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I. EUROPEAN STUDIES AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

THE EUROPEANISATION OF GOOD NEIGHBORLY RELATIONS AND REGIONAL COOPERATION CRITERIA: A COMPARISON BETWEEN ALBANIA AND NORTH MACEDONIA

Geri PILACA [*]

Abstract. *Good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation demand that all the bilateral relations of a country be stable and that all the disputes are to be resolved before the signing of the Accession Treaty. Considering that Albania and North Macedonia are two candidate countries which are found at the same stage of the EU Accession, and the weight that such criteria hold for these countries, it is necessary to provide an assessment of their preparation in this regard. The EU studies field provides for the use of Europeanisation literature to measure the fulfilment of the Accession criteria, one approach of which is measuring the policy adoption. For this purpose, Albania and North Macedonia were used as case studies to measure the progress of Europeanisation through the policy adaptation process as regarding Good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation during the period 2000-2019.*

Keywords: *Europeanisation, Albania, North Macedonia, relations, cooperation*

1. Introduction

Good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation have been one of the main accession criteria since the issuing of the first EC annual reports for the candidate countries. EU's emphasis on such criteria is highly related to the origin of its establishment, which was based on the spirit of cooperation among the countries of post-WWII Europe. As such, a good spirit of cooperation among the surrounding countries has made it possible for the European Integration to run smoothly and provide a common security area for the member states. The application of such criteria becomes even more relevant in countries that have had or still have open issues with their neighbours on several topics, especially in the Balkan Peninsula. This region has suffered from continuous wars and occupations and carries out a history of territorial, cultural, and ethnic disputes which are part of today's political rhetoric. For that reason, their fate regarding the EU accession process has been, on several occasions, heavily reliant on good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation criteria.

Good neighborly relations, as one of the two conditions of this criteria, require the most effort out of the candidate countries. It demands that all the bilateral relations of a country be stable and that all the disputes are to be resolved before the signing of the Accession Treaty. Besides, this condition may affect the ongoing process of

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European Integration, like in the case of North Macedonia, against whom, Greece had imposed its veto in the Council against the opening of the accession talks. On the other hand, in a country such as Albania it was seen that such a condition didn't pose a potential blockage towards the Integration process. While, regional cooperation is a condition that relies on the integration of the candidate countries in international and regional organizations, treaties, or initiatives through which the regional cooperation in the region is boosted.

On the other hand, the Integration is highly reliant on the capacity of the candidate countries to undergo domestic change, which can be explained through the domains of the Europeanization process. Considering that, the measurement of Europeanisation rises as a need to aid also to the understanding of the Integration process of candidate countries, and more in particular to two neighbouring countries such as North Macedonia and Albania (Ladrech, 2014).

Considering all of the above, this study aims to answer the following question: Has the Europeanisation of Good neighborly relations and regional cooperation been reached out on same levels in Albania and North Macedonia during the period 2000-2019?

This paper analyzes the good neighborly relations and regional cooperation criteria in Albania and North Macedonia for the period 2000-2019 by focusing on their multilateral relations that promote regional cooperation and the bilateral relations with the neighboring countries with whom they have had the closest and most interactive relations for this period. To analyze these indicators in terms of Europeanisation, the three-degree models of policy adoption provided by Elbasani (2013) (verbal, legal, and substantive) are taken into account.

The fulfillment of good neighbourly relations reflects the most evident differences between the two countries while the regional cooperation condition is seemingly fulfilled. However, it must not be denied that the wider political context in the EU plays a heavy role in the process.

2. Methodology

As the existing literature indicates, Europeanisation may occur through four processes: Historical process, Cultural diffusion, Institutional adaptation, and Policy adaptation. Considering that the policy adaptation process is more regarded by other scholars of Europeanisation such as Börzel and Risse (2000), and Radaelli (2003), it is then used for the purpose of this study. Concretely this study conducts a comparative analysis by taking Albania and North Macedonia as units of analysis.

The comparative method used is a "Small-N" case-oriented analysis, as the study involves two countries as a unit of analysis taken in a given context and time period. According to Lijphart (1971), such an approach is valuable as it provides for a structured analysis of the cases selected. While according to Ragin (1987), this approach provides for the analysis of a common historical process or outcomes for limited cases.

By Europeanisation performance comparison, it is implied the comparison of the ability of the countries to fulfill the various requirements that are set out by the European Commission in their annual reports for both countries. Considering that, the study analyses the Europeanisation process from a top-down approach. This method of measuring Europeanisation takes inspiration from Radaelli's (2003) attempt to measure the policy adaptation process of EU member states, but it applies to the candidate countries. However, as also Radaelli (2003) states, there is no particular formula of measurement for the extent of Europeanisation, but rather, the measurement is conducted by referring to other pieces of literature and conducting a simplistic screening of the said variables concerning the standards and requirements set in the Copenhagen criteria and the available models in the EU. Nevertheless, considering that the Europeanisation literature provides a variety of key points on which to focus regarding the Europeanisation measurement or progress tracing, it is necessary to provide a final assessment of this process by the end of each variable's analysis.

In this regard, considering that two Western Balkan countries are taken as units of analysis, and the focus is on the policy adoption process, this study has selected Elbasani's (2013) approach to policy adoption. However, it must be highlighted that what the Europeanisation literature refers to as the policy adoption process, is not only the adoption of government policies but also a set of legal documents (Bossaert & Demmke, 2003). As it was previously mentioned, according to Elbasani (2013) there are three degrees of policy adoption: verbal, legal, and substantive degree. The verbal degree, in the words of Elbasani, occurs when domestic political actors have endorsed the policy adoption through rhetoric. In this sense, the display of the discourse of the Albanian and North Macedonian politicians regarding their willingness in adopting the EU policies is taken as a point of reference. The legal degree is the second degree and comprises an attempt to adopt legal documents or institutions in line with the EU set of rules. For this purpose, the amount and the alignment of the pieces of legislation adopted are taken into account. Lastly, the substantive degree implies the implementation of legal documents and verbal rhetoric. Elbasani, defines the implementation as a process in which norms are transposed, adhered and enforced. For this purpose, the level of implementation will derive from how these norms are depicted in the EC reports. However, the EC reports serve as a point of reference for the previous degrees as well.

The research mainly takes into account secondary sources such as data analysis and reports provided by Albanian, North Macedonian, and international institutions. However, as has been explained before, the EC annual reports are the main secondary sources. The reason why these reports are the point of gravity for the Europeanisation assessment for this study is that they are the EU's main instrument of tracing the progress made regarding the fulfillment of the accession criteria.

It is necessary to emphasize that this study focuses on the process of Europeanisation from a top-down approach only, while does not make use of the bottom-up approach. However, it must be indicated that the bottom-up approach is not disregarded at the expense of the other approach. The reason for focusing on the top-down approach relies on the fact that it stems from the structure and principles of the EC reports, which are familiar not only to the academic field but also to the public, and thus, it makes the comparison more understandable and concise since it derives out of official and objective data.

Last, Europeanisation is an on-going process and is subject to internal and external dynamics which makes the prediction difficult and may not result fully accurate in the future. Nevertheless, considering the behavior of the countries towards the process during the reporting period, it is unlikely that there will be extreme events and changes in behaviour.

3. Comparing Good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation in Albania and North Macedonia

Albania and North Macedonia both have constructed their foreign policy in the region towards the provision of peace, security, and cooperation in the region of the Balkans, which historically has been characterised by war and ethnic conflict, and tension. Such policy was reflected in their respective multilateral and bilateral relations over the past two decades. As such, many multilateral and bilateral documents were signed in throughout the years, which were serviceable to the improvement of their relations with their neighbours and the overall stability of the region, as indicated in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1. Multilateral and Bilateral documents signed by Albania and North Macedonia (European Commission)

Year	Albania		North Macedonia	
	Multilateral documents	Bilateral documents	Multilateral documents	Bilateral documents
-2000	*6*		4	
2000	2		1	
2001		2		2
2002	1	1	1	
2003	2	7	2	4
2004	1		1	5
2005		7		9
2006	3	5	3	7
2007	1	1	1	1
2008	2	11	1	7
2009	1	9		4
2010		1		7
2011		4		3
2012		10		6
2013	1	7		6
2014	1	3		1
2015		1	1	1
2016				1
2017	2	4	2	3
2018		1		1
2019	1	1	1	4

However, it should be taken into account that, due to the specificity of these two countries, the nature and number of bilateral and multilateral documents differs, as it is further explained below.

3.1. Multilateral relations

The multilateral diplomacy in Albania and North Macedonia is similar as both countries are members of international organizations and treaties that have a direct and indirect effect on the cooperation in the regions such as the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe), WTO (World Trade Organization) and CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement). Even so, both of them are contributors and supporters of regional initiatives such as the Berlin Process (The Berlin Process-Information and Resource Center) which has produced the Brdo-Brijuni process (European Western Balkans, 2019), Regional Economic Action Plan (Multi-annual Action Plan on Regional Economic Area in the Western Balkans-MAP) and Transport Treaty (Treaty establishing the Transport Community, 2017), the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (Adriatic-Ionian Initiative), the Border Security Initiative (World Customs Organization), the Energy Community Treaty (Treaty establishing Energy Community), the European Common Aviation Area Agreement (European Common Aviation Area Agreement, 2006), Regional Initiative for Migration and Asylum (Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative) and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (European Commission).

Also, both of them had cooperated with NATO under the 2004 Charter for the security of the region (Ministry of Defence) and had contributed to the ALTHEA mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (European Commission, 2009a; 2009b). In the framework of security, both of them signed mani bilateral and multilateral agreements on cooperating in the field of border control, illegal migration, police, fight against organized crime and terrorism. Albania took a step ahead of North Macedonia when it became a NATO member in 2008 and increased its influence regarding the promotion of security and stability in the Balkans (European Commission, 2009a). However, we must keep in mind that North Macedonia's NATO membership had been blocked by Greece’s veto (Tziampiris, 2012).

The only evident difference in this matter is the cooperation of North Macedonia with the ICTY, considering that such country was part of Yugoslavia and fell under the scope of that tribunal (European Commission, 2004b) while Albania did not have such cooperation. Such multilateral relations were of utmost importance for imposing the rule of law in the region of the Balkans but also conclude the process of reconciliation in this regard. Overall, the cooperation had been continuous and successful, resulting in the prosecution of all the accused individuals.

As regards the fulfillment of the international obligations, only Albania has had some difficulties in the early 2000s regarding duties derived by the Council of Europe and WTO membership (European Commission, 2004a).

3.2. Bilateral relations

In the past 20 years, Albania has had dynamic interactions with Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Greece, Italy, and Turkey. In the last 30 years of democracy, Albania has applied the “zero problems with neighbours” foreign policy, which is reflected in the analysis on the bilateral relations. Albania has brotherly relations with Kosovo due to their shared history, culture, and language and they both have united their diplomacy. Some occasional tensions were seen with North Macedonia and Serbia which regarded the issue of the ethnic Albanians in these countries (Jano et al, 2018). However, they didn't provide the basis for crisis or conflict and their relations had had continuous improvement and were stable. The same was for Montenegro where no tension or issue had been registered, although more needs to be done to increase the cooperation between the two countries. Greece is one of the most important trading partners of Albania and one of the countries where political, historical, and cultural ties are strong (European Commission, 2020a). In essence, no substantial issues are found, although the countries have discordances regarding some historical matters such as the Cham genocide sea border demarcation, the nationalistic rhetorics by certain political groups, and Greece's refusal to recognize Kosovo's independence (Cela et al, 2018). Nevertheless, Greece has been a strong supporter of Albania's integration process. While the relations with Italy and Turkey have been excellent and these two countries have consistently supported Albania through investments and in the international area (European Commission, 2020a).

Table 2. Albania's relations with its neighbours (European Commission)[1]

Year	Kosovo	Serbia	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Greece	Turkey	Italy
2000	Good	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Good	Good	Good
2001	Good	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Good	Good
2002	Good	Good	Good	Moderate	Good	Good	Good
2003	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2004	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2005	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2006	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2007	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2008	Good	Moderate	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2009	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2010	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2011	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2012	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2013	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2014	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2015	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2016	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2017	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2018	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2019	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

North Macedonia on the other hand, has had close bilateral relations with Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria. Such bilateral relations has experienced fluidity due to its internal political dynamics and also due to its foreign policy decisions which have impacted the relations with some of its neighbours. The

[1] Based on the data retrieved from the European Commission's annual reports on Albania and North Macedonia covering the period 2000-2019, I have categorized the relations in "Good", "Moderate", "Bad". "Good" relations reflect cooperation on several levels and no conflict, tensions or political issues are registered. "Moderate" relations reflect cooperation but is often damaged by conflict, tensions or political issues. "Bad" relations reflect lack of cooperation as a result of conflict, tensions or political issues.

relations with Albania have been rather good but have been conditioned by the status of the ethnic Albanian minority in North Macedonia with an emphasisis on the armed conflicts in the early 2000's and the occasional tensions that proceeded in the following years (Jano et al, 2018). Also, the situation with Kosovo has been good, although North Macedonia has been hesitant to recognize its independence and establish diplomatic relations at the beginning (European Commission, 2009b). However, the hesitation was predominantly influenced by its relations with Serbia which had made clear it's positioning on the Kosovo issue (Marolov, 2015). Besides that, the relations with Belgrade have been good, and the countries showed a willingness to let behind their discordances during the 1990s and their opposite decisions on the issue of Kosovo. While the relations with Greece and Bulgaria have been the most delicate as a result of their history. On one hand, Greece has continuously denied the recognition of its northern neighbour's name (Tziampiris, 2012), and on the other Bulgaria has denied the existence of a Macedonian language and ethnicity (Đukanović, 2019). The name dispute took a toll on the Macedonian EU integration process and NATO membership through the veto used by Greece. Nevertheless, the countries settled such a dispute in 2018 through the Prespa agreement where the name "North Macedonia" was adopted (European Commission, 2019b). While the issues with Bulgaria have remained unresolved and could impact North Macedonia's EU integration process in the future.

Table 3. North Macedonia's relations with its neighbours (European Commission)

Year	Albania	Serbia	Kosovo	Greece	Bulgaria
2000	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Good
2001	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Good
2002	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2003	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2004	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2005	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2006	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2007	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
2008	Good	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
2009	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
2010	Good	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate
2011	Good	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate
2012	Good	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate
2013	Good	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate
2014	Good	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate
2015	Good	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate
2016	Good	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate
2017	Good	Moderate	Good	Good	Moderate

Year	Albania	Serbia	Kosovo	Greece	Bulgaria
2018	Good	Good	Good	Good	Moderate
2019	Good	Good	Good	Good	Moderate

5.3. Europeanisation of Good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation in Albania and North Macedonia

After having discussed the multilateral and bilateral relations, same as with the previous variables, it is important to draw out conclusions regarding the Europeanisation of Good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation.

Consequently, the three degrees of policy adoption in the Framework of Europeanisation provided by Elbasani (2013), such as verbal, legal, and substantive degrees, are taken into account and are visualized in the chart below.

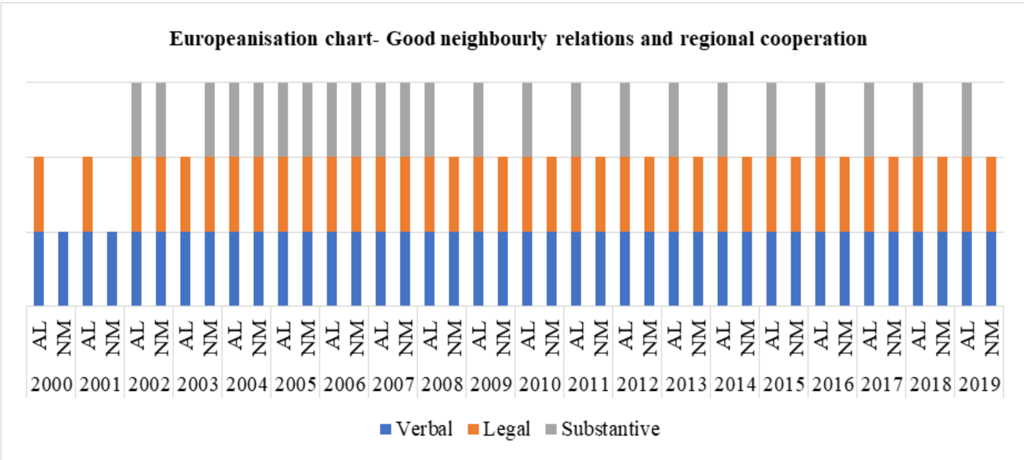

Figure 1. Europeanisation chart of the Good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation in Albania and North Macedonia during 2000-2019
Source: Author's work (2023)

As regards the first degree, the **Verbal degree**, similarly with the case of the political system variable, there is no evidence in the EC reports of domestic actors have verbally expressed opponence on adopting the required policies in line with the recommendations provided and also the requirements that stem from the Copenhagen Criteria, as provided in the conclusions of the EC reports in the key milestones for Albania (European Commission, 2007a; 2010a; 2011a; 2014a; 2020a) and North Macedonia (European Commission, 2002b; 2005b; 2006b; 2010b; 2020b). In a similar fashion to the previous case, the implementation of legal reforms consistently through these two decades has showcased the reaching for the subsequent legal adoption degree, which provides for the assumption that the former degree has already been reached and passed.

The **Legal degree** was seen to be reached out for both countries in different years but with a small difference in periods. Both countries have been consistent in adopting bilateral documents with the neighbour countries in many areas which have had a direct impact on their relations. Similarly, many multilateral documents were signed and adopted with the international institutions which directly or indirectly impact regional cooperation. There were only some differences in the periods of signing the agreements, such as the case of the WTO accession, which for Albania occurred in 2000 (European Commission, 2003a), while for North Macedonia it occurred in 2002 (European Commission, 20b).

Lastly, the **Substantive degree** has been impacted most by bilateral relations. For Albania, the bilateral relations have been overall good and have not become an obstacle to the Accession process, thus providing stability with its border countries. Some difficulties in implementing the obligations from the Council of Europe and WTO accession were evidenced for Albania in the early 2000s but which were addressed by 2004. While for North Macedonia, the complicated relationship with Greece and Bulgaria (European Commission, 2009b; 2018b), and sporadic tensions with Serbia (European Commission, 2002b; 2004b; 2009b) have often impeded the normalization of the relation with them. Moreover, the relation between Greece and Bulgaria has become an obstacle to its Accession process.

6. Conclusions

This paper analyzed the Europeanisation of good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation criteria in Albania and North Macedonia. The baseline of the analysis was the EC annual reports that indicated the progress of the countries from the period 2000-2019. From the comparative analysis, it is indicated that both countries have similarly adhered to and supported the international and regional initiatives. In addition, they both have shown a willingness to foster cooperation and security. As regards the good neighbourly relations, noticeable differences were seen.

For the past 20 years, multilateral relations have been oriented towards the support of economic and security cooperation in the region. Membership to the CEFTA, RCC, and the involvement in the NATO mission and the Berlin Process, have cemented their European orientation in the region. Therefore, the countries have shown quick adaptability and commitment to any international initiative presented and no particular issue has been evidenced.

As regards good neighbourly relations, North Macedonia has faced the most challenges. Periods of tensions have been noted regarding its relations with Serbia which have mostly been a result of the situation with Kosovo’s recognition and the border demarcation. While the relations with two member states, Greece and Bulgaria have been stranded by deeply-rooted historical issues. For years Greece had put a blockade on North Macedonia's EU integration process and the issue would finally resolve in a common agreement in 2018. While in the case of its relations with Bulgaria, the issue of non-recognition of the Macedonian language and ethnicity remains open.

As of above, in terms of Europeanisation **processes**, it resulted that both countries have presented continuously throughout the period the phases of **verbal and legal** adoption. However, only Albania has managed to provide a consistent **substantive** level of adoption while North Macedonia was impacted by its issues with Greece and Bulgaria for the most part.

Consequently, the three degrees of policy adoption in the Framework of Europeanisation provided by Elbasani, such as verbal, legal, and substantive degrees, are taken into account.

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EUROPEAN STUDIES AT THE FACULTY OF ARTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF COIMBRA, PAST AND PRESENT

Maria Manuela TAVARES RIBEIRO*

Abstract. *Analyze, interpret and think Europe, based on studies guided by a multifocal pluridisciplinarity has the line master foster learning and critical thinking in order to make the diagnosis of structures and geographic representations, historical, political, social, economic, cultural, religious, but also the attitudes and aspirations, bearing in mind the otherness in all its dimensions. It was in the pursuit of this goal that in Portugal courses in European Studies have been created. In several areas have also been offered oriented courses for the training of economists, lawyers, teachers, politicians, political scientists, historians of European Studies. Framed within various universities, institutes and higher schools, research centers, foundations, European Studies also mobilize humanistic knowledge. This happened at the University of Coimbra.*

Keywords: *Europe, Portugal, European Studies, European Construction, Higher Education.*

Europe is and has always been plural. This is the matrix and multiplicity that must be considered when questioning, discussing and reflecting on history, geography, economics, law, politics, religion, culture, citizenship and identity issues. In other words, thinking in terms of *unity* and *diversity*.

While economic and political means and ends have been put at the forefront and social and cultural issues have been pushed to the sidelines, the truth is that they are central. It has become a matter of urgency to bring the issues that concern citizens into the field of university research. Hence the perceived need to analyse, reflect on and interpret Europe through multifocal and multidisciplinary studies in order to promote learning and critical reflection, with a view to diagnosing geographical, historical, political, social, economic, cultural and religious structures and representations, mentalities, and aspirations.

This is the context in which European Studies courses were created in Portugal, when it was decided that it would be appropriate to create advanced training units in the field of European Studies.

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To this end, lecturers with different scientific backgrounds and enriched by different experiences, recognised in teaching and research, have been invited to reflect on and pass on to students, who also come from different backgrounds, the knowledge and projects from different fields that would allow them to explore and understand the paths that have shaped, divided or interwoven the space that is Europe.

European Studies has always required, and will continue to require, a theoretical and practical approach of a multi- and interdisciplinary nature. This is the only way to approach and analyse the complex problems involved. The aim is to combine more general training with more specialised training, always with a multifocal objective achieved through multidisciplinary mainstreaming, in order to acquire a solid competence in the specific field of European Studies, but also to develop the ability to think globally about problems and to exercise intellectual autonomy and critical thinking. All of this was and still is valuable capital for guiding future graduates, master's and doctoral students in an increasingly complex and evolving world and labour market. It was therefore appropriate to also mobilise the knowledge of the humanities in the training plan, prioritising a reflective and self-reflexive dimension.

The very consolidation of the European integration process has led to a growing demand for European Studies courses, some of which operate beyond the national framework, even within the European institutions, but also in the country itself, in universities, schools, companies, local authorities, public administration, various civil society organisations, etc.

The delay in Portugal's accession to the European Community was inevitably reflected in the delay in the establishment of the European Studies research area.

Portugal's accession to the EU in 1986 was a turning point. From then on, there was a need for knowledge about the accession, the negotiation process and the process of European construction, and the university began to produce it.

Courses in European Studies thus became necessary and inevitable. As might be expected, they began in the technical fields, with the first European Studies courses in Law and Economics, in the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Economics. This was the scenario in Portugal in the 1980s. The 1990s saw a growth in both research and teaching, especially at postgraduate level, in the historiography of European integration. An identical and almost simultaneous trend was observed in the fields of political science and international relations. This warrants some explanation.

There are underlying theoretical and political reasons for this: as regards the former, it is due to the inescapable place of European Studies in the international scientific scene, and the political reasons is that Portugal, as a member of the EEC and later of the European Union, faced with European challenges, had not only to master this knowledge, but also to produce knowledge in the field of European Studies. And it is up to the university, I repeat, to play this role of knowledge production and training.

The field of European Studies has thus been consolidated through curricular units in the curricula of Law, Economics, History, Political Science and International Relations.

It even became an independent specialisation in several universities, especially in the first and second study cycles of study.

In terms of the first cycle, examples include the degree in European Studies at the Faculties of Arts of Lisbon, Porto, Coimbra, Open University, Lusíada University, the degree in European Studies and International Politics at the University of the

Azores and the degree in European Studies and International Relations at Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias.

It should be added that at first cycle level, i.e. the undergraduate level, all universities offering degrees in Law, Economics, Political Science and International Relations offer European Studies courses, as does the second cycle.

At the second cycle level, i.e. the Master's level, European Studies are an autonomous structure in various universities with a dominant focus on law, economics, history or political science, and international relations. It should be noted that the first Master's degree in European Studies in Portugal was introduced at the University of Minho. As for the third cycle, i.e. the doctorate, the Catholic University, through the Institute of European Studies, awarded the doctorate, but other universities had made provision for the third cycle, especially since the Bologna process came into force.

Indeed, European Studies courses, while not confined to a single disciplinary field, have not ignored the contribution of other fields of knowledge – law, economics, political science, sociology, international relations, history, philosophy, geography. However, they should also be grounded in the humanities. They would thus benefit from the body of knowledge taught in faculties of arts and social and human sciences.

This was not a simple extension or reformulation of other courses – languages, history or philosophy – but, because of its transversal nature, the opening up of an entirely new area of teaching and research to help strengthen the capacity to respond to the demands of society.

The aim was to understand the European reality through the diversity of knowledge and, above all, to think about Europe both objectively and subjectively: to understand Europe in a comprehensive and critical way, but also to make new contributions to the *construction of Europe*.

As a result, both in Portugal and in Europe, degrees in European Studies are relatively new and still few in number. The field of European Studies has become autonomous, focusing in particular on the problem of European construction, both from the perspective of how it fits into the international organisation of Europe and the world, and the study of European integration in its many aspects: literary, geographical, economic, political, legal, cultural, religious, etc. This was the case at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Lisbon in 1998 and at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Coimbra in 2002. In this case, the degree in European Studies, was part of the Department of History, which was later renamed Department of History, European Studies, Archaeology and Arts.

In some cases, European Studies appeared in the form of specialisation and postgraduate Masters courses. Examples include the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Siena, the Université catholique de Louvain, Robert Schuman Université de Strasbourg, Nancy, and the Centre d'Études Européennes de Sciences PO (Paris), inter alia. At the University of Coimbra, the postgraduate programme in European Studies was created in the Faculty of Law in 1983 and in the Faculty of Economics in 2007.

As I mentioned earlier, there had been a trend towards autonomisation. Thus, within the organic framework of the Faculty of Arts, European Studies degrees were created, with a strongly dominant humanistic slant.

In the case of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Coimbra, it is important to highlight the originality of the European Studies degree, which was created in 2002.

Multidisciplinary knowledge was pooled together, with an emphasis on history, philosophy, geography, journalism and modern languages, as well as contributions from other fields traditionally outside the programme: law, economics, political science, international relations, sociology, among others.

A comparative analysis between the FLUC programme and that of the Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris III, reveals an identical purpose – to teach the diversity of multidisciplinary contributions. I experienced this in 1993 when I was part of an Erasmus group that included the universities of Coimbra, Salamanca, Granada, Poitiers and Siena. These contacts were productive in the immediate future. Under the auspices of the University of Siena and coordinated by Professor Ariane Landuyt, a Master in European Studies – postgraduate course – was set up.

Although I have taken other courses at various European universities, my experience at the universities involved in the Master in European Studies since 1999 has been remarkable. In addition to Coimbra, Salamanca, Poitiers, Granada, Strasbourg 3, Krakow, Oradea, Montpellier 1, Swansea, Hanover, Athens, Bologna, Siegen, and the Azores, other European universities have joined this Master's programme, which ran from 2001 to 2013.

Other initiatives are of note.

At FLUC, a Master's programme was set up on Europe – Visions of the Other, which I coordinated between 2002 and 2007, and in 2006 another Master's programme was set up, also at FLUC, on European Studies, coordinated by Professor Doutor António Martins da Silva. FLUC also ran a PhD programme in European Studies from 2009 to 2012.

This teaching and research experience at FLUC drew heavily on the experience and multiple activities – courses, debates, seminars of the Postgraduate programme in European Studies at the FDUC, which, as I mentioned, began in 1983 under the wise coordination and experience of Professor Doutor Manuel Lopes Porto. The FEUC Masters in International Relations with specialisation in European Studies, approved in 2007, was just as important, thanks to the tireless efforts of Professor Rogério Leitão.

It is also important to highlight the importance of European Studies in the projects of the Research Centres of the Faculty of Law, the UC Centre for Social Studies (CES), the UC Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies (CEIS20) and the diverse academic production of journals published in Coimbra, such as *Temas de Integração*, founded in 1996, and *Debater a Europa*, founded in 2009. There have been many scientific meetings – colloquia, seminars, workshops, courses in universities, but also in primary and secondary schools. We are indebted to Professors Manuel Lopes Porto and Rogério Leitão for their teaching and to several generations for the many and varied initiatives that have been the result of a healthy and always fruitful collaboration. Our Faculties of Law, Economics, and Arts owe them much. We should also highlight the dedicated collaboration of Professor António Martins da Silva and so many other promising FLUC professors who have been instrumental in giving a new impetus to teaching and research in European Studies.

The Europe in which our students will be part of in the future will be very different from the one we are teaching them today. At the beginning of the 21st century, as now, rapid change and growing uncertainty meant that we had to think and analyse more than just find "good" answers.

A solid interaction between the different fields of the humanities was and is necessary. An intensive dialogue between different fields of knowledge was and is desirable: Law, Economics, but also Political Science, Sociology, International Relations, History, Philosophy, Geography, Anthropology, and Languages. A dialogue within the Social Sciences and Humanities was and is essential.

Therefore, in addition to the Bachelor's degree (1st cycle), and to the Master's degree (2nd cycle), it is necessary and desirable to have a doctoral degree within the framework of European Studies at FLUC. This is the framework in which teachers guide young students in projects that will enable them to obtain grants, apply for international projects, supplement their studies with in-depth research leading to a doctoral dissertation, a future publication in a book, or articles published in specialist journals in Portugal and abroad. They can also benefit from their work as collaborating researchers in research centres in Coimbra, such as the Faculty of Law, the CES and the CEIS20.

For this doctoral programme to exist and function properly, it is necessary to have teachers trained in European Studies.

To this end, there must be competitions and vacant posts to train these future teachers and researchers. It would be useful to establish partnerships with Political Science and International relations. This is an objective or a desire that I would like to see materialised.

Nevertheless, much has been done in recent years...

A final word to the lecturers of European Studies at FLUC. Their work in the restructuring of the 1st cycle course and the Masters course has been tremendous.

It is time to celebrate 40 years of European Studies at the FDUC, 21 years at the FLUC, hoping that they will continue to be revitalised in the future so that we can *think better about Europe*, to *make Europe better*. Much of this has to do with the coordination of young and promising coordinators, directors, researchers and teachers of European Studies. Their success and achievements are and will also be those of the students, of the teachers of European Studies, and of the University of Coimbra.

HOW ARE POPULISM AND EUROSCEPTICISM LINKED WITH LEFT AND RIGHT IDEOLOGIES? THE CASES OF FIDESZ AND PODEMOS

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Abstract. *With the rise of populism and Euroscepticism in the political arena of the European Union, studies have long pertained on the particular relationship between these two notions. Both of them have found place in left-wing and right-wing political parties, establishing themselves within the foundations of party programs. This study aims to understand the relationship populism and Euroscepticism build with both left and right ideologies. Previous literature demonstrates that these notions are instrumentalized for socio-economic purposes in the left, and socio-cultural purposes on the right. The study's goal is to verify this connection, through comparing two different case studies: the first from the right-wing political party Fidesz in Hungary, and the second from the left-wing political party Podemos in Spain, which both are described as populist and Eurosceptic. The study concludes in the verification of the claim aforementioned: Podemos focuses on socio-economic goals, while Fidesz in socio-cultural.*

Keywords: *populism, Euroscepticism, ideology, policy, socio-economic, socio-cultural, European Union*

Introduction

The rise of populism and Euroscepticism in the European Union (EU) has been a significant trend in recent years. Populist parties and movements have gained ground in many EU countries, challenging the traditional political establishment and promoting anti-EU rhetoric. Eurosceptic parties have also gained support by advocating for the withdrawal or reduction of their countries' involvement in the EU. Both notions can be found interlinked, used by political leaders, parties, interest groups and media outlets. While not all Eurosceptic parties are explicitly anti-EU, they often promote policies that are at odds with the EU's vision of greater integration and cooperation among member states.

The United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU in 2016 was a significant blow to the bloc and a victory for Eurosceptic forces. The referendum campaign was characterized by anti-EU rhetoric, with the Leave campaign arguing that the UK would be better off outside the EU (Kaeding, Pollak & Schmidt, 2021). In Italy, the populist

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Five Star Movement and the far-right League party formed a coalition government in 2018, which collapsed in 2019. Both parties campaigned on a Eurosceptic platform, calling for a renegotiation of Italy's relationship with the EU. The far-right National Front has gained ground in French politics in recent years, with leader Marine Le Pen advocating for a referendum on France's EU membership. In the 2017 presidential election, Le Pen received 33.9% of the vote in the second round, losing to Emmanuel Macron (Mudde, 2019). The Law and Justice party, led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski in Poland, has been in power since 2015 and has been accused of undermining the independence of the judiciary and the media. The party has also been critical of the EU, calling for a greater role for national governments (Mudde, 2019). Therefore, populism and Euroscepticism have become legitimate discourses in the Europanization process.

The EU has taken several stances in order to oppose these growing tendencies. As the main concern is the lack of citizen participation, through creating initiatives that enhance citizen cooperation and communication with the EU Community, EU aims to further strengthen democracy and dialogue (Kaeding et al., 2021). Nevertheless, EU’s stance on economy, inequality or migration has made populist and Eurosceptic parties grow further and become a halt in the integration process of member states.

Literature Review

In the light of recent events which have shaped the political face of Europe, two notions: populism and Euroscepticism go hand in hand. Often used simultaneously, these two concepts have found place in the concerns of European Union (EU) experts. Depending on the country, party route and context, both populism and Euroscepticism can be of use for parties with strong ideological profiles.

Taggart (1998, as cited in Fortunato & Pecoraro, 2022) defines Euroscepticism as a part of European integration, that is a qualified or unqualified opposition towards the process of integration itself. Such negative approach towards the European Union can be traced back in the 1980s when the Single European Act was fairly contested, however, particular events after the 1990s altered the magnitude of this approach, such as the entrance of Euro, the failure of the Constitutional Treaty and the enlargement of the EU both in 2004, to name a few (Brack & Startin, 2015: 240-242). Previously, a sense of Euroskepticism had been only peripheral. The approach has evolved to become more legitimate within the EU integration discourse: the elites, including political figures and parties of member states have opposed and showed hostility towards policies of the EU; interests groups, including civil society organizations have been influencing public opinion; media channels have been transmitting a new agenda. Euroskepticism has grown to become a natural approach, mostly of member states that are directly influenced by the EU decision making.

This approach can be found both in its soft and hard forms. The former is a lack of trust in the European institutions and a will to change certain EU policies from which member states do not benefit. The latter is a complete opposition towards the integration process; a will to withdraw from EU membership and a perception that the EU is unreformable. Euroskepticism has become both “increasingly complex and multifaceted” (Brack & Startin, 2015: 241), taking different forms, influencing decision making of states and most importantly, stagnating the integration process, aiming a regress.

