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INTERPRETATIONS OF THE NATIONAL INTERESTS – A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Summary

The aim of this paper is to present various interpretations of the concept of national interests in the qualitative research we have conducted. Our qualitative research was carried out as a methodological research of the issue of the validity of the indicators used in a large international quantitative research. The use of the qualitative approach enables us to better understand the meanings attached to the notion of the national interest in the domestic context. The results show certain polarization between meanings referring to an international (or interethnic) context on the one hand, and interpretations concerning the internal problems of the country on the other. A large number of respondents point out the lack of defining national interests, or their continued and consequent implementation.

Keywords: national interest, nation, interpretation, Serbia.

1. INTRODUCTION

The political science research of the public opinion is often carried out to determine the attitudes of a particular population regarding the relation to the national interest – the central concept

for all strategic decision of the political elite. However, it is not limited to the political elite in democratic political systems. The concept of the national interest is burdened with various meanings attached to it in political,¹ media and everyday discourse.

At the same time, it is a necessary cognitive tool in the analysis of the behavior of certain political elites, but also the battlefield of the ideological and symbolic struggle for defining the future of the political community, i.e. the state. In our work, we intend to deal precisely with the different interpretations of the 'national interest' syntagm in order to gain better insight into the divisions that occur and possible interpretations of the term in the research of the general population.

Our qualitative research represents, in a sense, the continuation of the series of research which is being carried out for decades by Mladen Lazić together with his team of collaborators.² More specifically, the research was carried out in the following time and spatial frameworks: "The Research *Social structure and the Quality of Life* was carried out throughout the whole of SFRY, at the end of 1989, organized by the Consortium of Institutes of Social Sciences of Yugoslavia. The data was collected on a sample of 13.422 units. [...] The research *Stratification and Value Changes during the Period of Social Transformation* was carried out within the wider SEESSP project (South East European Social Survey Project) covering the territory of six countries of South East Europe in the period 2003-2004. Of the total number of subjects surveyed, which amounted to 2.997 [...]. Finally, the research *Change of Basic Structures of the Serbian Society* was carried out on the entire territory of Serbia in the first half of 2012, organized by ISR FF. The data were collected on a representative sample of 2.500 respondents".³

- 1) Clinton David, „The National Interest: Normative Foundations“, *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 48, No. 4, 1986, pp. 495–519; Miroslav Nincic, „The National Interest and Its Interpretation“, *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 1, 1999, pp. 29–55; Joseph Nye Jr, “The American National Interest and Global Public Goods“, *International Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 2, pp. 233-244, 2002; Ирина Милутиновић, „Медијски систем и национални интерес у контексту евроинтеграција: стање и перспективе Републике Српске“, *Национални интерес*, год. XIII, вол. 28 бр. 1, 2017.
- 2) Младен Лазич, *Чекајући капитализам: настанак нових класних односа у Србији*, Београд, Службени гласник, 2011.
- 3) Ирина Петровић, „Промене вредносних оријентација средње класе у периоду

The qualitative research, the results of which we present in this paper, arose due to a particular, primarily methodological goal. Namely, we wanted to empirically investigate the issue of the validity of the indicators in the aforementioned quantitative research by using the qualitative method.⁴ In particular, we wanted to investigate the constructive validity of the indicators (more precisely, only one level of this issue).⁵

What was the design of our qualitative research? “In the paper, we want to present part of the results of the qualitative methodological ‘experiment’ which we had conducted with the intention of gaining a better understanding of the instrument, that is, the statements used in the quantitative research of the value orientations. The goal of the qualitative methodological research was to better understand the interpretations of the statements, i.e. the attempt to check the (meaningful) validity of the statements [...]. In the paper, we will confine ourselves to only one segment of the issue of validity – the respondents’ interpretation of the statements. Our qualitative methodological research was carried out on a relatively small quota sample consisting of 20 respondents. All the respondents were permanently settled in the territory of the city of Belgrade. The structure of the sample according to sex and age corresponds to the characteristics of Belgrade’s general population. The research has been conducted, with some interruptions, over a period of approximately one year, during 2016 and 2017. After each statement, the respondents gave answers which were offered on the Likert scale, and after answering, each respondent was asked, “How did you understand this question?” Depending on the answers, the respondents were also asked additional questions (which also related to the parts of claims or the answer itself) in order to better understand their interpretation of the statements”.⁶

