from the general historical, sociological and cultural basis of the relations between Serbs and Albanians in the territory of the southern Serbian province. Furthermore, the paper deals with the aspect of strategic communications within the Kosovo-Metohija security issue. The chronological overview shows the development of the conflict in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, as well as the key activities of strategic communication caused by those events. The examples of strategic communication that are key in defining the security situation in Kosovo and Metohija have been singled out. On the basis of the analysis of the state of the discussed problem, the preconditions that can be said to represent the basis for establishing the communication environment of the Kosovo-Metohija security issue are listed. In conclusion, a general framework of the strategic communication of the Kosovo-Metohija security issue is proposed, through an adapted media, public diplomatic, negotiation and representation strategy. Such a framework of strategic

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communication represents the basis of support for solving the Kosovo-Metohija security issue in accordance with the objective goals and national interests of the Republic of Serbia.

Key words: *strategic communication, security, media, negotiation, lobbying, Kosovo and Metohija*

Strategic communication and national security

Strategic communication (SC) represents a modern management concept of constant harmonization of communication at different organizational levels of society, whose goal is to establish relations between the subjects of the process. Strategic communication can be viewed through national (state) and corporate level.[1] This form of communication is carried out in the public sphere through various communication methods and techniques. In addition to the methods and techniques of public relations and media relations, it can also include propaganda, psychological or various information operations, as well as public diplomacy and other methods for the execution of "soft power". In the sphere of for-profit organizations, SC can include marketing, advertising, positioning and other forms of corporate communications, which lead to promoting the organization's brand and building its reputation. Some authors try to identify the determinants of strategic communication in the organizational and functional sense through the actions of the media, public diplomacy and interest communications (negotiation and lobbying), by defining individual fields of communication according to organizational and functional characteristics.[2] The state SC, along with traditional diplomacy, armed forces and economy, represents the main channel for the manifestation of "soft power", and is indispensable in achieving the protection of interests important for national security. One of the main priorities of the national security of the Republic of Serbia[3] is the issue of Kosovo and Metohija (KiM). The status and future security paradigm of KiM is closely correlated with the complex foreign policy relations of the great powers that are intertwined in this area (especially the US and Russia). Moreover, relations with the EU have special importance, in which further integration of Serbia is conditioned by the "normalization" of relations with "Kosovo".[4]

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[1] Miroslav Mitrović, "Strateška komunikacija u funkciji nacionalne bezbednosti", *Vojno delo*, 1/2019, p. 42.

[2] Miroslav Mitrović, "Determinante strateške komunikacije od značaja za nacionalnu odbranu i bezbednost", *Zbornik Matice srpske za društvene nauke*, LXX, No. 170 (2/2019), pp. 179–194.

[3] "National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia", *Official Gazette of the RS*, No. 94 of December 27, 2019, p. 15.

[4] Miroslav Mitrovic, „Assessments and foreign policy implementation of the national security of Republic of Serbia", *Security and Defence Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2021, pp. 12-15.

The genesis of the Kosovo-Metohija conflict

For centuries, Serbs and Albanians in KiM have been in a relationship that can be metaphorically described as the "pendulum of domination".[5]

The early history of relations and the beginning of conflict (Middle Ages - mid-19th century). Before the Ottoman occupation of the Balkans, relations between Serbs and Albanians were harmonious, based on belonging to the same Orthodox Church.[6] The state of continuous conflict arises as a result of: 1) Islamization; 2) the assumption of the role of Grand vizier by Albanians; and 3) the great migration of Serbs. The first serious conflict arose during the 1876–1888 liberation wars, when Albanians settled in certain areas of KiM, permanently changing the ethnic structure of the population.[7] From then until today, the roles of subordinate and superior people in the territory of KiM have alternated.[8]

Mid-19th century to the Balkan Wars. The late Ottoman administration of KiM was marked by the dominance of Albanians, the emigration of Serbs from those areas and the establishment of the "League of Prizren" as an expression of the united Albanian nation.

The period of the Balkan wars (1912–1914). The attempt to establish the Serbian domination over the Albanians in KiM, the formation of the Albanian state and the conflicting attitude towards the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire.

