

DOI 10.51558/2490-3647.2025.10.1.681

UDK 316.48(470:477)

Primljeno: 18. 02. 2025.

Izvorni naučni rad
Original scientific paper

Adžlan Kurtanović, Atif Avdović

PERCEPTION ON RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT AND INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AMONG BOSNIAKS IN SERBIA

This study examines how the Bosniak minority in Serbia perceives the Russia-Ukraine war through the lens of international justice. Given their own history of conflict and contested justice mechanisms (e.g., ICTY), pro-Russian public sentiment in Serbia and Serbia's geopolitical ambivalence towards Russia-Ukraine war, Bosniak perspectives offer critical insights into minority dissent in polarized environments. A newly developed instrument – featuring scales on “Perception of Justice among Bosniaks in Serbia” and “The Russia-Ukraine Conflict” – was tested on 112 Bosniak respondents living in Serbia. Statistical analysis revealed that respondents held predominantly negative views of Russia's role, the war's consequences, and the international justice system. Higher education levels correlated with stronger anti-Russian perceptions, while skepticism toward the West's and region's treatment of Bosniaks and global injustice shaped war-related attitudes. The findings suggest Bosniaks perceive Russia as an aggressor operating outside accountability frameworks, reflecting broader minority distrust toward Serbia's geopolitical alignment.

Keywords: Russia-Ukraine conflict; Bosniaks in Serbia; international justice; negative perception of Russia in conflict; negative consequences of conflict

INTRODUCTION

The escalation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February 2022 marks one of the most consequential geopolitical crises of the 21st century. Complex historical, political, and economic tensions caused the war that has precipitated far-reaching global repercussions, including disruptions to international legal norms, humanitarian crisis, and the shift in regional security paradigm (Trautman & McFarlin 2023; Orhan 2022). Its full implications – particularly for post-Soviet and post-conflict societies – remain unfolding.

The Soviet Union's legacy is well known to have shaped political trajectories across world (Hellie 2002), especially Eastern (Southeastern) Europe, including Serbia, where there are cultural and historical ties to Russia (Petrović 2020). Additionally, Russia's contemporary influence extends to destabilization efforts in the Western Balkans. What is relevant for this research is its support for nationalist factions among Bosnian Serbs and Croats, often at the expense of Bosniak interests and Bosnia and Herzegovina government functionality (Salvo & De Leon 2018). Given Russia's explicit opposition to NATO and EU expansion in the region (Perica 2022), Bosniaks – who overwhelmingly favor Euro-Atlantic integration (Simić 2024) – may condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine.

Ethnic identities remain perceived as one of priorities in Balkan countries. Minority perspectives thus often reflect certain communalities of past grievances and current geopolitical alignments (Abazi & Doja 2018). For example, Gherman's (2024) study of Romania's minority in Ukraine demonstrates how historical experiences (e.g., Soviet repression) can foster solidarity with Ukraine. Public attitudes toward large-scale conflicts are thus rarely monolithic. Regarding Bosniaks, those attitudes are tied to historical trauma and collective memory manifested through memories of the 1992–1995 war, ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia) jurisprudence and earlier 20th-century conflicts (Dimitrijević et al. 2009; Minorities at risk project 2004); contemporary politics manifested through Serbia's ambivalent stance toward Russia (Dufalla & Metodjeva 2024) and unresolved minority rights issues (Guzina 2000; Bogavac 2017); and accountability issues manifested through frustrations with the inconsistent application of international justice, particularly regarding human rights violations (Suesser 2022).

However, existing literature in social and political psychology on Russia-Ukraine conflict does not treat Bosniaks in Serbia separately. This research aims to examine how Bosniaks in Serbia – a minority group with distinct historical and political sensitivities – perceive the Russia-Ukraine conflict and international justice mechanisms.

Their dual positionality (as a minority in Serbia and as a community with transnational ties to Bosnia) offers a critical lens to analyze their perceptions on identity, justice frameworks and geopolitics. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner 1979) suggests that minority attitudes are shaped by in-group/out-group dynamics, especially in post-conflict settings. Bosniaks' experiences with the ICTY (Kutnjak Ivković & Hagan 2017) may give insights on their trust in global accountability systems. As Bar-Tal (2000) notes, minorities often articulate differentiated views on geopolitical interventionism, reflecting both vulnerability and resilience. The study also aims to map Bosniak attitudes toward the war and international justice, contextualize these views within Serbia's domestic pluralism and the Balkans' geopolitical tensions, and enhance theoretical debates on minority agency in global conflict narratives.

The Russia-Ukraine war highlights the interplay between historical memory and contemporary geopolitics. For Bosniaks in Serbia, whose narratives are attached to unresolved justice claims and ongoing marginalization (Moll 2013), this conflict may resonate as both a distant crisis and a proximate allegory. This study thus moderates a critical gap in scholarship manifested by overlooking how minority communities – especially in ambivalent states like Serbia – interpret such global events.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Russia-Ukraine war has sparked extensive scholarly attention, generating multidisciplinary research across political science, international relations, and social psychology (Orhan 2022; Mbah & Wasum 2022; Lin et al. 2023). This study, while primarily situated in social psychology, engages with this broader academic discourse by examining how different nations and ethnic groups perceive the conflict. Below, we review key studies exploring public attitudes toward the war.

Comparative Perspectives on War Perceptions

Gherman (2024) investigated the Romanian minority in Ukraine, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to assess their stance on the war. Findings revealed strong support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russia, with the minority expressing a dual identity – maintaining ethnic heritage while affirming civic loyalty to Kyiv. This alignment may stem from historical grievances, particularly Soviet-era oppression (1940s–1950s) and fostering a shared “victim identity” with Ukrainians. Pragmatic considerations, such as anticipated improvements in minority rights legislation

(Milevoj 2024), may further explain this support.

In Germany, Wüstner (2023) surveyed 457 participants to differentiate between punitive attitudes toward the Russian state versus its people. Using factor analysis, the study identified distinct dimensions of blame, with respondents favoring state-level sanctions over collective punishment of Russians. Trust in Western media and political orientation significantly shaped these attitudes.

Bulgarian public opinion, as studied by Markova and Loope (2023), revealed a preference for neutrality, with 75% of 200 respondents advocating non-alignment – a stance the authors attribute to historical ties with Russia during the communist era.

Divergent Narratives: Russian and Ukrainian Attitudes

Research on Russian public opinion presents conflicting data. While Wollast et al. (2024) reported 50% support for the war among 2,856 Russians, Chapkovski and Shaub (2022) found 71% approval in an online survey of 3,000 respondents. However, such findings are contested due to potential state-led manipulation and media censorship (Kizilova 2022).