пост-социјалистичке трансформације у Србији“, *Социологија*, вол. LV, бр. 3, стр. 381.

- 4) In our qualitative research, we have collected a total of 25 indicators of value orientations, the validity of which (or part of the issue) we examined.
- 5) Станислав Фајгељ, *Методe истраживања понашања*, Београд, Центар за примењену психологију, 2010, стр. 462–463.
- 6) Божидар Филиповић, „О приватизацији и приватном власништву – квалитативни и квантитативни приступ проблему вредносне оријентације“, [рукопис у припреми за штампу], Београд, 2018.

Following is one of the questions used in the research⁷: “The media which do not care for the national interests should be prohibited”. This question was used as an indicator of political liberalism. In this paper, we will devote special attention to this statement, that is, the particular additional question we asked the respondents in relation to it – ‘What are national interests to you’? This additional question (slightly modified in the formal sense for the conversation flow) is the central focus of our work. One should keep in mind that our qualitative research on the interpretations of national interests arises in the framework of the statements relating to the media.⁸

2. RESEARCH FINDINGS

When looking at the data of our qualitative research, one can notice, and expectedly so, that the notion of the national interest does not appear as unequivocal. It cannot be said, however, that the interpretations are completely contingent and devoid of any structure. The interpretations can be divided on at least two bases. One refers to the level of international (and interethnic) relations, while the other occurs at the level of the internal organization of the state. Both groups of the interpretations can also be found simultaneously in the same answer of the respondents. The second observation, in principle, is that the respondents quite often point out the lack of an established national interest, that is, that they do not actually exist as such. One respondent believes that the existence of a national interest is something that distinguishes only certain countries: “Developed, civilized countries have national interests” (a technician at a public company, 33 years old). In their view, such a statement implied the absence of consensus or continuity in pursuing a policy of national interests (in Serbia), but also the incoherence in defining them. Although it cannot be clearly seen on the basis of the offered transcripts in this paper, some respondents showed certain ‘disconcertion’ because of the question asked. The pauses before giving answers

7) See when this indicator was used: Александар Јанковић, „Промене вредносних оријентација младих у периоду постсоцијалистичке трансформације“, *Социолошки дискурс*, год. 6, бр. 11, 2016, стр. 21.

8) All interviews were conducted in Serbian.

and the generality in their content can be interpreted as the respondents' surprise by the question itself (which did not occur in other answers). One respondent openly said that he did not expect to be asked such a question (head of sales at a family micro-enterprise, 25 years old). On several occasions, additional questions were needed in order for the respondents to provide their understanding of the notion of the national interest, and not of its image in the public opinion.

It should be noted that the term 'national' is more often interpreted in an ethnic rather than a national (state) context. Only one respondent explicitly pointed out that national interests are actually interests of the state (a graphic designer – self-employed, 37 years old). When looking at the part of the answers related to the internal organization of the state and society (thus, beyond the international and inter-ethnic context), the respondents mainly insisted on the development of the state, economy, culture and education, etc. The economy and material well-being are distinguished as the national interest of particular significance. When the respondents concretized their answers, several 'points' were singled out as particularly important for their determination of the national interests. Six respondents mentioned Kosovo as a relevant place for the interpretation of the national interest of the Serbs or the country in which they live. However, not all the respondents mentioned Kosovo as their own determination of the national interest. It is also mentioned as an example of an unsuccessfully defended national interest (a doorman, 61 years old; a secretary, 46 years old). Another, relatively frequent, concretization of the national interest refers to the biological survival of the people due to the unfavorable demographic situation in Serbia. When it comes to culture, one respondent emphasizes the Cyrillic alphabet and its promotion as the national interest in the specified domain. It should be noted that some respondents did not express the idea of the national interest in any particular way, while one respondent answered the question ("The media which do not care for the national interests should be prohibited") with "don't know" without any further clarification of his/her attitude towards the question. These were the concrete answers of the respondents to our question:

B. F: What are national interests to you, if you think they exist. That they exist at all as a notion. What are they to you? And do you think they should exist?

Respondent: I think, I think, the welfare of the people, plus the concern about, say, your nation beyond the borders as well. There. When I say the welfare of the people, I mean the economic, cultural...

B. F: When you say your nation, you refer to the citizens of the Republic of Serbia...

Respondent: I thought when you said 'national interest' I thought about the Serbs. I mean... I don't think we shouldn't care about them [non-Serbs – B. F.], but we're talking about Serbia, the population majority, then I think, as far as I'm concerned... I mean, they should care for the people in the neighborhood as well (a self-employed architect, 33 years old).

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B. F: What are national interests to you if you think they exist?

Respondent: I think they don't exist in our country. Not in our country. But in general, look, people...people...developed, civilized countries have national interests.

B. F: What should the national interest of Serbia be? That's what I'm asking you. Or the people you belong to, whatever you define it as. What do you think it should be? OK, maybe there isn't anything that is defined in the sphere of politics, but if someone were to ask you what national interests were, what would you say? If you have something to say, if not...

Respondent: Well, in principle that's...well, I don't know. Again, I'm telling you it's all individual. Everyone sees the national interest in their own way...for someone, it can be... Kosovo.

B. F: I'm asking what it is to you. Your?

Respondent: Depends on how you look at it. If you look. It depends on the person. If you look at it... something like... if you really think about what the national interest would be. It's, I don't know, like... to be normal, educated, clean, tidy, man, you know... I mean, it's a normal life. National interest, you know, I mean, like preservation of the population in general, I don't know. You know what can be a national interest in Serbia. I don't know. There's a ton of those phrases people use. I find it awfully annoying. To

have...I don't know. That some things have no alternative. What, like national interests do. You know, like, you have to be part of something. You know, you have to be one of the normal people. Who cares. [...]Like, the national interest of Serbia. Honestly, man, I'd rather we didn't [seek for joining the European Union – B. F].

B. F: Why not?

Respondent: I'd rather we didn't, I don't know, somehow it all seems too narrow-minded to me, it's all too...we're partly...I don't know how to explain it...we're partly a nomadic people. I don't know how to explain it. We're used to certain things that are really quite different from the system we're following unconditionally. I truly think that's not the way things are. You have to forbid the Serb to make rakija, to slaughter a pig...you'll hardly be able to explain it to him, you understand [...]I really have no idea how to define the national interests in a political sense. I swear to you, I really don't. Nation as such, what do you need? Man, what do you need? You need at least one child more to be born than... than you have old people dying. I don't know. You should make sure your people live decent lives. That they don't stink. You should raise their awareness, educate them culturally (a technician at a public institution, 33 years old).

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B. F: What is a national interest to you?

Respondent: Well okay, national interest...there must be a consensus of some sort...

B. F: If you think they exist. If there are such things as national interests or a national interest, what is a national interest to you?

Respondent: I don't know, if we say that Kosovo is a national interest, then it should be a national interest, so without a referendum, I don't know, consensus and other nonsense... no, I mean, we should work in that direction (a lower manager at a hypermarket, 31 years old).

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B. F: What are national interests to you if you think they exist. If they do, what are national interests to you?