The First World War (1914–1918). The domination of Albanians and discrimination of Serbs, with strongly expressed revanchism and cruel acts against the Serbian population and the Army in the retreat through Albania in 1915, which took about 150,000 Serbian lives.

First Yugoslavia (1918–1941). The domination of Serbs over Albanians. Albanians were not recognized as a constituent nation of the new state, and the benefits and privileges they enjoyed in the Ottoman Empire were revoked, leading to discontent and ethnic distancing with frequent armed rebellions.

The Second World War (1941–1945). The domination of Albanians and discrimination against Serbs. The Albanian national liberation movement, whose goal is the unification of KiM with Albania, joins the communist revolutionary movement of Josip Broz because it was promised that after the liberation and revolution Kosovo will get the status of a republic. At the same time, the majority of Albanians supports the Italian occupation, which allows them a dominant position and constant repression of Serbs.[9]

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[5] Lazar Nikolić, „Ethnic Prejudices and Discrimination: The Case of Kosovo", in: Florian Bieber, Židas Daskalovski, (Edts.), *Understanding the war in Kosovo*, Frank Cass Publishers, London, 2003, p. 55. (51-73)

[6] Miloje Zdravković, "Uzroci prvih sukoba Srba i Albanaca kroz istoriju", *Nacionalni interes*, vol. 40, no. 2/2021, pp. 183-204.

[7] Ibid, p. 197.

[8] Lazar Nikolić, „Ethnic Prejudices and Discrimination: The Case of Kosovo", gen. quote, pp. 55-63.

[9] During the Second World War, about 70,000 Albanians settled in KiM, and the same number of Serbs were expelled. Ibid, p. 58.

The period after the Second World War (1945–1966). The domination of the Serbian communist elite over Albanians and a part of the expelled Serbs who are not allowed to return. Kosovo did not receive the promised status of a republic, which caused dissatisfaction and disappointment among Albanians. The harsh measures of the communist leadership additionally affect the establishment of the cohesion of the Albanian national identity in KiM. In this period, the Albanian community withdraws and closes in itself, implementing self-isolation towards the other nations of the SFRY.

The period of the emphasized autonomy (1966–1989). The domination of Albanians over Serbs. Although the communist leadership of the SFRY rejected the idea of republic status, Albanians, by dominating institutions and strengthening their national identity,[10] persistently worked on the secession of KiM.[11] The 1974 Constitution gave Kosovo a dominant role towards the Republic of Serbia. There is sudden Albanian cultural awakening and intensive cooperation with related circles in Albania.[12] It is estimated that during this period, due to pressures and attacks on property and personal security, at least 100,000 Serbs and Montenegrins left the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. The communist government did not have an effective response to this situation, and a part of the problem was covered up.[13] This period is also marked by great modernization and industrialization of KiM, carried out with the assistance of other parts of the SFRY. Nevertheless, the Albanian society remains very closed, based on tribal relations, which, whenever possible, are put before the laws of the state. In this period, the organized extremist movements of Albanians occurred (the National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo, Kosovar Marxist-Leninist Organization, Communist-Marxist-Leninist Party of Albanians in Yugoslavia and the Red National Front), which represent the core of the later established terrorist organization, the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army - KLA.

The period of the dissolution of the SFRY and armed conflicts in KiM (1989–1999). As a reaction of the Serbian institutions to decades of the Albanian pressure, the Serbian domination came about.[14] The provisions of the 1974 Constitution were repealed, whereby the Republic of Serbia regains control over its province. In response, Albanians proclaimed the "Republic of Kosovo" in 1990, building parallel institutions. The special frustration of Albanians arises when the so-called "Kosovo issue" was not included in the 1995 Dayton Agreement. Then there is the escalation of conflicts, initiated by the KLA. Apart from Serbs and other non-Albanians, their attacks were also directed towards,

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[10] Dejan Guzina, „Kosovo or Kosova—Could It Be Both? The Case of Interlocking Serbian and Albanian Nationalisms", in: Florian Bieber, Židas Daskalovski, (Edts), *Understanding the war in Kosovo*, Frank Cass Publishers, London, 2003, p. 31.