The widely accepted definition of populism comes from Mudde and Kaltwasse (2017) which depict society as formed by two main hegemonic and antagonistic groups: the pure people and the corrupt elite. Morality is an important aspect when portraying these two groups; if one takes a look at the adjectives used before the two words, they can realise that people are generally depicted as good, while the elite is bad. People hold the ultimate source of power, nevertheless the elite illegitimately holds and uses this power for its own self-interests, resulting in further betraying, damaging or even exploiting the people. As such, general will comes into play as another important aspect when analyzing populism. Rousseau (1764, as cited in Kaltwasse & Mudde, 2017) distinguished between the general will and the will of all, the former being the capacity of people to join together and legislate their common interest, and the latter being a simple temporary aristocratic form of power.

Both the people and the elite are used as notions which represent in themselves constructions. A construction can become of use for a variety of elements, depending on what the populist leader wants to achieve. People can either be the sovereign, the common people, or the nation; similary, the elite can be illustrated by the political establishment, the incumbent party, the economic elite, the political elite or the media elite (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). The populist leaders who serve as watchdogs and criticize the illegitimacy of the elite are not part of it, they portray a group of people who are willing to not only oppose, but also undermine the status quo. Therefore, anti-establishmet populism, which falls under the category of hard populism, persists on the idea that the people are hard working victims of a state run by outsiders (the elite) which fulfill firstly and mostly their own interests, rather than the general will (Kyle & Gultchin, 2018, as cited in European Center for Populism Studies, n.d.).

Populism cannot exist on its own, for its fluid characteristics, which can be adopted to different ideologies. As it only teaches how the relationship between the elite and the people should be, and not how society can be run, it has to be combined with other concepts in order to thrive and find place within a discourse (Rooduijn & van Kessel, 2019: 11-13). What is another feature to be noted down is how populist leaders, which are usually charismatic figures, represent themselves as saviours of democracy. On the contrary, populism is often depicted as a challenger of democratic values, where populist leaders seek to mobilize the people for their own interest and power, becoming part of the elite themselves (Fortunato & Pecoraro, 2022).

As these two doctrines, populism and Euroscepticism, are usually found interlinked, it is natural for one to assume that there must be both differences and similarities between the two. A distinct difference is that populism is more abstract, whereas Euroscepticism is concrete (Fortunato & Pecoraro, 2022). Populism refers to the relationship of two constructions which are abstract and vast, and not to specific policy implementations. Euroscepticism on the other hand, refers to parties' attitudes towards the specific act of European integration, which involves a series of policies and decisions. Secondly, not all populist parties are Eurosceptic. Nationalist parties, such as those in Bulgaria and Slovakia are examples of this. The reasoning behind the absence of Euroscepticism can be found in the idea that populists perceive European integration to further help in deconstructing the elite, as their power would be delegated to the EU (Rooduijn & van Kessel, 2019: 15). Also, not all Eurosceptic parties are populist. The Conservative Party in UK, which led the Brexit process, did not have populist leaders (Rooduijn & van Kessel, 2019: 12).

Nevertheless, there are similarity points which have concluded in what is called populist Euroscepticism. Populists, similarly with the Eurosceptics, dislike the EU decision making process (Pirro & Taggart, 2018: 5-6). They believe the process to be opaque, most importantly not in line with the citizens' needs. Because it stands in the direct way of participation of citizens in politics, both parties convey a disbelief regarding the way EU handles crises and policies (Pirro & Taggart, 2018: 5). Most of EU officials are deemed to be technocrats, forming an elite with no connection to the people. Populists are knowing for not tolerating what they perceive of lack of transparency, and EU complex technicalities do not reduce this lack (Rooduijn & van Kessel, 2019: 30-35). The two notions do not always arise simultaneously, however over 75% of populist parties in EU also identify as Eurosceptic (Rooduijn & van Kessel, 2019: 37).

Therefore, one can also assume that populism and Euroscepticism find place usually in other ideologies. What is important to mention is how left and right parties use different frames to instrumentalize these concepts and harmonize them with the parties' goals and aims, and stance towards EU. Right-wing parties perceive the EU to be an organization which undermined national sovereignty, while left-wing parties believe it to be a neoliberal construct which raises inequality and poverty (Stollarz, 2021). Therefore, right-wing parties have the tendency to use populism and Euroscepticism for sociocultural purposes, while left-wing for socioeconomic purposes (Rooduijn & van Kessel, 2019: 4-7). For rightists, opening the borders, would bring a massive acceptable of globalization, which would threaten a state's homogeneity. For leftists, most of society gets exploited by the current economic system, in terms of welfare entitlement and working conditions. The study aims to verify this division between the left and the right, through solidifying it with the examples of Hungary and Spain. Fidesz, the incumbent party in Hungary is depicted as right-wing, populist and Eurosceptic, while Podemos in Spain, is depicted left-wing, populist and Eurosceptic as well.

Methodology

This study is a basic research with an exploratory nature, aiming at finding how two ideologies: populism and Euroscepticism are linked separately with the left and the right ideologies. As such deductive reasoning is used, through a top down approach, which analyzes how populism and Euroscepticism can be related by political parties with the socioeconomic claim of the left and sociocultural claim of the right. Two case studies are chosen to verify this relation: the first is case of the right-wing political party Fidesz in Hungary, and the second is the case of the left-wing political party Podemos in Spain. Qualitative method is applied. Sources of information are from secondary data: articles and books written by scholars, reports, news articles and official websites of both parties.

Findings

1. The case of Fidesz

The Hungarian Civic Alliance, or the Federation of Young Democrats, generally known as Fidesz, was established in 1988; its initial goals were a market economy and European Integration (Wallenfeldt, 2023). As Hungary at the time was under a communist regime, the party had anti-communist beliefs, aiming for a change in the status-quo. With the fall of communism in Hungary, Fidesz reached its peak in 1998, winning elections and occupying the government office through a coalition.

Orbán, its leader, became the prime minister. One of the main points of the party's political program was the austerity program: improving national economy, cutting taxes and social insurance fees, and aiming towards EU membership. The party won again in 2010, 2014, 2018 and 2022, currently serving as the incumbent party in government (Wallenfeldt, 2023).

Fidesz has a strong foundation of six main principles, which have been established on Hungarian values, history and psyche (Rajcsányi, n.d: 123-134). The government's role in maintaining society is strong and central, a role which has been established since the economic crisis of 2010. National sovereignty is upheld as the most important attribute which needs to be taken under consideration in policy making and implementation. As such, all policies maintain one main goal: the Hungarian interest. The middle class receives attention through tax benefits and family policy programmes. Despite the state's reduction on taxes for big companies, budgetary and fiscal policies are strict and tight, and the government does not favor foreign investment (Rajcsányi, n.d: 129). Most of economic policies follow a pattern against neoliberal tendencies, ensuring national sovereignty. International companies usually pay larger taxes than Hungarian firms. Orbán's views on property are protectionist (Stollarz, 2021). Lastly, policies become patriotic, nurturing Hungarian pride and history and focusing on securing Hungarian minorities abroad.

The party has been defined right-wing by general consensus, however in the previous years it managed to hold a moderately centric position through a populist discourse (TUIC Academy, 2021). Orbán recently considers himself to be right-wing, conservative and nemzeti, which according to Gati is defined as "not as provocative as a nationalist, but not as warm as patriotic" (Terzieva & Ostermann, 2011). His party supports a Christian democratic world-view, which further strengthens European identity. Through establishing strong Christian roots, the party also opposes any Marxist or progressive ideologies. As such, conservatism is a strong characteristic of Fidesz, nevertheless it has always been presented as not an elitist conservatism, further emphasizing populist tendencies (Rajcsányi, n.d: 124-126). A traditional view of family is continuously marketed, which makes Fidesz more appealing to the general public.

A significant event which marked the party's turn to populism were the 2002 elections. Fidezs lost against the slightly elitist liberal conservative bourgeoisie, which made Orbán turn to the people of the middle class, in order to gain more votes (Rajcsányi, n.d: 131). The leader is considered to have a strong presence in mass communication which he has embarked since the beginning of the decade.

The strong presence of nationalism is Fidesz policies and rhetoric is a strong indicator of populist tendencies. The state upholds national sovereignty while opposing external interference, therefore the EU Community is considered the elite, which is implementing policies, regulations and decisions that do not go hand in hand with the Hungarian social order and interest (Stollarz, 2021). This leaves space for Euroscepticism to rise and be instrumentalized.

The party has long permitted a culture of resentment, which populists intensify through using stereotypes from the past. In the name of Hungarian identity, many other identities become marked and therefore a threat to the people (Becker, 2010). 'Jews', 'gypsies' and 'communists' were identified as undesired groups; this was solidified in policies and a hate rhetoric. According to Becker (2010), Fidesz openly supported

Fascist-like media in the early 2000s; in one of the magazines, a doll wearing traditional Gypsy clothing was drawn hanged.

Anti-migration policies have been a strong part of Orbán's politics. Migrant waves from countries of the Middle East in 2015 and 2016 were strongly opposed by the leader, despite EU's external interference. Perhaps migration is the topic most right-wing populists agree. The party claims that multiculturalism does threaten Hungarian sovereignty and brings an increase in criminality and delinquency (Stollarz, 2021). Migration has been generally perceived as a "Muslim" threat, which threatens the country's cultural heritage. As Orbán perceives the nation to be based solely on ethnicity, any wave of foreigners or migrants cannot become part of it. Except for the populist approach which views the people as common, without any distinction and exposed to threats, this behavior could be partly explained through Hungary's homogeneity as a population over the decades (Thorpe, 2016). Such grip over the migration scheme could be a form of politicization: Fidesz feeds of the fear towards terrorism through the politics of blaming migrants from the Middle East.

In the 1990s, Hungary's entrance to the EU was projected as a natural fulfillment for the political and economic sphere of the state, considering that the communist regime deprived the state from said development (TUIC Academy, 2021). There was a general consensus not only by the political elite, but also by the public, that the cultural and political identity of the state must lead as further from the Eastern model as possible, which they associated with the former USSR (Rajcsányi, n.d: 125-126). As Fidesz was initially formed to oppose communist dictatorship, it soon came to embrace pro-European values, framing their party as a people's movement (Rajcsányi, n.d: 126).

However, after the transition period, the evaluation of democracy started to fall sharply. In a matter of years, Hungary became one of the most pessimistic countries within EU. Reasons for this fall into different categories, but a major indicator is the Eurosceptic and populist approach of Fidesz. The EU Community is perceived as a Eurocratic elite, which threatens the well-being of the Hungarian people, through a supranational level. According to supporters of the party, EU forces Hungary to become a colonial state (Lázár, 2015: 228). Therefore, it becomes unacceptable for Hungary to put at stake its sovereignty and authority and allowing massive delegations of power to an institution which does not take into consideration the needs of the Hungarian people.

From an economic perspective, Fidesz believes through openly opposing EU policies, they protect the Hungarian lands from foreign investors, believing this is a form of pragmatism (Lázár, 2015: 228). The party also emphasizes how the EU has been inefficient to manage several crises: the Eurocrisis, which Orbán stated to be a "sabotage" (Terzieva & Ostermann, 2011) or the Covid-19 pandemic. The relationship between the party and EU seems to be more competitive than cooperative. Végh states that Fidesz uses the EU parliament as "arena for fighting political battles for domestic consumption rather than as a platform for constructive cooperation" (2019). The party is willing to protect its own sovereignty as far as partly opposing EU membership; it does not believe EU policies make Hungary a beneficiary and nor can they be adjusted.

Most importantly, Fidesz has denied adhering to EU's migration policies, as they oppose a mixed race. Orbán claims to have a Christian Hungary and a Christian Europe, not a Europe with no identity (2016, as cited in Thorpe, 2016). In 2016, Orbán denied the compulsory quotas for distributing asylum and shelter to asylum-seekers, and secured the border through building a fence that would not allow migrants to come in (Thorpe, 2016). The border was largely named as an Iron Curtain that is built for the Hungarian people (Orbán, 2016, as cited in Thorpe, 2016).

2. The case of Podemos

Podemos, or as it means in English, “we can”, was founded in 2014. The party began as an anti-austerity movement, considering the country’s tightening of the budget as a threat to the Spanish people (Seguín, 2017: 289). Since its beginning, Podemos pledged to be fighting corruption, poverty, and inequality. Iglesias, its founder, found inspiration in Latin America populist leftist leaders, especially Bolivian ones, as he believed the Bolivian population to have a similar content with the Spanish one (Cervera-Marzal, 2020). A historical mark was when the party won five seats in the European Parliament in the year of its creation. Popularity arose in Spain later, and in 2019, the party won the elections through a coalition.

Six main fundamentals can be found in Podemos’s party ideology, which falls under the left-wing distinction. The party emphasizes public control over most areas, going against the privatization of public administration. Its main goal is poverty reduction, which can be achieved through anti-inequality plans, which aim at increasing social dignity (Seguín, 2017: 287-309). Large corporations receive punitive measures in cases of tax avoidance, while small enterprises are promoted and helped through tax cuts, when compared with larger companies. Investment banks are perceived to be speculating with Spain’s economy, therefore it is in the hands of people to vote for governments, not investment banks (Penty, Neumann, Montijano & Devereux, 2019). The party aims in promoting renewable energy resources, to oppose over-consumption. Lastly, all policies aim at improving the lives of the middle class, concluding to a Scandinavian model of social democracy, and integrating them more in the public and social Spanish life. When the party firstly began as a movement, they would use abandoned buildings in middle-class neighborhoods as areas for different activities, including here political debates (Cervera-Marzal, 2020).

Populist tendencies found in Podemos mainly source from the party’s anti-system approach, as opposing the political values of the system in which the party itself has been developed (Cervera-Marzal, 2020). Podemos is in favor of making Spain a federation, which would require a massive change in its 1978 Constitution and reformation, as it believes the federation to be a more convenient political system for Spain. Iglesias is in favor of minority rights: he has increased the number of refugee intakes from Syria and has showed levels of acceptance towards the idea of an independent Catalonia (Seguín, 2017: 295). The party’s roots in egalitarianism have made its approach to the political scene of Spain be anti-establishment, with an aim of change. Iglesias claims for Europe’s greatest heritage to be the freedom of its people. Furthermore, Podemos wishes to create an anti-pluralist establishment, which would increase citizen’s role in the political sphere through direct participation.

Iglesias, which began his career as a political science professor, rose to the scene immediately through his presence in television. He presented strong communication abilities through initially opening a political talk show where youth could discuss on political matters. Podemos has a strong connection with mobilization, always presenting themselves as in the side of the people. They help in the organization of different protests or riots, which have aimed at criticizing the government as working against the will of people and further amplifying the gaps between the rich and the poor (Cervera-Marzal, 2020). Members of the party are openly activists which have been against racism, against tenant evictions, have supported strikes in public services or have been against the tourification of working-class neighborhoods (Cervera-Marzal, 2020).

When the party was initially created, it aimed at converting the social indignation that had come as a consequence of EU austerity programs. Therefore, since its creation, it showed signs of Euroscepticism, nevertheless, it was a form of soft Euroscepticism where the party wished to reform EU policies (Gago, 2017). Podemos criticized how EU handled the Eurocrisis, emphasizing the impact the crisis had left in Spain's unemployment rates, which had been growing (Ramos & Cornago, 2016). Iglesias claims the crisis aftermath was not managed well either by the EU Community, or the Spanish state. The leader has a negative attitude towards several trade agreements with the EU. Also, Iglesias has called on the EU in several occasions to have a stronger stance towards migration, through increasing migration acceptance rates; and to further work on the reduction of poverty, which Podemos believes to partly come from EU policies and linkages (Ramos & Cornago, 2016).

Discussion

As one can see from the analysis, populist tendencies can be found in both parties of the Left and the Right. Orbán, through a popular presence in media, wishes to preserve Hungarian sovereignty and continuously praises its homogeneity, creating an image of enemies for other ethnicities, migrants, foreigners or even EU institutions themselves. Through projecting a strong Eurosceptic sense, he strengthens the idea that EU is the elite, which works based on its interests and fails to consider Hungarian principles. Fidesz's will to disintegrate from the EU shows a regress in the EUization of the continent, and a stronger attachment to the East. On the other side, Podemos aims towards a society which preserves egalitarianism and equality. The establishment is simply perceived as wrong, ruled by an elite which does not help in poverty reduction and continues exploitation. Iglesias claims for the EU community to also be an elite, which through its economic policy implementations is not helping the Spanish. Nevertheless, while Fidesz's Euroscepticism falls into the category of hard Euroscepticism, Podemos's is rather soft, with a goal of remaining EU members, but willful for a change.

Limitations

While conducting this study, some limitations have been present nevertheless. Firstly, when studying and measuring the degree of Euroscepticism both in Hungary and Spain, public participation on the EU is not taken into consideration, rather, the political parties' attitude is studied. Secondly, the relationship between democracy and populism, albeit an important one, has not been studied thoroughly. Lastly, there was a lack of research in the English language for Podemos.

Conclusion

Populism and Euroscepticism have found place in the political sphere of the European Union, and can be seen as strong attributes in parties both of the right and left wing of the ideological spectrum. Theory concludes that mostly, left parties make use of these two notions for socioeconomic purposes, while right parties for sociocultural purposes. The theory remains truthful: Fidesz in Hungary has proven to indulge and strengthen a sense of Hungarian ethnic heterogeneity and sovereignty through its policies and rhetoric, while Podemos in Spain focuses on reducing poverty and corruption for the greater good of the Spanish people, while also opposing the establishment. Populism and Euroscepticism strengthen the parties' right and left status and stance, while the leftist and rightist ideologies become perfect conditions for these two notions to grow hand in hand.

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II. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND SECURITY STUDIES

LEADERS, STATES AND WAR IN UKRAINE: BACK TO THE OLD SCHOOL OF REALISM?

Dacian DUNA*

Abstract. *Nowadays, the promises of a universal neoliberal order seem to have been hijacked by tendencies of illiberalism, authorianism and militarism all across the world, including in some Western societies. The complex crisis the current international system is facing, covering aspects from climate change to pandemies, and from political and financial instability to conflict and war, are picturing a grim reality. Does the grand old theory of realism coming back? Did we bury it too soon, academically speaking? The events in Ukraine, since 2014 and more sharply since 24 February 2022, prove that at least some realist and neorealist assumptions had survived and are still shaping the world. Russia under president Putin seems to lead a crusade of old Real-Politik practices deemed to topple not only Ukraine as an independent nation but also the foundations of the global neoliberal order.*

Keywords: *Real-Politik, power, hegemony, rationality, Russia, NATO*

Introduction

When this paper was written the Doomsday Clock released by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists showed 90 seconds until midnight. To have a worthy comparison to take into account, during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis the clock showed seven minutes to midnight. This illustrates the unprecedented risks our global society is facing, from climate change (and crisis according to some), pandemies, economic and financial crises, to political instability and international conflicts. However, the most disturbing fact is that the major powers of the world have lost the ability to settle their disputes peacefully or simply to communicate, negotiate and compromise especially now when global issues are becoming existential threats. There is a remarkable lack of leadership which indicate that the American century is driving to an end and nobody else is filling the place of the reluctant hegemon. The situation is as risky as the one happening right before the starting of the Second World War.

The events in Ukraine, whether one speaks about the annexation of Crimea in 2014, or the current war which was launched by Vladimir Putin in 24 February 2022, but also the most recent conflict in the Near East, involving Hamas and Israel, are both a consequence of the facts already emphasised in the previous paragraph and are consequential for the future of global politics. For this author they are an indication that anti-status quo powers are groping the ground left unchecked by the Western powers, the supporters of the current global neoliberal order. The West is loosing confidence in its ability to lead the world, while the „rest” (following the expression coined by Kishore Mahbubani and rebranded by Niall Ferguson) is growing confident.

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Today, Russia and China seem to lead an insurgency of the global South against the global North. Paradoxically, this antocratic resurgence has been made possible by the sharpening disputes eroding liberal democracy from within during the last years[1]. The current Western political elites have been unable to solve them or simply capitulated in the name of financial shortages or other priorities on their agenda.

Nothwitstanding, major political events, such as the war of aggression launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine (prefaced by the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbass in 2014), are still of major concern for the field of international relations. However, the academic agenda is even furthered from reality than the political agenda, especially in Western societies. Political science has been either seduced by political activism or continued to be dominated by research formalism and politically correctness. Ideological reasoning has replaced pragmatic reasoning. Unfortunately, the IR field seems increasingly alienated from the practice of international politics.

One can recall an interesting question asked almost obsessively by US citizens and broadcasted by TV by during the 9/11 attack on the WTC: "Why do they hate us?" This is a question without an obvious answer which still resonates today. President Bush has once answered to it in his address to the American nation: "They hate what they see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other. (…) We have seen their kind before. They're the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, they follow in the path of fascism, Nazism and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way to where it ends in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies."[2]. Of course, this speech was about terrorism, which at that time was represented by Al Qaeda, and how to fight it involving every available resource the US government used to have. Later, the same Presidency argued about the existence of an „axis of evil" in his first State of the Union address after 9/11, comprising not only terrorist organizations but rogue nations of the world such as Iran, Iraq, and North Korea.[3] Beyond and very close to it laid countries like Cuba, Lybia, and Syria. The 'axis' was a reminder of the interwar "Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis" which became a leitmotif in American foreign policy for authoritarian regimes poised to challenge the international order.

What is the relevance of these apparently begotten ideas of the early 2000s for the present time? After September 11, 2001, the aggressive response of America left the impression that the world lived its unipolar moment. It was the bold response of a

[1] The Capitol Hill insurrection at the end of Trump presidency (January 6, 2021) is an example, alongside the political crisis of the past 4 years (2018-2022), which left Israel vulnerable to its enemies, most notably to Hamas and Iran, but events such as these are happening ordinarily in Western societies especially in the post-pandemic years.

[2] "President Bush Addresses the Nation", September 20, 2001, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html (accessed in September 25, 2023).

[3] "President Bush's State of the Union Address", January 29, 2002, https://www.c-span.org/video/?525425-13/axis-evil (accessed in September 25, 2023).

global hegemon, the United States, against its purported enemy of that time: global terrorism. With all its mistakes and flaws, the US could not be challenged at that moment by any revisionist Great Power. It seemed that the end of history, predicted by Fukuyama, was finally taking place, with liberal democracy becoming the only game in the global village. The moment soon passed as the US and coalition's troops had bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan fighting insurgencies encouraged by the Western indecisiveness and mismanagement. This has paved the way for the counterattack of authoritarian, even autocratic regimes, such as the regime established by Vladimir Putin in Russia. The "axis of evil" – from the point of view of the international neoliberal order – reemerged stronger and more dangerous. Following the Israeli invasion of Gaza, Iranian commentators have even proposed the name of "axis of resistance" reminding of Hamas[4].

Theories of international relations have produced, so far, perfectible analytical tools, yet necessary for the development of international relations as a discipline, that can help the understanding of some of the likely causes and consequences of actions, such as the launch of the "special operation" against Ukraine by Russian President Vladimir Putin, but cannot cover, at least today, all the hidden aspects. The "fog of war", invoked by Carl von Clausewitz in his masterpiece *On War*, is thicker today than ever, since the manipulation of information has reached fantastic levels in the world of digitalization. In an atmosphere dominated by propaganda and fake news, it is increasingly difficult to reconstruct truth. But we must recognize that a battle between different and almost irreconcilable narratives is unfolding in the world, and the tragedy of a Ukraine caught in the claws of Moscow is a concrete example of that.

This paper is not suggesting that realism and its apparently old-fashioned form, political realism, are theories without defects. Most IR theories pretended to have discovered flaws in the realist theoretical framework. One can agree that realism as an academic theory has failed because it was not able to advance the initial aim of international relations, to prevent future wars and assist the peaceful change of the international system. Instead, realism and its most recent avatar, structural realism, have persevered in describing the game as it is, not attempting to change it into something else. However, the post-pandemic world appears now to be dominated by an agenda set by major state and non-state actors. Interstate and intergroup violence and war have reemerged from the cracks of the neoliberal order which are now exploited by new-revisionist major powers, such as Russia and China. Just like in the 1930s, authoritarian revisionist states are attacking the international neoliberal order from various platforms: military, political, economic, technological, informational, even geopolitical. One of the reasons may lie in the failure or inability of neoliberalism to react to these new challenges and retain, at the same time, its advantages. Globalization and interdependence are now at risk. Can we still hope to learn some of the lessons of grand old theory of realism? What is certain is that Great Power politics and competition are now driven back by assertive emerging powers seeking to destabilize the current international system and recreate it based on their own designs.

This paper is an attempt to re-evaluate the validity or more exactly the practicality of realism in the context of the Russian aggression on Ukraine or Ukraine's war of independence which started in 2014 and amplified in 2022. This paper assumes

[4] Hamas is the acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (Islamic Resistance Movement).

that the motivations of the conflict have been driven by Vladimir Putin's purported realist assumptions about international politics. This is not an analysis of this war in all its complexity, but instead is focused on its causes, intentions, expectations, and motivations of the parties involved – most particularly the Russians. It acknowledges its inevitable limits: without having access to classified information, we will not be ultimately certain about the true intentions and expectations of Vladimir Putin and his regime in Ukraine, even what really happens at ground zero, the battleground area. We can assume a general picture of these events as seen from a glass darkly. However, sharp contrasts appear when we look upon the Western response to the Ukraine conflict. Another question would be if realism may also be the answer to the puzzle. We are not sure, too. The same fog of war precludes us from making positive or negative predictions. However, if there is any wisdom in the past of international relations is this one: power can only be mitigating with power not with weakness. Unfortunately, many people in the 'West' are forgetting what is at stake. The support against authoritarianism is decreasing because people are getting weary of thinking about the long term in a society obsessed with living the present. The West has dematerialized notions of 'good' and 'evil' as obsoleted or unscientific concepts, replacing them with tones of grey. The 'others' have tried to relativize this in a totally different direction, trying to engage the West as an evil, decadent society (this can be easily identified in the public discourse of countries like Russia or Iran). Our society seems increasingly unable to see beyond the "banality of evil" (Arendt, 1963), trying to justify any human action as a normal affair.

Certainly, this paper does not aim to contribute to an ethical dimension of the study of politics and international politics but is reminding that moral judgements are the cornerstones of the current international law and order. In our international system, war is considered unlawful if it is violating "the prohibition of force contained in the United Nations Charter and the peremptory norm of general international law prohibiting aggression" (Haque, 2022). This makes the case of the war in Ukraine from the point of liberalism which dominates the formal political arena. However, realism may continue to dominate the informal political arena. Even so, political realism as a theory does not support a world void of moral principles as one might think.

Political realism and power politics

Realism is one of the oldest and most enduring theories of international politics though it has been criticized by nearly everybody except for (most) realists. In its academic form, it developed in the interwar period, as a reaction to liberal internationalism (utopianism) or, more precisely, to its assumed failures: the League of Nations' system and the liberal economic system that dominated the world affairs after the First World War and ended in the misery of the 1930s.

The assumptions of classical or political realism (as it labeled itself) are related to the importance of power in international politics, in the context of a world composed of sovereign nation-states existing in the condition of systemic anarchy. According to Morgenthau, statesmen are concerned with the national interest, defined in terms of power (Morgenthau, 1985:5), as most realists would agree. Implicitly, the international political arena is dominated by power politics, which often takes the form of a precarious balance of power, which states strive at least to maintain, if not to destabilize in their own benefit.

Starting from a pessimistic view of human nature, which emphasizes selfishness and “the perpetual and insatiable desire for power after power, a desire that ceaseth only in death” (Hobbes, 1651: 70), realism conceives of international politics as a zero-sum game. Moreover, this is also the result of international anarchy, which, coupled with distrust between states and especially between their leaders, induces the security dilemma. John Herz was the first who coined the concept of ’security dilemma’: “Groups or individuals living in such a constellation must be, and usually are, concerned about their security from being attacked, subjected, dominated, or annihilated by other groups and individuals. Striving to attain security from such attack, they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of others. This, in turn, renders the others more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst. Since none can ever feel entirely secure in such a world of competing units, power competition ensues, and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on (Herz, 1950: 157).

Realists have always been skeptical about the intentions and morality of states. They assume that states will likely act in their own self-interest without caring too much about ethical dimensions or the common goal of humanity. Nevertheless, even Hans Morgenthau acknowledged that “Political realism is aware of the moral significance of political action” (Morgenthau, 1985: 12) but “universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formulation but they must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place” (Morgenthau, 1985: 12). He also maintained that “Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe (…) To know that nations are subject to the moral law and to pretend to know with certainty what is good and evil in the relations among nations is quite another” (5th principle) ((Morgenthau, 1985: 13). In other words, realists do not fully reject morality. What they reject is false morality or the pretense that one’s own truth is universal truth. This can be applied both to Western universalistic aspirations or to the moral claims of President Putin when justifying his military invasion of Ukraine.

Edward Carr, considered by many realists as a utopian realist, used a rational approach to politics, consistent with the pragmatism of realism. He attacked what he termed ‘pure realism’ or ‘consistent realism’, rejecting Machiavellian cynicism, arguing that international order could not be based on power alone, and that it was an ‘unreal kind of realism’ which ignored the element of morality in any world order (Booth, 1991: 531). With his version of political realism, Carr anticipated the English school and defensive realism. One can argue that exhibiting a Machiavellian realist approach today is a political suicide, just like attacking a wasp nest without protecting gear: this may turn international politics almost in a state of chaos if the others will join the pack or worse - if the others will outcast the culprit from the international society and decide to punish him for upsetting the rules of the game. In fact, Carr emphasized that “pure realism can offer nothing but a naked struggle for power which makes any kind of international society impossible” (Carr, 1981: 93). In fact, Carr believed that “any sound political thinking must be based on both utopian and realistic elements” (Carr, 1981: 93). So, political realism is not equivalent to the Machiavellian doctrine “that anything is justified by reason of state” (Bull, 1995: 189).

Realism is simply a pragmatic approach to international politics, not without purpose, not with cynical superiority or bluster, but based on the intelligent affirmation of the doctrine of national interest defined in terms of power. Moreover, although frequently accused of favoring conflict, realism promotes peace rather than some alternative approaches, even if it is a peace with a gun at its foot, but at least it is not an illusory peace. *Si vis pacem para bellum*, the maxim attributed to Vegetius, may not be accepted by today's pacifists, but one must notice the fact that the most dangerous situations for democracy came when revisionist and militarist powers preyed on its weaknesses and lack of preparedness.

War leaders and the war in Ukraine

The realist perspective can be easily identified in the Russian narrative of the conflict in Ukraine, as evidenced by the myriad of speeches, statements and social media messages issued by the Russian leadership to the entire world since the starting of the war on Ukraine. One of the most important examples, though not the first, is Vladimir Putin's speech on February 24, 2022 referring to the ordered "special military operation" in Ukraine (a subterfuge for invasion):

"It is a fact that over the past 30 years we have been patiently trying to come to an agreement with the leading NATO countries regarding the principles of equal and indivisible security in Europe. In response to our proposals, we invariably faced either cynical deception and lies or attempts at pressure and blackmail, while the North Atlantic alliance continued to expand despite our protests and concerns. Its military machine is moving and, as I said, is approaching our very border."[5]

Upon trying to justify the "special operation", Putin paints a dark picture, dominated by a negative view of human nature that he projects over the 'West', a traditional Russian way of referring to the danger of Russia's encirclement and isolation by power-hungry Western elites, ever since the Soviet times. Of course, episodes from the past, such as the two world wars or the Western attempt to oppose Bolshevism by supporting the White army during the Civil War, are frequently used in support of such narrative.

Another element that emerges is Moscow's obsessive need for spheres of influence, present both in Russian political discourse and Russian political action. Russia claims to have reacted to NATO Eastern enlargement which eventually reached Ukraine, as well as to a regime it considers 'Nazi', established in Kyiv after the so-called coup against President Yanukovych. What Putin forgets to specify is what is the true legitimacy of the 'special operation', much less its legality, since Ukraine is a sovereign state, a UN member, not merely a satellite of Moscow whose treason must be punished or a territorial sub-division of the Russian Federation.

Paradoxically, if many would consider Putin a classical follower of Real-Politik, the operation ordered by the Russian President on February 24, 2022, partially questions the validity of this assessment. Realists would not invoke historical rights as evidence justifying the present action. This is not a realist, pragmatic argument, but an emotional one. It is true that nationalism can be a catalyst for rallying the nation behind the flag, but it must be carried out following an objective assessment of the reaction of other major players of the system (the external element) and most notably of Ukraine's resilience. A true realist would not show an obsessive-compulsive need to justify his actions through a mystified history, or to compare to Peter the Great. However, Putin

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[5] Address by the President of the Russian Federation, February 24, 2022, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843 (accessed in September 3, 2023).

has systematically repeated this mistake since 2014 with a stubbornness characterizing a dogmatic leader - which he never seemed before - or a leader with recent cognitive problems, which is certainly doubtful. Even the Westerners had assumed that even though he is following in the footsteps of his Soviet predecessors, Putin is a reasonable leader. Brzezinski wrote about him these flattery words: “In rebuilding a Russia "which commands respect in the world," Putin's good tactical sense dictates that outright hostility to the West is to be avoided” (Brzezinski, 2000: 33). Of course, Brzezinski took note about Putin’s early attempts to destroy the Western solidarity by using anti-American propaganda in Western Europe (Brzezinski, 2000: 33).

In his article published in 2021, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians”[6], Putin builds upon a pseudo-historical narrative beginning with Kievan Russia (‘Rus’), reviews the entire medieval history of Russia, touching also on the confessional element (Orthodox Christian tradition), invoking even Polish and later Austro-Hungarian schemes to speculate on the “Ukrainian question” in their favor, traversing the history of the civil war from the years of the Bolshevik revolution, the interwar and post-war years to reach the period of Ukrainian independence after the collapse of the USSR. Then, he resumes the line of external intervention in support of Ukrainian identity on behalf of NATO and the EU. The article is an outright invitation for Ukrainians to return to the basic Russian matrix, from which, according to Putin, they have been separated by elites serving foreign interests. He resumes the leitmotif of the Polish-Austrian ideologues who wanted to create an anti-Moscow Russia. He made an appeal to the Russian-Ukrainian brotherhood using the Soviet propaganda myth of the ‘great patriotic war’[7] and the friendship of the two ‘artificially’ separated peoples, to finally close his arguments with the thesis of ‘neo-Nazism’ of the regime in Kyiv, only to close emphatically:

“I am confident that true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia. Our spiritual, human and civilizational ties formed for centuries and have their origins in the same sources, they have been hardened by common trials, achievements and victories. Our kinship has been transmitted from generation to generation. It is in the hearts and the memory of people living in modern Russia and Ukraine, in the blood ties that unite millions of our families. Together we have always been and will be many times stronger and more successful. For we are one people.

Today, these words may be perceived by some people with hostility. They can be interpreted in many possible ways. Yet, many people will hear me. And I will say one thing – Russia has never been and will never be “anti-Ukraine”. And what Ukraine will be – it is up to its citizens to decide.”[8]

Putin's article is more important, in our opinion, than the speech announcing the “special operation”. Why? Because it reminds us, once again, about Putin's deep obsession with rebuilding the Russian empire and with a seemingly spotless Russian history. But this article was addressed to a different audience: the people of Ukraine.

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[6] Vladimir V. Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians”, July 12, 2021, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181 (accessed in September 4, 2023).

