

Martial arts as a sport and a way to prevent political radicalization and youth violence

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Greetings, my name is Zlatan Dežman, Senior judge at the Court of Maribor in Slovenia and associate professor of criminal law at the Faculty of Law, University of Maribor.

Let me have a few thoughts over 50 years of practical martial arts experience and their contribution to a culture of non-violence and preventing the political radicalization of young people in particular.

All martial arts have in common that they are self-defensive. This characteristic of theirs already excludes aggression in this respect, but on the other hand it directly releases aggression in playful, imitated, benign, positive or constructive aggression. Martial arts often give the impression that the essence of training is only speed, strength, skill and knowledge of various techniques, while ignoring their inner, subjective and psychic side, which through their training leads to personal transformation in accordance with their ethical principles and these deeper insights, which are a condition for coexistence with their social and natural environment. Therefore, it may seem downright paradoxical that martial arts are the ones that contribute to the prevention of violence.

The purpose of regular training is primarily to achieve relaxation of body and mind. Only inner peace allows sobriety and spontaneous non-violent reaction at a critical moment, which strengthens self-confidence. The practice of martial arts, together with their ideological and philosophical views on man and society, is one of the most diverse mental techniques for forming a personal identity. Therefore, they are among the ideal psychological preparations for overcoming various stressful situations both in the business world and in everyday life.

Martial arts training, as well as any sport, strengthens healthy self-confidence. Namely, a self-confident individual is one who also enables others to feel self-confident around him. Such an emphasis on self-confidence is important because it is the strongest factor in preventing conflicts, and especially physical conflicts. There is essentially no superiority complex. There is only a deep complex of inferiority, which so often leads to unnecessary disagreements and conflicts at all levels of both personal and social life.

Namely, martial arts masters are accompanied by the awareness that they have to limit their power even when they themselves are exposed to an attack that may serve them even after life, that is, in a situation where the self-preservation instinct begins to prevail. Such awareness, however, requires self-confidence, which is in the consciousness that, depending on his abilities and skills, he will be able to achieve a way out of the conflict situation in a socially acceptable way. Precisely because of such psychophysical properties, they are especially expected to have a greater ability to control their own strength, which stems from training martial arts and curbing their own impulsive reactions in conflict situations.

Therefore, they are rightly expected to be accompanied by a greater sense of security from a possible attack, that is, a feeling filled with the awareness that they know the secrets of effective self-defense rather than an attack or violence that only leads to escalating violence. Such an expectation justifies the ability to manage conflict situations in a peaceful way or at least with the greatest possible leniency towards the aggressor or attacker. Despite such a mission, martial arts also face the question of where the boundaries begin, from which their use can become excessive and therefore abuse, which has not only negative moral and ethical consequences, but also its liability for damages and criminal liability.

Martial arts, however, are difficult to abuse because their practical application requires a lot of practice and strong will- Sac kind of will a bully, whose sole purpose is to abuse martial arts to experience violence simply cannot do, when he realizes how long it takes to get to know them.

This dilemma is most often related to the question of when and under what conditions the criminal law allows self-defense, to which everyone has the right, as his constitutional right, to the inviolability of life and the preservation of his own dignity. We must be aware that the deterrence of violence provokes not only a demand for a quick defensive reaction, but that the experience of being threatened by violence is associated with an intense emotional experience in which our consciousness narrows to what causes affect, that is irritability and fear. In such an emotional state, however, one in his defensive reactions mostly feels and little or almost nothing thinks.

I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say that martial arts are rarely abused, and their training is the one with the least physical injuries among sports, especially considering how massively they are cultivated all over the world. This is because all techniques are recalculated directly until the injury

occurs, but this does not happen because the exercise itself requires the most careful attitude towards the partner so that he is not injured.

As a judge I can also ensure I have very rarely met anyone who would commit any violent crime and be a martial arts master at the same time, or a holder of any lower belt and abused such a skill of his.

And at the last what is the most important.

By practicing martial arts, therefore, the weaker become stronger, and the stronger become nobler, more tolerant and therefore more forgiving. This realization, however, is one that can make an important contribution to a culture of nonviolence and at the same time prevent political radicalization.