[11] Ana S. Trbovich, *A Legal Geography of Yugoslavia's Disintegration*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 233-234.

[12] Lazar Nikolić, „Ethnic Prejudices and Discrimination: The Case of Kosovo", gen. quote, p. 60.

[13] Marina Blagojević, „The Migration of Serbs from Kosovo during the 1970s and 1980s: Trauma and/or Catharsis", in: Nebojša Popov, (ed.), *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2000, pp. 224-230.

[14] Lazar Nikolić, „Ethnic Prejudices and Discrimination: The Case of Kosovo", gen. quote, p. 61.

according to their criteria, the "Albanians loyal to Serbia".[15] At the end of 1998, the FRY responded to mass terrorist attacks by a counterterrorist action, which was used as a pretext for the NATO aggression, in which the KLA represented the forces on the ground. The war lasted 78 days and ended with the Kumanovo Agreement, and accordingly the Yugoslav Army (YA) withdrew from the territory of KiM, and the status of the southern province was defined by the UN Resolution 1244. The withdrawal of the YA troops triggered the exodus of a part of the Serbs from KiM, and the establishment of a state of domination and repression of Albanians.[16]

The period after the NATO aggression (1999 to the present). The domination of Albanians, isolation, persecution, stigmatization and terror of Serbs in KiM can be viewed through the following periods: 1) until 2004 and the March Pogrom of Serbs[17]; 2) until 2008 and the self-proclaimed independence of the so-called Republic of Kosovo[18]; 3) until 2013 and the Brussels Agreement[19]; and 4) the current period of frozen conflict, negotiations on technical issues, latent conflict, complete separation of Serbs and Albanians, absence of any communication, cooperation, dialogue and expressed effort to improve the situation.[20]

The communication aspects of the Kosovo-Metohija conflict

The characteristics of the conflict in KiM are long duration, complexity of value and historical contrasts, sociological and physical distance of the participating parties, existence of stereotypes and prejudices, diametrical opposition of goals, interests of external participants, cultural and religious opposition, identity conflict and lack of communication at all levels. The prominent features of the communication aspects of the conflict in KiM are:

– *strong stereotypes and prejudices.* The conflict environment of the "pendulum of domination" favours the expression of strong negative, even hostile feelings towards the other party, which does not lead to the calming of the conflict. Stereotypes are a very important means of establishing a cognitive response. They explain the reason for the conflict and the actions of the other party, along with the rationalization of its aggression, the homogenization and mobilization of a group;[21]

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[15] In the first eight months of 1998, the KLA carried out 1,126 terrorist acts. Lazar Nikolić, „Ethnic Prejudices and Discrimination: The Case of Kosovo", gen. quote, p. 62.

[16] From 1999 to 2003, over 200,000 Serbs and non-Albanians were expelled from KiM, about 1,000 Serbs were killed, and about 1,200 were kidnapped. Tens of thousands of Serbian houses and more than 100 churches were destroyed. Ibid, p. 63.

[17] From March 17 to 19, 2004, Albanians killed dozens of Serbs, wounded hundreds, and exiled more than 4,000. Over 800 houses and 35 churches were destroyed. Vladislav B. Sotirović, "Kosovo & Metohija: Ten years after the 'March pogrom' 2004", *Srpska politička misao*, number 1/2014, year 21, vol. 43, pp. 267-283.

[18] Contrary to the UN Resolution 1244, on February 17, 2008, with the support of the Western powers, Prishtina declared the independence of the so-called "Republic of Kosovo".

[19] "Brussels Agreement", *Government of the Republic of Serbia*, 2013.

[20] "Vučić and Kurti without common points", *Radio Free Europe*, 2021.

[21] Lazar Nikolić, „Ethnic Prejudices and Discrimination: The Case of Kosovo", gen. quote, pp. 66-67.