[7] This is the Russian appellative for the Second World War developed by Soviet propaganda (originated in an article published by Yemelyan Yaroslavsky in *Pravda* on June 23, 1941).

[8] “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians”, July 12, 2021, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181 (accessed in September 4, 2023).

At the same time, it's an indication that the "special operation" was very likely premeditated since the article precedes its start by many months. It indicates Putin's illusory expectation that Ukrainians will riot against the 'Nazi' regime and overthrow it by themselves or at least will not react to the coming attempt to eliminate it, because they feel and think Russian and are ready to join Putin's imagined concept of a "Russian World".

These are illusions of imperial grandeur, not signs of a reasonable practitioner of Real-Politik. In fact, Putin does not seem to understand reality that does not overlap with his imaginary project, which is specific to a dictator's thinking. In this respect, Putin is reminiscent of Adolf Hitler. Thus, he can only be classified, at least since February 24, 2022, in the category of what Carr named pure ('Machiavellian') realists, but most likely among political adventurers who gamble everything on a single card.

Certainly, the actions of Vladimir Putin could still be considered as based on Real-Politik and raison d'etat if compared with those of historical figures like Peter the Great, Catherine the Great or Friedrich the Great of Prussia, but these leaders were living in a totally different world. They were 'Enlighted' monarchs acting in an age of almost constant warfare among the Great Powers, in which preying on the weak was business as usual. Today, the rules of international society are quite different. Acting cynically to defy the international order may not be considered as a realistic policy in today's terms. A supported of *Real-Politik*, late Henry Kissinger illustrates how realists are beginning to perceive the war in Ukraine. After he opposed Ukraine's bid for NATO membership for years and maintained for many months that Ukraine must sign a ceasefire with Russia, with the latter getting some territorial gains, in one of his latest public appearances (in a virtual conference with the World Economic Forum in Davos), Kissinger said that NATO membership may be an "appropriate outcome" for Ukraine, adding that "the idea of a neutral Ukraine under these conditions is no longer meaningful."[9]

Of course, a realist approach may also be found in the Ukrainian war narrative. The Ukrainian political regime, led by President Zelensky, is motivated by the perfectly legitimate national interest to maintain its sovereignty, and recover its territorial integrity lost after 2014. Ukraine rightly invokes self-defence and presents the Russian side using harsh appellatives such as 'invaders' or 'occupiers'. Ever since February 24, 2022, President Zelensky has been very active in pursuing the wartime objectives of Ukraine and advertise them to the world. This speech delivered online to the British MPs on March 8, 2022 is exemplary for his speaker's abilities, echoing one of the most successful British leaders of the 20th century, Prime Minister Winston Churchill[10], a clear supporter of Real-Politik: "We will not surrender, we will not lose,

[9] AFP (2023, January 17), "Henry Kissinger Says Russia War Validates Ukraine's NATO Bid", https://www.rferl.org/a/kissinger-russia-war-validate-ukraine-nato-bid/32227746.html (accessed on November 25, 2023).

[10] One of the most important wartime speeaches by Winston Churchill was in June 4, 1940, the "Finest Hour": "We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in

we will go to the end (…) We will fight at sea, we will fight in the air, we will protect our land.

"We will fight everywhere… and we will not surrender."[11] Of course, such an endeavour would be unrealistic without the support of the international community. Ukraine lacks the means to fight a long-termed attrition war with Russia. The lack of capabilities combined with the lack of allies would mean that Zelenski would have defied the first two principles of political realism described by Morgenthau.

It is true that Ukrainian leader has managed to push the EU out of the Russian influence or contributed to this aim. Zelenski has also managed to get help from the EU and its Member-States, from the US, the UK, and other major donors of the world. The Ukrainian narrative is supported today by a greater number of states and IGOs, even by the Vatican, than the Russian narrative. However, the 241.5 Bn USD in aid received from the donors[12] did not suffice for Ukraine to recover its entire territorial losses from the hands of the Russian invaders.

In December 2023, after the failure of Ukrainian Summer counter-offensive, Russia still occupies in Ukraine about half the territories it managed to invade in 2022 (Bailey, Evans, Wolkov, Hird and Kagan, 2023).[13] It seems that the new Ukrainian leadership resulting from the Maidan revolution had overestimated its own position and underestimated that Russia may respond violently to the detachment of Ukraine from the Kremlin. Ukraine had certainly hoped for stronger Western help even in 2014. Thucydides would assess this as an unrealistic policy, like the Melians' response to the Athenian delegation negotiating the surrendering of Melos. Russia would use the response given by the Athenians that "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must" (Thucydides, 2009: 302)[14], but this expression would be considered by today's Western standards as an abomination. The Western world rejects the Darwinian principles applied to social relations. The Western norm is opposite: it defends the rights of the disadvantaged people, including states. In this regard, the Zelenski regime has shown much more apprehension of Western values. One can say it's more realistic to be idealistic in a neoliberal international order.

States, balance of power and the war in Ukraine

Another dimension that political realism would invoke in understanding the war in Ukraine is balance of power. Realists disagree on its definition but agree that it is an important driver of power behavior. States counterbalance each other to avoid the risk of being destroyed by stronger enemies. Some states are disruptors of it, which for

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the hills; we shall never surrender", https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1940-the-finest-hour/we-shall-fight-on-the-beaches/ (accessed on November 23, 2023).

[11] BBC (2022, March 8), "Ukraine: Volodymyr Zelensky invokes Winston Churchill as he appeals to MPs", https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-60667964 (accessed on November 23, 2023)

[12] Kiel Institute (2023), *Ukraine Support Tracker*, https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/ (accessed on December 7, 2023).

[13] "Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment", December 6, 2023. Online: https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-6-2023 (accessed on December 8, 2023).

[14] In the translation of Martin Hammond published in 2009 by Oxford University the exact phrase was: "in terms of practicality the dominant exact what they can and the weak concede what they must".

classical realists is almost anathema. This is because balance of power is equivalent to one of the best ways in which peace can be preserved, especially among Great Powers. They thought balance of power or better said a balanced system is a wise international system.

The Russian narrative on Ukraine emphasizes the role of NATO, the EU, and particularly the U.S. in trying to use Ukraine to weaken Russia or counter its influence. What is illogical in the reasoning is precisely the fact that this approach gives the impression that Russia is openly looking for power and influence, therefore willing to destabilize the balance of power created after the collapse of the USSR. From this point of view, the Western actions to sanction Russia and strengthen Ukraine's defense capacity seem the only realistic ones, while Russia's actions are universalistic or imperialistic. Of course, the Russian arguments stand up rather badly, since the previous enlargements of the EU and NATO did not geo-strategically weakened the Russian Federation, nor did they restrict in any way its capacity or autonomy of decision-making and self-defense, much less did they lead to the destruction of Russia. However, the only apparent argument Russia can use as a realist excuse is NATO's anti-ballistic missile shield hosted by Romania and Poland, but this have not been likely designed to upset the nuclear balance between the two sides, which were supposed to be partners anyway, NATO and Russia. But this is rather related to the security dilemma.

The security dilemma is frequently used by neorealists and particularly by offensive realists as an explanatory variable for state’s behavior. According to John Mearsheimer who builds on the John Herz’s concept of security dilemma, “the best way for a state to survive in anarchy is to take advantage of other states and gain power at their expense” and “The best defense is a good offense” (Mearsheimer, 2001: 36). Russia did protest NATO and EU enlargements which, according to the Kremlin, have fundamentally threatened the security of the Russian Federation. Ukrainian alignment with the West may be perceived as a red line that justified the annexation of Crimea, the initiation of the war in Donbass, the build-up of Russia’s countermeasures in the occupied territories. Moscow believed that these offensive actions would bring more security to Russia as Ukraine will be prevented from joining NATO and the EU. Moscow has also repeatedly denounced the anti-ballistic shield developed by the US in Romania and Poland and the deployment of NATO infrastructure at the Russian borders as a major threat to the Russian national security and defense. In fact, the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation (2021) mentions “the buildup of the military infrastructure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization near Russian borders”.[15]

The truth is that Russia has had the initiative to change the geopolitical reality in Eastern Europe and especially the ex-Soviet space. Its investments in defense, its alliances built with Central Asia (the Collective Security Treaty Organization), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization or the BRICS partnership, its military actions in

[15] Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated 02.07.2021 No. 400, *On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation*, https://paulofilho.net.br/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/National_Security_Strategy_of_the_Russia.pdf or the official version in Russian: http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202107030001?index=1 (accessed on December 8, 2023).

Georgia, Syria, or Ukraine changed the climate in the Eurasian space from one based on cooperation to one of confrontation. It's a rollback of the situation of the 1990s. NATO's armies, with the notable exception of the US, have suffered major underfunding over the past 30 years, with Europe still relying heavily on the Americans just like during the Cold War. Europe reflects military weakness rather than strength relative to Russia, while the latter has been developing hypersonic cruise missiles and has become the largest nuclear power by number of warheads in the current period[16].

It is true that the enlargement policy adopted by the EU and NATO can be seen as an expansionist policy for those that disregard several facts: the West was cautious and delayed many years the process because the input for enlargement had come from the candidate countries. The countries from the former Soviet bloc, as well as the Baltic states, did not wanted to join the European and Atlantic communities because they were pressed by the US or Western Europeans to humiliate Russia, but because it was their chance to become parts of a genuine security community and enjoy the benefits of freedom and democracy. Russia has mostly been a threat to them rather than a friend or ally.

Vladimir Putin's "military operation" in Ukraine resembles the attempt made by the House of Habsburg to crush Protestantism in Germany that led to the famous Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Of course, the topic is different, but universalistic/imperialistic aspirations are palpable in both situations. With Putin in charge Russia has clearly embarked on the quest to reestablish the Soviet Union in a different version than the one that imploded in 1991 or to restore Czarist Russia in its greatest frontiers. The concept of ‘Russian World’[17] is central to this. This is dangerous for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of many Eastern European countries. In this regard, the current Ukrainian leadership is right: Ukraine seems to be just a step for Russia in its quest for dominance in Eurasia.

Political realism would argue that Hapsburg’s Counter-Reform and war pushed the other major players in the 17^{th} century Europe, like France or Sweden, on a collision course with Vienna. The result was disastrous for the Hapsburgs but this was made possible because France was governed by one of the most important supporters of *raison d’etat*, Cardinal de Richelieu. It is easy to note that this is much more difficult today when you deal with a Great Power capable to deploy nuclear weapons, an obvious thing for characters like the deputy head of Russian Security Council, Dmitry Medvedev, who frequently sounds the Jericho trumpets of nuclear doomsday. This is an argument of force irrespective of the possibility to materialize it or not.

[16] ICAN, “Nuclear arsenals by country”, https://www.icanw.org/nuclear_arsenals?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAvdCrBhBREiwAX6-6Uh2-7crN6iiv6JquVybjuhibR1dJiHdrRkze3JGvPzjL_JKG6ajaEBoCVbIQAvD_BwE (accessed on December 8, 2023).

[17] Russian World or *Russkiy Mir* in Russian is a concept and a political doctrine about the Russian sphere of political and cultural influence covering 258 million people in the world who speak Russian, out of which 146 million live in the Russian Federation and 112 million abroad. It is based on the Russkiy Mir Foundation established after a speech by President Putin in 2007. The concept is even mentioned in the *Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation* (published in 31 March 2023), https://russkiymir.ru/en/ (accessed on November 27, 2023).

A more reasonable argument for invading Ukraine is the significance of Ukraine in itself. The Kremlin's allies always point to the fact that even the Western experts have identified the geopolitical importance of Ukraine for the future of Russia. Zbigniew Brzezinski, frequently quoted by Russian commentators, was very adamant in his book *The Grand Chessboard* when stating: "Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot because its very existence as an independent country helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire" (Brzezinski, 1998: 46). It has always been a tradition in Russia and former USSR to study with considerable suspicion Western publications that approached Russia, its sphere of influence or the general design of international politics. Russian experts frequently drew conclusions unfavorable to Russia in Western research and practice. They generally regard the West as an enemy conspiring against Russia's natural aspirations. One of these is the solving of the so-called 'anomaly' created by disappearance of Soviet Union: the establishment of Newly Independent States. They consider that the West tries to prevent Russia from retaking the control over its former empire, thus trying to weaken it to the point it is no longer a global power, but a regional actor. But by doing so, they make the same mistake as Vladimir Putin: they unravel the true nature of Russian foreign policy – not for the mutual benefit of all the players of the world stage but for the aggrandizement of Russia, a nation that still beliefs in its manifest destiny of dominating Eurasia and the world.

Alexander Dugin, the famous Eurasianist, who even though does not have direct ties with the Kremlin is frequently identified by media and experts in Russian foreign policy as Putin's brain (Barbashin and Thoburn, 2014; Shekhovtsov, 2014), has constantly supported the Kremlin's geopolitical aspirations. He predicted in 1997 the Kremlin's policy on Ukraine: "Then there is the Ukrainian issue. Ukrainian sovereignty is such a negative phenomenon for Russian geopolitics that, in principle, it could easily provoke an armed conflict. Without the Black Sea coastline from Ismail to Kerch, Russia gets such a long coastal strip, effectively controlled by who knows who, that its very existence as a normal and independent state is called into question" (Dugin, 2020: 341). In his *Foundations of Geopolitics* he, in fact, mentions Ukraine 80 times!

Ukraine is just a part of Russia's foreign policy goals. It is essential for its resources, the most important one being its population. It may hold the key for Russia to reset its global position as a superpower. Vladimir Putin has unveiled a very important secret when he decided to invade Ukraine in February 24, 2022: Russia is not merely a state concerned with relative power gains. It is what John Mearsheimer describes as a state concerned with absolute power gains. According to Mearsheimer, "states that maximize relative power are concerned primarily with the distribution of material capabilities", while "States that maximize absolute power (…) care only about the size of their own gains, not those of other states" (Mearsheimer, 2001: 36). They do not care about the balance of power, though they might pretend to act in order to keep it. This may be the clue to understand Vladimir Putin's Russia as an offensive realist state, seeking absolute power in the world. In fact, Russian commentators and trolls frequently put this label over the United States, even quoting Mearsheimer. Certainly, the US has had so many opportunities to show its hegemonic ambitions since 1945, but they decided to temperate them. What about Russia?

According to Mearsheimer great powers are not mindless aggressors. He argues that "before great powers take offensive actions, they think carefully about the balance of power and about how other states will react to their moves. They weigh the costs and risks of offense against the likely benefits" (Mearsheimer, 2001: 37). This idea contradicts the tendency of the absolute power maximizer to dismiss the balance of power. At this moment, what happens is that the other great powers will ensure that the aggressor will be tamed. What Russia needs to avoid being drawn towards a dangerous and unpredictable global conflict is to be reminded that the West is still holding the keys of the international system. When this occurred (one can remember here the Berlin or Cuban missile crises), Russia/Soviet Union backed down.

With all the schemes that Vladimir Putin seems to have developed for more than two decades, the only course of action (from the point of view of the West) that might work is a realist one. It is both in the interests of the US and of the Europe Union to find a way to counterbalance an evolving alliance between autocracies (namely Russia, Iran, Syria, North Korea, and probably China or Saudi Arabia). The way the war in Ukraine has evolved from the initial impression that Russia will easily subdue Ukraine to a stabilization of the front and the latest Ukrainian counterattack is due to the Western and particularly US help. However, the West is currently in a defensive position, if not cornered. Also, the West is less united than it should be. Domestic divisions are preventing it. The biggest domestic fault line is between progressives and conservatives. The coming elections of 2024 in Europe and the US will erode the Western response to Russia even further. Autocracies do not feel the same level of urgency. Yet, they started to work together for the benefit of Moscow.

Conclusions

Leaders, states, and war? Why do leaders like Putin act like they do? R.J. Rummel would say: Because they can [18]. These leaders, which are known as authoritarian, dictatorial or autocratic, have developed political regimes that function only for their benefit. They are surrounded by elites that are co-dependent with them. The problem is that they place regime survival on the top of everything else - before the welfare of their citizens or the peace of the world. But this also brings another issue here. Why is democracy now threatened by them?

One almost cynical argument that Russia would not verbally use but it is shown in practice is the following one: the assertive, even aggressive behavior demonstrated by Moscow in the last two decades is intended also to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the Western neoliberal order which cannot directly challenge its actions for fear of nuclear retaliation. The EU, the UN, and any other institutions or states cannot stop Russia if it decides to do something. Realism would agree that this assessment could be right. Russia is returning to the Soviet policy of following any opportunity to score against the West, trying to create doubt within the Western society and using propaganda and misinformation as much as possible. It may even have developed a counterintuitive complex of hegemonic power.

During the last three decades the West was pretty sure that democracy, rule of law, and market are closely related. Based on a rational assumption, countries

[18] R.J. Rummel is Professor Emeritus of Political Science and the creator of the term 'democide'. He posted his poem on his blogspot: Pray tell, my brother,/ Why do dictators kill/ and make war?/ Is it for glory; for things,/ for beliefs, for hatred,/ for power?/ Yes, but more,/ because they can. (https://rudyrummel.blogspot.com/ accessed on December 2, 2023).

accepting the benefits of a free, liberal market will be easily brought closer and closer to democracy. It was a hope that systematically failed in the Middle East, Russia, or China. The Western markets embraced these entities bringing them into the global flows of globalization and interdependence. Most of the money earned from trade and investments by these autocracies is invested in weapons. To be sincere, they did it to counterbalance the huge military spending of the US, the only democratic powerhouse of the world, the only real threat for them. Practically, they reinvested in regime survival and reinvented Great Power politics. But this may not have become practical if the supporters of the current international order would have used at least some of the tools from the realist's toolbox.

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A SHIFT IN IR APPROACH AFTER UKRAINE WAR: REMILITARIZATION OF EUROPE, AN INTERPRETATION THROUGH THE REALIST LENS

Shysti BUSHATI *

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Abstract. *In the research my aim will be to give an explanation on the response and actions of the European countries during the Ukraine war through a realist perspective. The Ukraine war is potentially the new case that has left space for interpretation on the realist interpretation as well as possibly giving room for arguments in criticism of the liberal or neoliberal thinking. Priority will be given to the time frames surrounding the annexation of Crimea and up until the Ukraine War. The conflict's origins and its effects will then be largely interpreted from a realism standpoint. The process of analyzing will be as mentioned priorly in explaining the occurrences during the Ukrainian revolution and the potential clash of interest between the major power or actors (USA, EU, Russia). Further explanation will be given in the approaches of the European country's response to the threat of the Ukraine war, in which the majority of countries choose to increase their military capabilities. It must be noted in my findings that some of the diplomatic elements despite their presence throughout the conflict, the outcomes of them were not very successive, leaving again most of the countries to choose further rearmament rather than diplomatic language. The highlighted aspect in this case is the increase of importance in military power and military alliances as a form of balancing power and maintaining security as well as deterring potential aggression.*

Keywords: *realism, military power, military capability, conflict, alliance, international institution, Europe*

Introduction

The 2022 start of the Ukrainian war has had a tremendous effect on Europe's security environment. The conflict, which developed as a result of the escalating tensions brought on by Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and its support for separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine, exposed the weakness of the post-Cold War security order and raised concerns about the likelihood of conflict in the area. The Georgian war, which broke out after the recognition of the separatist republics of southern Ossetia and Abkhazia, can be linked back to comparable actions or behaviors

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on the part of the Russian state. Even in the case of Ukraine, this string of "repeated" incidents eventually escalated to the catastrophic level of the current armed conflict.

The situation of the Ukrainian invasion has led to an increase in the importance of military power, particularly in Europe. The invasion by Russia demonstrated the willingness of a great power to use military force to pursue its interests and expand its sphere of influence, which posed a significant threat to the security of Ukraine and the wider region. As a result, many European countries have increased their military spending and taken steps to enhance their military capabilities in response to this perceived threat. This behavior from a realist perspective can be interpreted and argued that states act to maximize their security and ensure their survival, and in this context, it is not surprising that European states would seek to enhance their military capabilities in response to this threat.

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine were a result of diplomatic failures, and military force has played a significant role in shaping the situation on the ground. This has led the states to rely more on the military power as a means of protecting national interests and resolving conflicts. The invasion has highlighted the importance of military alliances, such as NATO, in ensuring the security of member states. The alliance has played a significant role in providing military support to Ukraine and deterring potential Russian aggression against other member states. This has led to a renewed focus on the importance of military alliances and collective defense as a means of protecting national interests and maintaining regional stability.

The Ukraine war highlighted the limitations of international institutions such as the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in preventing or resolving conflicts. Realists argue that international institutions are often weak and cannot adequately enforce international law or prevent conflicts. As a result, states must rely on their own military power to ensure their security.

Moreover, the situation in Ukraine has led to increased cooperation and coordination among European states in the realm of defense and security. Countries such as Poland and the Baltic states have pushed for greater NATO presence and have increased their own military capabilities to deter potential aggressors. European states have also taken steps to increase their military interoperability and cooperation, including the establishment of the European Union Military Staff and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework.

Furthermore, the Ukraine crisis has highlighted the importance of military power and deterrence in international relations. Many policymakers and analysts argue that a strong military presence and credible threat of retaliation can deter potential aggressors and prevent conflict. This has led to an increased emphasis on military capabilities and deterrence in Europe and beyond.

The Ukraine crisis has certainly reinforced the realist perspectives, as states have become more focused on power and security issues in response to the conflict. Many countries have increased their military spending and modernized their military capabilities, as they seek to bolster their defense capabilities and deter potential aggression. Additionally, the crisis has led to increased competition between major powers, particularly between the United States and Russia, as they seek to assert their influence and protect their interests in the region.

Methodology

In this text the main aspect was the Interpretation of the European IR after the start of the Ukraine war, through a realist perspective or approach. The materials that I have obtained for the interpretation of the topic are based on quantitative method: Sources used are based on International Relations theories from Realist explanation on the behavior and actions of the

European states or countries, mainly from authors such as Hans Morgenthau, John J Mearsheimer as well as Kenneth Waltz. As well as a part of my research was based on some statistical data to monitor and explain the developments of military expenditures from Crimean annexation till the Ukraine war. Hence through the confirmation and testing of the Realist IR theory in the studying of the topic, is done through deductive research.

Literature Review

According to Hans Morgenthau, his theory of realism in international relations, emphasizes the importance of power, self-interest, and the struggle for survival in shaping the behavior of states. The central argument is that the international system is characterized by anarchy, which means that there is no higher authority or government above states that can enforce rules or resolve disputes. As a result, states must rely on their own power to protect themselves and advance their interests. Morgenthau argues that this leads to a constant struggle for power and security among states, and that this struggle is the defining feature of international politics. Morgenthau also emphasizes the importance of national interest in shaping state behavior. He argues that states are motivated primarily by self-interest and that their actions are driven by a desire to maximize their power and security. This means that states will often engage in aggressive behavior if they perceive it to be in their national interest, regardless of the moral or ethical implications of their actions. (Morgenthau, 1948: 97-121)

In addition to his emphasis on power and self-interest, Morgenthau also discusses the importance of diplomacy and international law in shaping state behavior. He argues that diplomacy and negotiation are essential tools for managing conflicts and maintaining stability in the international system. However, he also recognizes that international law is often weak and ineffective in the face of power politics, and that states will often ignore or circumvent international norms and treaties if it is in their national interest to do so. While Morgenthau recognizes the importance of diplomacy and international law, he argues that these institutions are often weak and ineffectual in the face of the harsh realities of power politics. (Morgenthau, 1948: 300-346)

As was previously mentioned, the self-interest factor plays a significant role in determining how nations, or more specifically, states, act or behave, and it is this component that has the creates the feasibility to lead the states into an armed conflict. Desire for power which is seen as necessary tool for achieving the said national interest is the element that predisposes the states for further competition into the international arena. (Morgenthau, 1948: 110-150) Reinhold Niebuhr has argued that moral considerations were often secondary to the pursuit of power, and that states would justify their actions based on moral principles only if it served their own self-interest or would manipulate or conform and align it in accordance to their interest. In the aspect of morality, it has historically has been utilized as a tool in inciting and motivating the masses or the general public in accepting and supporting the cause of that particular state. This cases of linking moral causes with the actions of their respective states, is seen as a necessary form of legitimizing their actions and in turn generating support through this “moral channel”. (Niebuhr, 2021: 10-67) It must be mentioned that despite the use of morality for justifications of immoral actions, the use of force was sometimes necessary to maintain stability and order in the international system. This context however was contested by Reinhold Niebuhr as being only one element of the state’s behavior, while he agrees on the use of force in pursuit of state interest, he also believed that states had a responsibility to act morally and to consider the well-being of others in their pursuit of power. (Pedro, 2017) Realists, however, have critiqued the latter as a situation that rarely arises since they believe that the state's interest will take precedence in decisions that may be morally dubious and have an impact on others.

On the aspect of responding to the competitive nature of survival in an anarchic system, especially to the circumstances and conditions of the contemporary International Arena, conventional deterrence is argued as an alternative solution in providing the countries necessary tool for survival. Mearsheimer argues that conventional forces play a critical role in deterring potential adversaries and in defending against conventional military threats. The author gives a detailed definition of conventional deterrence from his book “Conventional Deterrence”, and also it outlines the key components of a successful deterrence strategy. A successful deterrence strategy requires a credible threat of punishment, a clear understanding of the adversary's objectives, and the ability to signal resolve and commitment to follow through on threats. (Mearsheimer,1985: 23-66)

A historical overview of conventional deterrence can be presented on significant occasions such as the Cold War, the Gulf War, and the Kosovo War. These case studies are used as examples that highlight the fundamental concepts of conventional deterrence and to highlight the significance of conventional forces in deterrence tactics.

Conventional forces are critical for deterring potential adversaries and for defending against conventional military threats. Despite the presence of nuclear weapons which are considered a factor in impeding any other nuclear threats, they are not sufficient for deterrence because they are not effective in deterring conventional military threats, which are more likely to occur than nuclear threats. (Mearsheimer, 1985: 165-188).

Another issue is the inability of the international institution to prevent or handle conflicts. A critique presented by Mearsheimer is the idea that international institutions cannot effectively manage conflicts between states and promote international cooperation. Mearsheimer argues that international institutions are largely ineffective in achieving these goals because they are unable to overcome the basic problem of anarchy in the international system. (Mearsheimer, 1995: 5-18)

The idea of the potential benefits that states can attain with each other through international cooperation, and that international institutions can play a role in promoting and enhancing or facilitating that aspect is based on the idea of liberal institutionalism. Although it must be recognized that international institutions can sometimes help to mitigate conflicts between states as well as promote cooperation on certain aspects or issues, however these benefits are limited and often overstated. The primary issue of the international institutions lies on the aspect that they are fundamentally limited in their ability to promote international cooperation because they are unable to address the underlying problem of anarchy in the international system.

Thus, anarchy creates a situation in which states are primarily concerned with their own security and self-interest, and are therefore unlikely to cooperate unless it is in their immediate self-interest to do so. Several historical examples can be used to support this claim, such as the League of Nations' inability to stop the start of World War II and the United Nations' sporadic effectiveness in averting hostilities and fostering international cooperation. In the context of nations and international institutions, it is important to note that strong governments frequently use these organizations to promote their own interests rather than the interests of all the member states as a whole.

Mearsheimer suggests a realist strategy for handling international affairs that places a strong emphasis on the role that power and self-interest play in influencing state action. He contends that since states act rationally and want to maximize their own security and survival, their major motivations are the pursuit of power and self-interest. (Mearsheimer, 1995: 18-32)

Military alliances are formed as a countermeasure when states are weak or unable to completely provide the security that ensures their survival against stronger or more powerful states in the international system. This is established also in response to instances where international institutions or organizations are unable or powerless to control one state's violent actions. As explained by Kenneth Waltz's, where in his view, alliances are a sort of balance, which is the main strategy used by states to maintain their sovereignty and security. Waltz defines a military alliance as "a coalition of states that have pledged to aid each other in the event of an attack by an external actor." He notes that alliances are a common feature of the international system and have played an important role in shaping the behavior of states throughout history. (Waltz, 2010: 161-193)

Waltz argues that alliances are a response to the balance of power in the international system. When one state becomes dominant, other states will seek to balance its power through the formation of alliances. This can take the form of defensive alliances, in which states pledge to aid each other in the event of an attack, or offensive alliances, in which states pledge to cooperate in order to expand their power. (Waltz, 2010: 102-128)

According to Waltz, alliances are a means of achieving security in an anarchic system. By aligning with other states, a state can increase its own power and deter potential threats. However, Waltz also notes that alliances can be a source of instability and conflict. Offensive alliances, in particular, can lead to arms races and wars of aggression. Waltz distinguishes between two types of military alliances: formal and informal. Formal alliances are codified in a treaty or agreement, and often include specific obligations and commitments. Informal alliances, on the other hand, are based on shared interests and common goals, and may not be explicitly defined. Waltz argues that formal alliances are more stable than informal alliances, because they provide a clear framework for cooperation and communication. However, he notes that formal alliances can also be a source of conflict, because they can create a sense of obligation and entrapment. (Waltz, 2010: 102-128)

Waltz also discusses the impact of military alliances on the balance of power in the international system. He notes that alliances can either reinforce or undermine the balance of power, depending on their composition and objectives. Defensive alliances, for example, can help to balance power by deterring potential aggressors.

Offensive alliances, however, can upset the balance of power by creating a dominant coalition that can threaten the security of other states. (Waltz, 2010: 161-193)

1.The Crimean annexation and Ukraine war

The relations between Russia and Ukraine started to deteriorate shortly after the fall of president Viktor Yanukovych as a result of the Ukrainian revolution or Euromaidan revolution from 2013 until 2014. The revolution was sparked by Yanukovych's decision to abandon an association agreement with the European Union in favor of closer ties with Russia, which was seen as a betrayal by many Ukrainians who wanted their country to align more closely with the West. The revolution also reflected deeper grievances over corruption, economic stagnation, and political repression under Yanukovych's rule. (Sobolieva, 2022) The EU and the US supported the protesters and called for Yanukovych to step down, while Russia supported Yanukovych and accused the West of meddling in Ukraine's internal affairs. Once Viktor Yanukovych was overthrown, the newly established government signed the association agreement with the EU that Yanukovych had reneged on and forged deeper connections with the West. However, in light of these events, Russia responded by annexing Crimea and supporting the Pro-Russian separatist states of Luhansk and Donetsk. (Ellyatt, 2022)

Mearsheimer contends that the conflict in Ukraine was driven by Russia's desire to protect its strategic interests and prevent the expansion of Western influence. He argues that the West's support for the 2014 Ukrainian revolution and its efforts to integrate Ukraine into Western institutions threatened Russia's security and strategic position. Russia perceived these actions as a threat to its security and strategic interests and responded by annexing Crimea and supporting separatist rebels in Eastern Ukraine. The West failed to appreciate Russia's concerns and interests and pursued policies that were seen as aggressive and threatening by Moscow, which contributed to the escalation of the conflict. (Mearsheimer 2014, 1-12)

The Minsk accords were diplomatic attempt to reconciliate and further deescalate the situation of Ukraine and Russia. It consists of two agreements, Minsk I and Minsk II. The first agreement was signed in September 2014, but it failed to bring an end to the fighting in eastern Ukraine. The second agreement, Minsk II, was signed in February 2015 and included more detailed provisions for a ceasefire and a political settlement of the conflict. (Ukraine crisis: Leaders agree peace roadmap, 2015)

However, the Accords proved to be incapable of resolving the conflict and deescalate the tensions between Ukraine, Russia and the separatist groups, where it eventually was meaningless with Russian invasion on 23 February of 2022. It was a diplomatic failure of the western EU and USA to find a solution and reconcile, as well as failing to bring the Russian and Ukrainian government to the table for any kind of negotiation. (Nossel, 2022) Failure of the diplomacy was due to power imbalance, the power imbalance between Ukraine and Russia made it difficult for Ukraine to negotiate on equal terms with Russia. Due to Russia's size and might, Ukraine was unable to compete on its own terms. As argued and linked with Morgenthau’s approach, Russia as a regional power not wanting any western encroachment in its sphere of influence. The clash of interest between the major powers would make the treaty meaningless, thus leading to the behavior of Russia with fully mobilizing its army to attack Ukraine. (Morgenthau, 1967: 1-12)

The inability of the International Organization or Intergovernmental organization to stop or constrain Russia was also visible, and also the aspect of the diplomacy is not been productive in further generating any positive outcome or potential for either of the countries to come to the negotiation table. This as mentioned from the realist perspective that the inability of the international institutions lies from the limitations that they have for promoting any form of cooperation and they are unable to solve the problem of the anarchy in the international arena. (Mearsheimer,1995:30-41) Even in international organizations like the United Nations, the Security Council, which consists of 5 nations (the United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, and China), holds permanent seats and has veto power over all decisions. So, it becomes more challenging for these institutions to act and implement a suitable response in accordance with the situation that is currently occurring in Ukraine.

2.Europe Remilitarization as a response to the Ukraine war

Even after the Crimean annexation from Russia, many European countries fell the lack of the security aspect as the Russian aggression was successful in obtaining the territories as well as try to negate the sphere of influence of the western powers such as USA and EU. As a result of the Crimean annexation, many European countries increased their military expenditures. According to SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) Military Expenditure Database, after Russian aggression on Crimea, a significant number of European countries increased their military expenses. Countries such as Germany (from 44.5 billion dollars in 2013 to 53.4 billion in 2021), Poland (from 8.6 billion dollars in 2013 to 14.6 billion dollars in 2021), Spain (from 13.2 in 2013 to 18.8 billion dollars in 2021), Greece (from 4.4 billion in 2014 to 6.3 billion in 2021), Slovenia (from 530 million dollars in 2014 to 864 million in 2021), Estonia (from 413 million dollars in 2014 to 676 million dollars in 2021), Latvia (from 405 million dollars in 2014 to 673 million dollars in 2021), Lithuania (from 475 million dollars in 2014 to 986 million dollars in 2021), Denmark (from 3.1 billion dollars in 2014 to 3.7 billion in 2021), Norway (from 6.9 in 2014 to 7.5 in 2021).

However, the increase of tensions and insecurities among European countries rose during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Germany especially would mark on what was called the turning point for the German state “Zeitenwende”, Chancellor Olaf Scholz pledged to increase defense spending by €100 billion. For the first time after 7 decades Germany would undertake the role of a strong military power and presence in Europe and will be the largest military spender in Europe. With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, according to Scholz, it has become obvious that "we need to invest much more in our country's security, in order to safeguard our freedom and our democracy." (Mackenzie, 2022) Not only Europeans, but especially Germans, were taken aback by German Chancellor Martin Schulz's plan to more than increase the financing for his country's military. Years of dealing with the country's own past have kept it from developing a sizable military, but now a conflict is edging closer to Europe. (Schmitz, 2022).

Germanies chancellor is planning to modernize the countries army, and by the end of 2024 it will plan to spend over 2% of its GDP yearly on defense. These expenditures are seen as a necessary action in order to maintain the security of its citizens and Europe. (Jennen, Pearson, & Delfs, 2022) This expenditure has led to Germany radically change its former approaches and reestablish itself as a potential military power in the region (Hoff, 2022) Days later, Belgium said on February 25 that it will increase its defense spending from its current level of €4.2 billion (0.9% of GDP) to €6.9 billion (1.54% of GDP) by 2030. Romania said on March 1 that starting in 2023, it will increase its defense spending from 2.02% to 2.5% of GDP. (Mackenzie, 2022) Mateusz Morawiecki, the prime minister of Poland, announced on Monday that his nation is planning on further increasing its defense spending to 4% of GDP. (Welle, 2023). Sweden, for instance, has also increased its military spending as a result of the conflict in Ukraine as well. As reported by supreme commander of the Swedish armed forces of a war that has never seen before since World War 2, and the need to increase its military capabilities in order to face this challenge and threat (Nezirevic, 2023).

