

## POLICE SCIENCE IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: BUILDING THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS


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### Abstract

Police science in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an academic field on the rise, whose methodological and theoretical foundations are increasingly evolving. This paper explores the process of constituting police science as a separate interdisciplinary field, analysing the key factors contributing to its scientific foundation. A special focus is placed on defining the subjects of police science, their theoretical paradigms and methodological approaches, and the application of empirical research in the analysis of police work. It also discusses their relationship to related disciplines, such as law, criminology, sociology, and management. Through analysing contemporary trends and challenges, the paper emphasises the need to establish a scientifically based, evidence-based approach to studying police phenomena, thus confirming the academic legitimacy and practical relevance of police science.

**Key words:** police science, methodology, theoretical frameworks, interdisciplinarity, evidence-based policing.

## ПОЛИЦИЈСКЕ НАУКЕ У 21. ВЕКУ: ИЗГРАДЊА ТЕОРИЈСКИХ И МЕТОДОЛОШКИХ ТЕМЕЉА

### Апстракт

Полицијске науке у 21. веку представљају академску област у успону, чије се методолошке и теоријске основе све интензивније развијају. Овај рад истражује процес конституисања полицијских наука као засебне интердисциплинарне области, анализирајући кључне факторе који доприносе њиховом научном утемељењу. Посебан фокус стављен је на дефинисање предмета полицијских наука, њихове теоријске парадигме и методолошке приступе, укључујући примену емпиријских истраживања у анализи полицијског рада. Такође, разматра се њихов однос према сродним дисциплинама, попут права, криминологије, социологије и

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менацмента. Кроз анализу савремених трендова и изазова, рад наглашава потребу за успостављањем научно заснованог, evidence-based приступа у изучавању полицијских феномена, чиме се потврђује академска легитимност и практична релевантност полицијских наука.

**Кључне речи:** полицијске науке, методологија, теоријски оквири, интердисциплинарност, evidence-based policing.

## INTRODUCTION

Police Science is an interdisciplinary field that studies the organisation, functioning, and development of the police, its working methods, social roles, and professional standards. However, although the term ‘police science’ is increasingly used in academic and professional circles, there is still debate about its status as a scientific discipline in its own right. This debate stems from the complexity of police work, its normative, sociological and managerial character, and the different theoretical and methodological approaches used to research police phenomena.

The modern concept of police science increasingly relies on empirically based research methods (evidence-based policing), which enable the systematic examination of the effectiveness of police strategies and procedures. Also, the development of this scientific field implies the integration of legal, sociological, criminological, psychological, and managerial perspectives, thus justifying the need for its formal constitution as an academic discipline. This paper discusses the epistemological and methodological foundations of police science and its relevance to the theoretical and practical analysis of police work.

## THE CONCEPT OF POLICE SCIENCE

The term ‘police science’ (the existing literature also uses the terms ‘police sciences,’ ‘police as a scientific discipline,’ etc.) is not entirely uniformly defined, which is understandable given the complexity and multidisciplinary nature of this field. In different countries, legal traditions, and academic contexts, researchers and practitioners of the police profession often give various definitions of the term, its limits, and its methodological approach.

In the German tradition, the term ‘Polizeiwissenschaft’ originally referred to the science of the police as part of the state administration, where the police were viewed more broadly as a system of supervision and management in the interests of the public good (Foucault, 2007; Emsley, 2010). The term encompassed public order and peace, social policy, public health, etc. In early criminological and legal research, the police were generally treated as an organ of repression or a mechanism for enforcing criminal justice (Bittner, 1970). Thus, police science was un-

derstood primarily as a segment of criminalistic or criminology, emphasising forensic methods and the fight against crime. With the development of the sociology of the police and the formation of the modern sociology of crime, broader definitions emerged. Authors such as Banton (1964) and Reiner (2010) point out that police science cannot be reduced only to ‘catching offenders’ and the technical-operational side, because it also includes the examination of the social role of the police, relations with citizens, as well as the analysis of institutional culture (the so-called police subculture). With the strengthening of the concept of governance of the police system and under the influence of public policies during the second half of the 20th century, a framework emerged in which police science was defined through the prism of police management, organisational structure, human and material resource planning, and models of policing (Goldstein, 1979; Bayley, 1994).

The most common approach in contemporary literature is to respect multidisciplinary— from legal and security aspects through sociological, psychological, and criminological components, to managerial and IT components (O’Neill et al., 2008). At the same time, the idea is being developed that police science should be empirical, i.e., evidence-based, based on scientific research (Lum, Koper, & Telep, 2011; Butorac & Solomon, 2013).