– polarized and opposing views. The relations between the Serbs and Albanians in KiM are sharply polarized in all key issues that are a prerequisite for establishing trust: striving for domination, acceptability of violence, extreme ethnic distance,[22] explosiveness of victimization,[23] spiral of revenge, conflicting political solutions;

– disinformation and information manipulation. The basis for their existence is the need to mislead, disregard differences, as well as the focus on the argumentation of only one party, thus intensifying antagonism and mobilizing one's opinion. The media has a special role in this, whose key role is in the self-justification of a conflict and the mobilizing effect. The media presents the conflict as inevitable, necessary, normal, logical and expected, even as a justified and moral act.[24]

The contents of the strategic communication of the Kosovo-Metohija conflict so far

Strategic communication in the period from the beginning of the conflict in the territory of the former SFRY,[25] and in the case of the preparation of the aggression and succession of KiM,[26] according to the achieved results, aimed to prepare the world public opinion for the "necessity" of intervention[27] and the justification of the

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[22] Marina Blagojević, „War on Kosovo: A Victory for the Media?", in: Florian Bieber, Židas Daskalovski, (Edts.), Understanding the war in Kosovo, Frank Cass Publishers, London, 2003, p. 164.

[23] Ibid, p. 165.

[24] Ibid.

[25] As an example, a quotation from the paper by Herman and Greco can be useful: "The successful demonization of Serbs, making them largely responsible for the Yugoslav wars, and as unique and genocidal killers, was one of the great propaganda triumphs of our era. This was done quickly, with such uniformity and uncritical zeal in the mainstream Western media, that disinformation had (and still has, almost two decades later) an impact on the ground". Edward S. Herman, Emily Schwartz Greco, (March 19, 2009), "Serb Demonization as Propaganda Coup", *Foreign Policy In Focus*. In addition, there are other critical reviews from parts of the Western objective academic and professional public that support this thesis, such as: Simon Hulme, *The Modern Media: The Impact on Foreign Policy*, MA. Kansas: Command and General Staff College, 1996.; Jonathan Mermin, *Debating war and peace: Media coverage of U.S. intervention in the post Vietnam era, Princeton*, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999. Martin Yoanis Marinos, „Disciplining Civil War: Serbian and U.S. Press Coverage of the 1990s Conflicts in Yugoslavia", *Global Media Journal*, 2008, Vol. 7, Issue 12.

[26] Zoran B. Jevtović, Značaj antisrpske propagande i hibridnog ratovanja u procesu razbijanja Jugoslavije, *Napredak* Vol. II / No. 3, 2021. 95-114. doi: 10.5937/napredak2-34896; David R. Willcox, *Propaganda, the Press and Conflict - The Gulf War and Kosovo*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2005; Babak Bahador, The CNN Effect in Action: How the News Media Pushed the West toward War in Kosovo, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; Ekaterina Balabanova, *Media, Wars and Politics*, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007; Ekaterina Balabanova, *The media and human rights*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2015.

[27] Strategic communication, organized through several information operations, was prepared and executed within the NATO aggression against the FRY in 1999. Namely, despite the fact that at that moment only the US within NATO had a developed concept of the doctrine of information operations, whose purpose is to change public perception (*Perception* Management), the Alliance worked intensively on the adoption of these doctrines in its operational procedures. As a result,

separatist aspirations of the Albanians in the southern Serbian province.[28] The process lasted for almost an entire decade, with the persistence of the demonization of Serbs and the creation of an image of their explicit guilt for the wars in the territory of the former SFRY and the crimes committed during them.[29] On the basis of the analysis of the literature dealing with this topic and the events that took place before, during and after the NATO aggression against the FRY in 1999, it can be said that there was a specially developed strategic communication operation by the US[30] in order to achieve their goals. At the same time, media activity and representation of interests (lobbying) can be mentioned as expressed forms of communication.