This reaction and response of European countries in remilitarizing is according to Morgenthau, an action that is taken for the aim of deterring potential adversaries, in this case Russia.

In the context of Europe, the Ukraine war may have led some states to believe that their security is threatened, leading them to increase their military capabilities as a means of deterrence. For example, Poland has increased its defense spending since the Ukraine war, with the aim of strengthening its military capabilities and deterring potential Russian aggression. Similarly, the Baltic states have sought to enhance their military capabilities as a means of deterring Russia, including through the establishment of a joint military unit. These behaviors can be attested also from the argument presented by Mearsheimer in conventional deterrence. According to Mearsheimer, states can use their military capabilities to deter potential aggressors from taking hostile actions. In the aftermath of the Ukraine war, some European states may have sought to increase their conventional military capabilities as a means of deterrence against Russian aggression. Mearsheimer has also argued that the remilitarization of Europe is driven in part by the decline of US power and influence in the region. According to Mearsheimer, the US has been the dominant military power in Europe since the end of World War II, but its military presence has declined in recent years. This has created a power vacuum in Europe, which other states are seeking to fill through the remilitarization of their own military capabilities. (Mearsheimer, 1985)

In the case of military alliances where there has been the case of multiple countries attempting to join military alliances such as the case of Sweden with NATO, where they feel that from the realist perspective are not able or capable to fully handle alone the matter of their national security. Thus, leaving these countries to balance the power of the state of Russia, and eventually maintain their security. (Waltz, 2010:161-193)

Furthermore, many EU countries as well as NATO members have played a vital role in arming the Ukraine government in its war against Russia. In providing multiple military equipment as well as various kinds of military weaponry, from rifles, to missiles, drones, tanks etc., etc. One interpretation of this move is that it is driven by the desire to contain Russian power and influence in the region. Russia's annexation of Crimea and involvement in the Ukraine conflict represents a threat to the balance of power in the region, and therefore NATO and the EU are seeking to limit Russia's influence through the arming of Ukraine. In this view, arming Ukraine is a means of creating a deterrence against Russian aggression and maintaining a balance of power in the region.

Another interpretation is that arming Ukraine is a means of expanding NATO and EU influence in the region. Realists argue that states will seek to expand their influence and power whenever possible, and the arming of Ukraine can be seen as a means of advancing the interests of NATO and the EU in the region. This can be viewed as a way of increasing the number of states that are aligned with NATO and the EU, thereby expanding their sphere of influence. Or this can be an interpretation of both containing as well as expanding the sphere of influence.

Conclusion

According to the realist interpretation, the situation of the Ukrainian invasion has led to an increase in the importance of military power for several reasons. Realism is a theory of international relations that focuses on the importance of power, security, and self-help in international politics. Realists believe that states are the primary actors in international relations and that their behavior is driven by their pursuit of power and self-interest.

Firstly, the Ukrainian invasion has demonstrated the importance of military power in deterring aggression and maintaining the security of states. Realists argue that states can only rely on themselves for their security, and that military power is essential to deter potential aggressors and protect a state's territorial integrity. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has shown that states that lack sufficient military power are vulnerable to aggression and territorial expansion by more powerful states.

Secondly, the Ukrainian invasion has highlighted the importance of military alliances in balancing power and deterring aggression. Realists argue that states will form alliances with other states that share their security interests and have compatible military capabilities. The conflict in Ukraine has led to the formation of new military alliances, such as the Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltics and the Black Sea region, as well as increased cooperation between NATO and non-NATO countries in the region.

Lastly, the Ukrainian invasion has shown that military power can be used as a tool of coercion and influence in international politics. Realists argue that states use their military power to gain advantage over other states and to achieve their political objectives. Russia's invasion of Ukraine was a deliberate attempt to assert its influence over Ukraine and the region, and to challenge the international order.

In summary, the realist interpretation suggests that the situation of the Ukrainian invasion has increased the importance of military power in international politics. Military power is essential for deterring aggression, maintaining security, balancing power, and achieving political objectives.

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CHALLENGES OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE DISTINCTION AND PROPORTIONALITY PRINCIPLES REGARDING THE GLOBAL NUCLEAR DETERRENCE POLICIES

Claudiu Denis CHIȘEREU*

Abstract. *The article advocates for a multidisciplinary approach to the challenges surrounding nuclear weapons and the implementation of the proportion and distinction IHL principles. It also examines the relationship between nuclear deterrence policies and IHL norms. To this end, it traces the historical development of IHL from the Roman law codification of jus ad bellum and jus in bello to the contemporary IHL institutions of the law of Hague and the law of Geneva. It also highlights the role of the Martens Clause as a safety net for humanitarian protection and reviews the existing legal instruments on nuclear weapons, such as the NPT, the TPNW and the ICJ advisory opinion. The study's outcome underlines the need for more comprehensive and binding legal mechanisms to regulate nuclear weapons in a way that is in accordance with IHL and human rights.*

Keywords: *law of war, treaty, indiscriminate attack, armed conflict, target management, jus ad bellum, jus in bello, law of Hague, law of Geneva, Martens Clause*

1. Introduction

Nuclear weapons pose an existential dilemma to all of humanity. However, their destructive potential represents a strong enough reason in and of itself for states not to engage in nuclear warfare, in the absence of other insurmountable boundaries having been crossed by another subject of international law (e.g. initialising a direct military attack).

Most state actors, alongside NATO, maintain a first-use nuclear deterrence policy (Graham and Mendelsohn, 1999: 6) which implies that nuclear weapons can be used against any type of military attack, be it nuclear, conventional or non-conventional. This policy arguably detracts from the primacy of the proportionality principle. However, it can be inferred that this policy is indeed a justified exception from the proportionality rule because strategically the first-use approach reduces the propensity of malevolent state actors towards initiating conventional, chemical and biological military attacks, as well as cyberattacks[1].

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[1] The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) think tank, *'No First Use' and Nuclear Weapons* | Council on Foreign Relations (cfr.org) (last accessed October 16, 2023)

Conversely, promises of no first-use have been provided by the Soviet Union (revoked later by Russia), Pakistan, as well as by China (Shaw, 2021: 2750).

Consequently, NATO's nuclear deterrence policy has undergone fierce debate and scrutiny ever since the end of the Cold War. Even though there is a strong rationale for adopting this offensive policy, namely preserving global peace and stability as well as defending NATO's member states, one of its primary drawbacks remains compliance with the distinction and proportionality principles. Hence, the question that our study aims to answer is whether the distinction and proportionality principles can facilitate foreseeing and proactively addressing breaches of international law conduct referring to nuclear force management. Do these principles complement global nuclear deterrence policies or do the IHL legislators (mainly states and international organisations) have to better implement them in order to counteract rising threats?

On the other hand, the purpose of this study is to outline legally binding means of managing conventional military combat, stipulated by relevant international conventions, as well as a brief historical outline of the IHL principles evolution. Furthermore, it will identify legal instruments that can be harnessed so as to equitably judge and condemn state actors enforcing morally reproachable and forbidden war strategies pertaining to nuclear weapons.

In order to reach these goals, the paper will harness the scientific potential of a wide array of sources, including primary legal resources, official statements, academic literature, historical records, and expert opinions. The paper will put an emphasis on a multidisciplinary approach of the subject, combining legal, political and strategic views on nuclear deterrence. Additionally, the paper will put forward case studies and hypothetical scenarios to exemplify the challenges regarding compliance with IHL.

2. The Evolution of Modern IHL

War is a societally ratified method of settling international political disputes. Regardless of whether war is part of human nature or not (an ongoing debate among anthropologists, who focus on the dilemma of whether war is caused by nature or nurture (Dawson, 1996: 1-28), war is certainly a reality of modern human society. Laws governing war conduct are traceable to an entire history of philosophical and legal diligences aimed at reconciling the frequently conflicting attributes of war. War might indeed seem counterintuitive to human nature, as it inflicts immense suffering and provokes irreparable material damage. But history is never black and white, nor is it uncompromising, straightforward or predictable.

Incessantly, our ancestors have seen fit to wage war over minor misunderstandings, thus making war more prevalent than peace and forcing entire communities to transform suffering into a state of mind, if only in order to survive. Rather than remaining an unwarranted intrusion into their realities, an oddity, war deemed everyone's unabridged attention, regardless of social status. Arduous work had to be done to find ways to make armed conflict more bearable, less physically and psychologically demanding, due to the increasingly abundant ways in which war can affect human society.

Cicero's maxim "Silent enim leges inter arma" roughly translates into "During war, the law falls silent" (McLaughlin, 2020: 125). It is difficult to fathom what exactly prompted the famous lawyer, politician and philosopher to make such bold an affirmation. Given his academic background and his commitment to the unhindered delivery of justice, it can only be concluded that Cicero is an advocate of selective usage of law during war. To be more precise, Cicero put forward the concept of denying the applicability of certain rules of conduct when confronted with real-life war conditions. Thus, he is one of the first proponents of the right to kill in self-defence during times of civil riot and conflict. What essentially happens during chaotic, hectic times is that conventional Roman (or, for that matter, national) law is superseded by an unwritten, customary law of war which in turn, throughout millennia of evolution, is superseded by a written, conventional law of war.

The contemporary precept of war firmly establishes the distinction between the formally abolished war of destruction and a war that solely aims at annihilating the military capabilities of one's adversary, while taking all the compulsory precautions in order to save civilians, preserve objects, heritage sites, along with all the other spiritual or material values which rather pertain to all of humankind, not to any one individual country or area of land.

Peace can be unlawful and unjust due to discretionary national legislations, while war can be lawful and just, provided that it follows IHL guidelines.

IHL strictly emphasises the relevant course of action applicable during warfare, hence ensuring the effective protection of widely recognised social values, such as life, property, health, mental and physical integrity and so on. Due to this fact, IHL has been previously referred to simply as "the law of war", which entails two distinct meanings.

From a subjective standpoint, "the law of war" represents the states' prerogative to regulate mutual relations through armed violence deployment, a veritable national policy instrument. This definition alludes to the fact that the Romans used to call this law "jus ad bellum", literally translated into "right to war", afforded to each and every country owning the military capabilities to engage in warfare.

Due to relatively recent evolutions regarding reverting to war as a means of resolving political disputes, a novel perception of war was crafted by international jurisprudence and especially by way of customary law, which includes *jus gentium* (peremptory norms) and *jus cogens* (peremptory obligations). Their legitimacy and universal opposability stem from a prolonged application by a wide array of subjects of law, which turned them into *erga omnes* obligations (Linderfalk, 2011: 1-23). Ergo, modern IHL has its foundation in the principle of non-refoulement to force and threats of force in international relationships, which basically means an inherent state of peace has to characterise and govern international diplomacy, whilst war should only be waged in self-defence and not under any other circumstances, given its destructive potential towards mankind's most valuable assets. This principle *a fortiori* applies to nuclear conflict, which boasts an unfathomable destructive capacity. To summarise, the novel perception of war is closer to what Louis XIV, King of France, envisioned when inscribing one of his cannons with the Latin phrase "Ultima Ratio Regum", signifying "The Last Argument of Kings"[2], which underlines the enduring human aspiration for a hierarchy where diplomacy, good-faith and courtesy are primal, whereas war, ill-faith and discourtesy become obsolete, the last resort to be summoned when all the other reasonable alternatives fail to generate consensus on the political spectrum.

[2] Mid-18thC French 4-pounder field gun - Springfield Armory National Historic Site (U.S. National Park Service) (last accessed October 17, 2023)

Secondly, “the law of war” embodies a universality of legal norms which govern the inception, conduct and conclusion of military hostilities, which, according to Roman law, is called “jus in bello”, or “the law in waging war” (van Steenberghe, 2012: 107-124). This second definition creates the premises of modern IHL, in that it emphasises the need for a set of internationally agreed rules on war conduct which will, in the event of armed conflict, surpass the scale and scope of national legislations on military conduct. The ultimate goal is that of limiting or removing widespread atrocities and damage to elemental human rights, which can generally be labelled as crimes against humanity or even genocide.

Under the principle of independence or segregation governing the relationship between them, *jus in bello* doesn’t exclude *jus ad bellum*, as the two concepts are complementary in their range and scope, given that *jus in bello* focuses on regulating humanitarian protection during warfare, whereas *jus ad bellum* seeks to understand the justification or reasons for war, in order to allow stakeholders to formulate prevention measures (Solis, 2010: 22).

Last but not least, IHL also entails the “law of Hague” (or “the law of war”) and the “law of Geneva” (or „humanitarian law”), which are intertwined and complementary. “The law of Hague” consecrates the rights and obligations of belligerents with regard to the conduct of military actions, whereas “the law of Geneva” incorporates norms focusing on the protection of military conflict victims, the civil population and belongings. It also advocates for the protection of the national or international organisms which in turn protect the respective population or belongings. The two institutions were formally merged in 1977, the year of the last major codification of modern IHL, which was facilitated by the two additional protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Therefore, combat operations are presently governed by a set of international agreements emanating from the “law of Hague” and the “law of Geneva”. These include the Martens Clause, stipulated in the preamble to the 1899 Hague Convention II[3]– Laws and Customs of War on Land, which states that: ‘In cases not covered by this Protocol or by other international agreements, the inhabitants and the belligerents remain under the protection and authority of the principles of international law derived from established custom, from the principles of humanity and the dictates of public conscience.’ In other words, when all the other legal mechanisms fail to delineate a solution to a humanitarian crisis, the Martens Clause is *ex officio* activated, garnering the traits of a genuine “safety net” in terms of international law conflict resolution. Consequently, a neutral state that intends to offer humanitarian aid to the civil population can do so regardless of whether it officially acknowledges the existing state of war or not. Alternatively, the Martens Clause represents an established guideline of IHL due to the fact that it legitimises a commonly recognised, modern war policy framework, based on the premise that not everything that is not prohibited by a specific rule is necessarily lawful in war (Sandoz, Swinarski and Zimmermann, 1987: 38-39).

[3] *IHL Treaties - Hague Convention (II) on the Laws and Customs of War on Land*, 1899 (last accessed October 17, 2023)

3. The Principles Of Distinction And Proportionality And The Legal Challenges Of Nuclear Weapons

A broad spectrum of legal principles and armed conflict rules is at hand when it comes to the legislation of conduct of combat operations. However, out of this wide array of available litigation alternatives, two principles stand out, in view of their paramount importance, namely the principle of distinction and the proportionality principle. The former is a qualitative, absolute obligation, whilst the latter is a quantitative, relative obligation, due to the fact that proportionality is harder to evaluate objectively, as it depends on a larger array of conditions of existence. The paper will delve into the connexion between these principles and nuclear weapon usage generally, in order to facilitate a comparison with the globally embraced nuclear deterrence policy.

3.1. The Principle Of Distinction

In the Advisory Opinion of the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, the ICJ held that the principle of distinction is amongst IHL's "cardinal principles"[4].

The principle of distinction aims to establish a clear, insurmountable boundary between military objectives and civilian persons, as well as between military objectives and personal property. Henceforth, means and methods of war shall be exclusively directed towards the former.

An alternative goal of this principle is that of limiting the means and methods of warfare to those that are necessary and proportionate, which advocates for the complementarity of the distinction and proportionality principles. Only through a proportionately directed military attack can the distinction between civilians and military personnel be respected. Any disproportionate attack will inevitably result in unnecessary losses of civilian lives.

On the other hand, the principle of distinction doesn't normally afford protection to combatants, with the exception of combatants who, due to various reasons or occurrences, become temporarily or permanently incapacitated (in French, "*hors de combat*" means "out of combat"). A relevant example of unlawful treatment of *hors de combat* soldiers is the case of the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995, where Bosnian Serb forces killed around 8,000 (Brunborg, Lyngstad and Urdal, 2003: 229-248) Bosnian Muslim men and boys who had surrendered or were captured. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) found that these victims were *hors de combat* and that their killing constituted a crime against humanity (Singh, 2009: 247-296).

Alternatively, civilians are generally protected from attack, save for their direct participation in hostilities, during which period they lose the protection deriving from the principle of distinction. Additional Protocol I formulates a first codification of the term *civilian*: "any person who does not belong to one of the categories of persons referred to in Article 4 (A) (1), (2), (3) and (6) of the Third Convention and in Article 43 of this Protocol. In case of doubt whether a person is a civilian, that person shall be considered to be a civilian". Therefore, the term "civilian" is negatively defined as not

[4] Advisory Opinion, Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, ICJ, 8 July 1996, para. 78 (last accessed October 17, 2023).

including persons who are members of the armed forces, nor participants in a *levée en masse*. The latter are recognised by IHL customary and conventional norms as combatants, despite not being members of the armed forces or civilians (Melzer, 2008: 310). According to the legal interpretation principle *ubi lex non distinguit, nec nos distinguere debemus*, since the legislator doesn't make the distinction between categories of civilians on the basis of their nationality, the protection of neutral civilians applies to both enemy civilians and one combatant's own civilians, an aspect additionally confirmed by ICRC's Commentary on Additional Protocol I (Sandoz, Swinarski and Zimmermann, 1987: 610). Ultimately, even if there are reasonable doubts about one's civilian status, the benefit of the doubt will prevail in its application.

Speaking of personal property or civilian objects, they cannot become the object of an attack unless their status is modified to military objects.

Although prohibited by the principle of distinction, the proliferation of acts or threats of violence in order to spread terror among civilians is a common practice during warfare, as well as during times of peace, in the realm of terrorist attacks (which are subject to IHL norms, as a result of an *in extenso* legal interpretation of IHL's material object). To be more specific, the tendency to disobey any given political and religious *status quo* can take the form of nuclear terrorism. It comes as no surprise that, *exempli gratia*, the year 2007 marked the establishment of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT), at the time of writing encompassing 90 signatory states and intending to improve international capacity for preventing the illegal acquisition, transportation or use of nuclear and radiological materials.[5]

The principle of distinction has one essential consequence, specifically the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks. Indiscriminate attacks can be classified as disproportionate, uncontrollable as to the desired target or simply not willingly directed against a specific military objective.

The distinction between unlawful indiscriminate attacks and the proliferation of threats or acts of violence among civilians is that the former is never exclusively directed towards civilians, whereas the latter is centred on the civilian population.

The 1999 Kosovo crisis constitutes an example of unlawful, indiscriminate attacks affecting Kosovar civilians, as a consequence of the NATO high-altitude bombing campaign (Mccoubrey, 2000: 184-206). The bombing also resulted in the destruction of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, conventionally protected by both the civilian objective status and diplomatic immunity, which remains controversial to the present day. It either illustrates a severe lack of precautionary measures on the side of NATO military personnel (mistaking a civilian target for a military one) or an intentional disregard for the distinction principle presumably justified by the obsolete IHL "just war" principle, legitimising armed force use in the context of the embassy's alleged role in facilitating Yugoslav army communications and the monitorisation of cruise missile attacks. This attack also triggered diplomatically as well as politically damaging outcomes for NATO's relationship with China.

Regardless of the underlying motives for NATO's destruction of the Chinese Embassy, this conventional military attack accurately illustrates how disobeying IHL principles is a prerequisite for determining uncontrollable chain reactions which, once

[5] Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) (last accessed October 18, 2023)

in effect, prevent the involved state actors from intervening in the sense of preserving elemental human rights. All the more, we stress the stringent necessity of devising a legal framework for managing nuclear policies worldwide, given the incomparably more devastating indiscriminate effects of nuclear weapons, as compared to conventional weapons.

Improved target management is a satisfactory solution to limiting unlawful indiscriminate attacks using conventional military forces. This implies endeavouring an in-depth analysis of available information on previously acquired targets, thus preventing incidental loss of civilian lives or destruction of civil property. It is a multidisciplinary attempt at improving military operations conduct on the basis of the efficient identification, localization, selection and eventual targeting of essential military objectives pertaining to the adversary, thus assuring military victory. This management philosophy builds upon customary law provisions, whilst accompanying them with modern IHL standards, the most innovative and pertinent of which are evidenced by the target management rules found in The Fourth Title of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, adopted in 1977. Applying the principle of distinction ranks first among the priorities set in Title Four, as can be concluded from Article 48.

When it comes to the compatibility of nuclear weapons with the principle of distinction, the debate gives rise to numerous dilemmas and unresolved disputes. No authoritative judicial or political body has yet managed to deliver a satisfying response on the matter. Nonetheless the International Court of Justice (ICJ), in its 1996 advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, reached a relative conclusion: "the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law". Due to their recommendation status, these provisions haven't prevented Russian officials from choosing strategic interests in spite of global security, thus issuing repeated statements threatening to use nuclear force[6], to determine NATO states to withdraw their military, economic and political support for Ukraine[7].

Therefore, states and other actors engaged in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts must continue to address the legal challenges posed by nuclear weapons and seek ways to ensure that the principle of distinction is respected and upheld in all circumstances.

3.2. The Proportionality Principle

As can be inferred from the nature of military combat, two frequently conflicting interests have to be fulfilled: military objectives and civilian protection. The proportionality principle merely serves as a means to an end, as it implies increased precautionary measures regarding the protection of civilians. Due to this, proportionality represents a hindrance impeding successful military operations, which is why it wasn't historically

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[6] The Editors (2018), *Nuclear coercion skepticism and Russia's nuclear-tinged Threats* (Book Review), The Nonproliferation Review, Routledge Publishing, Washington, p. 379-383. https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700.2018.1431178.

[7] We will not be intimidated by Russia's nuclear threats, NATO tells Moscow | Reuters (last accessed October 19, 2023)

endorsed as a war principle until the twentieth century, precisely due to non-existent or fragile human rights protection frameworks before the inception of modern IHL.

To begin with, the proportionality principle has a twofold definition, corresponding to the distinct ways in which proportionality limits the use of armed force (Cannizzaro, 2006: 779-792). Thus, *jus ad bellum* proportionality seeks to limit the power of states to resort to force in the first place, instead of devising diplomatic solutions to conflicts. Secondly, *jus in bello* proportionality underscores the necessity of sparing civilians and civilian objects from unwarranted damage, be it incidental or collateral, throughout the entire duration of attacks aimed at military objectives, therefore prior to the inception of military actions and recourse to force. Implementing proportionality means respecting its double doctrinal codification, therefore our study will focus on examining whether 1) *jus ad bellum* proportionality can be upheld in the context of imminent threats to one state's survival and 2) *jus in bello* proportionality can be applied to the nuclear use of force.

There are two available alternatives to enforcing disproportionate war strategies and artillery against civilians and civilian objects: either you use a different weapon which would not trigger disproportionate harm to civilians or their property (thus respecting the *jus in bello* proportionality), or you do not carry out the attack at all (thus abiding by the *jus ad bellum* proportionality).

At the same time, *jus in bello* proportionality states that incidental damage must not be excessive in comparison with the immediate and concrete military advantage that you anticipate from your operation. Hence, when carrying out conventional or nonconventional operations, you are not allowed to engage in disproportionate attacks even when it comes to combatants and military objectives, as that would only serve as a way to unlawfully exacerbate the breach of elemental human rights, which are also inherent to belligerents.

Factual analysis of on-site war scenarios and developments is difficult to perform, therefore the proportionality assessment can be subject to decisive inaccuracies. Naturally, the problem revolves around who exactly gets to make the final decision about meeting proportionality requirements. Is it the soldier or the commander? Paradoxically enough, individual soldiers on the battlefield may quantify their military operation as being small-scale, not instrumental enough to justify enhanced and sustained military aggression beyond a certain threshold, whereas, on the other hand, commanders may characterise the exact same operation as decisive in the grand scheme of things (Cohen, Zlotogorski, 2021: 182). The sole criterion that should be taken into account when deciding upon the legitimacy of the attack is aptly illustrated by the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions (1977): will the attack be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated? This condition, which is in full compliance with the IHL proportionality principle, points out the fact that higher ranks should be granted the prerogative to assess the proportionality of attacks, rather than soldiers in the field, given the complex nature of the effects of large-scale military missions. According to ICRC's commentary on Additional Protocol I, the syntagm "concrete and direct military advantage" alludes to the fact that the gained advantage should be "substantial and relatively close", thus excluding advantages which are too insignificant or distant time-wise to justify the attack.

As regards *jus ad bellum* proportionality applied to nuclear weapons, the ICJ's Nuclear Weapons Advisory Opinion[8] underlines that the proportionality rule might still be compatible with the use of nuclear weapons, under exceptional circumstances, such as that of self-defence. Despite the large range of risks arising from an eventual use of nuclear weapons, the Court states that it doesn't deem it necessary to operate a quantification of those risks and that this type of evaluation has to be supervised by state actors "believing they can exercise a nuclear response in self-defence in accordance with the requirements of proportionality." Therefore, insofar as the ICJ can exert judicial authority regarding nuclear policies upon other law subjects, it strongly emphasises the conceptual perils relative to determining what type of "extreme circumstances of self-defence" might be enough to justify immediate nuclear action.

This evaluation of threat extremeness is highly debatable, in that a state's very survival might not equal a mere timely loss of some attributes of its statehood. Alternatively, does it suffice for the passive subject of the threat to be a constituent part of the state (e.g. a public institution), or does the state in its entirety have to be at risk? These circumstances strictly depend on one state's political, economic and military status at one particular moment in time. Nonetheless, a relevant evaluation of threat extremeness in view of the proportionality principle can be conducted using general the following set of criteria:

- Concreteness and imminency (as opposed to hypothetical or remote)
- Vital interests or core values of the state at risk (as opposed to secondary interests)
- Overwhelming and irresistible character (as opposed to a manageable and containable character)
- Unlawful and unjustified character (as opposed to legitimate or reasonable)

To conclude, proportionality leaves a lot to be desired in terms of applicability in the event of nuclear self-defence, as well as during hypothetical nuclear warfare. Nonetheless, not all scenarios are incongruent with the possibility of nuclear weapons being used in compliance with proportionality taking into account the immediacy of the faced threat, as well as recent developments showing an extensive effort at improving target management methods in case of nuclear attack, as has been outlined in the previous section delving into the distinction principle, which is deeply correlated with the proportionality principle. Furthermore, the proportionality principle can only be successfully applied in conjunction with the other IHL rules and principles, amongst which distinction is primary.

4. Nuclear Warfare Policy in View of the Proportionality and Distinction Principles

Conventional warfare benefits from a fairly large array of international legal agreements mitigating the damaging effects it can have on the environment, population and infrastructure. For instance, the following war methods are expressly forbidden: starvation, destruction of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, human shields, pillage, perfidy, improper use of enemy and other uniforms, attacking *hors de combat* soldiers, torture, taking hostages, engaging in reprisals.

[8] Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996 (last accessed: October 21, 2023)

On the other hand, when it comes to nuclear warfare, available legislation isn't homogenous and is subject to extensive criticism from both international and non-international actors (Dragoman, Ungureanu, 2018: 295).

Nuclear warfare is amongst the war means and methods that have indiscriminate effects. According to Article 51 of the Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions:

"Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited. Indiscriminate attacks are: a) those which are not directed at a specific military objective; b) those which employ a method or means of combat which cannot be directed at a specific military objective; or c) those which employ a method or means of combat the effects of which cannot be limited as required by this Protocol; and consequently, in each such case, are of a nature to strike military objectives and civilians or civilian objects without distinction."

How can an unlawful indiscriminate attack ever be justified, despite inherently trespassing the proportionality and distinction principles? And what's more, how does this relate to global nuclear deterrence efforts?

ICJ, in its 1996 advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, stated that "in view of the current state of international law, and of the elements of fact at its disposal, [it] cannot conclude definitively whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in an extreme circumstance of self-defence, in which the very survival of a State would be at stake". This view draws attention to the distinct possibility that the very essence of a state's existence is threatened by either conventional or unconventional military intervention. At that point, the legitimacy of self-defence might render IHL principles severely inadequate, unrealistic even. Revolving to nuclear weapons could thus become lawful, if only, subsequent to the nuclear weapon use, the respective state actor brought forward relevant evidence in the ICJ as to having lacked other viable military alternatives meant at overcoming the perceived national security threat.

The legislative disparities governing nuclear weapons are a consequence of both the particular nature of nuclear weapons and the lack of consensus among the main global nuclear powers. It can be inferred that nuclear force boasts a self-regulating set of unwritten rules, keeping states away from the idea of initiating nuclear retaliation, such as: the self-compromising potential of initiating nuclear attacks (the high risk of a devastating conventional or nuclear counter-attack towards nations initiating the attack in the first place); the fact that mere threats of using nuclear weapons serve a balance-keeping purpose and have no other significance beyond the strategic interests of those issuing them (e.g. Russian threats of using nuclear weapons during the military conflict in Ukraine).

Although there exists a quasi-universally ratified (including 190 states parties) 1970 UN *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*[9], it doesn't constitute a legally viable nuclear weapon management treaty, making it difficult to clearly establish what guidelines should be respected even when certain political actors remotely threaten with the use of as indiscriminate and destructive a force as nuclear power is. Essentially, this treaty doesn't provide enough guarantees in the sense that the sanctionatory mechanism it offers is inadequate as opposed to the real and imminent threat of nuclear fallout. There are five officially recognised nuclear-weapon

[9] NPT (last accessed October 20, 2023)

States, namely the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China, all of which are part of the treaty.

The treaty doesn’t permit legal coercion into not making use of nuclear weapons, because only recommendations can be made as regards the implementation and acquisition of nuclear weapons. The major additional shortcoming of the NPT Treaty stems from the fact that the four other states known or believed to possess nuclear weapons are not parties to this treaty, specifically North Korea, India, Pakistan and Israel.

When a state doesn’t ratify any nuclear non-proliferation treaty whatsoever, the way it manages available nuclear weapons becomes the main subject of the distinction and proportionality principles. This represents an application of the Martens Clause. These principles are a fundamental source of IHL, given that they have been agreed upon previously by a large proportion of state actors. Hence, nuclear policy has to be conducted whilst acknowledging the humanitarian consequences that they might yield. Considering their immense destructive power and indiscriminate effects, nuclear weapons compliance with IHL standards is very difficult to achieve.

Moreover, critics argue that the NPT Treaty cannot effectively stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons or the motivation to acquire them. The progress with nuclear disarmament is dissatisfactory, given the fact that the five authorised nuclear weapons states still have 13,400 warheads in their combined stockpile, which possess the equivalent of 5,000 times the explosive power of all types of weaponry used during World War II (Dragoman, Ungureanu, 2018: 293).

Nonetheless, the treaty stresses the destructive potential of nuclear weapons and emphasises their incongruence with IHL and also with the laws of humanity. Undoubtedly, the protection of human rights during armed conflict would be rendered useless by the use of nuclear weapons, which can never distinguish between military objectives and civil population. The NPT Treaty principles are reaffirmed and reinforced by the 1992 *Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance*[10], which stipulates that the usage of nuclear weapons is equivalent to committing crimes against humanity.

Non-state actors also significantly impact decision-making regarding nuclear policy. As part of NATO's nuclear deterrence policy, the transatlantic organisation is committed to arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation, but as long as nuclear weapons exist, it will remain a nuclear alliance[11]. NATO's nuclear policy is set as a result of the common agreement of all NATO Heads of State and Government, whilst its implementation is the responsibility of the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG)[12]. Presently, NATO’s nuclear policy has two law sources: the 2022 Strategic Concept and the 2012 Deterrence and Defence Posture Review.

In 2017, another attempt at codifying IHL regarding nuclear weapons was made, resulting in *The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* (TPNW)[13]. Having

[10] Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance | OHCHR (last accessed October 20, 2023)

[11] NATO - Topic: NATO’s nuclear deterrence policy and forces (last accessed October 20, 2023)

[12] ibidem.

[13] 2017 Treaty on The Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (last accessed October 21, 2023)

entered into force in 2021, the treaty only has 68 ratifying states as of October 2023[14] and is seen as complementary to and interdependent with the NPT, the cornerstone of the global nuclear energy regime. In comparison to the NPT, the TPNW is more divisive and controversial in the international community, as it has been opposed and boycotted by all the nuclear-weapon states and most of their allies that rely on nuclear deterrence, whereas the NPT has been widely accepted by almost all states.

Notwithstanding, the North Atlantic Council has issued a favourable statement on the TPNW, reaffirming its resolve to seek a safer world for all and to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons in full accordance with all provisions of the NPT, including Article VI, in a step-by-step and verifiable way that promotes international stability, and is based on the principle of undiminished security for all. This shows how the TPNW can facilitate constructive dialogue among geopolitical actors regarding the pressing and always relevant topic of nuclear force management.

The Hiroshima bombing (Fig. 1), when a relatively small bomb was enough to level a whole city, stands as proof of the destructive power of nuclear weapons. A one-megaton device is 80 times the destructive capacity of the Hiroshima bomb[15]. To form an idea of this destructive capacity, imagine a train with TNT stretching from Los Angeles to New York, holding 1,000,000 tons of TNT. Taking that into account, it can be inferred that even the explosion of a single, low-yield nuclear weapon, be it intentionally or by accident, can determine massive loss of life and notable material destruction. More importantly, these types of effects will not be limited by national frontiers and will trigger detrimental change on a larger scale, having an individual as well as a collective impact.

Figure 1: Hiroshima Memorial Park, a legacy that is not to be forgotten, especially in the context of nuclear disarmament efforts

Source: https://unsplash.com/s/photos/hiroshima-peace-memorial-park (last accessed October 16, 2023)

[14] Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) (nti.org) (last accessed October 21, 2023)

[15] Horrors of Hiroshima, a reminder nuclear weapons remain global threat | UN News (last accessed October 22, 2023)

Ultimately, assuring the primacy of the distinction and proportionality principles in case of nuclear threat requires a clearer codification of nuclear weapons use, as well as investing a pre-existing (e.g. the ICJ) or new IHL organism with the prerogatives to severely sanction any transgression from Treaties and principles regulating nuclear weapons.

5. Closing Remarks

"War is never to be undertaken except to assert rights, and when undertaken is never to be carried on except within the limits of rights.", states David J. Hill in his Introduction to 'The Rights of War and Peace', by Hugo Grotius (Grotius, 1901 ed.:27). There's a double facet to war, consisting of both an ending of the previous legal order and a beginning of a new legal framework: the conflict of arms silences civil laws, those that govern in times of peace. It is only them that become ineffective, whereas the laws that originate in the nature of man as man, the laws relying on basic human decency and common sense continue even during times of distress and coalesce into the non-amenable laws of war. Not abiding by these rules represents an implicit rejuvenation of barbarism and a despicable repudiation of human nature itself.

When it comes to nuclear warfare, surpassing the limits of war conduct can result in dire consequences for the environment, for humanity as a species. Having reached this incredible level of technological evolution (where we can destroy centuries of evolutions within seconds) comes with the even greater responsibility of mitigating the detrimental effects that uncontrolled progress can have. Thus, the myriad of nuclear deterrence policies and IHL principles in effect are not in vain, they condone a message that is beyond a despicable attempt at quantifying the unquantifiable: their purpose is that of conferring meaning to the conjugated societal efforts at putting an end to military conflicts, leading the way to a world where peace prevails, where the term "collateral damage" is a relic of the past, where humans no longer have to endure the collective drama of war. As utopian as this may sound, not a flicker of hope for its achievement would be left if it weren't for the IHL legal framework giving expression to the honourable manner in which war has to be conducted, as well as to the graceful methods of avoiding war through invoking diplomacy, good-faith and courtesy.