Many authors have tried to define police science based on these approaches. For example, in the book *Fundamentals of Police Tactics* (Milojević & Janković, 2022, p.2), the authors describe police science as “a scientific field that, by integrating legal, organisational, criminological and other knowledge, forms the basis for the professional work of the police.” In “Police Occupational Culture: New Debates and Directions” (published in *Sociology of Crime, Law and Deviance*) (O’Neill, Marks, Singh, 2007, p.54), the authors argue that police science is a framework that seeks to encompass “cultural, institutional, and operational understanding of policing, through empirical research and theoretical concepts of sociology, psychology, and law.” In the book *Community Policing: A Police-Citizen Partnership* (Palmiotto, 2011, p.33), police science is linked to community policing and empirically studies the relationship between citizens and police to advance practice. Lum, Koper, and Telep (2011, p.6), in “The Evidence-Based Policing Matrix” (*Journal of Experimental Criminology*), emphasise the concept of ‘police science,’ which involves the establishment of evidence-based policies and practices through the continuous testing of strategies and the evaluation of their effects.

When we talk about a definition that would also take into account the conditions in the Republic of Serbia, it is necessary to take into account the following. (1) The legal order and organisation of the state – the police in Serbia operates within the Ministry of the Interior, whose work

is regulated by the Law on Police and other laws and bylaws (Milojević & Janković, 2022). Police Science, in this respect, should include the analysis of current regulations, the functioning of the police within the state administration, as well as the obligations arising from the process of European integration and international standards. (2) Transitional and reform experiences – the police in Serbia, as well as in other countries in the region, went through periods of transition and reform, with the aim of democratisation and improvement of professional standards (Gajić, 2008). Therefore, part of the definition should also include the reform component of police science, which examines how standards of transparency, accountability and the protection of human rights are gradually being introduced. (3) Regional and cultural aspects – the historical, political and cultural context of Serbia has a significant impact on the development of police practice and the perception of police in the community. Police science, therefore, should also look at the specifics of mentality, the degree of trust of citizens, attitudes towards authority, traditional norms and customs (Kuribak, 2007). (4) Institutional and academic framework – in Serbia (as well as in the region) there are several higher education institutions and institutes dealing with security sciences, criminology and police work (e.g. University of Criminal Investigation and Police Studies, Centre for Security Studies, etc.). Requests for improving work methodology, curricula, scientific journals and conferences are part of the ongoing development of police science in the national framework.

Accordingly, it can be stated that police science (1) is a separate and specialised scientific field that studies police institutions, processes and phenomena, but is profoundly multidisciplinary and includes knowledge from several related disciplines (criminology, law, sociology, management, psychology, information technology, forensics, etc.); (2) has a dual objective: (a) descriptive and analytical – to explain the functioning and transformations of the police, and (b) normative and practical orientation – to improve police practice and the quality of security and human rights protection; and (3) in the context of the Republic of Serbia, they should be harmonised with national legal frameworks, police reform processes, European standards, as well as with the values of a society that strives for democratic principles and the rule of law.

Bearing in mind the previous elaborations, a definition can be derived that combines these multiple perspectives: Police Science is a set of scientific disciplines that, through a multidisciplinary and empirically based approaches, studies the organisation, functioning, and development of the police to strengthen security, the rule of law, and the respect for human rights. It pays special attention to the social, cultural, and legal context, and international policing standards. Such a designation credibly reflects the complexity and challenges of modern police practice, while providing a clear theoretical and methodological framework for further research and improvements.

### *THE CONSTITUENTS OF POLICE SCIENCES*

In the modern system of sciences, especially when discussing scientific disciplines within the social sciences, it is crucial to recognise the subject, theory, method and language (terminology) as the fundamental constituents of any science. If a sufficiently precise and harmonised subject of study, accepted theoretical frameworks, developed research methods and relatively stable professional terminology are formed in a scientific field, then we can speak of the constitution of a separate scientific discipline (Kuhn, 1962; Laudan, 1977; Milošević & Milojević, 2000; Milojević, Milojković, & Janković, 2012; Milašinović & Milojević, 2016).

#### *The Subject of Police Science*

In police science, the question of their object of study, i.e. what is considered the fundamental thematic core of this scientific discipline, is crucial for proving and justifying their independence and purposefulness. The subject of police science can be defined as the entirety of phenomena, processes and institutions related to the functioning of the police and police work, including (1) the organisation and structure of police bodies; (2) the methodology and strategy of policing; (3) the police's relations with the community; (4) the administrative and legal context; (5) the ethical, sociological and psychological dimensions of police work; and (6) technological and IT support for police work. Understood in this way, the subject of police science is not exclusively criminological (as in criminology), or exclusively related to security in the broadest sense (as in security sciences), but encompasses a complex and multidisciplinary framework that is constitutively focused on the police as an institution and activity (Porada et al., 2006).