For Ukrainians, systematic searches of Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar yielded no peer-reviewed studies on civilian attitudes toward the war. Available data – primarily media reports and NGO analyses – suggest a narrative favoring negotiated resolutions, though methodological limitations preclude definitive conclusions. An exception is Dembitskyi et al. (2022), whose work on Ukrainian fighters identified “safety and a secure life” as their primary motivation.

The Gap: Minority Perspectives in Global Conflicts

Despite abundant research on macro-level geopolitical impacts (Benedikter 2023; Forsberg & Patomäki 2023), few studies examine how ethnic minorities, such as Bosniaks in Serbia, interpret the war and related notions of international justice. Serbia’s ambivalent position – balancing historical Russophilia (Petrović 2020) with EU aspirations – makes its minority perspectives particularly revealing.

Bosniaks’ views likely diverge from Serbia’s majority due to identity since minorities filter global conflicts through localized identity experiences (Tajfel & Turner 1979); history, since Bosniaks’ engagement with international justice mechanisms (e.g., the ICTY; Kutnjak Ivković & Hagan 2017) may shape their trust in such frame-

works; geopolitics, since minorities often develop distinct attitudes toward interventionism and justice (Bar-Tal 2000).

This study addresses this gap by analyzing Bosniaks' perceptions of the Russia-Ukraine war and international justice, offering insights into Serbia's internal pluralism and broader Balkan dynamics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample

A total of 112 respondents participated in the study, all of whom were from the territory of Novi Pazar. The questionnaires were distributed online, with respondents primarily receiving a link via social media that directed them to the questionnaire. Before completing the questionnaire, respondents were provided with brief instructions regarding the purpose of the study and the procedure for answering the questions. Additionally, before beginning the questionnaire, each respondent was required to read and confirm the informed consent, thereby expressing their agreement to participate in the study.

The sample consists of 67.9% male, and 32.1% female respondents. Regarding their political orientation, 6.3% declare they are far left, 8.9% left, 10.7% moderately left, 50.9% neutral, 13.4% moderately right, 5.4% right, and 4.5% far right. Among respondents, 3.6% of them have finished elementary school, 2.7% vocational high school, 38.4% high school, and 55.4% bachelor's or higher studies. There are 75% respondents that consider themselves diligent believers, 21.4% not as diligent believers, 2.7% agnostics, 0.9% atheists that respect religious choices of people. None of the respondents has considered religious people narrow-minded. Economic status (ES) for 7.1% respondents is much higher than the average, 18.8% above the average, 58% average, 11.6% below the average, and 4.5% much lower than the average. Average age of the respondents is 30.44 with standard deviation of 11.35, varying from 17 to 75 years.

Instruments

For this research, we developed a special questionnaire, which we named the "Questionnaire on the perception of the war between Russia and Ukraine and international justice among Bosniaks in Serbia". This questionnaire consists of two subscales. The first subscale is "Perception of International Justice" which consists of 38 items (Ap-

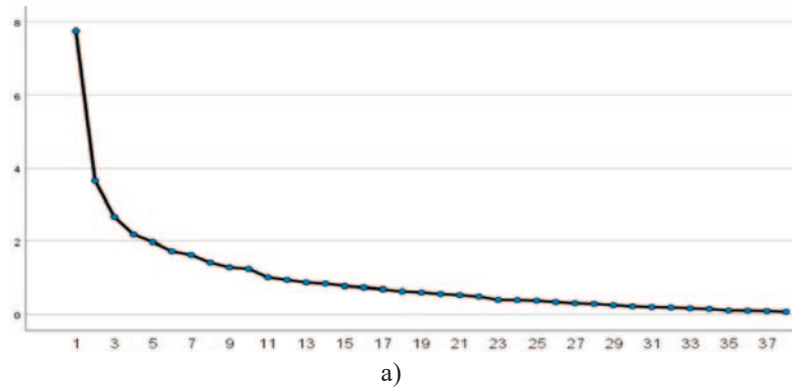
pendix A.1. or B.1.), and the second subscale is titled “The Russia-Ukraine Conflict” which consists of 7 items (Appendix A.2. or B.2.). Respondents would read a statement and then express their agreement or disagreement with that statement on a seven-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Mostly disagree, 3 = Somewhat disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 5 = Somewhat agree, 6 = Mostly agree, 7 = Strongly agree). The sociodemographic variables used included sex (S), age (A), education (ED), economic status (ES), level of religiosity (R), and political orientation (PC) (from far-left to far-right). Before completing the questionnaire, respondents would read the instructions containing basic information about the research, a notice that their answers would be completely anonymous, and information that they could withdraw from completing the questionnaire at any time.

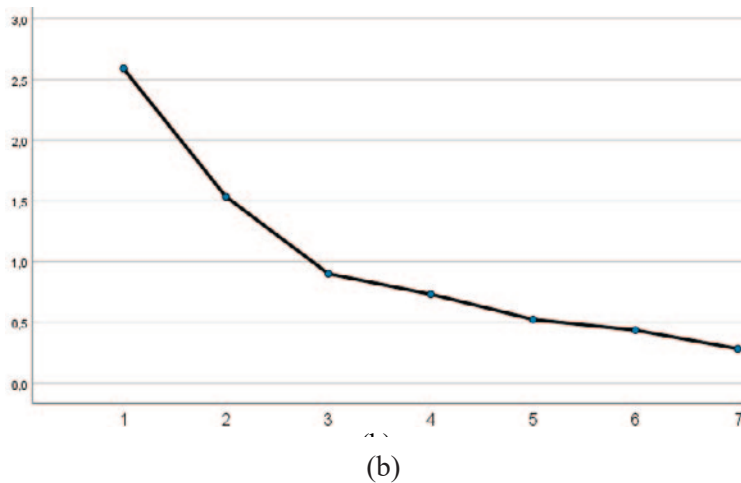
For all of the analysis methods used in the following paragraphs the SPSS v25 program has been used. DeepSeek AI tool has been used for text readability improvement.

Psychometric properties of instrument

On two scales used in this research principal component analysis (PCA) is performed in order to extract research variables. For component extraction the scree test has been used.

Figure 1. Scree plot for Principal Component Analysis. (a) Perception of International Justice scale; (b) The Russia-Ukraine Conflict scale.





Horizontal axis gives the order number of component extracted in the suggested solution, and vertical axis gives its eigenvalue.