Overall, the article has examined the relationship between distinction, *jus in bello* and *jus ad bellum* proportionality given modern IHL's evolution, as well as their applicability to nuclear weapon usage policy. It has been argued that, while nuclear deterrence shares some common features and objectives with distinction and proportionality, they remain distinct and independent of each other, mainly because of the different contexts and purposes in which they operate. It has also been suggested that the use of nuclear weapons poses serious challenges to the respect and implementation of distinction and proportionality, especially in light of their indiscriminate and long-term effects.

Our study has answered the main question that it aimed to address: whether the distinction and proportionality principles can facilitate foreseeing and proactively addressing breaches of international law conduct referring to nuclear force management. Thus, we are of the opinion that these principles can give some guidance and constraints on the use or threat of nuclear weapons, but they are not sufficient or conclusive in all circumstances. Therefore, there is a need for more comprehensive and binding legal instruments that can regulate nuclear weapons in a way that is consistent with IHL and human rights.

Moreover, the study highlighted the need for clarity and consistency in the interpretation and application of these notions, as well as the need for further development and adaptation of the legal framework governing the use of force in armed conflicts. It has also emphasized the importance of respecting and promoting humanitarian values and principles in situations of armed conflict, regardless of the legality or morality of the resort to force by states. Ultimately, the best way to ensure compliance with distinction and proportionality is to prevent or avoid the use of nuclear weapons altogether.

Future research directions may include identifying how the preexisting legal instruments on nuclear weapons, such as the NPT, the TPNW and the ICJ advisory opinion can be improved and complemented by new ones remediating the gaps and incongruencies in their provisions. The impact that technological innovations (e.g. artificial intelligence, cyberwarfare etc.) have on the existing legal framework on nuclear weapons is another relevant topic of research. It also would be worthwhile to expand on the subject of how dialogue and cooperation concerning states having different nuclear policies can be improved, in order to avoid nuclear escalation and foster a climate of global stability on the matter of nuclear force usage.

The contemporary international context and development strategies can only reaffirm the urgency of building upon the existing principles and institutions of IHL, thus attaining reliable guarantees from significant geopolitical actors regarding the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons of mass destruction and last but not least regarding their long-lasting commitment towards making armed conflict an obsolete method of resolving international disputes, incongruous with the provisions of legally enacted international agreements.

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US HISTORICAL CHALLENGES: A COMPARASION BETWEEN THE COLD WAR AND THE US-CHINA COMPETITION

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Abstract. *At the end of the Cold War, the US became the only superpower in the international system, but this situation continued until 2010, when China became the second economic power. The relation between the US and China is very complicated compared to the relationship between the US and the USSR during the Cold War. In the first case, the two powers combine the economic cooperation with the international competition, whereas in the second the two superpowers try to impose their political and economic system in the entire world. The USSR was using a political and military strategy, whereas China was using the economic expansion in order to change the international order and the regional power distribution. Also, the Chinese soft power was not as powerful as was the Russian soft power in order to influence the Western elites to support the Chinese political and economic model. Even though between the USSR and China there are many differences, China was determined to challenge the liberal order and to compete with the US. For the moment, there is not a clear winner between the US and China, but the next twenty years are going to be shaped by this competition.*

Keywords: *regional hegemon, soft power, economical competition, technological competition*

1. Introduction

China became the most important US challenger after the end of the Cold War, because it successfully transformed from a planned economy to a free market economy. Even though this road was not a smooth one, China succeeded in a period when the US was the only superpower left in the system to become one of the most important challengers. This rise made the US to enter for the first time after the end of the Cold War into a new competition with a power from the international system. Compared to the Cold War, the US-China competition can be described as a combination of competition and cooperation at the same time. Both countries are tied together in the international economic production chain, but at the same time they compete on the world market and in the future of technology. Also, the military competition between these two countries can be seen as a form of Cold War, where both countries do not fight each other, but they use different strategies in order to block the other part's capacity to impose its rules in the East Asia region. Even though the US-China competition is a regional competition, its consequences are at the global scale and can influence the way other countries see the US or China in the future.

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The purpose of this article is to create a comparison between the USSR and China, in the position of challengers of the US international order starting from the end of the World War 2 (WWII) up to the present. The comparison will be structured in four parts: the political and cultural power, international economic projects, military power and technological comparison. These parts will create an image of what were the advantages and disadvantages of the USSR, during the Cold War, compared to those held by China today. Even though it is a long historical period, this comparison is going to show the differences between the USSR and China's strategies in order to challenge the US international order.

2. China and USSR, Two Powerful Challengers for the US

The Cold War is considered to be the most important event of the 20th Century after the end of WWII and it is described as a new form of war where the two superpowers and their allies didn't fight directly into a military confrontation.

The first characteristic of the Cold War is that it was a conflict among economic, political and social models: democracy versus communism, the free market versus centralized economy, free press and liberty versus censorship and the gulags. The second characteristic were the military strategies - both countries tried to raise their military and technological spending in order to win the war without using any nuclear or hydrogen weapons. Also, the two superpowers avoided a direct military conflict, but they used the proxy wars in order to fight each other. The third characteristic is a soft power war- a cultural war - between Americans and the communist way of life and also between the models on how the world should be shaped if one superpower should win in the end.

China is the only communist country which managed to benefit after the post-Cold War order, by integrating in 2001 in the World Trade Organization (WTO), which offered the chance to rise economically. Because of this rising, the Trump administration launched in 2018 the Trade War between China and the US, which marks the beginning of the US-China competition. This form of the trade war is a new form of competition between the US and China, where both countries were imposing different custom tariffs from goods produced in the other country. A major point in this war was in 2020, when China accepted to sign the first phase of a trade agreement with the US, in order to stop the Trade War. But the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemics complicated the situation, when China decided to use its humanitarian help and the wolf warrior diplomacy as soft power weapons in order to extend its influence (Hossain 2021; Lee 2021).

The US-China competition is seen as a new form of the Cold War, since China became the most important US challenger form the international system (Kaplan 2019; Mandelbaum 2019). Robert Kaplan considers that this new Cold War is not going to be fought on land, compared to the previous one, but will be a naval one. China has to become the regional hegemon in the South and East China Sea as the US did in the Caribbean Sea during the 19th and 20th centuries. Controlling the Caribbean Sea gave the US the chance to become the regional hegemon in the Western Hemisphere. At the same time, the modern development of the hydrogen bombs will make the two powers to fight into a naval war, in the Pacific region rather than on land. The biggest threat for the US-China competition in order to turn itself from a Cold War into a hot one, is the decline of the Chinese economy which probably made the Chinese leaders to launch a military attack to the island of Taiwan, in order to limit the internal social and political unrest (Kaplan 2019). In the same way, Michel Mandelbaum considers that the new Cold War will mean a different containment strategy. During the Cold War, the US was doing a global containment strategy against the USSR. Today, the US doesn't have one single superpower to contain, but three powers: Russia, China and Iran. In this new case, the US should be involved in three regional containment strategies: one in Europe against Russia, in Asia against China and the last one in the Middle East against Iran. Coordinating these regional containment policies will be the next goal for the US foreign policy (Mandelbaum 2019: 124, 128,131).

On the other side, the US-China competition can't be defined as a Cold War, even though Zhao Ming is using the concept: *the New Cold War*, in order to define this competition, which is more complex than the Cold War (Zhao 2019). In the same way, Øystein Tunsjø considers that the modern international system is a bipolar rather than a multipolar system. Because between the first two powers ant the third power of the system is a power gap which makes the system bipolar. Also, the US-China competition can't turn into a Cold War, but into a sea conflict rather than a land conflict (Øystein Tunsjø 2018: 15-18). Because the conflict will be a maritime one, there is going to be more instability than during the Cold War, because the conflict limits between the two powers are not very well delimited. (Øystein Tunsjø 2018: 29-30). Also, Gregory Mitrovich considers that the US-China competition can't be a Cold War because China doesn't have a party network as the USSR did after the end of World War II (WWII), in the Western democracies, and its soft power is still in developing compared to the one had by the USSR (Mitrovich 2019).

Thomas Christensen is one important critic regarding the US-China conflict, because he considers between the US and China there can't be a Cold War because: the two powers are not involved into an ideological race; the global system can't be divided between two economic blocs; both of them are not leading two opposing alliances (Christensen 2021; Christensen 2020: 8). In the same way, Zhao Ming considers that USSR and the US presented two ideological system which are not linked economically between them. The Cold War competition was more about the military forces and ideology, whereas the new competition is more about geo-economic, different models of development and the control of the Internet or the outer space (Zhao 2019; Zhao 2018).

The US-China competition is very difficult to be described as a new Cold War, first because the conditions presented above, second because China didn't have the capacity to become the regional hegemon, as USSR did, and also because the two countries are linked together economically. China should become a regional hegemon and create an alternative regime system to the liberal democracy supported by the US, like the USSR did with communism. The incapacity of China to present its authoritarian system as a world political regime will diminish its chance of winning the soft power competition with the US. Also, the cultural differences between the Western Culture and the Chinese Culture will make the last one to continue to be seen like an ancient culture, with very few Western influences compared to the American culture.

2.1 Comparing the Political and Cultural Power

Comparing the Cold War with the US-China competition in modern history, we can find many differences rather than similarities. First, the Cold War was more a political competition compared to the US-China competition. The communist one was an ideology which was marketing itself as a peaceful one, where the disadvantages and the social differences created by the capitalist system were going to disappear. Compared to the liberal democracy, communism was a totalitarian regime where the power was concentrated in one party, the Communist Party, and its ruling elite. The goal of the USSR and the other communist regimes is to export revolution all around the world, in order to create a bigger communist block and win the competition with the US. Another way to extend the communist influence around the globe was by cultural liaisons between the communist countries and the democratic one. The power of attraction manifested by the Russian culture to the European cultural elite was huge compared to the Chinese culture in modern times. For the European cultural elite, the Russian culture is seen as part of the European cultural heritage, whereas the Chinese culture is seen more like an ancient culture, which had manifested to the European elites a form of exoticism, for many years. Also, the distance between China and Europe made this country not very connected to the European affairs, as it happened during the European history with the USSR/Russia. Russia is part of both Europe and Asia, but during history its foreign policy was more connected to the European political life rather than to Asia.

This geographical disadvantage of China will continue to influence its foreign policy, even though the country manages to become the regional hegemon in East Asia. Even though these disadvantages are real, China is trying to use its network of Confucius Institutes to export its culture around the world (Godement and Vasselier 2017: 80-81). But, for the moment, this network didn't succeed to manifest a cultural attraction as Maoism did during the Cold War, mostly because it is seen as a form of cultural propaganda in favour of China (Lee Edwards, 2021; Hartig 2018; Luiqu & McCarthy 2018; Peterson 2017).

At the same time, the American culture is seen also as a part of the European culture, because the first American colonists were European, many European languages are spoken in the US and democracy or the free-market economy were part of the European culture. On the other hand, the Hollywood movies and the American way of life influenced the European cultural and political life since the end of the World War I (WWI). The geographical position of the US, between Europe and Asia, made this country have the capacity to influence at the same time both continents.

During the Cold War the countries from the international system were divided in three political blocs: the Western bloc, composed by the democratic countries and their allies, the communist bloc and the Third World Countries. Compared to the Cold War period, the contemporary international system is divided on a North-South division. In the North are the countries from Europe and the North America with their traditions Australia, Asia and Middle East; whereas in the South are the poorest regions of the world (Canrong 2020: 9). So, in the North we have: democracy, technological development and financial capital for investments, whereas in the South we have: natural resources and a very unstable political order, which is more authoritarian than democratic (Reuveny and Thompson 2007: 557). China is a direct beneficiary from this division, because many countries from the Global South are open to the Chinese investments and foreign aid. Most of these countries were part of the Third World bloc, more open to the USSR aid rather than the help coming from the US, because many of them saw in the US a power the old European colonial powers. But, compared to the Cold War period, today's model of the authoritarian state ruled by the Chinese

Communist Party (CCP), doesn't have as many supporters as the communist movement had during the Cold War.

This is happening because between the authoritarian regimes and the communist ideology there is a big difference. Communism is a totalitarian ideology which describes what is good or bad for the society and promotes a full control by the Communist Party upon the society, whereas an authoritarian regime is not an ideology, but a political regime which can imply a mix of ideologies, where the politic leaders do not have full control of the society. Inside an authoritarian regime the free market economy can coexist with state owned companies, the population still has access to some outside information sources and the state police is not controlling every aspects of the citizens' life. Because China is more an authoritarian regime than a totalitarian state, the Chinese leaders will probably have a problem in exporting and supporting their political system. But many countries from the Global South are seeing in China what they saw in the USSR, a chance not to change their political regime in order to obtain the foreign investments or aid. So, for the moment, China is benefiting from this form of alliances, but in the long run this can't be an advantage because in time the popular support for the authoritarian regimes can go down because of any economic and political crises. These crises can bring other political leaders who can nationalize the Chinese investments or refuse to pay the debt back to the Chinese investors. In this case, investing inside the countries with authoritarian regimes can be seen for the short period as an economic advantage, but in the long term as a huge risk for the Chinese economy.

2.2 Comparing the International Economic Projects

The US and the USSR created during the Cold War a bipolarization of the system like Sparta and Athens did before the Peloponnesian Wars or the European Powers did before WWI. Both the US and the USSR were interested not to lose any of their allies during the confrontation, that's how we can explain the US intervention in the Korean and Vietnam or the USSR's military intervention in East Germany, Hungary or Czechoslovakia. Also, the two superpowers were interested to block the other part to attract more countries in their sphere of influence or to accept their political model. Compared to the USSR, China is not in the same position of creating an international bloc in order to support its economic and political model. China is interested to find new allies around the globe, but not by imposing its political system, because Beijing is a big supporter of the principles of Coexistence: sovereign equality, respecting and maintaining the diversity of world's civilization, promoting common development of the world's economies, maintaining peace and security through dialogue and cooperation, giving full scope to the important role of the UN and other multilateral mechanism (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Indonesia, 2004). Because of these Principles, China is interested to expand only economically by creating in 2013 the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and in 2014 the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

The BRI is considered the most important international project supported by China, after its economic rise. Described like a form of cooperation between different countries, it is formed by: the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and the Silk Road Economic Belt, and involves Chinese foreign investments in different infrastructure projects around the globe. These projects can help different countries to develop, but at the same time they create a form of dependency on China, called the debt trap. The most affected countries by this debt trap are in Africa, where many countries are poor and they can't pay back the investment in cash and so they have to give back to China their natural resources, in order to pay the debt. This way of payment creates political debates and massive protest in some countries, especially before the general elections (Soulé 2021: 12-14; Beyongo 2019: 197-198).

Comparing China's BRI project with Comecon, an international market organization created by the USSR during the Cold War, we can see that Comecon is a form of common market comparable with the EU common market, where as BRI is just a project based more on the Chinese investments in different countries around the globe. For the moment, BRI doesn't have a institutional structure, like Comecon had during the Cold War, the countries which are part of the BRI are meeting only in international forums, called Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, which had been held for two times until now, in 2017 and 2019. Also, the economic trade between the Comecon member states was done using the transferable ruble, a special currency based on the Soviet ruble. At the same time, China didn't succeed to use renminbi or to form a special currency based on its currency, in order to use it inside the BRI. The investments are done in US dollars which can be seen as a form of disadvantage compared to the USSR's system of Comecon. Creating a bloc of countries which are going to use the renminbi as a second currency after the US dollar can give China the capacity to influence the world trade market. But, in order to do this, renminbi should have a floated course rather than a fixed one (Overholt,2021: 42-43; Christensen, 2015: 125-126).

2.3 Comparing the Military Power

During the Cold War, the two superpowers were engaged into an armed race especially on the nuclear and hydrogen bombs, where each country was rising the military expenditure and the research and development budgets in order to win the competition. This armed race was considered to be one of the important causes that made the USSR to lose the Cold War. But comparing to China, the USSR succeeded to be a regional hegemon in Eastern Europe after WWII, even though John Mearsheimer didn't consider it (Mearsheimer 2003: 34). The USSR was using its military power to impose and control the communist regimes from the Eastern European and blocked any attempt of them to be part of the Western bloc. This strategic advantage gave the USSR the chance to project its political and military force outside the region, in Africa, Middle East, Asia and Latin America. At the same time, the US was forming regional alliances to balance the communist influence in those regions.

Compared to the USSR, China didn't succeed, for the moment, to become the regional hegemon in the East Asia, also according to Mearsheimer, the distribution of power in East Asia is an unequal multipolar distribution, where one country is trying to become the regional hegemon, very similar with Europe during the Cold War. Because of this situation, the probability of a military conflict in the region is high, but for the moment China is not making any important military actions as it happened before the WWI with Germany or with the USSR during the Cold War (Mearsheimer 2014: 309-310). On the other hand, the US managed to create a network of alliances in the region, which in the future will give the possibility to create a powerful containment strategy in East Asia, like it happened at the beginning of the Cold War in Europe (Clinton 2011, 58).

This distribution of power is a clear disadvantage because it makes it to use more resources in order to obtain the regional hegemony and leave it fewer resources which can be used to project power outside the region. Not having so many allies in the region, like the USSR had in Eastern Europe, is a clear sign that the capacity of China on putting pressure on the US and its regional allies is very limited. Also, if China is trying to threaten the countries from the region with the nuclear strike, as the USSR did during the Cold War, this can generate a race of nuclear proliferation around its borders. This didn't happen during the Cold War because the US presence in the region gave Japan and to South Korea the chance to rely on the American nuclear umbrella rather than produce their own. In the meantime, raising military budget of China makes the countries from region to come closer to the US and probably to form more defensive alliances. Compared to the countries from the Eastern Europe, the countries from East Asia are independent states who can decide which side they can ally in order to maintain their national sovereignty. The countries form East Europe were directly controlled by Moscow and their capacity to change their side was absolutely none, only two countries from Eastern Europe made an exception: Albania, which was the only European ally of China until the end of the Cultural Revolution and Yugoslavia, which was part of the Third World Movement, but both of them were communist states.

Another geopolitical advantage the USSR had during the Cold War, was that the country had only one border issue, with China in 1969. In the meantime, China was having border issues with India, Japan and regional conflicts with Taiwan and in the South China Sea. These regional conflicts in South China Sea and East China Sea, can turn a competition into a limited war between the US and China, because Washington can use them like proxy wars against China (Xuetong 2019: 200; Øystein Tunsjø 2018: 29-30)

The first important border issues were with India, which started in 1962, because both countries were claiming different parts of the other country's territory: India is claiming the Aksai Chin region from China, whereas China is claiming the Arunachal Pradesh region from India. The last confrontation between the two countries was in 2020, when during the limited conflict, 20 Indian soldiers were killed (BBC 2020). The border issues with Japan also started during the Cold War, when the Chinese government were claiming the Senkaku/ Diaoyu Islands from Japan. Until the end of the '70s China was not interested in these island but when vast deposits of hydrocarbs were discovered it started to claim the islands. Tension between China and Japan got high when in 2012 the Japanese government bought the island form their private owners and started to administrate them (Center for Preventive Action, 2022).

The border issues with Taiwan is considered to be the most important border issue of China since the end of WWII. After WWII, the communist led by Mao Zedong and the nationalist led by Chiang Kai-shek, started a civil war in order to control China. Because the nationalist forces were defeated in the Civil War, they retreated in 1949 on the island of Taiwan and continued to rule the island as an independent state until now (Fenby 2008: 350). Because of this, Taiwan is considered to be a region of China, but the ruling power from Taipei didn't recognise the authority of the mainland China over the island. Also, Taiwan was a member of the Security Council of the UN until 1971, when its place was taken by China and in time there were many tensions between the mainland and the island in: 1954-1955, 1958, 1995-1996, and each time the US intervened to calm the situation. But the situation of Taiwan is very difficult, because the US didn't recognize the country after 1972, but at the same time was helping the island with weapons, in order to stop any Chinese military attempts to control it. But the geopolitical position of Taiwan is very important, because the island is near Japan and it is part of the First Chain of Islands, considered to be very important for China in order to project force in the Pacific Ocean. So, if China controls the island, this is going to offer Beijing a great strategic advantage compared to the US: first, because Beijing can declare the Strain of Taiwan as national waters and block all the US military ships or any trade ships passing through the strain, second they will turn Taiwan into an operational base for power projection inside the region (Rittenhouse, Talmadge 2022). Because of this great risks, the US will try to block any attempts of China in conquering the island and probably will use this conflict like a proxy war in order to stop the military rise of China.

The South China Sea conflict is considered the second most complex regional conflict of China, after the one with Taiwan. China wants to control the islands of South China Sea in order to have direct access to the Strain of Malacca, the most important commercial route to Asia, and to exploit the oil resources in the region. The idea of controlling the islands came after the end of WWII, when the Republic of China's Government created the Eleven- Dash Line, in order to control the South China Sea. Later, in 1953, two dashes were removed, those which were near the Golf of Tonkin, due to the close relation between China and Vietnam, and so the Eleven-Dash Line became what we know today: Nine- Dash Line (Zhiguo, Bing Bing 2013, 102-103). In order to rise the Chinese influence in the region, Beijing started the construction of the artificial island (Beckman 2017; Associated Press, 2022). The creation of these artificial islands gave China the capacity to declare national waters inside the islands' chain (Cronin and Neuhard 2020: 14). As in the case of the Strain of Taiwan, China can block the access of the trading or military ships in the region and block the main trading route for Japan and South Korea. This can block the international supply chain and will probably produce an economic crisis, until the two countries will find an alternative route for their goods.

2.4 Comparing the Technological Competition

During the Cold War, the US and the USSR started the space race, which was seen, at the beginning, as a technological competition, but in reality, was more a soft power competition rather a technological one. The space race started in 1957 when the USSR sent the first artificial satellite into space. Then it continued in 1961, when Yuri Gagarin was the first man in space and in 1969, when the American astronauts reached the Moon. The last important year in the space race was 1986, when the MIR space station was launched on the Earth orbit. The space race raised the military budgets for both superpowers, because the space technology was expansive and the capacity to develop a global market was very limited. Compared to the space race, the 5G competition between the US and China is more complex because this technology can be sold worldwide and the US monopoly on the 5G is challenged by the Chinese companies, like Huawei. Even though, China is more advanced in the 5G development than the US, Washington is determined to develop its 5G technology in order not to let China control the future development of the Internet of Things (Kania 2019; Mariani, Bertolini 2019: 5; Woke 2018).

Controlling the 5G market is a goal for both US and China, because the 5G technology is considered to be the next step in the industrial development and the internet ecosystem (Berzina 2020: 4; Gallagher, Devine 2019: 6-7; Littman, Wilson, Haan, Fritz 2018: 2-3). Because of this, China wants more influence on the establishment of the global standards and 5G infrastructure (Mariani, Bertolini 2019: 4). In order to limit this future influence, the US decided to make the European allies to block, using their internal legislation, any Chinese companies involved in the development of the 5G infrastructure (Murphy& Parrock 2021; Noyan 2021; Cerulus 2020). This decision came a year later, after the Chinese decision to block any foreign telecommunication companies to have access to its domestic network, in order to help the national companies (Cory 2019: 5-8; Mariani, Bertolini 2019: 10).

The 5G competition is also a competition between the models of development: China is using a planned system of developing, whereas the US is more market orientated (Mariani, Bertolini 2019: 7; Lewis 2019: 102-103). In the case of the Chinese model, in the short run it can give a real advantage, but in the long, because of the bureaucracy, the system, can rise the research and development (R&D) costs and even block some projects. At the same time, CCP is using the 5G development to create a digital authoritarianism, because the government can use this new technology to increase the surveillance on the population (Mariani, Bertolini 2019: 8; Cave, Hoffman, Joske, Ryan and Thomas 2019: 8-10). Also, China can use technology to export its digital authoritarian model to other authoritarian regimes around the globe (Cave, Hoffman, Joske, Ryan and Thomas 2019: 11-14; Wright 2019). But, exporting this form of authoritarianism will not improve the China's soft power around the globe, because more people will see in this new form of authoritarianism as a negative model rather than a positive one. (Lewis 2019: 103-105).

Compared with the USSR's gains during the space race, the Chinese development of the 5G can produce negative soft power. This situation can put more pressure on CCP, because this negative soft power combined with few political rights can stop China from its journey of becoming the next dominant power. With a low soft power profile, a dominant power can't influence more countries and can lose its advantages obtained in other domains. In order to stop this scenario, China should try to find a solution to use the 5G development more on public use rather than promoting the digital authoritarianism around the globe. This will not limit China's chance to develop faster than the US, but it will give China the chance to gain more positive soft power around the globe.

3. A New Potential Hegemon in East Asia

In the theory of offensive realism, John Mearsheimer declares that countries are interested to rise their power in order to become the hegemon of the system. The states are not going to stop militarizing themselves when they are reaching the military equilibrium with other powers from the system, but they will continue until they have a higher position compared to the others. The scope of each power is to become the hegemon of the system, in this case global hegemon or regional hegemon. For the moment, there are no global hegemons, but according to Mearsheimer there is only one regional hegemon, the US, in the Western Hemisphere (Mearsheimer 2003: 20, 34).

When a power becomes the regional hegemon, it will try to block the other regional powers to challenge its position and the outside powers to become regional hegemons in their regions. In order to block the other potential regional hegemons, the regional hegemon can form international alliances, which can be used to balance the rising power. Also, once a country became a regional hegemon, it can export its military and economic power outside the region without any problems because in its region there is not another power which can challenge its status (Mearsheimer 2003: 34-35).

For China, becoming the regional hegemon will offer the chance to order the East Asia region by its own international interest. Without the capacity of becoming the regional hegemon, China can lose the competition of becoming the next dominant power of the global system. Also, achieving the regional hegemon status will be very difficult because in Asia there are a number of regional powers which can block the rise of China: Russia, India, Japan, South Korea or Indonesia. As the USSR did at the beginning of the Cold War, setting up communist regimes in Eastern Europe, China should do the same in East Asia, by supporting different friendly regimes or creating regional political alliances in order to maintain its regional hegemony. Once China controls East Asia, then it will have the capacity to export military power in other regions of the globe (Christensen 2020: 9; Christensen 2015: 36).

Projecting military power in Europe and North America will be very difficult for China, because in these regions there are powerful powers, which will block its expansion. In the case of Europe, after the war in Ukraine, it will be very difficult for China to project military or economic power, because the EU countries, many of them NATO members and Russia will block the outside powers, excluding the US, to have access to Europe. So, for China finding friendly regimes, like in the period of Cold War with Albania or Hungary, in modern times, will be a difficult job, with little chance of success. In the case of the Western Hemispheres, the US will probably block China, like it did during the Cold War with the USSR after the Cuban Missile Crisis. The only regions where China can project its military and economic force will remain Africa and the Middle East, but in this last case this will be too complicated because there are so many regional powers, like Iran and Saudi Arabia, which will probably try to block other powers to involve in their politics.

4. Conclusions

Even though the Chinese soft power and the military projection is not as powerful as the USSR, the economic rise of China turned the country into the most important challenger of the US international order, after the end of the Cold War. Its border issues didn't stop China from becoming the second economic power in the world, but there is still a huge probability for the US to win this competition, even though the international perception is that the US is not managing very well some internal and external issues. During the Cold War, there were periods when the USSR was seen more powerful than the US, but in the end the US managed to win the competition. This can happen again because the US is a democracy and has a big capacity of technological development, but until then the US-China competition will continue to shape the 21st Century as the Cold War did with the 20th Century.

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REPRESENTATIONS IN CODES AND GEOPOLITICAL MODELS OF THE PLURINATIONAL STATE OF BOLIVIA REGARDING DEFENSE AND SECURITY

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Abstract. *The governments of the Movement Towards Socialism implemented profound structural reforms in the Bolivian State, encompassing legal and regulatory aspects and citizen relations, as well as the symbolic production of the State. The creation of the Plurinational State implied reforms in the legal, normative and doctrinal frameworks, based on an institutionalized collective imaginary. This ideological-political construct, known as "national popular" (Cf. Infra), became state policies under the Suma Qamaña model. This doctrine, which emerged from the interpretations, discourses and representations of the various trade union strata of the Movement Towards Socialism, guided the restructuring of the formal spheres of the Bolivian State.*

The study of how the Plurinational State constructed, signified and operationalized the concept of "security" revealed the social relations underlying the political processes and some consequences of its implementation at the societal level. This includes the process of normalization and internalization of a political-citizen habitus, which develops mainly in the informal sphere of social relations, in clear contradiction with the limits and objectives established by the formal sphere. Such habitus not only permeates civil society interactions, but also has a profound impact on the governance and management of state and public policies, as well as on their scope, effectiveness and relevance in relation to the civil society to which they are beholden. This highlights the contradictions between the State, its organs and institutions, and the corporate and union interests that make up the political hegemony of the MAS.

Keywords: *Bolivia, geopolitical models, Plurinational State, security.*

Introduction

This article is an advance of doctoral research, specifically a hypothesis-generating exploratory case study. Its objective is to provide working elements to guide and contribute to the subsequent deepening of the object of study. Specifically, it seeks to answer the question: What representations were present in the geopolitical codes and models referring to security, produced and institutionalized by the Movimiento al Socialismo during the administration of Evo Morales Ayma (2006 - 2019)?

To this end, a chronological systematization of the political field of the Bolivian State during the periods of government of the M.A.S. is recovered from a previous publication [AGUILERA: 2020]. Framed in this chronological

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systematization, the specific objectives of the exploratory case study can be summarized as:

1) Explore the agencies related to the security of the Plurinational State, identifying agents and agencies, for subsequent in-depth investigation.

2) To identify and describe the reforms introduced by the government of the movement towards socialism regarding the conception and meaning of the term "security" by the Plurinational State of Bolivia, based on the comparison of the existing narratives between the Political Constitution of the Republic of Bolivia (2004) and the Political Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia (2009) by applying the specialized software Atlas Ti.

3) Describe codes and models institutionalized by the Movement Towards Socialism in the main Bolivian State bodies related to security (Armed Forces and National Police) during the administration of Evo Morales Ayma (2006 - 2019).

4) Formulate working hypotheses to be tested in the course of the doctoral research.

At the same time, a transversal objective of the study is to identify and record the different components of the categories and hermeneutic units proposed by the model of critical analysis of geopolitical discourse presented by MÜLLER [2010], in order to subsequently apply them through the operationalization of the model in the Atlas ti software.

The case study, qualitative in nature, adopts an interpretative-explanatory approach. In addition to the corresponding literature review, it is based on both a hemerographic exploration and the processing of six semi-structured interviews with key informants or experts, systematized by means of narrative analysis in Atlas ti. The sources used depend on the specific objective.

The main difficulty encountered in the research process was the lack of access to primary sources during the data collection phase, i.e., official documents and interviews with police officials. This was especially noticeable in relation to the comprehensive planning models and security agendas introduced until 2019 by the different administrations led by Morales Ayma. It is necessary to point out this aspect in order to explain the limited availability of information from primary sources, especially regarding the Bolivian Police and, to a lesser extent, the Armed Forces. The sections corresponding to these institutions were written based on data obtained from secondary sources - bibliographic and newspaper reviews; in addition, interviews were conducted with experts and key informants - officers and administrative officials in the case of the Armed Forces and civilian specialists in the case of the National Police - maintaining the anonymity of all interviewees, in order to comply with the ethical protocols of informed consent.

Referential framework. Popular geopolitics, practical geopolitics and formal geopolitics: geopolitical codes, models and representations.

Geopolitics, in theory, language and practice, classifies large tracts of territory and masses of people [FLINT: 2017]. As several authors repeat [FLINT: 2017, CAIRÓ: 1993], all countries, even the smallest, have geopolitical codes and geopolitical models. This can be assumed in several ways, but since the literature review is not of interest at this point, geopolitical codes should be understood as the way a country and its political leaders represent the world and their interaction with it;

in other words, geopolitics as a discursive practice [O'TUATHAIL: 1989]. On the other hand, geopolitical models are the way in which the academic tradition of a state conceives its geopolitics, that is, a formal geopolitics [FLINT: 2017, DALBY: 1996, O'TUATHAIL: 1989].

In this sense, representations are the basic level of imaginaries [MOSOCVICI: 1979, FLINT: 2017], fundamental elements that construct both formal geopolitics and practice, and can be understood both as a self-conception, and as an alter- conception. In the first case:

Geopolitics is a word that evokes images, creates different representations of the geographical entities that are the scenarios of geopolitical action. The construction of representations is an essential part of geopolitics. (...) [A] work to create and maintain an image of the country (...) representation dominates the way [a country] justifies or represents its geopolitical actions. [FLINT, 2017: 65]

On the contrary, geopolitical representations can also be classified as an alter-conception.

The other side of the representation coin is the way countries represent other countries, through two competing representations. (...) reaching an agreement [with a country] requires portraying it as normal diplomacy with a reliable country. (...) acts of hostility and violence require a negative representation of a geopolitical adversary [FLINT, 2017: 65-66].

Geopolitics, in its classical approach, is usually related to the competition between hegemonic powers [CAIRÓ: 2003]; however, here we propose to understand it from the perspective of a hegemonic political project, which deploys a set of geopolitical codes and models oriented on behalf of a strategic (and developmentalist) re-conception of a State -in this case, the Bolivian one; and which, at the same time, orients the production of meaning and governmental management, in order to achieve and perpetuate a hegemony in its respective political field.

This was reflected not only in the introduction of doctrines in state agencies and institutions, but also in the creation of new institutions aimed at the production of specific geopolitical codes, in line with the ideological-discursive reorientation proposed as conceptualization and justification of a set of state policies and new institutional approaches (Cf. Infra).

Initial considerations: geopolitics and security in the south american region

It is necessary to review the state of the art on the meaning of the term security from the tradition of the field of geopolitical studies in the South American region, in order not only to contextualize the writing of the article, but also to show historical aspects that influence the conception of security by the different political projects in the region and how the ideological affinity between them safeguarded, more than once, the legality and legitimacy in the exercise of state power by various governments.

According to RIVERA [2012], thinking about South America´s security and stability in classical or traditional -Westfallian (sic.)- terms, could be considered a deceptively peaceful region; however, crime and violence rates reflect structural contradictions of a socio-political nature, inherited from colonial times. These inequalities delineated a series of social agendas that have inevitably impacted the debate and political course of South American states, making political stability one of the main strategic objectives in the medium and long term.

MALDONADO [2016] and FERRATTO [2015] agree that historical and geographical particularities have influenced South American security agendas over time. These agendas, although based on the European and U.S. tradition, present specific strategic objectives derived from the colonial era, such as: economic development, reduction of inequality and social inclusion and, especially, the continuing problem of indigenous peoples and territory. These concerns have conditioned strategic thinking in South America by linking the conception of security - understood as the stability of governments and political processes - with economic development and social inclusion, often without considering the character and legitimacy of the regimes.