The police is a specific state authority and professional service with the authority to use force in the civilian domain (Bittner, 1970; Reiner, 2010). Regarding their organisational culture and social role, the police differ from the military, the judiciary, or private security services. This peculiarity lies in the need to study exclusively police phenomena, processes, and strategies of action, thus forming an irreplaceable thematic field—an independent subject of police science.

Although police science is closely related to law, criminology, sociology, psychology, management, forensics, and technology, its thematic core (policing) cannot be fully encompassed in any of these sciences individually. Jurisprudence deals with norms, criminology with the aetiology and phenomenology of criminality, and sociology with social groups and their relationships, while police science synthesises all these points of view in the unique context of policing (Emsley, 2010; Milojević & Janković, 2020).

Policing goes far beyond criminal law response and forensic investigation; it also includes (1) the protection of law and order, (2) participating in emergencies, (3) supporting citizens, and (4) cooperating with international organisations. No other discipline deals with the totality of this activity from a scientific point of view in the way that characterises police science (Bayley, 1990; Stenning, 2009).

Police science directly contributes to the development of doctrinal and strategic bases for: shaping the police action policy at the state level; the standardisation of police practice (instructions, instructions, protocols, personnel training); and the creation of indications for the reform and improvement of the police (democratisation, transparency, professionalism).

The independence of the subjects of police sciences is also reflected in the fact that they are theoretical and applied sciences which actively deal with evaluating and improving actual police practice (Reiner, 2010; Banović & Amanović, 2019).

Although police science relies on other disciplines, its subject – policing and police institutions – is not and cannot be fully ‘covered’ by other sciences. Police science is an independent field that examines what and how the police do, how they are regulated, and how they impact society (Bayley, 1994; Emsley, 2010; Bruno, 1989).

The existence of numerous journals (e.g. *Police Quarterly*, *Policing & Society*, *Policing: A Journal of Policy & Practice*) and scientific conferences (e.g. the international conference *Days of Archibald Reiss* in Belgrade) confirms that police science creates its own theoretical and empirical material, independent of, but compatible with other fields (Porada et al., 2006; Stenning, 2009; Lum et al., 2011; Milašinović & Milojević, 2016; Banović & Amanović, 2022). This indicates that the subject of police science is already sufficiently clearly defined and recognised in international academic and professional circles.

Given the unique social role of the police, a scientific approach is necessary that takes a unified view of all these activities as a single subject. This is precisely the essence and the main argument for the autonomous existence of police science (Milojević & Janković, 2022; Milašinović & Milojević, 2016). The independent existence of this subject (i.e. police institutions, activities, methods, strategies and relationships) argues the development of police science as a separate scientific discipline, shows the expediency of their separation from related sciences, and underlines the importance of this area of knowledge for modern society.

### *The Theory of Police Science*

When we speak of a theory as a constituent of a scientific discipline, we mean a set of general ideas, conceptual and categorical frameworks, principles and laws that enable a coherent interpretation, explanation and prediction of phenomena within the subject area (Kuhn, 1962;

Laudan, 1977). In the case of police science, theory represents a system of thought and instruction about the structure and functioning of the police, perceiving it as a comprehensive social phenomenon with different segments and layers (Milošević & Milojević, 2000; Milašinović & Milojević, 2016; Milojević & Janković, 2022).

The theory of police science can be defined as a system of thought and principles that: (1) includes key terms and categories necessary for understanding and explaining police activities; (2) identifies the main principles and laws governing the structure and functioning of police bodies; (3) coordinates and systematises various facts and findings from empirical research, bringing them into a coherent relationship with the basic idea of the police as a social institution (Bayley, 1990; Reiner, 2010); and (4) includes guidelines and instructions (normative and practical) for improving the professional work of the police, i.e., for creating and implementing police strategies, procedures and reforms (Goldstein, 1979; Palmiotto, 2011).

In this way, the theory of police science is not reduced to a mere description of facts (empirical findings). However, it directs and interprets them as unified, forming a single whole to understand and rationally regulate police phenomena.

The theory of police science is based on the definition of basic concepts and categories, without which it would not be possible to precisely consider the structure and functioning of the police, i.e. it is based on the conceptual and categorical apparatus. The conceptual and categorical apparatus consists of concepts and categories of different levels of generality. They are arranged systematically, analogous to the phenomena and processes that make up the content of the activities of police bodies. This conceptual apparatus constitutes the 'language' of the theory of police science, through which various segments of the police system are described and understood.