Respondent: Well, above all, I mean, in my opinion, our national interests are a good economy, good standard, people. Good enough, so to speak, not to exaggerate. I mean, we don't expect God knows what, but for the people to enjoy a good enough standard. Um...people to be taken care of in every way, by that I mean the farmers and the citizens alike, and...for the strategy, the politics to be of a certain level, to exist in a sense, and so...that (a 63-year-old woman, retired).

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B. F: What did you mean by national interests? In the statement itself.

Respondent: I consider national interests to be...simply... [...]not to endanger the country as such [...] national interest... it's kind of difficult for me [word – B. F.] to be able to explain my perception of this statement from the beginning (a 52-year-old woman, unemployed).

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B. F: What are national interests to you?

Respondent: Well, national interests [...]Survival of the state, the people. Much like we failed to defend our national interests in Kosovo, we should now defend what is left of Serbia.

B. F: Is there something else that comes to mind? In terms of national interests? If not, feel free to say so.

Respondent: Well, I don't know, I don't know (a doorman, 61 years old).

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B. F: What are national interests to you? To you.

Respondent: What are the interests? Well, for example, to protect our market economy.

B. F: Anything else maybe? If there is anything else, if not... it's enough.

Respondent: Well...

B. F: Yes, alright (a concierge, 50 years old).

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B. F: What are national interests to you?

Respondent: Well, all that does good for our country. Both when it comes to geopolitics and anything else.

B. F: Okay, is there anything else? How could we...

Respondent: Well, of course...

B. F: More specifically, what would the national interests be. In any area or areas. Respondent: Culture above all else, education, everything and all. Everything that concerns a nation (a computer technician, 34 years old)

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B. F: Tell me, what are national interests to you, if you think they exist?

Respondent: Well, I don't think there are such things as national interests, I think there are state interests. Well...

B. F: What are state interests?

Respondent: Well, state interests are strengthening of the state, of economic stability, military, whatever. In every way. And maintaining integrity, of course, it's a current issue (a graphic designer – self-employed, 37 years old).

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B. F: What are national interests to you if you think they exist?

Respondent: National interests? Oh...

B. F: If you don't have an opinion about it or you haven't really thought about it, feel free to say so. You don't have to...

Respondent: Well, let's say I don't (a student, 22 years old).

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B. F: Tell me, what are national interests to you?

Respondent: Well, national interests, for example, in our situation it's Kosovo, the Cyrillic alphabet, its use in general...so in accordance with it they will prefer to write in the Latin alphabet, yet according to the Constitution of Serbia, priority is given to the Cyrillic alphabet. Like, we use both alphabets equally, but the priority is given to the Cyrillic alphabet because it's ours. Well, that, for example. Also, I don't know, again there's the issue of religion as well.

B. F: Religion, in what way. In the sense that...

Respondent: Well, for example...

B. F: In terms of the media, that's what I'm talking about.

Respondent: Well, for example, when there's an important...

simply in times of Orthodox Christian holidays, and we're Orthodox Christians. Our media should also celebrate such holidays in some way. They shouldn't avoid showing them (a student, 24 years old).

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B. F: What are national interests to you? Here it says the media which...

Respondent: National...working for themselves and no one else. I think.

B. F: Okay...states which work for themselves or individuals? I didn't understand.

Respondent: Individuals, yes.

B. F: Okay. When individuals work for themselves, then they work for the national interest?

Respondent: Yes

B. F: Yeah, okay (a 75-year-old woman, retired).

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Respondent: It's necessary to define what national interests are. And I can see that in the past twenty years we haven't had a particular national interest. National interest is two words that are reduced to who is in power, and so s/he determines what the national interest is.

B. F: And what is the national interest for you?

Respondent: Well, something on which there is a wide consensus among everyone. I mean, in principle, in the past 20 years we haven't agreed on anything, like, we're all for it. It's hard for me to define what the national interest is and the media that don't preserve it. Should we put a ban on them, but then again, to put a ban on the media... you know, I don't know what one has to do to get a ban. I don't know if a single medium has ever been banned in Serbia. Officially banned. There are, however, situations when a medium is pressured into shutting down, but to ban one. I don't think that has ever happened (a sanitary and ecological technician, 35 years old).