Based on the Scree plot for Scale 1, it can be observed that after the fourth extracted factor, the eigenvalues differ less, meaning that the decline in the plot becomes negligible. Although a total of 11 factors has eigenvalues greater than 1, which is a common criterion for factor extraction, the changes in eigenvalues after the fourth factor are minimal, and the variance explained by subsequent components is not significant compared to the previous ones. The same holds for parallel analysis. The closer characteristics of the extracted components are provided in Table 1. Total variance explained by the solutions extracted by scree plot for the first scale is 42.837%. Analogously, for Scale 2 components explaining 58.892% of manifest variables total variance are extracted via scree test.

Table 1. Eigenvalues, percents of manifest variables variance determined by extracted components and Cronbach alpha coefficient of reliability.

Scale	Component (Number of items)	Initial extraction		Rotated extraction (Varimax method)		Cumulative % of variance and KMO coefficient	Cronbach's alpha
		Eigenvalue	% of variance	Eigenvalue	% of variance		
I	1 (11)	7.760	20.420	5.261	13.844	42.837 0.687	0.9
	2 (14)	3.660	9.632	4.387	11.545		0.8
	3 (12)	2.672	7.032	3.437	9.044		0.6
	4 (13)	2.186	5.754	3.194	8.404		0.6
II	1 (5)	2.588	36.971	2.587	36.960	58.892	0.7
	2 (3)	1.534	21.921	1.535	21.932	0.645	0.5

Bartlett's test detects significant deviation of correlation matrix from the identity matrix ($p < 0.001$) indicating high correlations between items.

Regarding the first scale, component eigenvalues vary from 2.186 to 7.760, explaining from 5.754% to 20.420% of manifest variables variance. After rotation, component eigenvalues vary from 3.194 to 5.261, explaining from 8.404% to 13.844% of manifest variables variance. Percent of total variance explained by these scale components is 42.837%. Measuring underlying characteristics using two of the other components is reliable with $\alpha > 0.6$, while for other two components its reliability is very good since $\alpha > 0.8$. Resulting variables are quantifying respondents' perception on

- World injustice (WI), composed of items 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28;
- Mistreatment of Bosniaks by countries of west and region (MB), composed of items 1, 4, 5, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 28, 30, 31, 34, and 36;
- World Islamophobia (WIS), composed of items 2, 3, 13, 16, 20, 23, 28, 29, 31, 36, 37, and 38.
- Unfavorable position of Bosniaks in Serbia (UP), composed of items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 21, 22, 23, 32, 33, and 34.

Item 35, i.e., "The problems of people in Sandžak should be prioritized over political problems in Bosnia", does not correlate with a coefficient of absolute value equal to 0.3 or higher with any of the components, so it does not contribute to the instrument in measuring the extracted characteristics. Therefore, it is recommended to exclude it from the model.

Regarding the second scale, component eigenvalues are 2.588 and 1.534, explaining 36.971% and 21.921% of manifest variables variance, respectively. After rotation, component eigenvalues are 2.587 and 1.535, explaining 36.960% and 21.932% of manifest variables variance, respectively. Percent of total variance explained by these scale components is 58.892%. Measuring underlying characteristics using one of the components can be accepted as reliable with $\alpha > 0.6$, and for another component it is $\alpha \approx 0.5$. Resulting variables are quantifying respondents' perception on

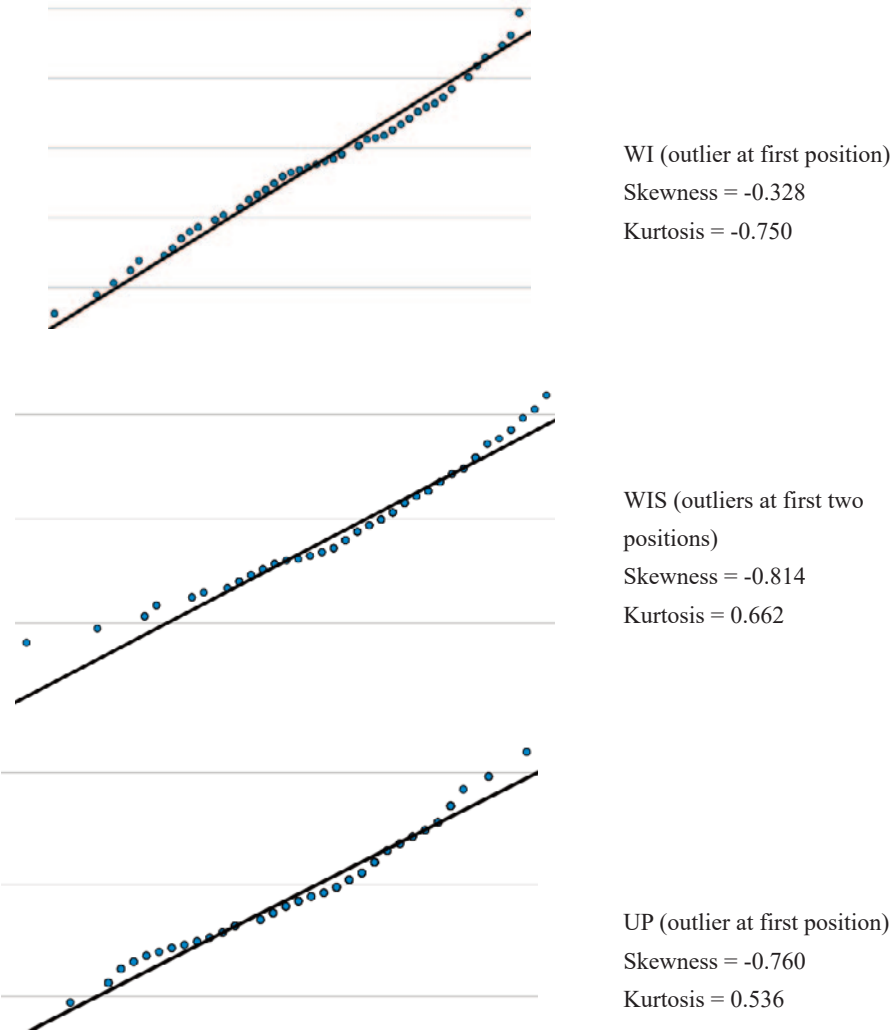
- Negative perception of Russia in conflict (NR), composed of items 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6;
- Negative consequences of Russia-Ukraine conflict (NC), composed of items 1, 2 and 7.