The theory of police science includes the general principles that underpin and guide policing, for example: the principle of legality (the police must act within the framework of the constitution, law and established procedures); and the principle of accountability and legitimacy (police work must be controlled, evaluated and aimed at protecting common interests).

When taken together with the conceptual framework, these principles create a unique and guiding basis, which various authors have also called the doctrine of the police (Banton, 1964; Reiner, 2010).

Although the term 'law' is less commonly used in the social sciences in the same sense as in the natural sciences, there are certain regularities in the functioning of the police described in the scientific literature (e.g., the 'law of escalation of the use of force' due to inadequate control mechanisms, statistical regularities regarding the distribution of crime and

police interventions, etc.) (Loftus, 2010). These regularities, verified by empirical research, form part of the theoretical framework, as they help to predict and explain certain phenomena in police work.

The theory of police science is not just a set of fragmentary knowledge but a coherent structure whose parts reinforce and connect. The basic idea is that the police is a social mechanism (or institution) that has: (1) its structure (organisation, hierarchy, competencies); (2) its functions (preventive, proactive, repressive, advisory, intelligence, etc.); (3) its responsibility towards society and the legal order; and (4) its value basis (ethical principles, legitimacy, freedoms and rights of citizens). All individual facts (research findings) must be consistent with and complementary to this overall idea (Bayley, 1994; Palmiotto, 2011; Milašinović & Kešetović, 2018).

There are numerous scientific papers and monographs dedicated exclusively to the theoretical foundations of police work (e.g. the works of Egon Bittner, Harold Goldstein, Michael Banton, David Bayley, Robert Reiner, Saša Milojević, Srđan Milašinović, Boban Milojković, and others), which, each in their way, develop and deepen theoretical insights into the nature of the police, its social role and ways of functioning (Bittner, 1970; Goldstein, 1979; Reiner, 2010; Milašinović & Milojević, 2016; Milojković, 2020; Milojević & Janković, 2022).

Within the framework of police science, unique theoretical paradigms have developed, such as: community policing (Palmiotto, 2011); problem-oriented policing (Goldstein, 1979);

intelligence-led policing (Ratcliffe, 2008); and evidence-based policing (Lum, Koper & Telep, 2011).

Each paradigm has its fundamental concepts, values, postulates, and methods, which are studied within the framework of police theory and adapted to the contemporary challenges of police work.

The development of police terminology – from defining basic concepts such as police legitimacy, professional ethics, police management, and the use of force to more complex concepts such as *polis-gemeinschaft*, trust-building measures, and predictive policing – shows that in the world of academic and professional publications on the police, there is a relatively stable and recognisable conceptual framework. This framework is not present in criminology, classical security studies, or other related disciplines to the same extent, thus confirming the autonomy of the theory of police science.

Police science theory is speculative or normative, and strongly practice-oriented, indicating its development and relevance (Stenning, 2009). For example, strategic documents that rely on problem-oriented policing methodology or evidence-based policing are widely used in police reforms, the development of procedures for patrol work in the securi-



ty sector, the organisation of criminal investigations, etc. (Bayley, 1990; Milojević & Janković, 2022; Buturac&Solomun, 2013).

Thus, the theory of police science, understood as a thought and instruction on the structure and functioning of the police, is an integral component (constituent) of this scientific discipline. Based on a unique conceptual and categorical apparatus, the agreement of several empirical and normative facts with the basic idea of the role and function of the police, the presence of principles and postulates on police work, as well as on practical and professional application, the theory of police science represents a solid foundation (constituent) of its scientific essence.

### *The Method of Police Science*

Within any scientific discipline, a method represents the way, i.e., the ways and procedures of the cognition of its subject. Unlike subject and theory, which science's relatively more stable constituents can experience, method is often considered the most dynamic element of scientific inquiry (Kuhn, 1962; Laudan, 1977). The development of science depends mainly on developing and adapting the methodology, as it opens up new perspectives and possibilities for a deeper and more precise understanding of the research subject. In the case of police science, the essence is not to have exclusively one's 'own' methods that no other discipline possesses but to ensure an adequate and adapted application of existing scientific methods to a specific subject of police science – the police and phenomena related to it (Bittner, 1970; Reiner, 2010; Milošević & Milojević, 2000; Milašinović & Milojević, 2016). It is this ability to thoughtfully use universal but also specific methodological procedures that confirms the development of police science and points to the fact that the police, as a phenomenon and institution, can be successfully investigated by any (-one's) methods, provided that they are adapted to the peculiarities of police work.