In other words, political and economic stability depends on the fulfillment and satisfaction of various social needs and demands. These include, mainly, access to territory and economic inclusion, the provision of basic services, education, health, and road and productive infrastructure. However, it is necessary to point out that, more often than not, these aspects are conditioned by the corporate interests of associations and power groups represented by the political parties that interact in the webs of power differentials that make up the political fields -always circumstantial- of the different South American states [AGUILERA: 2020].

On the other hand, the 21st century presents new specificities that constitute challenges for the public and political management of South American states. These specificities broaden the concept of security by encompassing dimensions such as food and energy security, as well as the political participation of agencies and agendas emerging from social movements, such as: landless movements, growing migratory flows [CAIRÓ: 2003], informal economies and their relationship with illicit economies -almost normalized- as well as gender agendas -always challenging the traditional conservatism of Latin American societies. Resuming, the exercise of socio-political rights that have become new prerogatives conditioning political stability.

On the other hand, the concentration and availability of strategic *preciosities*[1] and *commodities* in the South American region [BULK: 2012] -starting with the most precious commodity of humanity: water, together with a wide range of environmental services, such as territories suitable for agro-industry and genetic reserves- make it necessary for strategic planning to contemplate contingencies and conflicts regarding the administration, sustainability and territorial use (as formal and informal administrative units) of the Natural Resources present in the different South American regions.

In conclusion, to understand the complexity of security in South America, it is essential to consider political stability as a horizon, its historical, geographical and socio-political contexts. This allows to adequately address current and future challenges in the region, highlighting the importance of understanding the influence of historical and geographical particularities, as well as social demands and contemporary challenges. Contextual framework. Production of geopolitical meaning: the structural

[1] Understood as strategic natural resources, i.e., of high demand due to their use value and consequent exchange value [WALLERSTEIN: 1974].

reforms of the movement towards socialism, hegemonic agent of the bolivian political field between 2006 and 2019.

The three terms of Evo Morales Ayma's government have meant a profound change in the geopolitical representations of the Bolivian State. This is mainly evidenced in the structural transformations -from being a republic (1825 - 2009) to a Plurinational State (> 2009)- consolidated through the promulgation of a new Political Constitution of the State (CPE) in April 2009. In this sense, these reforms formalized departmental autonomies -in exercise since 2004- and included municipal autonomies and indigenous-origin autonomies in the constitutional text, thus inaugurating the vertical distribution of power [MAYORGA: 2018]. Likewise, a fourth power of the State was inaugurated by raising the then National Electoral Court to the rank of Plurinational Electoral Body and constitutionalizing a second round in case there was no simple majority (50%+1) in the general elections.

The 2009 constitution was based, in turn, on what at the time was called a "new civilizing proposal" called *Suma Qamaña*, which encompasses a series of codes and models from the organizational culture and narratives of the components of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS); that is, from the meanings that the historical memory of the unions and social movements that make up MAS produced and signified as the ideological *corpus of* its political project.

Consequently, the codes and models that make the geopolitical agency of the Plurinational State of Bolivia [Cf. Infra] can be understood as an institutionalization[2] of the social representations present in the narratives of social movements and trade unions that constitute the Movement Towards Socialism [SPRINGEROVÁ & VALISHCKOVÁ: 2018].

This institutionalization was consolidated through a constituent assembly and the subsequent promulgation of the aforementioned Political Constitution of the State in April 2009, which, in turn, gave genesis to a series of geopolitical models produced by State intellectuals who proclaim the existence of a "sovereign geopolitical strategy" [PAZ: 2019] and refer to the Bolivian State as an indissoluble unit, or "a single mountain" [AMOREBIETA: 2019]. These codes attribute the role of antagonistic alterity -the *no self*- at the global level to the United States [QUINTANA: 2019; PAZ: 2019] and at the regional level to the Chilean State [MANZANO: 2021, LOIS: 2022, ESTREMADOIRO: 2017]; although these points will be developed with greater attention a few pages later.

Complementing what PAZ [2019] points out, the "sovereign geopolitical strategy" is based on: (a) the *Sumaq Qamaña* or living well as a civilizing horizon, (b) plural democracy [3], (c) autonomy [4], (d) the communitarian economic model, nationalization and control of "strategic natural resources" as well as "strategic sectors of the economy", (e) the "Peoples' Diplomacy", together with democratization and

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[2] Review the STAGGENBORG: 2013 conceptualization.

[3] It recognizes, in turn, three types of political process: representative democracy, exercised through the election of representatives; direct democracy, exercised through mechanisms such as referendums and town councils; and finally, community democracy, exercised through customs and traditions.

[4] Which, in turn, inaugurated the horizontal distribution of power, by electing regional governors - previously appointed by the president [Mayorga: 2016].

access to the diplomatic exercise by intellectuals of the "indigenous" population, (f) gea-politics, or geo-harmony [BORJA: 2014] -a pacifist version of geopolitics for development and integration, g) community security, such as the security model implemented by the Bolivian Police. Meanwhile, the construction of formal geopolitical representations was made around the compilation of Bolivian academic production -with the creation and compilation of the Bicentennial Library, promoted by the Vice-Presidency of the Plurinational State-, taking as a historical reference the work of Jaime Mendoza [AMOREBIETA: 2019].

The referred models and codes were progressively included in the legal structure of the Plurinational State, in the form of laws and doctrines. For example, Law 026, of Plural Democracy, Law 1096 of Political Organizations; Law 031 of Autonomies; Law 699 of International Relations from the Autonomous Territorial Entities[5]; Law 733 of the Integral Planning System of the State (S.P.I.E.), etc.

There was also formal geopolitical production, i.e., codes produced in formal and specialized academic contexts. On the one hand, from institutionalized intellectuals[6], standing out the intellectual and ideological production of characters who held important political positions; that is, decision makers, such as:

- Álvaro García Linera. Vice President during Morales Ayma's administration [2006 - 2019] and main ideologist of the political party, with narratives strongly influenced by the Grasmcian concepts of hegemony and the *Katarista* indigenist movements[7] of the late twentieth century. Among his main ones can be found: "*La potencia plebeya: acción colectiva e identidades indígenas, obreras y populares en Bolivia*" [2012]; "*Las tensiones creativas de la revolución*: The fifth phase of the Process of Change" [2012]; "Geopolitics of the Amazon, hacendal [sic.]-patrimonial power and capitalist accumulation" [2015].
- Juan Ramón Quintana. Considered Morales Ayma's strong man, he held several positions related to security, defense and territory; in addition to publishing a series of academic research-reflections. Highlights: "Police and democracy in Bolivia: a pending institutional policy" [2005]; "Police in Bolivia: unofficial history (1826-1982)" [2012]; "Soldiers and citizens: a critical study on military service in Bolivia" [2016 2nd Ed.].

There is also evidence of the foundation of centers for training and elaboration of their own geopolitical models, as well as institutions aimed not only at academic

[5] That is, from sub-national levels of government: governors' offices, mayors' offices and indigenous-original governments.

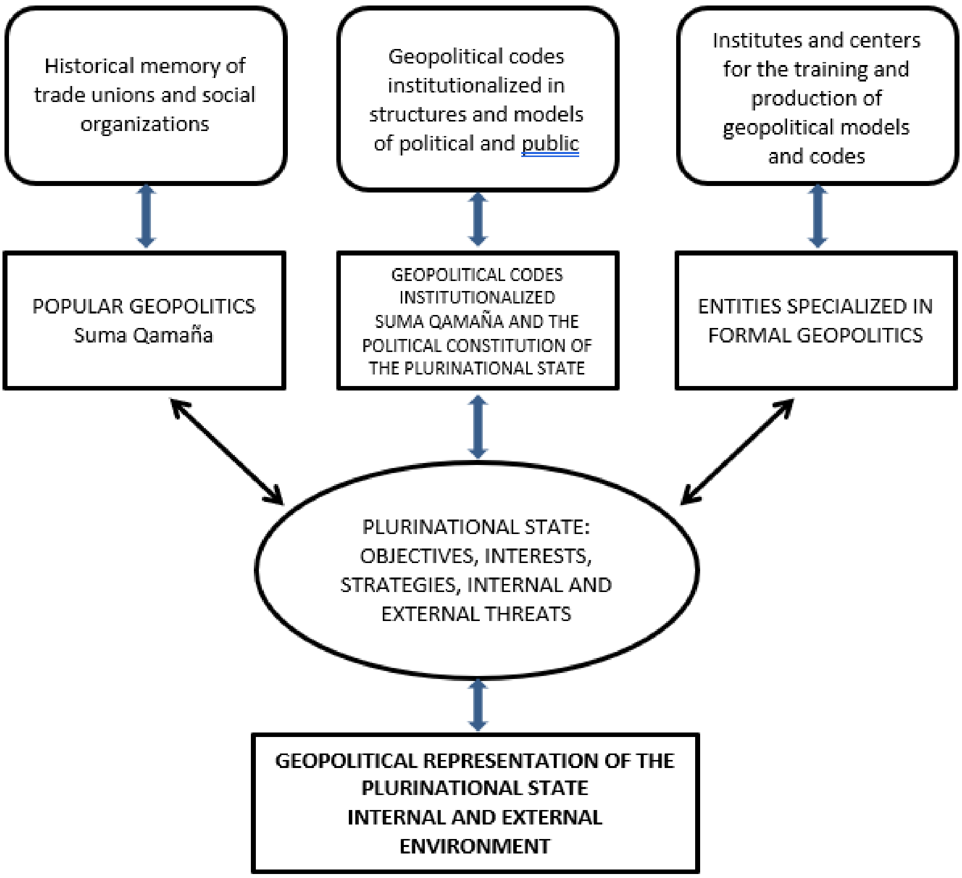
[6] In this case, it is necessary to distinguish between the institutionalized intellectual -that which is part of the state apparatus- and the organic intellectual -that which is part of the political party or social movements.

[7] The Bolivian "katarista" movement is a social and political movement that defends the rights and autonomy of indigenous peoples in Bolivia. It is based on the struggle against oppression and racial and social discrimination, as well as the search for social justice and respect for cultural diversity. They demand the recovery of natural resources and indigenous territories, and promote the economic and social development of indigenous communities. They have been influential in the promulgation of the 2009 Political Constitution of the State, which recognizes indigenous rights and establishes the plurinational character of Bolivia.

production and training of specialized cadres, but also at the political incidence of the same -i.e., formal geopolitics. Some of these institutions are:

- the Vice-Presidency of the Plurinational State [8]
- the Agency for the Development of Macro-regions and Frontiers (ADEMAF)
- the Anti-Imperialist School of the Armed Forces
- and, mainly, the Plurinational School of Government and Public Management (EGyGP) with its Geopolitics Observatory.

Figure 1. Production of geopolitical meaning in the plurinational state of Bolivia



Source: Own elaboration based on Cabrera's model [2019].

The structural reforms and the production/signification of their meanings, also implied a change in the strategic alignment of the Bolivian State; since they not only implied a break with the US continental hegemony, as evidenced by the expulsion of

[8] Although this instance was not founded with the Plurinational State, the then Vice President García Linera, exercised the condition of institutionalized intellectual from the same; through the Center for Social Research of the Vice Presidency and giving rise to a master's degree in Geopolitics of development and integration in 2016.

the US diplomatic mission [9], the DEA [10] and USAID [11], but also entailed the implementation of its own model to fight drug trafficking [CONALTID: 2011] whose approach prioritizes "social control" exercised by coca leaf producer unions over repressive eradication policies and their high social cost, promoted by administrations aligned with the U.S. counter-narcotics model.

On the other hand, the strategic realignment led to the establishment of diplomatic relations, military and technical cooperation with the governments of China, Iran, Russia and, to a lesser extent, India. These relations would have been considered unlikely a few years ago.

Synthesizing the working hypothesis, we have that the Bolivian State was the object of a profound structural, ideological and programmatic reordering; whose significance followed a process that can be traced to the symbolic tradition of social movements - indigenous and trade union agencies; and whose interests are reflected in the same construction of meanings regarding security policies.

The production of geopolitical meanings can be summarized in the following graph:

The movement for socialism (mas) as a hegemonic agent in the bolivian political field

In order to understand the representations that shape the geopolitical codes and models of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, it is essential to examine both the organic structure of the political party that maintained hegemony in the Bolivian State for 13 years, and the historical processes characteristic of the Bolivian political field during that period. As previously mentioned, for this purpose we will proceed to recover and summarize the systematizations of a previous article AGUILERA [2020]. In this sense, it is necessary to distinguish three temporal periods: the first involves the rise and consolidation of the M.A.S. in power (2006-2009), the second refers to the beginning and zenith of its hegemonic condition (2009-2014), while the third period comprises the decline of the hegemony of Morales' charismatic leadership and his subsequent resignation (2015-2019).

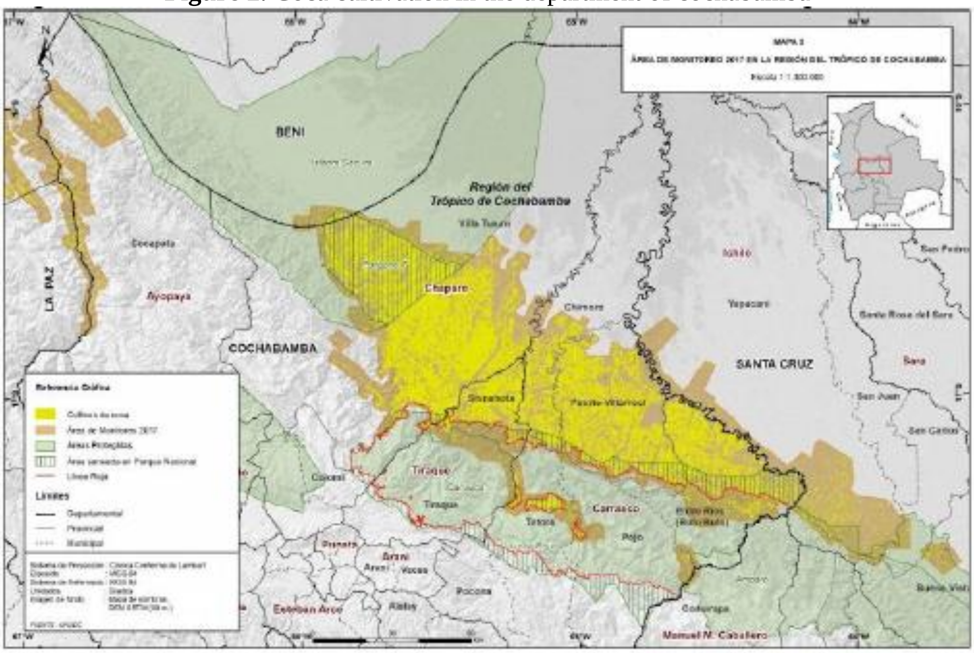
Features of the organizational culture of the movement to socialism

The founders, the core and 'hard vote' of the Movement Towards Socialism - Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples (M.A.S. - IPSP), are the agrarian unions that represent historically disadvantaged sectors of Bolivian society [WALSH: 2008] and whose economic activity often borders on the informal and illegitimate: the Single Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia (C.S.U. - T.C.B.), the Six Federations of Coca Producers of the Tropic of Cochabamba and the Confederation of Peasant Women Bartolina Sisa - the latter two of which bring together, in a single union, the Six Federations of Coca Producers of the Tropic of Cochabamba [WALSH: 2008].T.C.B.), the Six Federations of Coca Producers of the

[9] September 9, 2008
[10] November 1, 2008
[11] May 1, 2013

Tropic of Cochabamba[12] and the Confederation of Peasant Women Bartolina Sisa -the latter two trade union organizations predominantly bring together peasants of Quechua ethno-linguistic origin, settled in the two main protected areas[13] -forest reserves- of the inter-Andean valleys of the Bolivian territory, specifically in the department of Cochabamba:

Figure 2. Coca cultivation in the department of cochabamba



Source: UNDIOC [2018]

In 2009, the Central Obrera Boliviana (C.O.B.), the Federación Nacional de Cooperativas Mineras (FENDECOMIN), the Central Obrera Regional de la ciudad de El Alto (C.O.R. El Alto) and the Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Marcas del Qollasuyo (CONAMAQ) -an entity that brings together the indigenous communities of Aymara ethnicity of the Andean region of Bolivia- joined the political party.

According to Mayorga [2018], one of the main characteristics of the political party in question, is the caudillismo typical of the "national-popular"[14]; that is, the

[12] The Confederation of Coca Producers of Chapare is composed of 965 unions and 50 thousand affiliated families, with a total of approximately 200 thousand producers [BOLPRESS: Union genealogy of the peasant coca leaf. February 17, 2018]. It covers almost all the municipalities of this province. This is reflected in the composition of political power, as the M.A.S. party occupies local government positions and can easily mobilize resources, counting on the logistical backing of the state apparatus and the representation and legitimacy granted by the unions as social organizations.

[13] To the north, bordering the department of Beni, the Isiboro Sécure Indigenous Territory. To the southeast, the Carrasco National Park. In both forest reserves, coca leaf cultivation and gold extraction by mining cooperatives.

[14] This concept of René Zavaleta Mercado refers to the Bolivian political culture, specifically to the leadership of the mining union as a historical actor in the Bolivian social formation, and

organization around the "charismatic leader", in this case -until 2019- Evo Morales Ayma, who deployed a situational charisma, based on his indigenous status and humble origin, showing him as a benefactor who promoted and executed the redistribution of wealth for historically unprotected and excluded majorities. This combination allowed the exercise of representation both in the unions and in the political party, a combination of overwhelming power differentials in the Bolivian political and electoral field.

Another characteristic pointed out by MAYORGA [2018] about Morales Ayma's political style is his confrontationist rhetoric, but his "conciliatory" approach with transnational capitals.

The bolivian political field: three moments in the bolivian historical and political process

The events that took place in the Bolivian political arena during the period between 2006 and 2009 meant a great change in the course of the historical and political processes of the Bolivian State, allowing the consolidation of the M.A.S. as the hegemonic party during the second administration. Three events marked this administration: first, the 2005 election in which the political party in question won the elections with 53.6% of the votes, allowing an unprecedented political majority in Bolivian history; second, the constituent process called by the M.A.S. -which although it had a majority of representatives related to that political party, had to conciliate with the opposition political parties, within the Plurinational Legislative Assembly, to make the new text feasible in legal areas still in force at that time[15]. A third moment, important for the present analysis, was the conflict with the regional political parties and the civic movements of the department of Santa Cruz in 2009, in which the support and the consequent legitimacy granted by the then prosperous UNASUR allowed, after a referendum, the promulgation of the new Political Constitution of the State and the subsequent political hegemony of the M.A.S. thanks to the 2009 elections.

The hegemonic period of the M.A.S. (2010-2015) involved the dissolution and fragmentation of the Bolivian political opposition into a set of regional political parties with no capacity for cohesion, articulation or national representation. During this period the main hegemonic strategy of the ruling party was to expand the consensus capacity it exercised through the realization of social summits that led to the expansion of the political pact, to include, paradoxically, antagonistic political sectors such as the agricultural entrepreneurship of eastern Bolivia -from the departments of Santa Cruz, Beni and Tarija- traditional bastion of Bolivian liberalism [MAYORGA: 2018].

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contemplates the presence of union leaders in areas of political representation (Parliament) as a mechanism for participation and channeling of social demands since the mid-twentieth century. The union is understood as a mediation mechanism between the State and society, transcending unionism into the political arena.

[15] According to BORT [2010], the conciliation referred to three points: the inclusion of the word "Republic" in the official designation of the country, the recognition of non-indigenous urban populations and, above all, to ensure the impossibility of a, at that time, hypothetical third re-postulation of Morales to the presidential elections. It should be noted that, in the course of history, none of the three points of the political agreement that made the new constitutional text feasible was fulfilled.

However, the first precedent of the hegemonic decline of the M.A.S. takes place during this period - in 2011 - when indigenous peoples of the Amazon region marched to prevent the construction of a road that cut in half the Isiboro Sécure Indigenous Park Territory (T.I.P.N.I.S.).

According to SPRINGEROVÁ and VALISHKOCVÁ [2018], such conflict revealed the existing contradictions between the pro-indigenist and environmentalist narratives of Morales Ayma's party with the extractivist policies of the Plurinational State. Evidencing contradictions between the narratives of indigenous nationalism and the prerogatives of the territorial development model, as well as the existing conflicts between the rights of indigenous peoples over their territories and the objectives of the peasant unions that make up the core of the M.A.S. - due to the progressive subjugation of lowland indigenous territories and the systematic occupation of forest reserves to expand coca cultivation areas (Cf. Supra). According to the aforementioned authors, the M.A.S. *framing process* identifies any opponent or critic of government policies as an ally of the conservative, right-wing, racist and, above all, coup-plotting political class. While resorting to union violence with the backing and endorsement of the Bolivian Police which acts, more often than not, as a repressive and protective force of the shock groups formed by mining and coca growers' unions.

The beginning of the hegemonic decline of the M.A.S. can be placed in the referendum of February 21, 2016, which inquired about the possibility of modifying the C.P.E. of 2009 to enable a third re-election of Morales Ayma. Faced with the defeat and the impossibility of a third re-postulation by constitutional means -and ignoring the binding nature of the referendum- the M.A.S. forced the re-postulation under a constitutional sentence that established, in an almost surrealistic way, that the indefinite reelection is a Human Right.

In this regard, MAYORGA [2018], establishes a consideration of interest for the understanding of the object of study: in the 2016 referendum Morales Ayma was competing with himself, making impossible the formation of an antagonistic otherness -as in the beginning had been the "North American imperialism", the "colony" and the "corbatudos" (sic.)- through which to operationalize a political identity. On the other hand, the inaction of the Plurinational Assembly -the Bolivian Congress- together with the permissibility and complicity of the Judicial Body evidenced the failure of both bodies as counter-majoritarian mechanisms, as well as the malleability of "Plural Democracy" [AGUILERA: 2020].

Already in 2019, the deteriorated image of the state institutionality, together with the constant and habitual cases of corruption, had ostensibly degraded the image of the "charismatic" and "indigenous leader" of Morales Ayma- called into question by his attitude and posture before the T.I.P.N.I.S. protests, eight years earlier. Even more, M.A.S. analysts and ideologues ignored, or pretended to ignore, the fact that the percentages of both the middle class and the urban population had grown considerably [CIUDADANÍA: 2018; BRÚJULA DIGITAL: 2018], rendering the ethno-centric narrative unviable as a cohesive factor around which to gestate a political identity and a political discourse [AGUILERA: 2020]. These elements became empty signifiers around which the set of urban movements -civic, in the jargon of the Bolivian political field- had built a chain of signifiers with which to build the narratives of their discourse.

Representations of defense, security and protection in the plurinational state: comparative analysis of the constitutional texts of 2004 and 2009

The comparison of constitutional texts is a specialized and particularly cumbersome task; it should be emphasized, therefore, that for this purpose an exploratory analysis of narratives is applied by means of the specialized software ATLAS ti 23, which contrasts three words in the constitutional texts: defense, security and protection.

A first approximation shows that, while in the 2004 constitution the main concept is Bolivia, the 2009 constitution has as its main concept the word State. Likewise, the map of concepts shows the absence of the word defense in the 2004 Constitution, while in the 2009 Constitution it is one of the most frequently used words. It also highlights the recurrence of the concept of Armed Forces in the 2004 constitution, in contrast to the 2009 constitutional text, which replaces it with the indigenous-origin concept.

The 2009 Constitution defines as central functions of the State, the control, security and defense of the State, creating the Attorney General's Office for this purpose, while delegating the defense of society to the Ombudsman's Office - something it has in common with the 2004 Constitution.

Perhaps the most noteworthy contribution of the 2009 constitutional text is the inclusion of food security as a state function, while recognizing the protection of genetic resources, ecosystems and territorial spaces of the Amazon basin. Similarly, the 2009 text contemplates the defense of human rights, natural resources, biological and genetic material as well as the indigenous-original-peasant nations and peoples (I.O.C.) and their territories along with their uses and customs. On the contrary, the 2004 text recognizes as central functions of the State the protection of private property, medium-sized property and agricultural enterprises.

Both constitutions agree that the task of the Bolivian National Police is "the defense of society, the preservation of public order and the enforcement of laws"; however, as will be seen below, the Plurinational State gave priority to the Police as a repressive force and instrumentalized access to judicial services for political purposes. It delegated to the Armed Forces border guard and anti-smuggling tasks.

In conclusion, the main difference between the two constitutional texts lies in the fact that the 2004 text has a normative character, and includes supreme and presidential decrees, legalizing them -especially as far as the Armed Forces are concerned.

In contrast, the 2009 constitutional text is an ideological corpus centered on the indigenous-original-peasant peoples, giving special attention to the defense of their rights. In addition, it stands out for making the environmental issue a central element in the construction of its narratives, recognizing "Mother Earth" - a euphemism for environment - as a subject of rights rather than simply a good.

This narrative took shape with the holding of the World People's Conference on Climate Change, held from April 19-22, 2010 in Cochabamba, whose product, the "Declaration of the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Defense of Life"[16] , was included as a proposal in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Bonn, Germany the same year.

[16] https://www.cancilleria.gob.bo/webmre/node/1112

Main codes and operations of the movement to socialism: building antagonistic otherness

The main security actions of the Bolivian State were directed towards those that the political project of the M.A.S. considered as threats both to its consolidation and to the interests of the unions that make up its central core. These actions played an important role in the construction of the party's political identity, by serving as elements in the chains of equivalence [LA CLAU: 2008, Müller: 2010] that shaped both the internal and external representations of the M.A.S.

As noted above, codes related to global, regional and local antagonisms can be identified. At the global level, the M.A.S. defined itself on multiple occasions as "anti-imperialist and revolutionary", basing its identity on the criticism of anti-drug operations carried out by governments allied to U.S. hegemony in the region, as well as on the opposition to "neoliberal" and "privatization" policies imposed by the structural reforms of the end of the last century in the American continent.

In this sense, the operations that began the process of Bolivia's strategic realignment stand out, leaving the U.S. orbit (Cf. Supra) to seek to initiate relations with China, concretized by obtaining credits and employing Chinese companies for the construction of road integration and productive infrastructure projects [AGRAMONT and BONIFAZ: 2018].

At the regional level, the M.A.S. instrumentalized the Bolivian historical memory by retaking the maritime issue as an element of identity cohesion. In 2014, the Bolivian state initiated a lawsuit before the International Court of The Hague with the aim of pressuring the Chilean state to enter into negotiations to achieve a sovereign outlet to the Pacific Ocean. In addition, it is worth mentioning the recurrent incidents on the border between both States, in which members of the Bolivian Armed Forces were captured by the Chilean National Police in 2013, 2017 and 2018, taken advantage of by the political leadership to create a referent of identity self-affirmation. These events led to the officers, non-commissioned officers and sergeants of the Armed Forces imprisoned in Chilean territory being considered "national heroes"[17].

At the local level, codes were produced that signified as antagonistic alterities the civic and citizen political movements -that is, not aligned with any political party- that at some point resisted the policies promoted by the M.A.S. or clashed with the interests of the unions that make up the M.A.S.. In this regard, some of these operations can be identified:

a) The civic movement of the then called "media luna", which brought together citizen representatives, mainly urban, from the departments of Tarija, Beni, Pando and, mainly, Santa Cruz. This conflict culminated in an operation on April 16, 2009, in the Hotel "Las Américas", which ended with the death of three European citizens, as well as the arrest of a European citizen and a Bolivian citizen. In this same conflict, the participation of UNASUR stands out as a legitimizing entity of the Morales government at the international level. The combination of both operations -one police and the other diplomatic- put an end to the civic resistance movement. At the same time, these urban and regional movements were characterized as mercenaries, separatists, imperialists and coup plotters [TOMICHA: 2021].

[17] On February 14, 2013

b) The T.I.P.N.N.I.S. march, referred to above, demonstrated that even indigenous movements can be considered as "enemies of the process of change". However, among the narratives promoted by the then Vice-President of the State, those that acquired a geopolitical nuance stand out. One of the main justifications for the construction of the highway was the need to interconnect the departments of Beni and Cochabamba, which affected the road monopoly that Santa Cruz has, since the railroads and highways of Beni are only connected to Santa Cruz. In addition, it was argued that the construction of the road would promote regional development and bring basic services, health and education to the local indigenous population.

c) The elimination of the "mestizo" category in the 2012 census marked the imposition of a citizenship model based on ethnic self-identification and the defenestration of the previous citizenship model[18]. However, although the 2012 census was expected to ratify the victory of indigenous plurinationality, it turned out to be quite the opposite: there was a marked decline in the population that self-perceives itself as indigenous, representing only 40% of the total population. Before the census, the government took it upon itself to delegitimize the "mestizo" option, calling it a "racial, colonial, tributary category", among other terms. After the publication of the census results, the then vice-president reaffirmed this interpretation in his speech of August 6, 2013, as an opuscule of his essay on Bolivian identity: nation, mestizaje and plurinationality.

d) The 2016 referendum was a turning point for the Bolivian political arena. It not only demystified the figure of Morales as a charismatic leader, but also unveiled a series of events that delegitimized the hegemony of the M.A.S. in the Bolivian political field, mainly referring to the perks and corruption as a political *habitus*. Faced with the wave of criticism, the M.A.S. resorted to a repetitive narrative of interventionism from "the empire", alleging defamation and disinformation campaigns by "pro-imperialist" and "separatist" media, which were labeled as traitors and secessionists.

e) The 2019 elections marked a turning point in the historical process of the Bolivian political field. These elections were widely questioned due to serious irregularities that led the electoral observer missions of the Organization of American States and the European Union to qualify them as fraudulent, null and void and shameful. These elections reflected the frustration of the urban populations in the face of the excessive abuse of the unions and the contradictory discourses in relation to democracy and representativeness. For the M.A.S., they represented the emergence of a new antagonistic figure: the "pititas", who embodied the urban sectors with a

[18] In the decades following the 1952 National Revolution, the idea of a mestizo nation was promoted in the governmental sphere as a signifier that homologated citizenship, replacing ethnic categories with notions of social class such as "peasant" or "worker". In the 1976 and 1992 censuses, during the Banzer dictatorship and the democratic government of Jaime Paz Zamora respectively, no information on ethnicity was recorded. However, starting with the 2001 census, the ethnic self-identification question was reintroduced as part of constitutional and legal reforms to affirm the "pluri-ethnic and multicultural" nature of the nation. The results of this census showed that 62% of the population identified themselves as indigenous, which had important political repercussions, since during his inauguration as President of the Republic, Evo Morales highlighted this census result above the electoral results, pointing out that indigenous peoples, who make up the majority of the Bolivian population, represent 62.2% of the total population.

predominantly western cultural consumption and whose identity resisted being classified as indigenous. The narrative of the then ruling party characterized these movements of the urban middle classes as "coup plotters" and "fascists" since, from their perspective, what happened was not an obvious fraud, but a conspiracy of foreign[19] and national interests to seize Bolivian lithium [TOMICHA, 2021]. It is curious to observe the speed with which the Argentine, Venezuelan, Cuban and Russian media reproduced and signified, often from a paternalistic approach towards the Bolivian community, the narratives used by the M.A.S. to justify the failed electoral process.

Construction of codes and representations in the tutelary organs of the plurinational state: armed forces of the plurinational state

The Armed Forces of the Plurinational State of Bolivia underwent profound reforms in terms of their doctrines. This was a reflection of a deep questioning of the status/role of the armed forces during the history of the Bolivian state; according to QUINTANA [2016 (2nd Ed.)], such questionings can be summarized as:

- Compulsory military service in Bolivia has historically been used as a tool of social and political control by governments.
- There is a significant gap between the official rhetoric of military service as citizenship training and the abuses and mistreatment that occur within the armed forces.
- The military recruitment and training system does not comply with international human rights standards and causes a series of psychological and emotional problems for recruits.
- Military service is perceived by many young Bolivians as a burden and an interruption in their education and personal development.
- Living and working conditions within military units are precarious and contribute to the perpetuation of abuses and violence.
- There are socioeconomic inequalities in the way military service is applied, as low-income youth have fewer options for evading it.
- Structural reforms are required in the military recruitment and training system to guarantee respect for human rights and promote effective citizen training.
- It is necessary to encourage citizen participation and dialogue to rethink the role of military service in Bolivian society and seek alternatives that are more inclusive and in line with individual rights.

One of the first measures adopted by Morales Ayma in relation to the Armed Forces was the inclusion of cadets of indigenous origin in the Military College - traditionally relegated to sergeants and non-commissioned officers. This change began in 2008 and resulted in the formation of several promotions that included indigenous officers at the time of graduation from the Army Military College.

This was also manifested in the symbolism of the Armed Forces, which incorporated the Cuban revolutionary phrase "Homeland or death - we will win"

[19] According to TOMICHA [2021] the figures and interests that intervened, gestated and financed the "coup d'état" were: Elon Musk, Obama, Trump and the European Union - mainly Germany and the United Kingdom.

together with the traditional harangue "Long live Bolivia - towards the sea". In addition, changes were made in the military symbols by including the wiphala[20] , an indigenous flag created by the *Katarista* movements, as a central element in both the insignia and the coat of arms of the Bolivian army:

Image 1. Coat of arms of the bolivian army

Source: Ministry of Defense of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

On the other hand, thanks to the support and financing of the Venezuelan State at the time under the leadership of Hugo Chavez, improvements and renovations were implemented in the military infrastructure throughout the country. These policies contributed to improving the general standard of living of Bolivian soldiers and promoted respect for their human rights.

According to interviews with a senior officer, specifically a Lieutenant Colonel in favor of the "process of change", one of the main aspirations of senior officers at the beginning of Morales Ayma's mandate was to improve their income, as had happened in the case of the Venezuelan Armed Forces. In this sense, various bonuses granted to officers for training and rank were eliminated and incorporated into the salary scale.

Finally, as mentioned above, the role of the armed forces in state security underwent a change as they took on new specific responsibilities. Mainly, they focused on border control to combat smuggling, in addition to playing an active role in citizen security by taking over from the Bolivian Police during the mutiny of its cadres on June 23, 2012.

Construction of codes and representations in the tutelary organs of the plurinational state: the bolivian police and structural reforms.

Perhaps one of the most representative institutions of the contradictions that characterize the Bolivian State is the Bolivian Police. Covered by the Organic Law of

[20] The *wiphala* is a flag of Andean origin that represents the indigenous peoples of the region. It became an emblem of the struggle for the rights of indigenous peoples and the vindication of their identity and culture. Thanks to the CPE of 2009, the *wiphala* has acquired a status of recognition and respect in the country, and has become a central element in various areas of Bolivian society, representing the cultural and ethnic diversity of the country.

the National Police No. 734, enacted on April 8, 1985 during the government of Dr. Siles Suazo, its functions were de-concentrated as of Law 264, of 2012. This law delegates to the Autonomous Territorial Entities competencies related to the provision of economic, infrastructure and logistical resources that, under the concept of citizen security, have the objective of achieving a decentralization of police units.

Juan Ramón Quintana summarizes the codes with which the police institution is understood in Bolivia. The book "*Policías y democracia: a pending institutional policy*" [2016] raises the need for a deep reform in this institution. Its main conclusions are:

- It highlights the existence of contradictions and challenges in the role of the Bolivian Police within the Bolivian State.
- It addresses the Organic Law of the National Police No. 734 of 1985 and Law 264 of 2012 as legislative milestones in the deconcentration of police functions and decentralization of police units.
- He criticizes the lack of reform in the doctrines of the institution, which continues to maintain a classic conception of security centered on security and criminal justice policies.
- It stresses the need for greater articulation between the police and democracy, and raises the importance of an institutional policy that promotes transparency, accountability and respect for human rights.
- The author stresses the importance of building a citizen police force, close to the community and committed to the protection of citizens' rights.
- It is concluded that there is a pending task in the construction of a true institutional policy that strengthens the relationship between the police and democracy in Bolivia.