It is important to note that even though $\alpha \geq 0.7$ is usually referred to as the reliability based on which the instrument parts that form obtained variable need not to be improved, Cronbach (1951) himself had suggested that a high value of alpha was 'desirable' when an instrument was used to assign a score to an individual, but he argued that the key point should be that scores obtained when using an instrument had to be interpretable – and this was often possible without needing very high values of alpha (Taber 2018). Since this is the observational study, and interpretability of the items and obtained variables enables us to consider the measurement acceptable at $\alpha \geq 0.5$. Instrument should be improved once the conditions for the experimental study are met.

WI, NR and NC are dependent variables since that is the goal of the paper, i.e. determining the perception of Serbian Bosniaks on these characteristic – how are they impacted and how are they related – based on the data obtained. Other variables will be treated as predictors.

Three of the research variables, MB ($p > 0.2$), NR ($p = 0.176 > 0.1$) and NC ($p = 0.147 > 0.1$), have distribution that fits the normal distribution based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Since the sample size is moderate (greater than 50) and p-values are larger than 0.1, results suggest that there is no strong evidence against the data fitting the normal distribution. However, for other variables, the non-normality ($p \leq 0.027$) can be explained by potential outliers. In that case parametric correlations and regressions can be applied and the results could be taken as reliable. Following diagrams give required information.

Figure 2. Normality Q-Q plots for variables World injustice, World islamophobia and Unfavorable position of Bosniaks in Serbia.



Observing the normality Q-Q plots we can see that the distributions of observed variables are similar with normal in terms of shape (points concentrate at the line). Existing outliers can be detected. These outliers, along with the large sample size cause tests to report non-normal distribution. Also, low values (less than 1) of skewness and kurtosis indicate characteristics of normal distribution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Since the research focuses on Bosniak respondents' perception on Russia-Ukraine war and international (in)justice, the paper displays descriptive statistics on variables WI, NR and NC.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for World injustice, Negative perception of Russia in conflict and Negative consequences of Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Variable	Median	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
WI	58 (44)	56.12	13.36	22 (11)	77 (77)
NR	24 (20)	24.24	6.67	5 (5)	35 (35)
NC	15 (12)	15.36	3.65	7 (3)	21 (21)

In parentheses scale measures are given. Scale minimum is the lowest possible value, scale maximum largest possible, and scale median is mean of scale minimum and scale maximum.

Higher scores of each variable indicate higher presence of characteristic it measures in terms of respondent perception. Based on Table 2, Bosniak minority respondents in Serbia have expressed substantially high scores of WI. They thus perceive that international justice is not nearly well preserved as it should be. Both empirical mean and median are larger than theoretical median for more than 12 units (18.18% of scale range). Also, 78.6% off respondents have reported WI score larger than 44, while 50% of respondents have reported WI score larger than 58.

The findings demonstrate that Bosniaks in Serbia perceive international justice as inadequate – a perspective deeply rooted in their collective historical experiences. Some factors explaining such results might be the community's exposure to violence during the 1990s conflicts, particularly in regions like Sandžak (Minorities at Risk Project 2004), perceived shortcomings of international judicial mechanisms, including delayed or selective prosecutions at the ICTY (Meernik 2005), inconsistent sentencing for war crimes against Bosniaks (Clark 2014) and lack of meaningful reparations or institutional reforms; and long-term transmission of grievance narratives that frame international justice as structurally biased (Moll 2013; Halbwachs 1992).

This framework moves beyond individual grievances to reveal how institutional performance, historical trauma, and communal memory-production interact to shape minority groups' perceptions on global justice systems. The Bosniak case thus offers a test of transitional justice theories that assume international institutions can foster reconciliation through legalism alone (Teitel 2003).

The similar holds for both NR and NC. Respondents have expressed substantially high scores for negative perception of Russia in the conflict and of consequences of war. More than 75% of respondents have reported NR scores larger than scale median, and 67% of respondents have reported NC scores larger than scale median.

While war is widely regarded as inherently undesirable, empirical research demonstrates that populations may perceive it as a necessary means to achieve justice under specific circumstances (Saucier et al. 2018; Grossman, Manekid & Miodownik 2015; Bizumic et al. 2013; Hall 1993). However, Bosniaks in Serbia report negative attitudes toward the Russia-Ukraine war and view its consequences as detrimental. This stance likely stems from their collective historical experiences with conflict, particularly the trauma of the 1990s wars and their consequences in the former Yugoslavia (Minorities at Risk Project 2004). Their skepticism may also reflect deeper doubts about the efficacy of international institutions to deliver justice – a sentiment reinforced by their community’s complex relationship with post-conflict justice mechanisms like the ICTY (Kutnjak Ivković & Hagan 2017).

This pattern aligns with broader findings that communities with histories of conflict-related trauma often interpret new wars through the prism of past grievances (Rinker & Lawler 2018; Hirschberger 2018; Li et al. 2023). For Bosniaks, whose identity is partly shaped by narratives of victimization and institutional failure (Dimitrijević et al. 2009), the Russia-Ukraine conflict may thus resonate as both a geopolitical event and a reminder of unresolved injustices.

To properly understand whether the sample properties indicate certain perceptions of WI, NR and NC, the correlation analysis of sociodemographic variables is performed and given with the following table.

Table 3. Correlation analysis of sociodemographic variables

Variable	A	PC	ED	R	ES
S	0.077	-0.143	0.051	-0.081	0.038
A	/	-0.081	-0.021	-0.064	0.190*
PC	/		-0.042	0.325**	-0.023
ED	/			-0.103	0.103
R	/				-0.214*

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

There is no statistically significant correlation between sex and any other variable ($|r| \leq 0.143$, $p = 0.133 > 0.05$), which indicates no significant difference in those scores distributed among male and female participants.

There is statistically significant positive correlation, with the level of significance 0.05, between age and ES ($r=0.190$, $p=0.044<0.05$). However, correlation is weak and when a lower level of significance is considered, correlation is not significant.

Political continuum significantly correlates only with religiousness ($r=0.325$, $p=0.000<0.01$). Moderate positive correlation indicates that the more religious respondents are, the more left they are oriented.

Education does not correlate significantly with any other variable ($|r|\leq 0.103$, $p\geq 0.281>0.05$).

There is statistically significant correlation, with the level of significance 0.05, between religiousness and ES ($r=-0.214$, $p=0.024<0.05$). Correlation being negative indicates that less respondents are religious, the better their ES is.

Table 4. Correlation analysis between sociodemographic variables and research variables

Variable	S	A	PC	ED	R	ES
WI	0.057	0.131	0.070	0.121	0.055	0.040
MB	0.123	0.442**	0.022	0.113	-0.187*	0.106
WIS	-0.012	0.205*	-0.082	0.118	-0.169	0.047
UP	-0.102	0.035	-0.164	0.004	-0.012	-0.174
NR	-0.013	0.173	-0.003	0.269**	-0.113	0.055
NC	0.094	-0.103	0.160	-0.125	0.006	0.119

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$.