The method of police science can be defined as a set of scientific procedures, techniques, and instruments applied to gain knowledge about the organisation, functioning, effects, and transformations of the police. This method: (1) includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches; (2) may use general (universal) scientific methods, as well as specific procedures adapted to the subject of police science; and (3) ensure the reliability, objectivity, and reproducibility of results, to the extent possible in the social sciences (Bayley, 1994; Stenning, 2009; Milošević & Milojević, 2000; Milašinović & Milojević, 2016). Understood in this way, the method is a key instrument for scientific validation of claims about police phenomena: the operation of police services, the relationship between the police and the community, the use of force, crime prevention, cooperation with other institutions, the development of police ethics, etc. (Alimpić, 2018).

Because police science is highly interdisciplinary, its researchers draw on methodological advances from: legal sciences (analysis of legal norms, comparative methods, interpretation of cases and case law); criminology (statistical analysis of crime rates, creation of criminological profiles, longitudinal research of manifestations of forms of crime); sociology (surveys, interviews, observation, field research, case studies); psychology (psychometric testing, interviews, experimental design in the study of stress in police officers); management (studies of organisational structure, performance evaluation, analysis of management effectiveness, performance measurement); and information technology (digital forensics, analysis of large databases, use of GIS technologies in crime analysis).

Using these universally recognised methods, police science adapts existing methodological tools to the specific subject of policing. For example, observing a police patrol 'in action' (the so-called ride-along research) uses the classic qualitative observation method. However, its operational application is adapted to the security and ethical constraints of police work (Loftus, 2010).

With the development of the concepts of problem-oriented policing (Goldstein, 1979), community policing (Palmiotto, 2011), intelligence-led policing (Ratcliffe, 2008) and evidence-based policing (Lum, Koper & Telep, 2011), new research strategies are emerging that police scientists are beginning to develop and apply: (a) the comparative research of community policing models between different countries and communities; (b) experimental design in evidence-based policing (e.g., randomised controlled trials of the effectiveness of police interventions); (c) hot spots policing methodology (geospatial distribution of criminal hotspots using GIS technology and statistical models); and (d) qualitative observation of police subculture, communication, and citizen relations (Loftus, 2010). These methodological practices testify that, in police sciences, methods of other sciences are applied and creatively improved or adapted, confirming this discipline's development and independence (Bayley, 1994).

The scientific methods used in police science are universally known in the social sciences, but in police sciences: (1) they are adapted to the working conditions of police institutions (the need for security and protection of secrecy, ethical restrictions, the possibility of exposure to risky situations during field research, etc.); (2) combine into specific methodological approaches (e.g., problem-oriented policing combines quantitative analyses of crime with qualitative insights into the local causes of the problem); and (3) develop new instruments (special questionnaires, observation protocols, geocoded databases) adapted to police environments (Lum et al., 2011). This confirms that police science is a 'case-by-case method' in that universal scientific tools are specifically employed to provide the most effective and accurate insight into the reality of policing (Bayley, 1994).

Thus, police science consists of general and specific scientific procedures that are proven to apply to the study of police institutions and phenomena. Its development stems from (1) interdisciplinarity (the use of methods from law, sociology, criminology, psychology, management, IT sciences, etc.); (2) adaptation to the police context (security restrictions, ethical procedures, specific forms of fieldwork); and (3) the results of numerous empirical research and studies (Bittner, 1970; Goldstein, 1979; Emsley, 2010). In police science, we see a continuous improvement of the methodological approach, especially in the areas of community policing, intelligence-led policing and evidence-based policing, where new approaches and evaluation techniques are intensively experimented with (Palmiotto, 2011; Lum et al., 2011; Kesić, 2013). Not only is the ‘authentic method’ of police science sought, but it is pointed out that the universal and most valuable methods of social sciences can be applied in police science, and these methods are partially modified according to the specifics of the police field (Loftus, 2010; Milošević & Milojević, 2000; Milašinović & Milojević, 2016). This interaction between the universality of the methods and the specificity of the subject shows the scientific maturity and development of police science. Therefore, the method of police science, as one of the key constituents, has been developed to a sufficient extent to enable the systematic, reliable and empirically based research of police phenomena. This testifies to the high scientific value and autonomy of police science within a broader set of social and interdisciplinary sciences.

### *The Language of Police Science*

Within police science, language is often the least controversial constituent since it mainly relies on the terminology of the police’s day-to-day operational work. However, a deeper look reveals that the language of police science contains complex aspects and barriers that affect the precision of scientific expression and communication.