With respect to Morales Ayma and his speeches, three moments were found in the representations regarding the Bolivian Police.

- On December 8, 2005, ten days before the general elections that led to his first term in office, when asked about the role of the Bolivian Police, Evo Morales Ayma said: "I prefer to give money to private security, they do patrol".
- Subsequently, during the 2012 riot, Morales Ayma said: "The previous commander has asked me for [resources] and has told me: 'give me brother president and I will put an end to crime', he has not complied".
- One of the most difficult moments Morales Ayma faced with the Bolivian Police was during the police mutiny of 2019, which resulted in his resignation. These events gave rise to the creation of the epithet "motines", used to refer to police personnel, their unionism and the politicization of their role by senior cadres and officialdom.

However, during the governments of Evo Morales Ayma in Bolivia, and unlike the Armed Forces, no significant reforms were carried out regarding the doctrines of the Bolivian Police. The institution maintained a traditional conception of security, focused on security and criminal justice policies. No profound changes were implemented in terms of community security approaches, human rights protection or structural reforms in the police. To this day, the institution continues to operate with a classic conception of security, which has led to an increase in penalties and types of crimes, generating a saturation in the legal and penitentiary system.

National police: security as a social field, the national police habitus

During the interview, the specialist in security and Bolivian Police reaches a relevant conclusion: the police institution shows resistance to structural reforms, mainly due to the normalization of corruption among its members. They have internalized practices of obtaining "informal and illegal rents", the result of extorting citizens and criminals, as well as obtaining resources for almost any activity of vehicle control or obtaining documents in which they are involved. Even worse, the continuous cases of police violence made this institution the main entity violating human rights in the country [UNITAS: 2022].[21]

Other issues identified through the interviews and the hemerographic review were as follows:

- The unionization of its cadres and their high level of corruption reflect the importance of informal settings and scenarios in the institution's decision-making process.
- There are no selection criteria for its cadres, a considerable percentage of its officers have disciplinary and criminal records [AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: 2010; OPINION].[22]
- As a result of the 2019 conflicts, a political purge process has been initiated, favoring elements related to the governing party in terms of assignments and seniority, favoring political affinity over professional suitability.
- Social intervention models are unrealistic because they are based on biased diagnoses (repeating data, without objective or impact indicators as established by the S.P.I.E.), seeking to justify budgets and not contemplating social or institutional control of effectiveness and efficiency (audits).
- Along with the judicial system, the Bolivian Police is the most socially questioned body, with very low levels of trust [LAPOP: 2018].
- There is an overlapping of functions, as the Bolivian Police aspires to take on the role of the Armed Forces, emulating not only uniforms and regulations, but also training its cadres with military instruction.

With regard to the Bolivian Police, it can be concluded that, although the Morales Ayma government initiated a process of adaptation of the police institution, it is not effective, mainly due to a series of factors:

- The State administration prioritizes the political field in terms of the usefulness of its security forces. This is due to the fact that within the movement to socialism the image of political otherness has been created as an enemy to be eliminated: the ghost of the "pititas", as the political antagonist that defeated the charismatic leadership in November 2019.

[21] The 2022 Situation Report shows and breaks down the violations of the freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly, democratic institutions and the right to defend political rights:
In quantitative terms, (...), the National Police accumulated 25% of the total number of violations recorded; this figure corresponds directly to its disproportionate intervention in social conflicts, particularly those involving protests questioning the national government (68% of the cases of its participation)."

[22] "13 cases that tarnished the police during the last decade" July 4, 2023

- There is no such thing as a social intervention model (integrated planning). The existing documents do not establish action protocols, nor indicators by objective or impact (the S.P.I.E. is not applied).
- As a result of the corporate (sectorial) interests that the socialist movement represents, the police do not have the capacity for real intervention in terms of macro security problems such as drug trafficking.
- The politicization of promotions in the Police and Armed Forces produces not only a drop in morale among officers, but also a profound questioning of institutionalism.
- Politicization has also favored the collusion of corruption networks both at the organizational level (the last 5 commanders of the Space Force for the Fight against Drug Trafficking are in jail) and at the inter-organizational level (cases of corruption networks among judges, prosecutors and police).

Conclusions

During the terms of Evo Morales Ayma in Bolivia, a structural and ideological reordering of the Bolivian State took place based on the demands and meanings generated by the social movements and trade unions that make up the Movement Towards Socialism (Movimiento al Socialismo). These reforms focused their narrative on ethnic representation as the main element of articulation in shaping their political identity and citizenship project. However, this had dire consequences for the concept of citizenship proper to liberal democracy - based on individualism, business and private property; since the current State protects and privileges corporate or unionized citizenship, i.e., that which can exercise power differentials through political representation or social pressure in the streets.

On the other hand, although the (M.A.S. - I.P.S.P.) managed to consolidate a political hegemony during two terms in office (2010 - 2019), based on a charismatic leadership and the representation of historically disadvantaged sectors of Bolivian society, such as agrarian unions and indigenous communities; such narratives were left aside at the time of promoting policies and projects that responded both to the political project itself, and to the economic interests of the various unions that make up that political party.

Geopolitical models in Bolivia have evolved, from the rise and consolidation of the M.A.S. to its hegemonic decline, demonstrating the ability of this party to include diverse agents and agencies in its political pact. However, the articulation of the elements and narratives that make up its discourses has not been able to overcome the structural contradictions of both the State and the [internal contradictions] of the party itself.

The 2009 constitution highlights the protection of indigenous rights, food security and environmental conservation, considering "Mother Earth" as a subject of rights. However, the conflicts of 2011 scuttled any environmental pretensions in the narratives that make up the discourses of the M.A.S. This can be corroborated by contrasting said discourse with the "General Coca Law", enacted on March 8, 2017, which benefits coca producers in the Chapare by establishing 22,000 hectares of coca, legalizing in fact 7,700 hectares in the Tropic of Cochabamba[23] . Even more, a review of the coca growing areas of the coca growers' unions in the department of Cochabamba - Morales Ayma's social and political base - shows that such illicit activity[24] overlaps with protected areas, denying any environmental pretension of the same, demonstrating the prevalence of union interests and the extractivism they promote.

In addition to the contradictions between narratives, discourses and political operations, other factors contributed to the hegemonic decadence of the M.A.S.The progressive erosion of the charismatic leader's image due to the widespread corruption among its political members, as well as its contemptuous attitude towards the protests of the urban middle classes, degraded the party's image, facilitating the emergence of urban and political opposition movements and becoming nodal points that articulated the creation of an alternative identity and antagonistic political position, whose identity representations do not fit with the forced ethnic adscription that makes the core of the M.A.S. political identity and citizenship proposal.

The fact that the "mestizo" category was omitted in the 2012 census ballots demonstrates the inability to assimilate into an ethnocentric political identity sectors that do not identify with any "indigenous-originating-peasant" nation and whose cultural consumption is undeniably Western. The political leadership of the State has taken the path of denial and invisibilization of this population in the political citizenry, instead of the integration and assimilation of these urban sectors.

In this sense, it also resorted to the construction of an antagonistic otherness, through which the political party in question forged its political identity. This significance can be traced even before Morales Ayma assumed the presidency. From the so-called "*corbatudos*", which referred to the technocrats who held political representation during the neoliberal period, to the "separatists and fascists" during the conflicts of 2008 and 2009, to the "*pititas*" in the conflicts of 2019.

Paraphrasing Müller [2010], the function of geopolitical discourse is to establish hegemonic articulations that establish identity, by denying and annulling empty signifiers that may generate antagonistic chains of equivalence. In this sense, the M.A.S. has employed various strategies, including symbolic violence, especially in social networks[25] , to the denial and invisibilization of representations discordant with their narratives. It is paradoxical that they describe the political antagonist as fascist, given the recurrent use of unionized shock groups under the protection of state forces, particularly the Police a.

[23] This law defunds Law 1,008 of the Coca and Controlled Substances Regime, which only allowed 12,000 hectares in the territory of La Paz and considered illegal production in Chapare because it was not ancestral. In other words, it legalizes coca cultivation in Cochabamba's Chapare. According to the agency, the majority of coca production in Los Yungas is commercialized in the legal market, while in the case of Chapare, a little less than 10% is destined for legal human consumption [UNDIOC: 2018].

[24] According to the UNDIOC report, 91% of coca leaf production in these regions is destined for the production of narcotics.

[25] https://about.fb.com/ltam/news/2023/02/reporte-de-amenazas-adversarias-cuarto-trimestre-2022/

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III. CULTURE, IDENTITY AND ISSUES OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

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SOCIAL CAPITAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL NETWORKS IN THE CONTEXT OF TIMIȘOARA – EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2023

Corina TURȘIE*

Abstract. *Knowing that the ECoC label is a potential platform for generating social capital for the cultural sector, this article proposes, using the tools of network science, an empirical analysis of the cultural ecosystem of Timișoara 2023. The results allow to discuss the density of the network of partners, the centrality of the most connected partners, the intensity of collaboration between partners and the clusters of collaboration by type of organization. The results can be a policy resource for investigating the sustainability of the cultural ecosystem after obtaining the title of European Capital of Culture.*

Keywords: *cultural ecosystem, network, social capital, bonding, bridging, linking.*

Introduction

Four generations of European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) have succeeded so far, coinciding with three different sets of European legislation (Sassatelli, 2009; Garcia & Cox, 2013). As the European legislative framework evolved, changes occurred in the program objectives but also in the cultural development strategies used by cities (Gordach & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007; Malcom, 2005; Sacco et al . 2013; Turșie, 2015a). Nowadays, the ECoC title is obtained after an internal national competition; candidate cities have several years to prepare a cultural program with a European dimension based on cultural cooperation between several types of actors; the program must be sustainable and an integral part of the long-term cultural and social development of the city.

The perspective of sustainable development through culture produced increased research interest and raises a recurring criticism: the instrumentalization of culture for mainly economic goals (Garcia, 2004). This perspective is opposed by another: a bottom-up and non-market vision of cultural development in which social participation, social capital and community cohesion take precedence over economic considerations (Sacco et al., 2014). However, if long-term urban development effects are produced by planning lasting legacies and social and cultural impacts (Liu, 2017), the difficulty remains in measuring them because of their non-tangible character (Garcia, 2005; Turșie & Perrin, 2020; Scardino et al., 2022; Vujičić et al., 2023).

How can we investigate the sustainability, dynamism and cultural effervescence of a ECoC without counting bricks and mortar, as is usually done: the number of cultural institutions and their capacity to receive the public or the number of

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tickets sold? How do we measure the impact of the title on the lasting strengthening of the local cultural sector? Without having the ambition to answer all these questions, this article proposes, with the help of network science tools, an empirical analysis of the collaboration networks of Timișoara 2023. This research topic is even more provocative since these connections and networks of collaboration contribute to the development of the European dimension of a ECoC program, task perceived to be challenging especially in peripheral post-socialist cities (Turșie, 2015b; Vesalon & Crețan, 2019). By choosing Timișoara 2023 as the territory of the analysis, this case study contributes to the literature on the importance of the ECoC label for the fourth generation of ECoC cities, those which, since 2019, must propose and follow monitoring and evaluation plans of their cultural programs. New methodological approaches, such as the proposed one, can be a valuable resource, particularly for public policies.

1. European Capital of Culture, social capital, networks

The link between the ECoC title and the development of social capital has been discussed by several researchers. The ECoC title is perceived as a potential source of social capital generation for the cultural sector (Liu, 2017). Richards et al. (2013) mention mechanisms used to increase social capital, either by increasing interaction, fostering higher levels of identification, or supporting social structures and networks. Palmer (2004) considers that the added value of the degree of collaboration within the cultural sector can have important implications for event planning, such as an increase in the number of visitors, an increase in the attention generated by the event and the opportunity to benefit economically. Finally, these collaborations contribute to the sustainability of the title, because the lasting value of the ECoC lies in the international contacts and networks created during the year (Sjøholt, 1999) and the possibility of learning by taking part in networks.

Social capital is a complex and contested concept, with divergent interpretations of its meaning and use (Bordieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000) and with different levels of analysis: individual or community-level. In a simplified analogy argument, if human capital refers to a person's abilities, and economic capital refers to money, then social capital refers to human relationships and networks. The structure of human relationships inherent in social capital can be captured in the idea of social networks, that is, the network of relationships between individuals in a given population. Researchers generally agree that social capital is seen as a resource accessible through social contacts and networks, with norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or between groups (OECD, 2001). Bourdieu conceptualizes social capital more as an individual resource, dependent on a person's social position, while Putnam sees it as a resource for the community or society as a whole.

At the community level, the assessment of civic engagement by the number of organizations within it can be a good measure of social capital because it signals opportunities for connection building, that are both strong and inexpensive to establish. The *bonding* social capital described by Putnam connects members of socially homogeneous cultural groups. It is more introspective, promotes reciprocity and collaborative action and helps inspire a sense of belonging. The notion of bonding social capital has been criticized in particular in terms of personal interest, exclusion of foreigners and outsiders (see among others Callahan, 2005; Baycan & Öner, 2022). *Bridging* social capital makes it possible to create links between heterogeneous groups; it is more outward-looking and helps limit existing divisions. Such networks provide access to information and resources outside the group and stimulate the strengthening of community cohesion, because people who form bridges between usually unrelated groups can serve as mediators between these groups and mobilize the individuals for common causes. According to Putnam, the two types of social capital have different objectives but can coexist and be prioritized accordingly. Critics of Putnam have also developed the concept of *linking* social capital (Woolcock, 1998), which adds a political dimension to the analysis, because this type of social capital forges links with those who have financial means, influence and political power.

The idea of social networks is central to understanding the concept of social capital. Additionally, elements of social capital such as obligation, trust, information channels, norms, and sanctions are facilitated by the structure of social network. Thus, network density or network closure helps create trust and effective norms (Coleman, 1988) or the so called generalized reciprocity that Putnam speaks of. Multiplexity in networks, that is, actors knowing each other in more than one context, can facilitate what Coleman calls appropriable social organization or the benefits of one context's relationships being appropriated to be used in another (Coleman, 1988).

This research mobilizes the concept of social capital at the community level to analyze the development process of the cultural sector of Timișoara 2023 within the framework of the collaborations developed. The empirical basis of the analysis is composed of the Timișoara 2023 bid documents: the 2016 Bid Book (Timișoara 2021, 2016) and its revised version in 2022 (Timișoara 2023, 2022). The proposed study is a relational analysis of collaborations between cultural organizations within the cultural and creative ecosystem of Timișoara 2023, as an innovative instrument for investigating community social capital.

The ecosystem approach to culture has been described by researchers as well as policy makers. The European Commission (2018) highlights in its new "European Agenda for Culture" the importance of the cultural and creative sectors for innovation, job creation, cohesion and the well-being of societies. At the heart of this approach is the idea that the cultural and creative sectors operate cross-sectorally with different adjacent sectors, or with completely different sectors. Thorsby (2008) spoke of interdependence: economic, social, cultural and environmental systems should not be seen in isolation. A holistic approach is needed instead, that is, one that recognizes the interdependence, particularly between economic development and cultural development.

In this paper, by discussing cooperation and exchanges, or joint initiatives with local, national and European cultural and creative operators, we also have the opportunity to reflect on the resilience of the cultural environment of Timișoara, understood as its capacity to rebuild itself after a crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic context, which led to postponing Timișoara's ECoC title is highly relevant here. Also on this point, Cox (2000) believes that the forces of social capital come into play when communities face conflicts, problems or changes. Social capital measures complement and expand the range of usual social indicators and offer new perspectives on how we can create a more resilient societal system.

In the following, the study is divided into three parts: a brief chronology of the challenges faced by Timișoara in the preparation of the ECoC title, a presentation of the cultural and creative ecosystem of Timișoara 2023 as an analysis of the network of cultural actors included in the application documents, and finally a discussion on the sustainability of the cultural and creative environment of Timișoara as well as some implications for public policies.

2. Timișoara 2023 - a chronology of challenges

Using the slogan "Shine your light, light up your city!", Timișoara ECoC 2023 evokes in its application file several meanings of the metaphor of light. Timișoara is the city of "firsts": in 1884, it was the first city in continental Europe whose streets were lit by electricity. Additionally, the spark of the 1989 Anti-Communist Revolution began in Timișoara. Furthermore, in a symbolic understanding, the inner light of citizens whose energy is activated will be the legacy of the ECoC title.

The Bid Book is composed of three symbolic territories to explore, from darkness to light. The 'people' territory evokes the dimension of social inclusion and the need to increase access and participation to culture. The 'places' territory explores center-periphery issues, whether it concerns the equitable distribution of cultural events in the different districts of the city, or the cross-border dimension of the candidacy, involving the surrounding historic region of Banat. The 'connections' territory opens up reflection on the European dimension of the candidacy, built - among other things- through partnerships with diverse cultural and creative actors. The symbolic journey across these territories is marked by 'stations' and ‚routes' - flagship projects- and the stations and routes have 'hosts' – leaders- and 'partners' – which are local and European organizations.

Timișoara won the national competition for the ECoC title in 2016. At that time, the candidacy was prepared by the Timișoara 2021 Association, a non-governmental structure, closely linked to the Municipality. Several unwanted turns occurred in the preparatory phase of the title, during 2016-2020: Timisoara 2021 Association have been strongly criticized by part of the local cultural community, with accusations of clientelism; moreover, delays in the public funding promised by the three financing institutions – the Municipality, Timiș County Council and the Ministry of Culture, seriously complicated the preparations. Furthermore, in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected the planned cultural events, by blocking them of forcing them to migrate online. Adaptive management measures have been taken at the individual and collective level (Matei et al., 2021). Finally, Timișoara's ECoC year has been postponed to 2023.

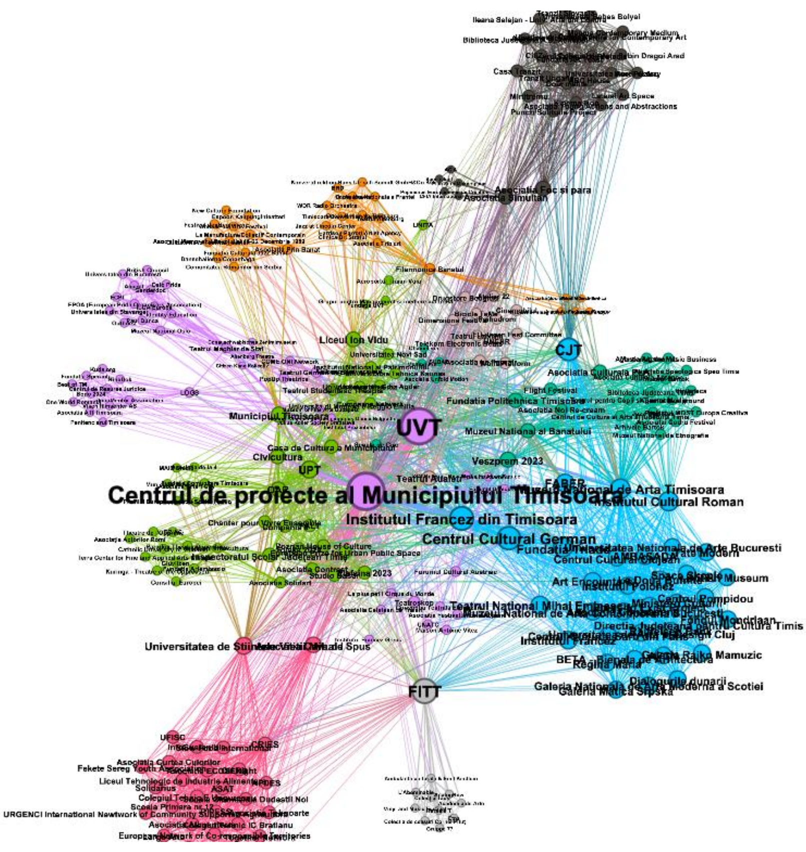
After the 2020 local elections, changes in political power were followed by the resignation of the director of the Timișoara 2021 Association. A new public institution was created - the Center for Projects of the Municipality of Timișoara - with the aim of managing the title and preparing an updated Bid Book. The initial bid was filtered to present only projects considered feasible to be implemented in the short term until 2023, managed by organizations with solid cultural activity in recent years. The former Timișoara 2021 Association changed direction and only retained communication and fundraising functions.

From then on, the governance of Timișoara ECoC 2023 became quite complicated. The new Bid Book, published in 2022, just a year before the cultural year, presented only 70% of the projects to be implemented, financed mainly by the Municipality and by the Timiș County Council. The other 30% remained to be developed during 2023. Several calls were launched at the end of December 2022 and during the entire year 2023, alongwith the arrival of the long time promised funding from the Ministry of Culture. Hence, more collaborations were being created even as the cultural year unfolded, adding new actors and projects to the existing cultural and creative ecosystem.

3. The network of collaborations of Timișoara 2023

The analysis of the network of collaborations developed by Timișoara 2023 is based on the data contained in the updated Bid Book of Timișoara 2023, published in 2022. The cultural program of Timișoara 2023 was analyzed and organized in order to obtain a symmetrical matrix on the network of collaborations between cultural actors. Figure 1 is a 272x272 matrix and the results are visualized with Gephi software.

Figure 1. The network of collaborations of Timișoara 2023



Source: the author (with Gephi)

The 272 nodes represent all organizations involved in the implementation of the Timișoara 2023 cultural program, which are mentioned in the Bid Book. The larger the node, the more projects the organization is involved in. The largest nodes (in purple) are the Center for Projects of the Municipality and the West University of Timișoara; other large nodes (in blue) are the Timiș County Council, the French Institute of Timișoara and the German Cultural Center. The lines connecting the nodes represent collaborations between these organizations, which share common stations and routes. The network consist of 3466 lines.

In Figure 1, the colors represent the thematic clusters of the cultural program, in terms of cultural stations and routes. More precisely, the descriptive sheets of the stations and routes presented in the Bid Book were analyzed to extract information on the host organizations – the leaders- and on the partner organizations. Three types of collaborations were noted: leader – leader (shared leadership); leader - partner; and partner – partner (shared membership). The results will allow us to discuss the density of the partner network, the centrality of the most connected partners, the intensity of collaboration between partners and collaboration clusters by type of organization (node).

The analysis shows the 272 local, national, European or international organizations involved in the Timișoara 2023 cultural program. We can extract from this network information on its structure, its actors and the relationships between them, which are presented in the following.

The network density, calculated with Gephi, is 10%, meaning that 10% of the organizations in the Timișoara 2023 cultural program were connected in a common project in 2022. Further reflection can start from here, questioning whether this is an opportunity or an obstacle?

It is important to mention that all the 'hosts', i.e. those responsible / the leaders of the funded cultural projects, are Romanian organizations; they are the main actors of the ECoC title. Additionally, most of the partner organizations are from Romania (55%), mainly from Timișoara. The European partners (Figure 2) are organizations from France (4%) or Germany (3.8%), or from neighboring countries which also have ECoC cities – Hungary (Veszprem 2023), Serbia (Novi Sad 2022) (4%) and Croatia (Rijeka 2022) (1%).

Figure 2. Partner organizations by country

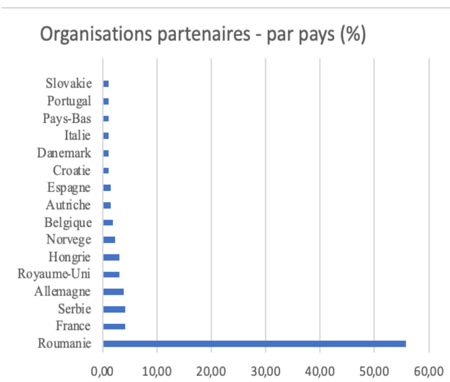
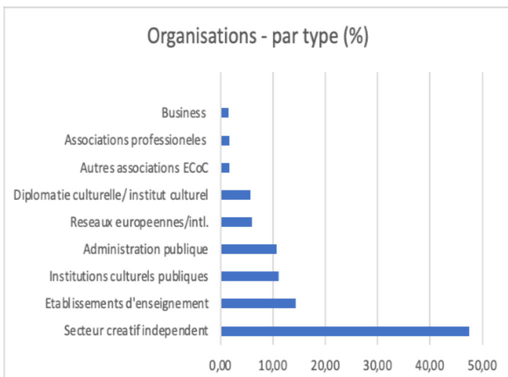


Figure 3. Partner organizations by type



Source: the author

Figure 3 shows the type of organizations involved in the cultural program of Timișoara ECoC. A large number of partners organizations belong to the independent cultural and creative sector (understood here as non-governmental or private actors), contributing to the cultural effervescence of the city (Popa et al., 2021). For this research, the subtypes of actors by field of activity have not been detailed. Other actors involved in the Timisoara 2023 cultural program are as follows: 14.28% - educational establishments (universities and schools – the majority from Timișoara and Romania but also from other cities; for example, the University of Novi Sad or the Technical University of Kaunas); 11.08% - public cultural institutions (theaters, opera, philharmonies, orchestras, museums and galleries); 10.69% - public administration institutions (municipalities, county councils, ministries); 6.03% - European networks (permanent transnational collaborations between different public and private organizations such as Europeana Network, European Network of Co-responsible Territories or Slow Food International); 5.67% - cultural diplomacy organizations such as cultural institutes from different countries, in the traditional understanding of state-led activity, anchored in bilateral processes (such as the French Institute in Timișoara, the Polish Institute in Romania, the German Cultural Center in Timișoara, the Serbian Cultural Center in Paris, etc.); 1.60% - other associations managing ECoC titles (Bodo 2024, Elefisna 2023, Veszprém 2023); 1.59% - professional associations (organizations not linked to culture, such as intensive therapy doctors, landscapers, speleologists, etc.); and 1.53% - organizations from the business sector (banks and private hospitals in Timișoara, etc.).

As we have seen, different types of organizations are involved in the revised Timișoara 2023 cultural program highlighting the added value of collaboration: pooling resources, increasing public participation, social inclusion or cultural innovation. For example, a recurring cultural event in the Banat region, a classical music concert in the Românești Cave, now involves a cavers' association and the Timișoara Philharmonic as partners in a heterogeneous network. “Spotlight heritage” is a project which involves the National Museum of History of Banat and the Polytechnica University of Timișoara, aiming to develop a digital platform using augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies, to offer a virtual journey through five neighborhoods of Timișoara.

Knowing that within the cultural and creative sector opportunities for innovation are missed due to a lack of cross-sector collaboration (Goethe Institut, 2020), it is important for ECoC cities to map the local creative and cultural environment early in the preparatory years towards the title, in order to identify resource organizations and their bridging potential and to imagine public policies favoring the type of intersectoral collaboration that is meaningful for the local community.

In terms of connections, the best connected organizations in the Timișoara 2023 cultural program are presented in Figure 4. The indicator “Degree” expresses the number of connections in cultural projects working together with other organizations. We note the significant importance of the first two organizations – the Center for Projects of the Municipality and the West University of Timișoara – the largest nodes in the cultural network of Timișoara 2023. The “Closeness centrality” indicator expresses the status of being a central organization, that is to say having the possibility to connect with most of the other nodes, using the shortest paths. Here we find the so-called resource organizations, those having significant relational capital: an organization of the youth sector (the Timiș County Youth Foundation), several foreign cultural institutes (French and German) located in Timişoara, a few public administration institutions (the Timis County Council), several public cultural institutions (the National Museum of Art of Timișoara, the National Theater “Mihai Eminescu” Timișoara) and the independent sector, notably mentioning here a gallery of modern art of national importance (Timișoara Triade Foundation) or an independent community center (Faber - the largest of this kind in Timișoara). Faber was built on the premises of a former oil and paint factory and represents an initiative of urban regeneration of industrial heritage, a practice which is rather rare in Timisoara (Pavel & Jucu, 2020). The West University of Timișoara is also present in this Figure; being the largest educational institution in the region has well-established relational capital and is also a reservoir of know-how to share in the community.

The “Eigenvector centrality” indicator characterizes an organization strongly connected to other well-connected organizations; these are organizations that collaborate in several projects with the same organizations, having many other collaborations themselves. Whithin the cultural program of Timișoara 2023 the multiplexity feature (or actors who collaborate in several projects) primarily characterizes actors with a strong and constant operational capacity.

Figure 4 also highlights the central position of the Center for Projects of the Municipality, a public institution which manages the financing of most of the projects included in the Bid Book and therefore, having control over the financial resources, expresses an important linking social capital. A person designated as curator in each component of Timișoara's cultural program was made available to network actors, with the task of building collaborations, providing the local community with valuable linking social capital.

Figure 4. Best Connected Organizations

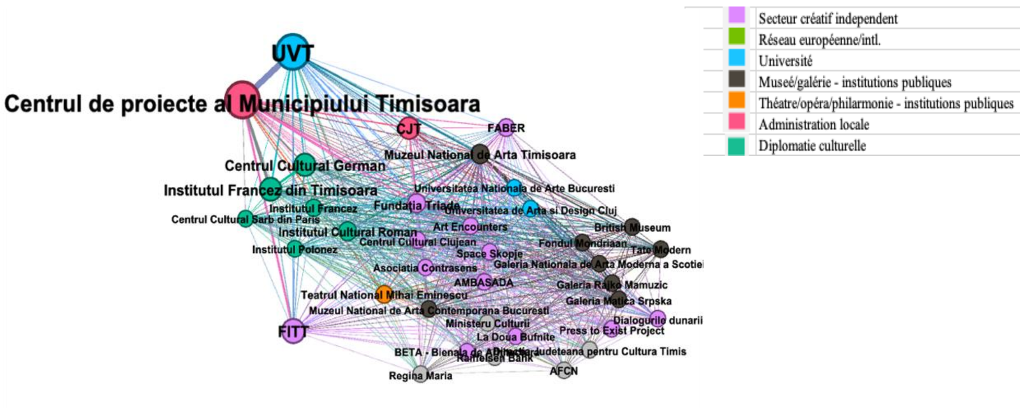
Nr.	Organisation	Degree	Closeness Centrality	Eigenvector Centrality
1	Centrer for Projects of the Municipality of Timișoara	251	0.96	1
2	West University of Timișoara	213	0.89	0.96
3	Timiș County Youth Foundation	94	0.67	0.59
4	French Institute of Timișoara	90	0.66	0.55
5	German Cultural Centre of Timisoara	84	0.65	0.53
6	Timiș County Council	79	0.64	0.51
7	National Museum of Art Timișoara	64	0.61	0.42
8	Romanian Cultural Institute	58	0.60	0.41
9	Triade Foundation Timișoara	57	0.60	0.41
10	Faber Timișoara	52	0.59	0.37
11	National Theater “Mihai Eminescu” Timișoara	46	0.58	0.37

Source: The author (with data for Bid Book Timișoara 2023)

The importance of a resource organization within the network lies in its potential to facilitate the rapid creation of new connections. Taking the case of the Centre Pompidou, who is part of the cultural program of Timisoara 2023, we could argue that if a cultural actor would wonder who to contact in order to organize a future event involving the Centre Pompidou, a good strategy would be to identify an organization already linked to this cultural institution. This example is not randomly taken since probably the most important cultural event in terms of budget and potential visibility for Timisoara 2023 is represented by an art exhibition of the sculptor Constantin Brâncuși, taking place between September 2023 and January 2024, involving high profile partners such as the Center Pompidou and Tate Modern London.

The network of actors, part of Timișoara 2023, which highlights the connections involving the Centre Pompidou (ego newtork Centre Pompidou) is represented in the next two figures, by type of organisation (figure 5) and by country (figure 6). The bonding feature of the network can be understood through the clusters of connections between similar actors: key independent cultural actors (with violet), in the field of visual arts such as the Triade Foundation and the Art Encounters Foundation of Timișoara; public cultural institutions such as the Tate Modern in London, the British Museum in London, the Matica Srpska Gallery in Novi Sad, the National Museum of Art in Timișoara; institutions of cultural diplomacy (French, German, Polish or Romanian cultural institutes and centers); universities (West University of Timișoara, National University of Art in Bucharest, University of Art and Design in Cluj-Napoca). Without taking into account the scale of the nodes here (Figure 5 represents the scale of the nodes in the entire ecosystem and not in the ego network of Centre Pompidou), the network involving the Center Pompidou expresses also the heterogeneity feature: actors of different types are connected in cultural projects and share common routes and stations in the Bid Book.

Figure 5. *Ego network* Centre Pompidou – by type of organisation

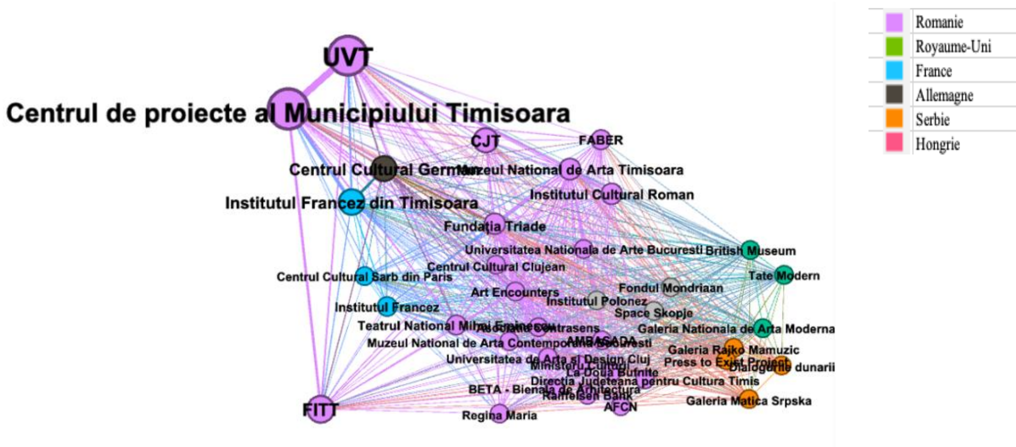


Source: The author (with Gephi)

The bridging social capital feature is expressed by the fact that the network involves heterogenous actors, such as the contribution of a private hospital and a banking institution which support the Brâncuși exhibition in Timișoara. In this network we also find the Art Encounters association, which organizes a Contemporary Art Biennial in Timișoara and which carries out cultural mediation projects involving schools, with the aim of introducing children to the understanding of art contemporary.

The coexistence of bonding clusters as well as bridging relationships in a cultural network express different objectives to be achieved, planned by cultural managers. Bonding is necessary to connect similar organizations such as local artisans interested in craft fairs or musicians interested in sharing rehearsal rooms. Bridging facilitates meetings between different actors who bring added value; hence the importance of *thiers-lieux* such as Faber in Timișoara or community youth centers in the neighborhoods of Timișoara, as resource organizations and meeting places.

Figure 6. *Ego network* Centre Pompidou – by country



Source: The author (with Gephi)

Knowing that the European dimension of a ECoC cultural program can be expressed by collaborations with foreign organizations, in the case of Timișoara 2023 we find both a regional approach and an internationalization approach of cultural networking. Some of the European organizations with which Romanian organizations are best connected in cultural projects are located near Timișoara (figure 7). They involve other ECoC partner cities, reflecting a regional approach: Veszprém, city with which Timișoara shares the CEC title in 2023, and Novi Sad, city with which Timișoara was to share the title in 2021. Another part of the most connected partners is made up of well-established cultural institutions such as those previously mentionend, reflecting the need to increase the city's international profile through major events that bring high visibility, in an internationalization rationale.