Statistically significant sociodemographic predictors of research variables are

- age that significantly correlates with MB ($r=0.442$, $p=0.000<0.01$), and WIS ($r=0.205$, $p=0.030<0.05$).
- education that significantly correlates only with NR ($r=0.269$, $p=0.004<0.01$).
- religiousness that significantly correlates only with MB ($r=-0.187$, $p=0.049<0.05$).

According to these results, NC has no significant predictors among sociodemographic variables.

Table 5. Correlation analysis between research variables

Variable	WI	MB	WIS	UP
WI	/	0.161	0.243**	0.270**
MB	/		0.411**	0.256**
WIS	/			0.357**
NR	0.024	-0.068	-0.090	0.066
NC	0.354**	0.264**	0.116	0.153

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Among the research variables, there are no statistically significant predictors of NR ($|r| \leq 0.090$, $p \geq 0.346 > 0.1$).

Among the research variables, statistically significant predictors of NC are variables WI ($r = 0.354$, $p < 0.001$) and MB ($r = 0.264$, $p = 0.005 < 0.01$).

Based on correlation analysis, preliminary model for predicting NR scores would have only one predictor ED. Using stepwise method, it is obtained that there are no latent nonlinear predictions of NR by any other variable. Hence, preliminary model is actually final model. However, since ED is ordinal, categorical variable, the analysis of variance will be used instead of linear regression. Due to first two categories of ED having only 4 and 3 respondents, respectively, nonparametric methods guarantee more reliable result. Kruskal-Wallis test is thus used.

Table 6. Analysis of variance for Negative perception of Russia in conflict between Education categories.

Education	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max	H (p)
Elementary school	4	17.25	11.32	5	30	6.811 (0.078)
Vocational school	3	18.00	3.46	14	20	
High school	43	23.72	6.15	12	35	
Bachelor/Masters/PhD	62	24.24	6.67	5	35	

Kruskal-Wallis test indicates there are statistically significant differences between these groups, but with the level of significance of 10%. This means that results might be different if there were more respondents in the first two groups. General tendency is that, higher the level of education, higher the score for negative perception of Russia in conflict. Pairwise difference is statistically significant, with the level of significance of 5%, only between the groups of Vocational school and Bachelor/Masters/PhD

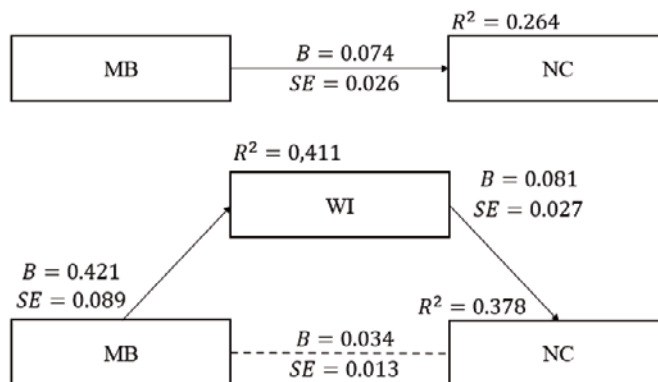
($Z=2.022$, $p=0.04<0.05$). Otherwise, differences are reported as non-significant ($Z\leq 1.538$, $p\geq 0.137>0.1$). These results might not reflect a general trend since the first two groups are non-representative in terms of the sample size.

The study reveals that education potentially serves as a predictor of negative perceptions of Russia among Bosniaks in Serbia, with higher levels of education correlating with more critical assessments of Russian foreign policy. This finding aligns with established literature on education's role in shaping political cognition (Pithers & Soden 2000), suggesting education expands exposure to diverse, often international, media sources, reducing reliance on state-dominated narratives and cultivates critical thinking skills, enabling individuals to systematically evaluate historical precedents (e.g., Russia's interventions in the Balkans) and ethical implications of geopolitical actions.

These results detect education as an important socio-cognitive filter through which ethnic minorities interpret international conflicts. They also highlight a broader research imperative: to investigate how educational systems determine the relationship between ethnic identity and political attitudes in post-conflict societies.

As for NC prediction, based on the correlation analysis, variables that figure as significant predictors in the preliminary model are WI and MB. However, using stepwise method with all of the research variables detects only WI as a significant predictor of NC. There are thus no latent nonlinear predictors, and final model will take into consideration WI and MB as predictors. Also, since stepwise method does not detect MB as significant when WI is in the model, mediation occurs.

Figure 3. Mediation of World injustice at Mistreatment of Bosniaks by countries of west and region impact on Negative consequences of Russia-Ukraine conflict analysis



In Figure 3 details about NC determinations are given. Since partial correlation coefficient between MB and NC when WI is controlled is 0.139 and is not statistically significant ($p=0.145>0.1$), while regular Pearson correlation coefficient ($r=0.264$, $p=0.005<0.01$) indicates statistically significant correlation, the full mediation of WI occurs. Therefore, it is unnecessary to use Aroian or other mediation significance test.

The data suggest that historical experiences of mistreatment by Western and regional powers may foster perceptions of systemic world injustice, which in turn shapes respondents' negative evaluations of the Russia-Ukraine conflict's consequences. This pattern resonates with critical international relations theories that position justice perceptions as a core determinant of conflict attitudes (Patomäki 2006), particularly among communities with lived experiences of geopolitical exclusion.

Mechanism that might explain this occurrence is that past grievances (e.g., perceived abandonment during the Bosnian War or inconsistent application of international law) create a framework for interpreting current conflicts. Additionally, repeated experiences of marginalization violates confidence in international institutions, as documented in post-Yugoslav justice studies (Subotić 2019). The gap between international norms and observed outcomes fuels cynicism, consistent with theories of justice motivation (Lerner 1980).

Results also indicate how conflict perceptions of marginalized groups serve as both a political stance and a factor maintaining their position within global power structures. Limitations of the study are small sample size, lack of theoretical background concerning this topic and lack of less educated respondents in the sample.

CONCLUSION

Our research has shown that Bosniak respondents living in Serbia have reported perception of international justice as far from well established. Accordingly, perception of Russia as the initiator in Russia-Ukraine war is negative. Consequences of war are also perceived negatively.

There is one significant predictor of Bosniaks negative perception of Russia in conflict and that is Education. It has been shown that more educated Bosniaks tend to have larger scores of Bosniaks negative perception of Russia in conflict. However, this is significant only with the level of significance of 10% and might be different for sample with more less educated respondents.