The language of police science can be defined as a unique system of terminological and linguistic means (words, phrases, symbols, abbreviations) that enable professional communication, the exchange of information and the construction of theoretical concepts in the field of police and related security disciplines (Emsley, 2010; Milojević & Janković, 2022). This language was developed: (1) operationally-practically – through everyday police practice, the formation of professional terms, codes, commands and abbreviations for effective communication between members of police forces; and (2) theoretically – through the development of scientific approaches and concepts (such as community policing, problem-oriented policing, evidence-based policing, etc.) that required a clear articulation of specific terms and definitions (Goldstein, 1979; Palmiotto, 2011). The conceptual-categorical apparatus is considered to be the foundation of the theory of scientific discipline, and language is inextricably linked to it

(Milošević & Milojević, 2000; Milašinović & Milojević, 2016). When a certain number of concepts and categories are crystallised in police science (e.g., police legitimacy, police powers, police subculture, use of force, criminal tactics), a corresponding terminological apparatus is established that 'translates' this conceptual system into concrete words and expressions.

Language is crucial for exchanging ideas, theoretical concepts, and empirical findings. If a term is not clearly defined and generally accepted, ambiguity or misinterpretation can occur, calling into question the validity of scientific research (Loftus, 2010). For example, different terms for a special police unit or the powers of police officers can create confusion when conducting comparative research in multiple countries or regions (Bayley, 1994; Stenning, 2009).

The development of the theoretical foundations of police science is closely related to the linguistic form in which the theory manifests itself (Goldstein, 1979; Reiner, 2010). Language is the medium by which researchers formulate hypotheses, conceptualise phenomena, and discuss results. The theory remains vague, with diffuse ideas without adequately developed language – with agreed terms, definitions, and explanations (Laudan, 1977). In the police, language is traditionally concise and operational, oriented towards a quick exchange of commands, encrypted notifications and incredibly defined terms. However, scientific thinking about police phenomena requires a more detailed and comprehensive expression, leading to some 'metalinguistic' research and language upgrading (Milojević & Janković, 2022).

Starting from the premise that the language of police science is sufficiently communicative, concise and precise, in practice, we encounter four specific characteristics that complicate its use:

1. Conventional origin of terms – many terms are derived from practice or borrowed from other languages and disciplines and do not necessarily have a logical basis in literary language (Bittner, 1970). For example, names such as stop and frisk, intelligence-led policing, or abbreviated unit names (SWAT, OSA, PTJ) are often Anglicisms or specific slang words. As a result, these terms may be inadequate for precise scientific expression, especially when switching from one language to another and losing sight of the local convention that created them (Bayley, 1994);
2. Different naming conventions in different countries – due to the conventional origin of specialised words and phrases, the same phenomenon can have a completely different name or the same name is used for other concepts (Emsley, 2010). In the context of translation and the international exchange of theoretical texts, this creates a discrepancy between the word's literary and local specialised meanings. This results in difficult comparisons

and slower knowledge transfer, which reduces the transparency of international research and can lead to miscomparisons (Loftus, 2010);

3. Concise (operational) language vs. scientific language – in police practice, conciseness is valued as efficiency ('short and clear,' 'no superfluous words'), which can lead to the formation of 'operational jargon' (Milojević & Janković, 2022). In contrast, scientific expression requires a broader range of words that connect terms, provide definitions, and contextualise concepts (Laudan, 1977). This leads to the fact that the language of police science may lack the vocabulary necessary for nuances of meaning and elaboration of complex concepts, so there is a need for metalinguistic research and the expansion of terminology;
4. A large number of marginal concepts – in police science, there are several 'marginal concepts' – those that partly belong to another term or are located on the border of different disciplines (e.g. terms between criminology, psychology and policing). Many do not have adequate expressions in literary language, so they are interpreted arbitrarily (Stenning, 2009). This introduces confusion in the terminological apparatus and reduces the accuracy of scientific communication, which slows down the progress of police science at the international level (Reiner, 2010).

Despite the abovementioned problems, we can argue that the language of police science undoubtedly exists and plays a constitutive role for the following reasons:

1. A conceptual-categorical apparatus has been formed: concepts such as police legitimacy, police discretion, police ethics, use of force, organisation and management in the police show that a set of concepts and categorical distinctions characteristic of police science has been established (Goldstein, 1979; Emsley, 2010);
2. There is a specific terminology: in scientific journals dedicated to police studies, several professional terms are regularly used that are understandable only in the context of police work and theory (Lum, Koper & Telep, 2011);
3. Development of metalinguistic research: experts in the field know the difficulties of conventional and operational language, so they research terminological harmonisation, translation and standardisation (Stenning, 2009). These efforts indicate that police science is constantly upgrading and improving its linguistic apparatus;
4. Functionality in the scientific and practical domains: although the terms are sometimes concise and operational, they are nevertheless supplemented with definitions and clarifications in the scientific domain. Thus, the language of police science enables

a sufficiently successful exchange of information and the construction of theories despite limitations (Milašinović & Milojević, 2016; Milošević & Milojević, 2000);

5. Parallel use of professional jargon and scientific terminology: in practice, short and clear expression is maintained, while in scientific papers, authors increasingly introduce precise definitions and equivalents in international literature, thus establishing a two-layer language – operational-professional and academic (Reiner, 2010; Milojević & Janković, 2022).