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B. F: What are national interests to you? Did you think of something when you read this term national interests?

Respondent: Well, I thought precisely of the ugly image, of the distorted image of the people, of I don't know...some people, who presumably have done something wrong, but in fact haven't, or something like that. I mostly thought of...the first thought was, I don't know...I think I've recently seen something on Al Jazeera... [..]Like, some Muslims were murdered and the Serbs did it [the respondent is most likely talking about Srebrenica, but she couldn't remember the exact location of the events and the content she had seen on the abovementioned television programme – B. F.]. They killed the Muslims, I don't know, the parents grieving, I don't know, burying them, this and that, visiting the cemetery, I don't know. I don't know, to me it doesn't seem kind of, at all, I don't know. Honestly, I have no idea if it is, I can't say, I mean, that I agree with that. I've neither read, nor learned about it. Globally, just listening about it. I can't say anything for sure. I mean, no, God forbid. I can take neither side, because it's all... unknown. To me it's all kind of... but then again, this forcing of one side only. For example, that one side is bad, such and such, because everywhere there's good and there's bad. And I'm not, like, exclusive.

B. F: So, in that context, I mean, what you said, what would the national interest be, national interests? I mean, to show...

Respondent: Well, the ugly image of the people, in general, something that instigates hatred, something that, you know, like... for the future in general, for the new generations, new children. Some...(a 56-year-old woman, unemployed).

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B. F: What is the national interest to you? So, regarding this statement, did you think of anything specific? Or how do you understand the national interest?

Respondent: I just tried to understand it in the way that people in power might understand it, and I didn't look at it from my own aspect. I have to admit...

B. F: Okay, you can say both.

Respondent: Yes, yes...national interest. You know what, some kind of preservation...but mere preservation of the state. Preservation of the people in that state, it can't be something to be brushed aside completely. I don't think that way, that it has to be... that, that nothing else matters. Let me return to the beginning,

because I haven't forgotten, it's really necessary to appeal to the people, I don't know, to procreate, increase in numbers... to, to provide some conditions for a normal life. But not to get too much into it, I truly believe this to be my national interest. Preservation of a state. I am, I really don't want it to and I don't think this nation should be abolished because of something. Some people think we should disappear and it's why they're constantly calling us various names and...they create such an image of us. Some people standing on the side, I mean, some people from abroad. We know how we've been interpreted, but to have to be totally flattering, without any...sense of boundaries, and for it to be without that, you know...that, that if...somehow you always see the media through the journalist profession. Somehow that research, critical journalism and the critical attitude toward everything in general, in my opinion, is the reflection of one's integrity. And if you... if everything's now 'amen', then what's the personal...it doesn't have to be a personal attitude, what's the empirical evidence then. What's something that's...no, s/he said so, and I'm taking it as face value. To me, that's rushing headlong towards another extreme, which can sometimes result in drastic examples. We've had such cases through history. Now...and those were some nations that had done an awful lot of evil. Those were, what I believed, very... their media, all of theirs was very loyal to the national interest. And, I don't know, I guess they were the only ones who had a good time. The question is whether all of them had a good time because they suffered control and terror; but, peoples, millions of peoples in the world didn't have a good time because of them. You know what I'm talking about. Well, to me, usually, many wouldn't agree with me, but when I hear such overly passionate nationalism, somehow I always get the chills, it always reminds me of Nazism. Maybe it's my deeply-rooted fear of it. I have this subconscious fear, because to me it's really the ultimate misery that can befall humanity. We have... we know what happened, and now we also have these bright examples (a 55-year-old woman, unemployed).

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Respondent: I don't know what our interests are, except for the preservation of Kosovo and...I mean, what.