There are two significant predictors of Bosniaks negative perceptions on negative consequences of war, perception of Mistreatment of Bosniaks by the countries of

west and region and perception of World injustice. The impact of WI is direct, while for the impact of MB full mediation through WI occurs. In other words, eventual impact of MB is fully manifested through WI.

Future research should include a larger number of Bosniak respondents from different regions of Serbia. Additionally, we recommend conducting longitudinal studies to track the evolution of attitudes over time and the impact of changes in international relations on the perception of war and international justice.

APPENDIX

Appendix A.1. Scale 1 items in Serbian.

Skala 1 - Percepcija pravde kod Bošnjaka u Srbiji

Mnogi ljudi se u nekoj meri slažu, a mnogi drugi ne slažu sa raznim mišljenjima koja ćemo sada dati. Odgovor dati biranjem (zaokruživanjem/štikliranjem) odgovarajućeg broja na skali od 1 (uopšte se ne slažem) do 7 (u potpunosti se slažem), gde 4 znači da ste neodlučni, tj. da niti se slažete niti se ne slažete. Podsećamo da nema tačnih i pogrešnih odgovora i da svako ima pravo na svoj stepen slaganja.

1. Zapad (zemlje EU i SAD) ne prihvata naš narod jer smo drugačiji od njih i držimo do sebe.
2. Međunarodni politički sistem je pravičan.
3. Zapad samo želi da nam pomogne da popravimo greške za sopstvenu korist.
4. Moja nacija je uvek zasluživala pravičniji tretman od strane drugih zemalja nego što ga je dobijala.
5. Zapad nas mrzi.
6. Naša država ne kažnjava dovoljno one koji su je opljačkali.
7. Mnogi kriminalci su i dalje na slobodi u našoj zemlji.
8. Mnogi su se kod nas na nepošten način obogatili.
9. Kod nas se zakon ne primenjuje jednako na sve.
10. U našem društvu važnije je imati dobru vezu nego biti sposoban.
11. Kod nas se ne isplati biti pošten da bi uspeo.
12. Znanje i sposobnost kod nas niko ne ceni.
13. Kod nas su mito i korupcija postali uobičajena pojava.
14. Ja živim u sigurnom, stabilnom i bezbednom okruženju.
15. Svet je u suštini džungla gde moć, bogatstvo i uspeh čine sve.
16. Svet se u suštini zasniva na principu – svako dobije ono što zaslužuje.

17. Svet je u suštini opasno i nepredvidivo mesto.
18. Često imam poteškoća da obezbedim stvari koje moja porodica i ja trebamo.
19. Političko angažovanje u ovoj zemlji je besmisleno i neefikasno.
20. Politički pogledi ljudi kao što sam ja imaju uticaja u političkom sistemu moje zemlje.
21. Bošnjaci su u politički nepovoljnijem položaju u odnosu na druge narode u regionu.
22. Teže je da se čuju autentični stavovi Bošnjaka nego drugih naroda u regionu.
23. Moćni akteri ne žele da razumeju poziciju Bošnjaka.
24. U današnje doba čovek se može osloniti samo na materijalne stvari.
25. Ma šta pričali, ko ima novac prolazi dobro, a ko nema loše.
26. Danas svemu (prijateljstvu, pomaganju...) može da se izračuna cena i izrazi korist.
27. Lepo je pričati o visokim idealima, ali se na kraju sve svodi na novac.
28. Pravosuđe ne gleda na isti način Srbe i Bošnjake.
29. Ogroman broj slučajeva koji su se odigrali u skorijoj prošlosti nam ukazuje da pravosuđe nije isto za sve.
30. Broj zapošljenih Bošnjaka u pravnim institucijama je mali, čak i tamo gde su oni većina.
31. Postoji diskriminacija Bošnjaka na svim državnim nivoima (u zdravstvu, pravosuđu, obrazovanju).
32. Vršioći vlasti u Novom Pazaru ne rade dovoljno na poboljšanju statusa bošnjačkog naroda.
33. Vlast u Novom Pazaru je u stvari sluga Beograda i uopšte nema u interesu rad za bošnjački narod.
34. Bošnjaci, bili oni iz Bosne, Sandžaka ili Crne Gore, su u stvari jedan narod.
35. Problemi ljudi u Sandžaku treba da nam budu prioritetniji od političkih problema u Bosni.
36. Aktuelna događanja oko Rusije i Ukrajine nam pokazuju da Zapad ne tretira isto muslimanske i ostale države.
37. Muslimani širom sveta (u Siriji, Palestini) godinama pate, i gotovo da niko ništa ne preduzima, dok su se oko rata Ukrajine i Rusije „svi“ vodeći svetski lideri aktivirali.
38. Rat u Ukrajini nam pokazuje licemernost Zapada u odnosu prema muslimanima i muslimanskim državama.

Appendix A.2. Scale 2 items in Serbian.

Skala 2 - Sukob Rusije i Ukrajine

Koliko se slažete sa sledećim tvrdnjama o sadašnjem ratu na teritoriji Ukrajine? Odgovor dati biranjem (zaokruživanjem/štikliranjem) odgovarajućeg broja na skali od 1 (uopšte se ne slažem) do 7 (u potpunosti se slažem), gde 4 znači da ste neodlučni, tj. da niti se slažete niti se ne slažete. Neki ljudi imaju jedno mišljenje, a drugi drugačije, nas ne zanima ko je u pravu nego kako su različita mišljenja povezana sa drugim pogledima ljudi. Nema tačnih niti pogrešnih odgovora.

1. Rusija je izvršila agresiju i napala Ukrajinu isključivo iz svojih podlih interesa.
2. Ukrajina je samo bojno polje za sukob Rusije i Zapada.
3. Rusija je bila prinuđena da se brani da je NATO ne bi opkolio i uništio.
4. Rusija mora da odgovara za sve posledice agresije na Ukrajinu.
5. Srbija bi trebalo da uvede iste sankcije Rusiji kao i zemlje Evropske unije.
6. Srbija ni po koju cenu ne treba da uvede sankcije Rusiji.
7. Šta god odlučila da uradi u vezi sukoba u Ukrajini, Srbija će imati veoma loše posledice.

Appendix B.1. Scale 1 items in English.

Scale 1 - Perception of Justice among Bosniaks in Serbia

Many people agree to some extent, while others disagree with various opinions we will now present. Answer by selecting (circling/checking) the appropriate number on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), where 4 means that you neither agree nor disagree. We remind you that there are no right or wrong answers, and everyone is entitled to their own level of agreement.