Thus, the language of police science undoubtedly exists as a functional and theoretical set since it encompasses numerous terms, expressions, and symbols that describe, understand, and research police activity. This confirms the independence of police science, since the terminological apparatus is very different from the languages used by other disciplines (criminology, law, sociology, and security sciences in a broad sense).

Despite its partial conventionality and conditional localisation, the language of police science is sufficiently developed and specific to be recognised as a mandatory and independent element (constituent) of this scientific discipline. Its dual character (operational-conceived and scientifically supplemented) shows that it is a living, dynamic language that adapts to the needs and challenges of both police practice and scientific research.

#### *THE POSSIBILITY OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN POLICE SCIENCES*

Whether phenomena related to the police and their activities are suitable for scientific research is inextricably linked to the debate on the existence and development of police science as an independent discipline. Contemporary literature and research in recent decades convincingly show that police phenomena and practices are open to empirical verification, theoretical reflection and multidisciplinary research (Bayley, 1994; Reiner, 2010). Complex tasks carried out by the police require comprehensive consideration from various angles: legal, sociological, psychological, managerial, and even technical. Therefore, the phenomenon of police and police work has an interdisciplinary character, one of the peculiarities of modern sciences. Contemporary social sciences today do not limit their subject matter to narrowly defined theoretical systems but tend to explore critical social issues in an integrative way – which the police undoubtedly are (Bittner, 1970; Bayley, 1994).

Police science possesses theoretical models and concepts (paradigms) that enable scientific explanation and prediction of police phenomena. These paradigms show that the police can be studied descriptively and theoretically, aiming to generate, test and advance scientifically based hypotheses and explanations about its operation (Reiner, 2010).

Police practice can be examined using different scientific methods – quantitative, qualitative, comparative and experimental. Modern advances in information technologies (GIS, big data, analytical software platforms, virtual reality, artificial intelligence) enable the more precise and comprehensive collection and processing of empirical data, allowing policy-related phenomena to be explored even more deeply and broadly (Ratcliffe, 2008).

A common criticism is that phenomena related to the police have a strong ‘subjective’ and ‘situational’ component. Each situation is specific, and there are different political, cultural and organisational determinants, so the question arises as to whether the results can be objective and repeatable (Bittner, 1970). However, it is a challenge that also exists in all social sciences (sociology, psychology, political science) and not only in the context of the police. With well-defined variables and indicators (e.g. measures of citizens’ trust, effectiveness of criminal measures, legitimacy, rate of overreach), the following can be carried out: (a) comparative studies between different police systems; (b) longitudinal research within an organisation over time; (c) evaluation of reforms; and (d) controlled case studies (Bayley, 1994), etc. This allows for objectivity and reproducibility, with methodological awareness of the social context and cultural differences (Emsley, 2010).

Of course, police science faces certain limitations and challenges, which, nevertheless, are not only inherent in them but also occur in other social disciplines:

1. Data sensitivity – many investigations into police practice require confidentiality, security clearances, or sensitive information. This can slow down the scientific process or limit it (Stenning, 2009);
2. Research ethics – investigations of police phenomena must strictly adhere to ethical standards, especially when it comes to observing fieldwork, interviewing victims or delicate cases (Loftus, 2010);
3. Political influence and pressures – sometimes, scientific findings on the police do not fit into current political agendas or are considered undesirable for public disclosure (Reiner, 2010);
4. Comparative problems – Differences in professional terminology, competencies, and organisation of police institutions in different countries make international research difficult, which requires the additional standardisation of concepts and indicators (Emsley, 2010).

Nevertheless, these difficulties do not negate the possibility of a scientific approach but only emphasise the need to carefully plan research designs and improve methods.