The media has greatly influenced the escalation and management of the conflict, as well as the accomplishment of the political goals of Albanians, and the US foreign policy as the main protector of the Albanian goals. The cumulative effect of the media can be viewed through the manifestation of the so-called "CNN" effect. Despite the existence of critical theories that deny the potential influence of this effect, media-supported events on the foreign policy scene, unipolar dominance and the US interventionism at the end of the last century and the beginning of the 21st century, contribute to the argumentation of its strength.[31] In short, the CNN effect is the sublimation of the "lighthouse effect" by which only one party of the conflict is shown to the public.[32] The importance of its action is reflected in the raising of tensions in order to stimulate the public to support the US military intervention.[33]

The media has greatly influenced the initiation, escalation and outcome of the conflict in KiM.[34] During the period of the Albanian domination (1974–1989), the media in KiM played a key role in justifying the discrimination against Serbs. At that time, the ruling Albanian communist elite, by pressure harmonized with their political

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"the NATO war with Yugoslavia over the province of Kosovo was the first time that members of the Alliance, both individually and organizationally, implemented the concept of information operations in their military doctrines". More in Kristina Riegert, „Know Your Enemy, Know Your Allies: Lessons Not Learned from the Kosovo Conflict". *Journal of Information Warfare* (2002) 1, 2: 79 – 93.

[28] Nenad Perić, „Media war: ‚Artillery support' for NATO aggression on the FRY 1999", in Nebojša Vuković, (Ed.) David vs. Goliath: NATO war against Yugoslavia and its implications, Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics and Faculty of Security Studies, 2019, 350-364.

[29] Zoran B. Jevtović, "Značaj antisrpske propagande i hibridnog ratovanja u procesu razbijanja Jugoslavije", gen. quote; Miroslav Mitrović, "Mediji kao instrument strateške komunikacije u oružanim sukobima - SI-EN-EN efekat", Vojno delo 3/2020, pp. 34-52, DOI:10.5937/vojdelo2003034M.

[30] Ekaterina Balabanova, *Media, Wars and Politics*, gen. quote; Ekaterina Balabanova, *The media and human rights*, gen. quote.

[31] Piers Robinson, *The CNN effect*, London, Routledge, 2002.

[32] Miroslav Mitrović, "Mediji kao instrument strateške komunikacije u oružanim sukobima - SI-EN-EN efekat", Vojno delo 3/2020, pp. 34-52.

[33] Babak Bahador, *The CNN Effect in Action: How the News Media Pushed the West toward War in Kosovo*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

[34] David R.Willcox, *Propaganda, the press and conflict-The Gulf War and Kosovo*, New York, Routledge, 2005.

goals, silenced and marginalized the discrimination against the Serbs in KiM. Blagojević states that "the Albanian Kosovo media, together with the Albanian educational system, by inventing the Albanian history, were responsible for the creation of 'ethnic truths'".[35] Considering the media conflict during the NATO aggression against the FRY, three opposing media parties can be noticed: NATO, Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. The media constructs of the West aimed to support the aggression, presenting Albanians as victims and Serbs as the only culprits.

Advocacy - lobbying is a legitimate activity practiced by many ethnic groups in the US.[36] The Albanian interest groups, since the mid-1980s, have intensively and strategically developed long-term awareness of the so-called "Albanian issue" in the framework of the political and general public in the US. The strategic commitment of Albanians for the secession of KiM from Serbia, the establishment of a special state form, and later the unification with Albania, intensified in the mid-1990s, especially after the Dayton Agreement, when they came into complementarity with the geopolitical and economic interests of the Clinton administration. At that time, the activities of many Albanian interest and media organizations in the US intensified.[37] The dominant place in achieving the goal of "Greater Albania" is occupied by the Albanian-American Civic League[38], by collecting funds, mobilizing and sending young Albanians from the US to the KLA formations in KiM.[39]

On the other hand, the FRY, despite its much smaller resource capacities, successfully resisted general communication attack. The advantage was, among other things, reflected in the possibility of the media presence on the ground, live stream of civilian victims of the NATO strikes, examples of successful actions against the aggressor (videos of the shot down "invisible" F-117), and also cyber operations and other offensive activities within the defensive information strategy[40]. Such actions led to public opinion resistance to the aggression in some NATO countries, primarily in Greece and Italy[41], but also to repression in the form of an attack on the headquarters of Radio Television of Serbia in Belgrade, which can also be interpreted as an expression of the Alliance's informational impotence.[42]

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[35] Marina Blagojević, „War on Kosovo: A Victory for the Media?", gen. quote, p. 169.

[36] Miroslav Mitrović, *Strateško lobiranje*, Kragujevac, Koraci, 2017, pp. 115-127.