1. The West (EU countries and the USA) does not accept our people because we are different from them and we take pride in ourselves.
2. The international political system is fair.
3. The West only wants to help us correct our mistakes for its own benefit.
4. My nation has always deserved fairer treatment from other countries than it has received.
5. The West hates us.
6. Our country does not properly punish those who have plundered it.
7. Many criminals are still free in our country.

8. Many have become wealthy in our country through dishonest means.
9. The law is not applied equally to everyone here.
10. In our society, having good connections is more important than being capable.
11. In our country, it does not pay to be honest if you want to succeed.
12. Knowledge and ability are not valued in our country.
13. Bribery and corruption have become common occurrences here.
14. I live in a safe, stable, and secure environment.
15. The world is essentially a jungle where power, wealth, and success determine everything.
16. The world is fundamentally based on the principle – everyone gets what they deserve.
17. The world is essentially a dangerous and unpredictable place.
18. I often struggle to secure the things my family and I need.
19. Political engagement in this country is meaningless and ineffective.
20. The political views of people like me impact my country's political system.
21. Bosniaks are in a politically disadvantaged position compared to other peoples in the region.
22. It is harder for the authentic views of Bosniaks to be heard compared to other peoples in the region.
23. Powerful countries do not want to understand the position of Bosniaks.
24. In the current day world, one can only rely on material things.
25. No matter what people say, those who have money do well, and those who don't do poorly.
26. Today, everything (friendship, helping others...) can be assigned a price and measured in terms of utility.
27. It's nice to talk about high ideals, but in the end, everything comes down to money.
28. The judiciary does not treat Serbs and Bosniaks equally.
29. A large number of cases from the recent past show that the judiciary is not the same for everyone.
30. The number of employed Bosniaks in judiciary institutions is low, even in places they are the majority.
31. There is discrimination against Bosniaks at all state levels (in healthcare, judiciary, education).
32. The authorities in Novi Pazar are not doing enough to improve the status of the Bosniak people.

33. The authorities in Novi Pazar are actually servants of Belgrade and have no interest in working for Bosniak people.
34. Bosniaks, whether from Bosnia, Sandžak, or Montenegro, are essentially one people.
35. The problems of people in Sandžak should be a higher priority for us than the political problems in Bosnia.
36. Current events around Russia and Ukraine show that the West does not treat Muslim countries the same as others.
37. Muslims around the world (in Syria, Palestine) have been suffering for years, and almost no one did anything, while in the war between Ukraine and Russia, “all” the world’s leading leaders have become active.
38. The war in Ukraine shows the hypocrisy of the West toward Muslims and Muslim countries.

Appendix B.2. Scale 2 items in English.

Scale 2 - Conflict between Russia and Ukraine

How much do you agree with the following statements about the current war in Ukraine? Answer by selecting (circling/checking) the appropriate number on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), where 4 means that you neither agree nor disagree. Some people have one opinion, and others have different ones; we are not interested in who is right but in how different opinions are related to other people’s views. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. Russia committed aggression and attacked Ukraine solely out of its own vile interests.
2. Ukraine is just a battleground for the conflict between Russia and the West.
3. Russia was forced to defend itself to prevent NATO from encircling and destroying it.
4. Russia must be held accountable for all the consequences of its aggression against Ukraine.
5. Serbia should impose the same sanctions on Russia as the European Union countries.
6. Serbia should under no circumstances impose sanctions on Russia.
7. Whatever Serbia decides to do regarding the conflict in Ukraine, it will face very negative consequences.

Appendix C.1. Data based on which the results are obtained: Google drive link.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ntqcMQywtqn-kR4uFAob700vRRGXux0Q/view?usp=drive_link

REFERENCES

1. Abazi, Enika, Albert Doja (2018), "Time and narrative: Temporality, memory, and instant history of Balkan wars", *Time & Society*, 27(2), 239-272.
2. Bar-Tal, Daniel (2000), "From intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation: Psychological analysis", *Political Psychology*, 21(2), 351-365.
3. Benedikter, Roland (2023), "The new global direction: from "one globalization" to "two globalizations"? Russia's war in Ukraine in global perspective", *New Global Studies*, 17(1), 71-104.
4. Bogavac, Živanka M. (2017), "National minorities, with special opening opinion in the Republic of Serbia", *Економика - Часопис за економску теорију и праксу и друштвена питања*, (3), 87-97.
5. Clark, Janine N. (2014), *International Trials and Reconciliation: Assessing the Impact of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia*, Routledge
6. Cronbach, Lee J. (1951), "Coefficient Alpha and the Internal Structure of Tests". *Psychometrika*, 16(3), 297-334.
7. Dembitskyi, Serhii, Roman Kyrychenko, Svitlana Salnikova, Mykola Sydorov (2022), "The Value Dimension of Public Opinion in Ukraine during the Full Scale War and Its Role for Post-War Reconstruction", *Sociological studios*, 21(2), 42-56.
8. Dimitrijevic, Vojin (2009), "Domestic war crimes trials in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia", In: J. Batt & J. Obradovic-Wochnik (eds.), *War crimes, conditionality and EU integration in the Western Balkans*, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), 83-100.
9. Dufalla, Jacqueline, Asya Metodjeva (2024), "From affect to strategy: Serbia's diplomatic balance during the Russia-Ukraine War", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 1-20.
10. Forsberg, Tuomas, Heikki Patomäki (2023), "Looking at the war in Ukraine and ways it could end from a global perspective", *Globalizations*, 20(7), 1180-1186.