Is it possible to conduct a scientific investigation into the police and their activities? The answer is unequivocally – yes, for the following reasons:

1. The existence of a defined subject: the police is a complex social institution with specific powers and functions, which can be precisely defined and studied (Bittner, 1970; Reiner, 2010);
2. Formed theoretical and methodological frameworks: decades of research have brought to light various scientific approaches, models and paradigms, indicating that the police study is quite suitable for scientific analysis (Goldstein, 1979; Palmiotto, 2011; Lum et al., 2011);
3. Empirical verifiability: police phenomena can be analysed statistically, qualitatively, experimentally, and comparatively, allowing hypotheses to be tested and knowledge to accumulate (Bayley, 1994; Milašinović & Milojević, 2016);
4. Relevance for practice and society: the results of scientific research on police issues affect not only the improvement of policing but also the protection of human rights, transparency, relations with the community and security in general (Ratcliffe, 2008; Reiner, 2010).

Scientific work in the field of police science is growing year by year, as evidenced by numerous journals, monographs, and conferences dedicated exclusively to police issues. Despite the ethical, political, and practical challenges, scientific research dealing with policing in modern society continues to evolve and improve. Thus, the answer to the question about the science of studying police phenomena is positive – it is possible, not only in theory but also in practice, to achieve objective and systematic research into police activity.

### CONCLUSION

Police science has developed as a multidisciplinary field integrating various academic disciplines to understand and advance policing. Although they were previously considered part of legal and criminological studies, modern research points to the need to separate them as a scientific discipline. This need stems from the specifics of policing, its complex social function, and the increasing reliance on scientific methods in the decision-making process. Empirical research, concepts such as problem-oriented work, police work in the criminal hotspot, evidence-based policing and the development of new methodological approaches show that police science is not only a theoretical field but also a practically applicable discipline that contributes to the professionalisation of the police and the improvement of security policies. Therefore, a clearly defined subject of research, theoretical frameworks, scientific methods and lan-



guage confirm the justification for the existence of police science as an autonomous academic domain with a significant impact on modern security strategies and social processes.

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## ПОЛИЦИЈСКЕ НАУКЕ У 21. ВЕКУ: ИЗГРАДЊА ТЕОРИЈСКИХ И МЕТОДОЛОШКИХ ТЕМЕЉА

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### Резиме

Рад "Полицијске науке у 21. веку: Изградња теоријских и методолошких темеља" анализира полицијске науке као самосталну интердисциплинарни академску област. Аутори истражују конституисање полицијских наука кроз дефинисање њиховог предмета, теоријских парадигма и методолошких приступа, са посебним нагласком на примену емпиријских истраживања и evidence-based приступа у анализи полицијског рада.

Полицијске науке проучавају организацију, функционисање и развој полиције, укључујући њену друштвену улогу и професионалне стандарде. Ова област се разликује од сродних дисциплина попут права, криминологије и социологије по специфичности свог предмета изучавања, који обухвата полицијске институције и процесе. У раду се истиче мултидисциплинарни карактер полицијских наука, који интегрише правне, социолошке, криминолошке, психолошке и менаџерске перспективе.

Теоријски оквири полицијских наука обухватају парадигме као што су community policing, problem-oriented policing, intelligence-led policing i evidence-based policing. Ове парадигме дефинишу основне принципе и методе полицијског рада, наглашавајући потребу за емпиријским проверавањем ефикасности полицијских стратегија и процедура.

Методолошки, полицијске науке користе како квантитативне, тако и квалитативне приступе, прилагођене специфичностима полицијског рада. Методи укључују анализу правних норми, социолошка истраживања, психометријска тестирања, менаџерске евалуације и употребу информационих технологија попут ГИС-а и дигиталне форензике. Ова методолошка разноврсност потврђује научну зрелост и аутономност полицијских наука.

Рад такође разматра језик полицијских наука као систем термилошких средстава који омогућава стручну комуникацију и теоријско промишљање. Развој специфичне терминологије и појмовно-категоријалног апарата доприноси прецизности научног изражавања и унапређењу теоријских концепата.

Аутори аргументовано бране потребу за конституисањем полицијских наука као засебне научне дисциплине. Ова потреба произилази из јединственог предмета изучавања, развијених теоријских и методолошких оквира, као и практичне релевантности за унапређење полицијске праксе и безбедносних политика. Рад показује да полицијске науке не само да интегришу сазнања из различитих дисциплина, већ и развијају сопствене теоријске оквири и методологије, чиме се потврђује њихова академска легитимност и практична релевантност.

Закључак рада истуче да су полицијске науке изградиле чврсте теоријске и методолошке темеље који омогућавају систематско, поуздано и емпиријски засновано истраживање полицијских феномена. Тиме се потврђује њихова улога аутономне академске области са значајним утицајем на савремене безбедносне стратегије и друштвене процесе.