[37] Miroslav Mitrović, "Potencijalni uticaj interesnih grupa na spoljnu politiku Sjedinjenih Američkih Država: slučaj 'Kosovo'", *Zbornik Matice srpske za društvene nauke*, No. 163, (3/2017), pp. 413-428.

[38] Albanian American Civic League, https://www.aacl.com, 28/10/2021.

[39] Palmo Mastrolilli, „La lobby Albanese in America", *Limes*, 3, 1998, pp. 287–290.

[40] Miroslav Mitrović, Milan Miljković, „Hybrid genesis of information operations in cyberspace", *Teme* VII(4), 2018, 1359-1372. http://doi.org/10.22190/TEME1804359M

[41] Kristina Riegert, „Know Your Enemy, Know Your Allies: Lessons Not Learned from the Kosovo Conflict", gen. quote.

[42] Claudio Cordone, Avner Gidron, „Was the Serbian TV station really a legitimate target?", *Le Monde diplomatique*. July 2000. https://mondediplo.com/2000/07/03kosovo

The modelling of the strategic communication of the Republic of Serbia to KiM

The characteristics of the conflict in KiM, from the aspect of striving to find its sustainable solution, point to the need for it to be based on mutual respect of interests and a sincere commitment to future peaceful coexistence. There is a need to establish direct interethnic communication at the micro-macro level of communities. It is necessary that the communication which would lead to the resolution of the conflict has the following preconditions:

– *the establishment of restorative justice.* Solving crimes with compensation, identification and arrest of the responsible and community involvement in conflict resolution.[43] At the same time, in the case of the conflict in KiM, it is necessary for the parties to the conflict to take an objective and impartial position, which will punish all criminals, show that crimes do not have the statute of limitations and provide satisfaction to the victims' families;[44]

– *suppressing the dichotomy of truth.* Different interpretations of truth contribute greatly to the absence of constructive communication and are based on conflicting political goals and stereotypes. Gradual harmonization of the relationship to truth contributes to the reduction of emotional distance and a more rational perception of attainable goals. An important role is also played by the third party - the international community, due to the implementation of double standards and taking sides in the conflict;[45]

– *the establishment of direct dialogue.* Direct dialogue contributes to the erosion of negative stereotypes and a more realistic self-projection. By discovering the opposite aspects in oneself, as well as the similarities between oneself and the other, the process of communication and deconstruction of the negative view towards the other is carried out.[46] Research suggests that direct interaction between people who have different beliefs or cultural, ethnic or religious status will increase the ability to understand the perspective of the opponent's views and thereby reduce prejudice against such a group.[47]

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[43] „UN Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes", *UN Handbook*, Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2006, p. 6.

[44] Holger-C. Rohne Jana Arsovska and Ivo Aertsen, „Challenging restorative justice - state-based conflict, mass victimisation and the changing nature of warfare", in: Ivo Aertsen, Jana Arsovska, Holger-C. Rohne, Marta Valinas, Kris Vanspauwen (Eds.), *Restoring Justice after Large-scale Violent Conflicts*, Devon, Willan Publishing, pp. 16-19.

[45] Vesna Nikolić-Ristanović, „Potential for the use of informal mechanisms and responses to the Kosovo conflict – Serbian perspective", in: Ivo Aertsen, Jana Arsovska, Holger-C. Rohne, Marta Valinas, Kris Vanspauwen (Eds.), *Restoring Justice after Large-scale Violent Conflicts*, Devon: Willan Publishing, pp. 160-164.

[46] Dan Bar-On, „Empirical criteria for reconciliation in practice", *Intervention*, 3 (3), 2005, p. 184.

[47] Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Reading, Addison-Wesley, 1954; John Duckitt, „The Social Psychology of Prejudice", New York: Praeger, 1992.