11. Gherman, Marin (2024), "The perception of the Romanian Minority in Ukraine on the Russian-Ukrainian War", *Annals of Philosophy, Social & Human Disciplines*, 1, 109-123.
12. Guzina, Dejan (2000), "Nation-building vs. minority-destroying: Majority-minority relations in the post-socialist Serbia", *Southeast European Politics*, 1(1), 25-40.
13. Halbwachs, Maurice (1992), *On Collective Memory* (L. A. Coser, Trans.), University of Chicago Press
14. Hellie, Richard (2002), "The Soviet Global Impact: 1945-1991", *Russian History*, 29(2/4), 141-150.
15. Hirschberger, Gilad (2018), "Collective trauma and the social construction of meaning", *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1-14.
16. Kizilova, Kseniya (2022), "Assessing Russian public opinion on the Ukraine war", *Russian Analytical Digest*, 281, 2-5.
17. Kutnjak Ivković, Sanja, John Hagan (2017), "The legitimacy of international courts: Victims' evaluations of the ICTY and local courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina", *European journal of criminology*, 14(2), 200-220.
18. Lerner, Melvin J. (1980), *The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion*, Plenum Press
19. Li, Mengyao, Bernhard Leidner, Gilad Hirschberger, Jiyoung Park (2023), "From threat to challenge: Understanding the impact of historical collective trauma on contemporary intergroup conflict", *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 18(1), 190-209.
20. Lin, Faqin, Xuecao Li, Ningyuan Jia, Fan Feng, Hai Huang, Jianxi, Huang, Shenggen Fan, Philippe Ciais, Xiao-Peng Song (2023), "The impact of Russia-Ukraine conflict on global food security", *Global Food Security*, 36, 100661.
21. Markova, Angelena, Amy Loope (2023), "The Influence of Communism on the Bulgarian Attitude Towards the Russia-Ukraine War", *Journal of Student Research*, 12(3), 1-20.
22. Mbah, Ruth Endam, Fivine Forcha Wasum (2022), "Russian-Ukraine 2022 War: A review of the economic impact of Russian-Ukraine crisis on the USA, UK, Canada, and Europe", *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 9(3), 144-153.
23. Meernik, James (2005), "Justice and peace? How the International Criminal Tribunal affects societal peace in Bosnia", *Journal of Peace Research*, 42(3), 271-289.

24. Milevoj, Marin (2024), "Prava nacionalnih manjina u ukrajini–usklađenost nacionalnog pravnog uređenja s međunarodnopravnim okvirom", *Paragraf*, 8(1), 85-110.
25. Minorities at Risk Project (2004), *Chronology for Sandzak Muslims in Yugoslavia*; available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/469f38f61e.html> [accessed 23 March 2025]
26. Moll, Nicolas (2013), "Fragmented memories in a fragmented country: memory competition and political identity-building in today's Bosnia and Herzegovina", *Nationalities Papers*, 41(6), 910-935.
27. Orhan, Ebru (2022), "The effects of the Russia-Ukraine war on global trade", *Journal of International Trade, Logistics and Law*, 8(1), 141-146.
28. Patomäki, Heikki (2006), "Global justice: A democratic perspective", *Globalizations*, 3(2), 99-120.
29. Perica, Vjekoslav (2022), "Reconciliation Attempts and the Return to Conflict in the Balkans, 2010-2022 (And Parallels to the Russian War on Ukraine)", *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, 42(4), 1-26
30. Petrović, Dragan (2020), "Russia and the Serbs (Serbia), from eastern question to contemporary relations", In: Stojanović, Bogdan, Elena G. Ponomareva (eds.), *Russia and Serbia in the Contemporary World: Bilateral Relations, Challenges and Opportunities*, Institute of international politics and economics, Belgrade, 98-114.
31. Pithers, R. T., Rebecca Soden (2000), "Critical thinking in education: A review", *Educational Research*, 42(3), 237-249.
32. Rinker, Jeremy, Jerry Lawler (2018), "Trauma as a collective disease and root cause of protracted social conflict", *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 24(2), 150-164.
33. Salvo, David, Stephanie de Leon (2018), "Russia's Efforts to Destabilize Bosnia and Herzegovina", *German Marshall Fund of the United States*, research report, 1-5.
34. Simic, Vanesa (2024), "Potential and Problematics: European Union Enlargement of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 21st Century", *European and Eurasian Undergraduate Research Symposium 2024*. University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, 21-31.
35. Subotić, Jelena (2019), *Yellow Star, Red Star: Holocaust Remembrance After Communism*, Cornell University Press

36. Suesser, Julia R. (2022), "Accountability for Human Rights Abuses in Authoritarian Regimes? The Insufficiency of International Justice Institutions: A Critical Look at Syria, China, and Russia", *Connecticut Public Interest Law Journal*, 22(1), 172-193.
37. Taber, Keith S. (2018), "The Use of Cronbach's Alpha When Developing and Reporting Research Instruments in Science Education", *Research in Science Education*, 48(1), 1273–1296.
38. Teitel, Ruti G. (2003), *Transitional Justice*, Oxford University Press
39. Trautman, Lawrence. Maia McFarlin (2023), Putin, Russia and Ukraine: International human rights violations, war crimes, & future implications, SSRN; Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4393282
40. Turner, John C., R. J. Brown, Henri Tajfel (1979), "Social comparison and group interest in ingroup favouritism", *European journal of social psychology*, 9(2), 187-204.
41. Wollast, Robin, Joseph B. Phillips, Illia Yahiiaiev, Karine Malysheva, Olivier Klein, Nikhil K. Sengupta (2024), "Russians' Attitudes Towards the War in Ukraine", *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 55(1), 119-135.
42. Wüstner, Kerstin (2023), "The War in Ukraine: Punitive Attitudes in Germany", SSRN; Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4515475 [Accessed 16 Jan. 2025]

PERCEPCIJA RUSKO-UKRAJINSKOG SUKOB I MEĐUNARODNE PRAVDE MEĐU BOŠNJACIMA U SRBIJI

Sažetak:

Ova studija ispituje kako bošnjačka manjina u Srbiji percipira rusko-ukrajinski rat kroz prizmu međunarodne pravde. S obzirom na njihovu historiju sukoba i sporne mehanizme pravde (npr. ICTY), pro-rusku naklonost javnosti u Srbiji i ambivalentnost Srbije prema rusko-ukrajinskom ratu, perspektive Bošnjaka pružaju ključne uvide u manjinsko neslaganje u polariziranim okruženjima. Novorazvijeni instrument, koji uključuje skale za 'Percepciju pravde među Bošnjacima u Srbiji' i 'Rusko-ukrajinski sukob' – testiran je na 112 bošnjačkih ispitanika koji žive u Srbiji. Statistička analiza pokazala je da ispitanici uglavnom imaju negativne stavove o ulozi Rusije, posljedicama rata i međunarodnom pravosuđnom sistemu. Viši nivo obrazovanja bio je povezan s izraženijim anti-ruskim stavovima, dok su skepticizam prema postupanju Zapada i regiona prema Bošnjacima i percepcija globalne nepravde oblikovali stavove o ratu. Nalazi upućuju na to da Bošnjaci percipiraju Rusiju kao agresora koji djeluje izvan okvira odgovornosti, što odražava šire manjinsko nepovjerenje prema geopolitičkom usmjerenju Srbije.

Ključne riječi: rusko-ukrajinski sukob; Bošnjaci u Srbiji; međunarodna pravda; negativna percepcija Rusije u sukobu; negativne posljedica sukoba.

Authors' address

Adrese autora

Adžlan Kurtanović

Atif Avdović

State university of Novi Pazar

akurtanovic@np.ac.rs

aavdovic@np.ac.rs