B. F: What are they to you? How would you understand and define them and are these national interests something that

coincides with...

Respondent: For example, I think that we carry our national interests within ourselves and I don't see...you know, we can't allow to be walked over, of course. But when someone says, I don't know, that we're like this or like that, we can be quiet about it or comment on it with a single word, while saying "this was said by someone who matters very little to us".

B. F: When you read it, or rather when I read it to you, did you think of this determination of the national interests or did you think of something existing among the public as an understanding of the notion of the national interests. If I'm clear enough with my question? So, what were you guided by in this statement? In the answer.

Respondent: I wasn't much guided by anything because the question to me was a bit unclear. You understand. Because now I no longer know what our national interests are. I think what used to be our national interests has long since been gambled away, sold out, that it was lost a long time ago, that, you know, I'm a bit sick of it all...

B. F: What do you mean?

Respondent: Well, I don't know, I mean...

B. F: What has been gambled away?

Respondent: Well, I don't know, like preserving Kosovo.. the Republic of Srpska...

B. F: I have to ask you because of...for the record.

Respondent: Yes, yes, I get it, yes, yes, I think it's all so far above us. That we as an ordinary people... you know, I really don't know anymore. I don't know when it was sold out, whether it was or it wasn't, or who did it. I don't know anymore what they are...what national interests we should preserve and what we should bow to or how we should react. I mean, I don't see anyone protecting them anymore, or nor protecting them, for that matter. We say one thing, but do the other. You know, I'm absolutely...I mean, the question itself is not clear enough to me. But I don't think any medium should be banned, generally speaking. I mean, I don't know, like...everyone should be given the freedom of speech, well OK, if someone thinks otherwise...I actually really mean, maybe a change, but I have no idea. I don't think it should be forbidden either, I think there should be another

side that wants to say something different. Maybe someone here wants to say OK, I don't care about national interests, I want to live normally, without it constantly hearing about this. I don't think, in general (a secretary, 46 years old).

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B. F: How did you understand, or what are national interests to you?

Respondent: Wait, quite normally, they can't do what they want with you, they have to...

B. F: How would you determine what the national interest is to you, so what is it to you? How did you understand the idea of the national interest when you heard this sentence? Or read it, whatever.

Respondent: You know what. It's a broad concept, my son. We'd go on and on forever. You know what, I'm quite annoyed by this, for example, the media nowadays, Russia, Russia, Russia...I like Russia as a nation, but I don't like this politics. What's in it for you!? They say, you don't like America, you don't like the European Union, why, you're living off the European Union. You export everything to them, right? You can't just go about it one-sidedly. That's just what we talked about earlier. Look, it's a broad term, we can go on and on about it. But you have to make sure you're protecting your interests, to not let everyone do what they want to you, and say what they want, and you can't let everyone come here. To be perfectly clear, such things happen here. Everyone is doing shady things, but you have to have some control. Now, I don't know what to tell you (a 67-year-old woman, retired).

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B. F: you don't have an opinion on this issue or you don't have an opinion on these elements. Say, national interest, banning media, and so on? Or in general...

Respondent: Because I don't know what to tell you. Because I don't think anything should be forbidden, because I'm simply of the opinion that television can show...See, I'm canceling myself out...I think TV can show anything in the sense that...I mean, why aren't we allowed to watch certain shows. In what way? It just can't be forbidden. Now, that's what I said before, the fact that the

people enjoy so much freedom now, that we can now do what we want and everyone can say what they want, that's another thing, but. Why should anything be forbidden? There you have it, that's what I believe. I mean, if you look at it realistically, I'd be the first one to ban Pink, Grand Show, and all that nonsense, but there are people who really like it. So what. Are we going to ban it, no (a 20-year-old woman, unemployed).

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B. F: What are national interests to you? How did you understand the idea of the national interests in this sentence?