In order to provide a comprehensive and sustainable resolution of the conflict in KiM, Serbia needs to develop strategic communication based on two main criteria: *compliance with goals* and *support for rationally sustainable solutions.* This implies the development of the media, public diplomatic, negotiation and lobbying strategy;

– *the media strategy.* It should be harmonized with general goals (reduction of tensions, accomplishment of restorative justice, resolution of the status of KiM, the issues of human security, etc.) and communication goals (the establishment of interethnic communication, the establishment of objective informing, the suppression of the influence of stereotypes, the suppression of prejudices, the creation of positive relationship in the Albanian and international community, etc.).[48] The media strategy addresses the Serbian, Albanian and international audience, which requires the synchronization and unification of communication instruments, for the sake of a coordinated and harmonious action that results in a positive image and the establishment of stable positive relations with target groups;[49]

– *the public diplomacy strategy.* Its goal is to achieve soft power by attracting and creating desirability among the Albanian population and the international public. The engagement is necessary in the widest spectrum of social action, such as religion, culture, education, non-governmental organizations, art, citizens' movements, political parties. The forms of action are also very diverse and range from sponsorship, philanthropy, organizational and technical assistance, donations, organization of joint performance, TV appearance, etc. The activities in the mentioned fields have to be promoted through classic and modern media, with special emphasis on social networks.[50] Despite the fact that the field of action is at first glance very broad, it is possible to organize it at the level of substrategies depending on the specific audience, as well as to group it according to areas;[51]

– *the negotiation strategy.* It is based on accomplishing the Serbian goal, along with making the conflict become passive and cease. Such a negotiation strategy, taking into account history, genesis and the current state of relations, is more than ambitious, but not impossible. Namely, the negotiation strategy is not implemented separately from other contents of strategic communication. From the point of view of Serbia, it also has two tracks of action: towards Albanians and towards the international community, more precisely, the forces influencing the conflict. The negotiation strategy consists of several substrategies that are implemented from the

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[48] Nenad Perić, "Medijska politika, informisanje javnosti, masovno komuniciranje i propaganda kao sredstva međunarodne politike i ideologije", *Nacionalni interest*, no. 3, 2008, pp. 169-182.

[49] Nenad Perić, Miroslav Mitrović, "Nova medijska strategija Vojske Srbije kao instrument meke moći", *Vojno delo*, 3/2021, pp. 60-72.

[50] Miroslav Mitrović, "Javna diplomatija u paradigmi hibridnog koncepta sukoba", *Vojno delo* 2/2018 309-325.

[51] Mark Leonard, *Public Diplomacy*, The Foreign Policy Centre, London, 2002, p. 11.

highest (strategic, state) to the micro level (local communities, groups of citizens, organized interest groups, etc.). Moreover, it is necessary to prepare the internal public to accept the attainable level of the negotiated solution, by reducing the conflict narrative and creating the atmosphere of the conflict de-escalation.[52]

– *the lobbying strategy*. It should be viewed as a communicative act of influencing decision-makers in accordance with one's goals and interests.[53] The Serbian lobbying strategy in solving the Kosovo-Metohija problem represents support for the state in the foreign policy arena and contains various communication and organizational forms (lobbying and lobbying through intermediaries).

Observing the specifics of the representation of interests in the EU and the US, which are also the main protagonists of interests opposed to the interests of Serbia, it is necessary to create a lobbying model as a platform for one's actions and as a basis for demands towards professional representation companies. It is possible to base the Serbian lobbying strategy on solving the Kosovo and Metohija issue according to the STAP model: 1) defining the topic, goals and tasks; 2) defining the target public; 3) creating a message; 4) establishment of communication channels; 5) expansion of support base; 6) affirmation of resources; 7) strategy imple-mentation; 8) systematization of data and information; 9) assessment of results and correction.[54]

All of the abovementioned represents the basis of one of the aspects of considering the problem and an attempt to support the Serbian efforts to assert its security and vital national interests in relation to KiM in the future through communication means. For this purpose, in addition to the development of communication strategies, it is necessary to develop an organizational structure at the state level that will plan, coordinate and implement the strategic communication of the Republic of Serbia. As one of the units in which an organizational unit (centre) could be developed for the communication aspects of relations with and in KiM is the Office for KiM of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. The elaboration of possible competencies, structure and composition, as well as tasks and goals, is the subject of further considerations and goes beyond the format and main idea of this paper.

Conclusion

The conflict between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija is long-lasting and complex. The security issue of Kosovo and Metohija directly affects the national security of the Republic of Serbia. Considering this conflict through a shortened retrospective, we can call it a permanent state of disturbed relations. There is a

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[52] Miroslav Mitrović, Željko Ivaniš, "Bezbednosno pregovaranje", *Vojno delo*, 4/2013, 169-183.
[53] Miroslav Mitrović, *Osnove lobiranja*, Mladenovac, Presing, 2015, p. 13.
[54] Miroslav Mitrović, *Strateško lobiranje*, gen. quote, pp. 162-164.

difficult, seemingly impossible task for the current generation of the political and intellectual elite of Serbs and Albanians: calming conflict tensions, overcoming contradictions, harmonizing interests, suppressing frozen conflict and finally, achieving coexistence in the same territory.

Taking into account the complexity and importance of the issue of Kosovo and Metohija for the national security of the Republic of Serbia, as well as the fact that the international community is also involved in the conflict, there is an objective need to develop strategic communication that will support solving the problem in a way that will not threaten the interests of Serbia.

Accordingly, it is necessary to develop detailed and adapted strategies for media appearance, public diplomacy, negotiation and lobbying. The principles of development should take into account the specifics of the genesis of the conflict, historical and social characteristics, goals and alternatives of the process, the interests of the parties directly and indirectly involved in the conflict, the development of relations with the parties that are observers of the process, as well as time and resource potential. The long duration and "freezing" of the conflict are not in favour of the Serbian interests, so it can be said that the development of strategic communication in support of solving the security problem in KiM is a task that must not be delayed.

The scope of this paper does not allow for more detailed elaboration of the organizational and implemented aspects of the strategic communication of the Republic of Serbia, which would simultaneously support the effective accomplishment of national interests and a harmonized solution acceptable to all parties. Above all, further elaboration of certain contents of practical policies in the state institutions, which would bring together experts from the fields of communication, management and political science, is imposed as necessary. Therefore, this paper, with its contents and conclusions, has no capacity or ambition to present itself as a unique and isolated solution, but to contribute to a critical approach to finding possible ways to achieve sustainable peace.

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S u m m a r y

Strategic communication as an expression of the state soft power, which expresses its strategic commitments, supports the state influence on the international scene and enables a more favourable status in providing national interests. The paper deals with the strategic communications within the Kosovo-Metohija security issue. A chronological overview follows the development of the conflict in the area of Kosovo and Metohija and the critical activities of strategic communication caused by those events. The examples of strategic communication that are key in determining the security situation in Kosovo and Metohija have been singled out. Based on the current state of the discussed problem, the prerequisites for establishing a constructive communication environment have been emphasized.

The conflict between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija is long-lasting and complex. The security issue of Kosovo and Metohija directly affects the national security of the Republic of Serbia. Considering this conflict through a shortened retrospective, we can call it a permanent state of disturbed relations. There is a difficult, seemingly impossible task for the current generation of the political and intellectual elite of Serbs and Albanians: calming conflict tensions, overcoming contradictions, harmonizing interests, suppressing frozen conflict and finally, achieving coexistence in the same territory.

Taking into account the complexity and importance of the issue of Kosovo and Metohija for the national security of the Republic of Serbia, as well as the fact that the international community is also involved in the conflict, there is an objective need to develop strategic communication that will support solving the problem in a way that will not threaten the interests of Serbia.

Accordingly, it is necessary to develop detailed and adapted strategies for media appearance, public diplomacy, negotiation and lobbying. The principles of development should take into account the specifics of the genesis of the conflict, historical and social characteristics, goals and alternatives of the process, the interests of the parties directly and indirectly involved in the conflict and the

development of relations with the parties that are observers of the process, as well as time and resource potential. The proposed framework of strategic communication supports the resolution of the Kosovo-Metohija security issue in accordance with the objective goals and national interests of the Republic of Serbia. The long duration and "freezing" of the conflict are not in favour of the Serbian interests, so it can be said that the development of strategic communication in support of solving the security problem in Kosovo is a task that must not be delayed.

Key words: *strategic communication, security, media, negotiation, lobbying, Kosovo and Metohija*