Respondent: Well, a national interest is something that is of our own, say, Serbian national significance.

B. F: And what would they be for you?

Respondent: What would they be for me?

B. F: Yes, what are national interests for you? Did you think of something specific? If not, feel free to say so.

Respondent: I didn't think you'd ask me that, but a national interest is something that, to me, is most valuable for a country. I can't answer what it is, in the sense that I can say it's this and that. But, for example, national interests can also be some laws that are very important for us. That the media don't have to present everything like it's the worst thing in the world or, like, to use spinning to manipulate the public opinion. But rather to present it as the most ordinary news, like any other (sales manager in a family micro-enterprise, 25 years).

3. CONCLUSION

What is the significance of our qualitative research, the results of which we presented in the paper? Our research 'relies' on a large international database created during several cycles of research.⁹ The implementation of a number of methods in research concerning a particular phenomenon is certainly considered a desirable approach to the investigation of a specific political and social phenomenon. In our case, the qualitative research has contributed to a better understanding of the quantitative data

9) The indicator to which we devoted our attention in the research was not used only in the research covering the territory of Serbia and former Yugoslavia.

and indicators, as well as the phenomena (national interests) themselves. We cannot declare a definitive attitude as regards the validity of the indicators, since only part of the data related to the indicator in question was presented in the paper. We can say that the validity does not have to be questioned simply due to the different interpretations of the notion of the national interest. We consider it desirable that several methods be applied in the case of the research concerning general population (at least in the preparatory phase for designing of a questionnaire) in order to form quality indicators, but also to better understand the data obtained. In any case, the determination of the national interest cannot be regarded as unquestionable and defined in its own right. We have seen that this notion arouses different associations among the respondents and is a reflection of the consequences of a not so old history and political conditions of life in Serbia. We believe that our qualitative approach can contribute to a better understanding of new empirical research of the national interests.

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ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИЈЕ НАЦИОНАЛНОГ ИНТЕРЕСА – КВАЛИТАТИВНО ИСТРАЖИВАЊЕ

Резиме

У овом тексту смо покушали да истражимо различите интерпретације појма „национални интерес“. Појам национални интерес је врло значајан за разумевање политичког живота неке политичке заједнице. Дефинисање националног интереса није питање које се појављује само у кругу политичке елите, него може да се каже да се ово дефинисање појављује унутар читавог друштва. Приступили смо овом питању са врло специфичног методолошког становишта истраживања које се тицало валидности индикатора који се користе у међународном и домаћем истраживању. Индикатор је био употребљен као један део лествице истраживања која се односила на вредносна одређења. Тврдња којој смо посветили нашу пажњу у овом истраживању гласи: „Медији који не маре за национални интерес би требало да се забране.“ Заправо, резултати квалитативног истраживања који су приказани у овом раду јесу само један део одговора на претходно споменуто питање (интерпретације националног интереса). Након што су испитаници дали своје одговоре на Ликерт лествици, питали смо их и нека додатна питања. Једно од њих је гласило: „Шта теби представља национални интерес?“ Резултати овог истраживања говоре о амбивалентности разумевања концепта национални интерес. Значења тог концепта су била поларизована на она значења која су се односила на међународни (или међуетнички) контекст са једне стране, и са друге стране на унутрашња питања државе и на њено функционисање. Велики број испи-

таника је нагласио мањак друштвеног консензуса о националном интересу у држави. Ти испитаници верују да он заправо не постоји или да је неконсистентно имплементиран као основа државне политике. Неки од испитаника су нагласили демографска питања као могуће важна за дефинисање националног интереса. Поврх тога, било је очигледно да су испитаници често одговарали у општим категоријама и да су на неки начин били изненађени питањима. Без обзира на релативно високу учесталост појма национални интерес у јавном дискурсу, утисак је да испитаници нису самостално размишљали о самој суштини тог појма.

Кључне речи: национални интерес, нација, интерпретација, Србија.

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