Figure 8 describes the best connected organizations located in Romania which are part of Timișoara 2023 collaboration network, highlighting the major role of three public universities of Timișoara. According to Sorenson et al. (2006), there could be social capital effects based on the proximity of cooperative learning establishments such as universities, research institutes or even community centers. West University of Timișoara and Polytechnica University have developed their own cultural programs included in the Timișoara 2023 cultural program (the "Reflections" and "Bright

Cityscapes" stations), with the objective of sharing knowledge in the community, exploiting their know-how and the already existing institutional relationships.

Figure 7. Best connected organisations

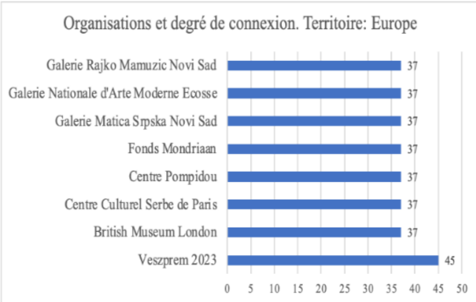
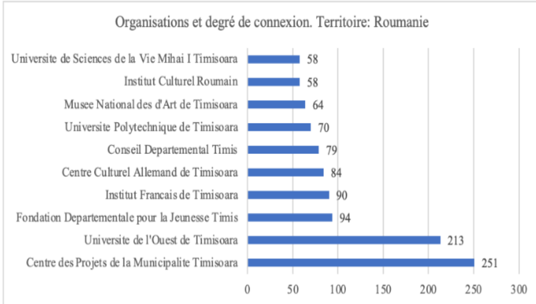


Figure 8. Best connected organisations



Source: The author (with data from the *Bid Book*)

The role of cultural diplomacy, represented by institutions such as the French Institute of Timişoara or the German Cultural Center of Timişoara, is also central to ensuring the European dimension of the title. Building international contacts and projects in a pandemic context has been a real challenge, thus having these types of organizations nearby was a key resource for the preparatory years of Timişoara 2023.

The importance of the Timiş County Youth Foundation, which manages neighborhood initiatives such as the creation of youth centers, lies in its key role in achieving social inclusion objectives. An example of inclusive best practice involving the Foundation was described in Lamour et al. (2022). 15 youth centers were created by transforming industrial buildings into open spaces that cater to young people from all social categories, including disadvantaged young people who live in remote neighborhoods. These spaces hosted various activities, ranging from educational activities to artistic and cultural events (concerts, plays, exhibitions) and leisure activities. In the context of the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, and in order to express European solidarity, the Foundation opened a transit center for Ukrainian refugees in its main youth center in Timişoara.

4. Network sustainability and implications for public policies

The potential for social capital to make a positive contribution to policy outcomes in various areas of social and economic concern such as societal well-being, community safety, culture, education and health has sparked interest among decision-makers and researchers (OECD, 2001; White, 2002; Hellerstein & Neumark, 2020).

The analysis of the collaboration networks created within Timişoara 2023 is an opportunity to reflect on the long-term social impacts of the title. Analyzing the cultural program put in place by Timişoara 2023 requires a relational approach. The 2022 revised Bid Book expresses pragmatic developments and decisions taken after the pandemic and in the absolute proximity of the cultural year. Most of the partners involved are organizations from Romania based in Timişoara. Public institutions (museums, universities, cultural institutes), which proved to be more resilient during the pandemic than the independent sector, are more intensely connected in projects. The increased involvement of Timișoara universities in the life of the community represents a learning potential and a potential for know-how transfer in the community. The European dimension of the cultural program is expressed, among others, by the partnerships created, reflecting two approaches: a regional/cross-border cooperation with local partners and an international rationale for collaboration, with European partners. The intense collaboration with foreign cultural institutes located in Timișoara represents more accessible means of internationalization ‘at home’.

A limitation of the research is represented by the fact that the described network is only the static image of the actors involved in the implementation of the Timișoara 2023 cultural program at the level of the year of the revised Bid Book (2022). In essence, taking a snapshot of the local network of cultural collaborations to link its importance to local development can be misleading. What may initially appear to be a positive resource for local development may change at some point, when the benefits of strong links in the local network reach their peak. Furthermore, the described network does not identify the behavior of the actors, the levels of trust, the integration of norms, all of them being dimensions of social capital to be further investigated. Ultimately, the network density, calculated with Gephi, was 10%, meaning that 10% of the organizations involved in the Timișoara 2023 cultural program were connected, showing an open network, with relationships to be either developed or lost.

What will be the legacy of the title after the cultural year? The sustainability of the network of collaborations set up for the title is questionable based on the experience of other EcoCs, for which the cultural excitement subsided immediately after the cultural year, due to lack of similar levels of funding for culture and by the fact that the organizations managing the title use to have a limited existence.

It is important to mention that for Timișoara 2023 the title facilitated the introduction of a new reference framework to give an outline to the cultural and creative environment of the city: the cultural ecosystem. Timișoara's Bid Book uses this concept by describing a program called “Power Station”, aiming at long-term capacity building for the local cultural sector, offering services, funding and support to individuals, organizations and local institutions during the cultural year but also afterwards. Networking between local and international actors, intersectoral cooperation and cultural mediation are the key points of the program, in order to obtain a legacy of the title.

In conclusion, this research proposes, using the tools of network science, a representation of the collaborations developed within the cultural program of Timișoara 2023. The description of the collaborations between the local, regional or international actors involved - as a snapshot for the year 2022 - allows us to have an image of the European dimension of the project. This is a milestone for future analyses of the cultural and creative sector and of its dynamic.

It is important to emphasize the usefulness of representations and measures of social capital in public policy decisions, knowing that social capital is also a political resource (Montgomery, 2001). Several questions arise, which can be explored in depth in future research using plural methodologies: what practices or cultural policies could lead to future development of the cultural and creative ecosystem in the long term? In terms of network resilience, understood as resistance to crises, what is the future of the ecosystem if an actor should disappear? These studies could be useful for other ECoC candidate cities that would be interested in measuring social capital to understand why some communities adapt better to change than others, why some communities are able to do better with a given set of resources and what influences shape community confidence in achieving goals. If the links between social capital and community trust and adaptability prove strong enough, then building social capital in communities will likely become an increasing public policy priority.

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LINGUISTIC CHALLENGES DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC IN EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract. *It seems that in the last few years the crises in Europe are at the order of the day, on each country's agenda. From an economic crisis to a sanitary crisis and lately a security crisis, the European Union has to face different challenges. Communication in this period is very important in order to keep us safe and to be protected. During the Covid-19 pandemic European Union faced different linguistic challenges (Piller, 2020; Civico, 2021) that caused misinformation or lack of information among the people. As Marco Civico observes, "People with limited knowledge of the local dominant language may be excluded from information campaigns about measures to contain the spread of Coronavirus and vaccines." (Civico, 2021:2)*

Linguistic diversity and multilingual communication in European Union is a reality, being one of its main objectives. However, the multingualism is challenging (Czyzewska, 2014) and one of the most important limitations in communication that came with the Covid-19 pandemic is the devaluation of minority and regional languages and the rise of English-centered multilingualism in the communication (Crnic-Grotic, 2020).

Our paper will be structured in two main parts. In the first part we will discuss about the difficulties and challenges of multilingualism in European Union nowadays and we will focus on the multilingual communication during emergency situations (Civico, 2021). In the second part we will review the strategies adopted by European Union regarding the multilingualism during the Covid-19 pandemic and we will try to analyze how minority and regional languages were impacted by them. In both situations we will base our research on the official websites of the institutions of the European Union and on studies or articles already written by other researchers and scholars. On the basis of the findings of this review, we will propose a number of conclusions about the causes and consequences of the difficulties related to multilingualism in emergency situations.

According to Ingrid Piller, Jie Zhang and Jia Li (Piller & all, 2020:503), Covid-19 crisis is a great lesson for us to open a space for intercultural dialogue and to better integrate the multilingualism in communication.

Keywords: *linguistic challenge, communication in EU, multilingualism, communication in crisis, communication during covid-19*

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The Covid 19 pandemic has brought with it many language challenges for the European Union. This difficult period has imposed restrictions and changes in the way people communicate, especially in the area of public health and safety. In the context of a global health crisis, the EU has had to address issues related to the translation and interpretation of information related to Covid 19 into a multitude of official languages of the Member States. This approach has been crucial to ensure effective and coherent communication across the European Union.

One of the EU's main objectives during the pandemic was to provide accurate, up-to-date and understandable information, regardless of the language they speak. This required close coordination between the European institutions and Member States on the translation and interpretation of Covid-19 related communications. For example, the European Commission quickly developed a dedicated web portal where pandemic-related information and recommendations were published and translated into all official languages of the European Union. This involved a considerable effort in terms of human and technological resources.

In this paper we will try to make a short review of the multilingualism policies of the European Union nowadays by focusing on the multilingual communication during the emergency situations. In the second part of the article we will move our focus on the strategies adopted by the European Union and the member states and we will analyze them. At the same time, we will examine the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the regional and minority languages. Our research is based on the official websites of the European Union, on studies and articles already written regarding the aspect that we investigate. For conclude we will stress the main aspects regarding the linguistic challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic in European Union.

1. Multilingualism in the European Union over the time and the challenges of the policy in the European Union

The multilingualism was a policy of the European Union that existed since its creation, but more visible since the adhesion of the countries from the former communist area, in 2004. Always had an important and decisive role, even if during the time was moved in different portfolios. The maximum recognition of the policy was in 2007 when the Multilingualism represented a portfolio *per se* in the European Union, portfolio that was attributed to the Romanian commissioner Leonard Orban and lasted for 3 years, between 2007 and 2010. Later, the policy was part of the Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth portfolio and attributed to the Cypriot commissioner Androulla Vassiliou from 2010 to 2014 (Dendrinos, 2018:14). Since then the Multilingualism didn’t from part of any other portfolio and it was on this time that the Civil Society Platform for Multilingualism, launched in 2009 by the European Commission stopped being financially supported and receiving mandates (Dendrinos, 2018:15). This decision led to the creation of an autonomous NGO, called European Civil Society for Multilingualism (ECSPM), which is living up to its mission and growing with the inclusion of academic institutions (European Civil Society Platform for Multilingualism, 2018). The Multilingualism continued to be a policy of the European Union, but maybe not so visible.

While the commissioner Orban was leading the Multilingualism portfolio, the appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity in European Union was presented as a priority for Europe. In a speech from 2009 he said that “We should use this diversity to

Europe's advantage. A culture of multilingualism promotes a culture of openness and tolerance. These are crucial values not only for Europe, but for the entire world. Any realistic international vision for the future of our world has to be founded on acceptance and appreciation of different cultures – and languages are at the heart of any culture. In the Commission's strategy on multilingualism I emphasize that multilingualism can play a key role in intercultural dialogue, in creating more cohesive and more sustainable societies" (Orban, 2009). At that time, the Multilingualism was seen as an asset for Europe and a shared commitment.

Some years later, the approach toward Multilingualism was a bit changed. By 2012, when the European Commission recommended "Rethinking Education: investing in Skills for Better Socio-Economic Outcomes", the conclusions regarding multilingualism and languages were articulated more instrumental, utilitarian. The European Council recognized that "linguistic diversity is a fundamental component of European culture and intercultural dialogue", but also "a good command of foreign languages is a key competence essential to make one's way in the modern world and labour market" (Council of Europe, 2011:4).

The European Union's policy regarding the multilingualism has always had three important aims: the protection of Europe's rich linguistic diversity, the protection of languages and to give citizens access to European Union's legislation in their own language. All the decisions taken regarding the multilingualism had to do with these aims. Since 2014 the Multingualism was more present in different types of projects like "European Language Resource Coordination: supporting Multilingualism in Europe", which is an interesting network developed to manage, maintain and coordinate relevant language resources in all official languages of the European Union, but especially public service documents (European Commission, 2017). Supporting multilingualism from the point of view of language learning had several projects also. One of them is the Erasmus + Programme for Education and its objectives to include the promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity. In supporting mobility, which offers students and working adults the opportunity to experience different socio-cultural realities in education and work, it provides help via Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support (OLS) to programme participants to learn and assess themselves in the language of the host country (European Commission, 2020). Other types of projects regarding the multilingualism are also present and other initiatives took place. We have mentioned just a few of them, the scope of this article not being the enumeration of all the European projects regarding the Multilingualism, but to see the change of the vision in the European Union regarding this policy.

One interesting initiative is the European Day of languages, celebrated every year on 26th of September, when all sorts of events that promote language learning in the European Union take place, including the European Language Label, that is an award by the Commission designed to encourage new initiatives in language teaching and learning, to reward new language teaching methods and to raise awareness of regional and minority languages (Dendrinos, 2018:17).

Another important collaborator of the European Commission since 2014 is the European Center for Modern Languages (ECML) with its headquarter in Graz, Austria. The mission of the ECML is to encourage excellence and innovation in language teaching and support its member states in the implementation of effective language education policies. The Modern language Division of the Council of Europe is responsible for the production of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (Council of Europe).

Summarizing and viewing the evolution of the Multilingualism over the time, we arrive at the conclusion of the European Parliament that “Multilingualism is the language of the European Union” (European Parliament, 2022). Despite this, the Multilingualism has its own challenges, obvious because the European societies are facing rapid change due to the technological advances, globalisation, but also ageing population.

Looking at the Multilingualism policy from the economic point of view it seems that implementing the policy is firstly very expensive. Just for the translations in the EU, the total cost of translation and interpretation in all the EU institutions is around 1 billion Euro per year (1% of the EU budget or just over 2 Euro per citizen) (Czyzewska, 2014:91, European Parliament, 2022:7). Spending around 2 euros per year in order to ensure that all the citizens have access to the legislation of the EU in their language seems good value for the money. However, the average cost across the EU is not necessarily the indicative figure to take into consideration, as the number of people speaking EU official languages differs substantially.

Another challenge for the Multilingualism is the fact that implementing a multilingual policy in the EU also takes time (Czyzewska, 2014:93). Translation of official documents into all official languages can take several months which results in delays in the adoption of EU documents. The problem of translation delays has been observed especially in the period of the largest enlargement of the EU when the number of official languages increased. The third challenge regarding the Multilingualism policy is also the fact that the EU is also connected with the future accession of new EU Member States. Countries as Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia or Turkey will widen the number of EU official languages. Accession of new EU Member States will thus result in an increase of translation and interpretation costs of the EU institutions in order to respect the principle of the linguistic diversity in the European Union.

In conclusion, it’s essential for the EU to encourage all the citizens to be multilingual and to keep with the objective of multilingualism in the UE to know two foreign languages apart the mother tongue, even if this objective is an old one and may seem obsolete.

2. Strategies adopted in Europe regarding the multilingualism during the Covid-19 pandemic

We should start this part of our study by saying that the strategies that we will present do not represent an exhaustive examination of the situation during the covid-19 pandemic. This part of the study is based on information found on papers already published regarding the situation of multilingualism in the pandemic. On the other part, it is possible to not have seen everything is published until now regarding our topic. Anyway, the scope of our paper is to show how multilingual communication is made at the level of the Europe in crisis situation and the reaction of the European Union.

The covid-19 pandemic took many governments by surprise and forced them to take decisions that have been neglected during the time regarding the communication in urgent situations. The pandemic demonstrated that the multilingual communication is important in order to be everybody informed and not to create panic, misunderstanding or suppositions. The lack of an adequate "inclusive multilingual communication" (Civico, 2021:2) in emergency situations can lead to severe inequalities.

As strategies adopted by the European Union regarding the multilingualism, we can mention a few. First of all, it was created the institutional website of the European Commission with information about covid-19 in all 24 official languages of the European Union, even if in the early days of the pandemic the Commission published an official document on the disease in English only (translations were published in the following days and weeks, but the fact that these documents were initially available exclusively in a language that, at the moment of publishing, was the native language of roughly 2% of the EU population and spoken fluently by another 10% is quite telling of the attention to multilingualism in emergency situations) (Civico, 2021:10). But, even if the European Commission published the translations in a few days, the regional languages were excluded and also the languages of the migrant populations. Another interesting aspect was that a member of the European Parliament, Andor Deli, addressed a parliamentary question to the Commission on April 21, 2020 on the subject "Difficult challenges faced by minority language media outlets during the pandemic." In particular, the question concerned the consequences suffered by the already struggling minority language media, with particular reference to national minority languages. Noting that media outlets are crucial for the maintenance and promotion of minority languages, he argues that the current funding from the EU is not enough to support the industry in this critical moment. Furthermore, the Commission said that it will continue co-funding specific internship opportunities in minority language media with a budget of 700,000 euros (European Commission, 2021).

In general, there were some countries that cared more about the multilingual communication during the pandemic, for example the Portuguese Government published some leaflets in 15 languages of some migrant communities and also the Belgian Government published online information about corona virus in 29 languages of migrants living in Belgium (Civico, 2021:10). On the other side, the Ministry of Healthcare of Slovakia was skeptic regarding the vaccination campaign and disregard the ethnic minorities (Civico, 2021:11). In general, the lack of information in languages other than the country's official language(s) was noted to not only cause a non-homogeneous spread of information, but also to pass on the idea that minority languages are less important than the official ones (Crnić-Grotić, 2020).

The international body tasked with coordinating the global response, the World Health Organization (WHO), makes information available in the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish) and three additional languages (German, Hindi, Portuguese) although in practice English predominates, as it is the language of press conferences. World Health Organization information is primarily directed at member states, which are then tasked with localizing relevant information for their populations through their national health authorities. This means that states have been key actors – including information providers – in this crisis. Most of the world's states operate in one or two national languages only, and linguistic minorities within those states – whether indigenous or migrant – face significant language barriers at the best of times. Around the world, the exclusion of linguistic minorities from fair and equitable access to social participation is something common (Piller, 2020:505).

In general, the communication between governments, organizations and citizens is made by different channels. For example, the publishing of policy documents is one of the manners in which this communication is made. Concerning the case of the covid-19 pandemic, many policies were addressed to the hospitals and other health care institutions, but also to the general public. The information addressed to the general public concerned mainly recommendations and rules of conduct to follow during the pandemic in order to limit the diffusion of the virus. In this kind of situations is important that the information be accessible and understandable to the general population and to all the subgroups that may exist. It is obvious that the information between governments and citizens do not only flow through papers, but also through others means like television, internet and press. And of course, these other means are the most common source of information for the majority of people, regardless their level of education and their language proficiency. The only common thing between these two ways of communications is the language in which the information is transmitted (Civico, 2021:6-7, Piller, 2020:505). On the other side, this information is transmitted in the majority of cases in the national language of each state. This has been contributed to the fact that the persons speaking a regional language or a minority language be vulnerable to misinformation and fake news.

Some countries of Europe have taken more interest than others in the covid-19 pandemic. For example, in Denmark, in March 2021 were organized webminars in order to discuss the situations of the ethnic minorities with respect of the covid-19 situation. Several local good practices were identified, like using young people to explain and spread accessible and multilingual information on digital platforms. Also, some NGOs took the initiative to step and provide multilingual information in minority languages. This is the situation of the NGO Danish Refugee Council, which created a website where they provided information about covid-19 in 12 different languages (Civico, 2021:11).

Finland also is a good example when we talk about the communication in different languages during the covid-19 pandemic. The Finnish institute for health and welfare formed a Multilingual and Multichannel Coronavirus Communications Task Force in collaboration with the Finnish Ministry for Social Affairs and Health. This channel is the response to the need of information in multiple languages and the objective was to offer correct and appropriate information to the persons who have migrated to Finland and need to be informed. It seems that Finland went a long way for proving multilingual information about the pandemic. They managed to produce and to translate materials in 24 different languages and to disseminate it through various channels of diffusion like television, social media or different web pages (Civico, 2021:12-13).

Another very interesting and good news was the fact that the Deaf community received a lot of attention during the covid-19 pandemic. Antonio Guterres, the United Nation Secretary General, expressed his feeling of inclusion for these people, saying that this is the opportunity to implement more inclusive and accessible societies (Civico, 2021:14). In order to do this, during the pandemic, it was very important that the information be spread also in sign language. However, this was difficult in some situations, as there are deaf people using the lip-reading when communicating with other persons. It’s not the case for all deaf persons, but they exist. In this situation, the obligation to wear a mask made impossible the communication with many deaf individuals. So, the recommendations for this category of persons were, on one side that the hospitals to rely, if possible, on sign language interpreters specialized on medical communication, but also the use of transparent masks, in communication with deaf persons. Also, it was recommended the use of an application on phones that converts the speech to text in order that the medical staff could use it and could transmit their information to the patients. In addition to these measures, it was recommendable also that the information made available in text format in public spaces to be accompanied by a QR code that gives access to the same information in the national sign language (Civico, 2021:14).

3. Causes and consequences of the difficulties related to communication in emergency situations in the European Union

The communication during emergency situations is something that outbreak with the covid-19 pandemic. They are not some many publications dating before 2020 (Civico, 2021:3) and presenting communication in this type of situations. In this sense, the journal *Multlingua* published a special issue (volume 39, issue 5) titled “Linguistic diversity in a time of crisis: Language challenges of the covid-19 pandemic” and dedicated all the articles for this type of situations. One thing that call out our attention is the fact that one of the authors, Li, (2020) even calls for the establishment of a specific subdiscipline of linguistics, which she names “emergency linguistics”, that should focus on the contributions of linguistics during emergency situations, while Teng (2020) includes emergency language services within the larger category of the national emergency management system (Multilingua, 2020).

Moreover, and maybe totally understandable in the context of a pandemic situation, most of the studies even regarding communication were published in medical journals, rather than in social sciences journals, and authored by medical doctors rather than by linguists or social sciences experts (Civico, 2021:3), thing that its somehow logical, because the emergency was related to the medical sector and the first reactions were in that sector. In their study, Knuesel et all (2020) mention the fact that it’s not justified the fact the institutions were caught unprepared for covid-19 from the point of view of communication and this fact was highlighted in other occasions too, not just in the context of the covid-19 pandemic. As an idea to improve the communication in this specific type of situation, Knuesel et all (2020) suggest that health care institutions could value more the skills of multilingual doctors and medical staff, able to attend patients in their language in a competent way. Communicating with the patients in their own language leads to a better understanding of the treatment, of the patient condition and a better confidence of the patient in the medical staff. In his article from 2021 dedicated to the barriers in communication during covid-19, Marco Civico even presents some studies that demonstrate the fact that being treated in your own language improves the medical act and the response to the patients to it.

Limited access to interpretation and translation services has always had a significant impact on people who are not native speakers of the local language or who are deaf or hard of hearing. This has been especially true during the pandemic. Language barriers are one of the most substantial problems of restricted interpretation and translation services. It can be difficult for non-native speakers of the local language to understand crucial information about the virus, preventive measures, medical instructions, and governmental regulations. As a result, people can find it challenging to seek medical care, adhere to safety guidelines or decide what is best for them during the pandemic. It's critical for people and healthcare professionals to communicate clearly, especially in times of health emergency. But the absence of adequate interpretation and translation services makes it difficult for medical staff to comprehend patients' symptoms, medical histories or concerns. This lack of communication can result in incorrect diagnoses, unsuitable treatments, or a deterioration of patient-provider trust, all of which compromise the standard of care. Multicultural communities were the most affected during the pandemic by linguistic challenges. As seen before a lack of translating or interpreting services and the virtual communication issues led to miscommunication. These people not only struggled to understand the basic information and guidelines and took longer to adapt to the virtual reality created by the pandemic, but they also had issues in accessing healthcare and other essential services.

It is somehow interesting the manner in which Pillar and all (2020) counts the number of languages in the world. Making a small experiment regarding the languages on Wikipedia, they argue that global public communication is conducted through a small number of languages, between which the English language is the second most frequently used. The conclusion is that the global knowledge dissemination is limited to a small number of languages, and this was the case also when the covid-19 pandemic has started (Piller, 2020:504). Or, the communication in critical situations concerns the languages needs of migrant populations, especially for the population settled on a territory. Covid-19 was an example that the communication is challenging, but covid-19 was only a trigger, because there can exist other emergency situations and we have to be prepared. These kinds of situations are not only health care crises, but it can be wars, earthquakes, floods or others. Actually, Marco Civico observes in his paper "Covid-19 and language barriers" that "People with limited knowledge of the local dominant language may be excluded from information campaigns about measures to contain the spread of Coronavirus and vaccines" (Civico: 2021:2).

On the other part, the states are not the only actors in our world and the information that circulates emanate from a wide variety of social actors, from media corporations to political parties or other kind of groups. Some of them are specifically dedicated to make public health information available in languages insufficiently served by state actors. Others have contributed to a so called infodemic, where the persons who don't have access to high-quality information were permanently exposed to misleading information. Actually, we can speak about a combination of language barriers, on one hand and low levels of trust in official communications on the other hand. These have made the minority populations vulnerable to misinformation and fake news regarding the covid-19 pandemic (Piller at all, 2020:505).

The corona virus pandemic was not only a health crisis, but also a political and even spiritual one (Piller at all, 2020:509). In that time, for a human being, not being able to gather with another person or to hug a friend was something disturbing. Many persons have found themselves separated from the loved ones during the pandemic, not only because of the quarantine, but also because of the travel restrictions that kept families apart. This entire means that the language challenges of covid-19 do not only relate to the dissemination of information, but also to relationship building. Emergency communication is also about establishing and providing comfort (Piller at all, 2020:510).

In order to conclude we would like to assume the affirmation of Piller et all that mentions the fact that the covid-19 has thrown the role of English as global lingua franca even more than before. But, beyond that, they envisage a paradigm shift in sociolinguistics on the horizon. First of all, the sociolinguistic would need to include local and indigenous knowledge in communication in order to avoid an English-centered monolingual mindset. Secondly, the sociolinguistic as discipline, should be more adapted to our times, more adept of dealing with multi-directionality and complexity; and thirdly, the sociolinguistics needs to establish a clear dialogue with policy makers and activists (Piller at all, 2020: 512).

In conclusion, it’s more than clear that the multilingualism during emergency situations is very important. In future, the development of increasingly accurate translation-enabling technologies is going to be crucial in the management of multilingualism during emergency crises. The communication with minority populations or migrant population during a crisis should be done in their language. However, this practice proves way more ineffective when the linguistic background of the population changes significantly.

On the other hand, it is true that sometimes the language-related problems are not only language-related and it should be better to have some cultural training too. Mikolič Južnič and Pokorn (2021) discuss the difference between “intercultural mediators” and “community interpreters”, who are, respectively, more focused on the cultural aspects and the purely linguistic tasks. Both figures play a vital role in emergency contexts.

The language challenges during the covid-19 pandemic have reiterated the importance of languages and translation in the European context. Steps have been taken to strengthen and improve language capacities, thereby promoting effective and inclusive communication throughout the European Union. It is important to continue investing and to make efforts in developing and strengthening language capacities in the European Union in order to overcome future challenges and ensure access to relevant information and clear understanding for all citizens, regardless of language. By addressing and solving these language challenges, the European Union demonstrates its commitment to linguistic diversity, effective communication and solidarity among Member States.

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RUSSIAN ETHNIC MINORITY IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF LATVIA

Vladislav VOLKOV*

Abstract. *The author of the article shows the importance of studying the economic environment, organizational culture in Latvia, as an ethnically diverse side, taking into account the influence of the political and ethnic factors. Since there are two ethnocultural poles in the ethnic diversity of Latvia - ethnic Latvians, who are the core of the Latvian nation-state, and Russians, as the largest ethnic minority in the country, the author of the article focused on the issue of the nature of ethnic differences in the Latvian organizational culture. While the few works within the framework of the economic science of Latvia consider the established organizational culture in this country mainly as a homogeneous ethno-cultural entity. To confirm the hypothesis that the ethnic factor also plays an important role in the economic life of Latvia, the author of the article in 2021 organized a sociological study in research project "Interaction of the individual, society and the state in the overall process of Latvian history: conflicts of values and the formation of common values at historical breaking points".*

Keywords: *multi-ethnic environment, ethical values, ethnic favoritism, integration*

1. Social Characteristics of Russian Population in Latvia.

Latvia has traditionally been a multicultural and multi-ethnic country. Moreover, this multiculturalism has a strong impact not only on the private life of Latvian residents, but also on socio-political, cultural and economic life. Latvia's proximity to Russia, and in the 18th century its inclusion in the Russian Empire and in the 20th century in the USSR, stimulated the migration of a large group of Russians, as well as other ethnic groups who chose Russian as their native language. Statistics show that at the end of the 19th century (1897) 231.2 thousand Russians, or 12% of its population, lived on the current territory of Latvia, and before the First World War - more than 300 thousand. The proportion of Russians was especially high in the largest city of the Baltic provinces - in Riga. Before the First World War, about 100 thousand Russians lived there, which made up a fifth of the townspeople (Skujenieks, 1925: 68). During the years of independent Latvia (1918 - 1940), the Russian population, although reduced to 206.5 thousand (1935). But at the same time, Russians remain the largest ethnic minority in Latvia (10.6%) (Skujenieks 1936, p. 292). The Russian population in Latvia reached its peak in the last years of the existence of the USSR. In 1989, 905.5 thousand Russians lived in Latvia, or 34.0% of its population (Iedzīvotāju

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skaits …, 2022). The high proportion of the Russian and Russian-speaking population in Latvia and especially in the largest cities, starting from the era of bourgeois modernization in the second half of the 19th century, as well as priority identification based on the Russian language and Russian culture, political self-identification with Russian and then Soviet statehood determined the reproduction of the most important structural elements of their collective ethnocultural identity, features of socio-cultural behavior (Feigmane, 2000; Apine, Volkovs, 1998).

Since the restoration of Latvia's independence in 1991, due to emigration and negative demographic growth, a steady decline has begun in both the total Russian population and its share in the population of this country. By 2023, the total number of Russians in Latvia has approximately halved compared to 1991. At the beginning of 2023, 454.4 thousand Russians lived in Latvia, which accounted for 24.2% of the country’s total population. At the same time, the share of the Russian population among other ethnic minorities is high – 65.4%. The share of Russians in the largest cities of Latvia is very high: in Riga – 35.6%, in Daugavpils – 48.1%, in Jurmala – 33.3%, in Liepaja – 26.9%, in Jelgava – 25.5% (calculated according to: Iedzīvotāju skaits …, 2023).

The high proportion of Russians in the country's population also determines their high degree of ethnic and linguistic consolidation. Among all the largest ethnic groups, only Latvians and Russians speak the native language of their ethnic group. 95.7% of Latvians consider Latvian their native language, and 94.5% of Russians consider Russian as their native language. At that time, only 27.2% of Ukrainians in Latvia consider Ukrainian as their native language, 19.4% of Poles consider Polish as their native language, and 18.8% of Belarusians consider Belarusian as their native language (calculated according to: Iedzīvotāju, 2021).The high proportion of the Russian population in the largest cities of the country, as well as in Latgale, where Russian Old Believers settled already in the 17th century, determines the consolidation of the collective identity of this ethnic group in the conditions of independent Latvia, which is expressed in the reproduction of the characteristics of the ethnocultural behavior of Russians in the socio-political, cultural and even economic life. All this creates the conditions for a characteristic feature of social life in Latvia, including the economic sphere, as a contradictory combination of ethnocultural individualistic diversity and “ethnic clustering” (Eidheim, 2006: 52).

The Constitution defines Latvia as “the national state of the Latvian nation” and the “Latvian people”, and Article 114 of the Basic Law speaks of the right of ethnic minorities to “preserve and develop their language, ethnic and cultural identity” as one of the fundamental human rights (Latvijas, 2014). In Latvian legislation, there are some norms that ensure the functioning of ethnic minority languages in part of the country's public space, for example, giving the right to study in state and municipal primary schools in educational programs for ethnic minorities (Izglītības, 2014). The programs of the leading political parties, focused on the ethnic Latvian voter, link the prospects of state identity politics with a significant strengthening of the position of the state language in the life and education system of ethnic minorities. The programs of many political parties omit many constitutional provisions on guarantees for ethnic minorities and do not even include the very concept of “ethnic minority” in their content (Volkov, 2023: 30 – 38).

The Russian ethnic minority is an integral element of the Latvian social system, which also determines the main parameters for the integration of the non-Latvian population. Despite the fact that the state focuses on the ethnic integration of minorities, primarily in the sphere of political participation, in the education system, language policy and historical memory policy, integration processes also affect the economic life of Latvia. The integration of the Russian minority into the socio-political and socio-cultural space will be successful if these processes also affect such a sphere of society as the economic life. And this is not at all accidental. It is in joint economic activity that the process of continuous interaction between people belonging to the ethno-national majority and ethnic minorities is realized in daily life. Moreover, the actualization of interethnic harmony and the emphasis on ethnic boundaries in economic interaction takes on a much greater "everyday" character than what happens in the political life of people, in which the political participation of the majority of the population, compared to political leaders and activists, is limited mainly to local elections, national and supranational authorities, as well as during active political campaigns. It is in the economic life of a multiethnic society, taking into account its orientation towards achieving a financial or production result and due to its competitive nature, that the main forms of interethnic harmony and at the same time socio-ethnic hierarchies are built. In this sense, the nature of economic interaction in a multi-ethnic society, the established practices of economic behavior, organizational culture, characteristic of the entire nation and its individual ethnic groups, act as the most important basis and at the same time a criterion for social integration.

2. Economic Conditions that Determine the Formation and Reproduction of Organizational Culture.

The peculiarities of the organizational culture of the Russian population of Latvia are largely derived from the nature of the existing typified relations between ethnic groups in Latvia in economic life and, above all, the nature of the division of labor between the national majority of the country - ethnic Latvians, and ethnic minorities - Russians. Despite the fact that the economic sphere of society's life acts as a separate and highly specialized function (Habermas, 2005: 242 – 266), the economy reproduces the basic parameters of the social system of society, which ultimately ensures the integration of the social system (Parsons, 2005: 9 – 14). It should also be borne in mind that the social identity of an individual and the way of life he cultivates is a holistic phenomenon in which economic, political, and cultural components constantly interact and mutually complement each other. At the same time, such a large ethnic group as the Russians is internally differentiated in terms of its place in the socio-economic system of Latvia, in terms of the complexity of the economic activity being implemented and, accordingly, in terms of income. This internally differentiating feature also leads to differences in the degree of assessment of the basic institutions and values of Latvian society as incentive factors for the implementation of certain goals according to the degree of social complexity of an individual professional career.

The influence of the value-institutional system established in Latvia on the peculiarities of the relationship between ethnic Latvians and Russians in economic life, on the Russians' self-assessment of their economic situation, career chances, and, consequently, in the choice of the most optimal ways of economic behavior, professional career and choice of norms within professional culture. Sociologists have been stating this for several decades. Immediately after Latvia joined the European Union (2004), a large-scale sociological study was conducted, one of the objectives of which was the need to determine the influence of the value-institutional system on the economic well-being of the Russian population of Latvia. The study was conducted in 2006. In Latvia, 932 respondents took part. And the results of this study established the existence of a strict relationship between the state ethnic policy pursued in Latvia in relation to the Russian population and the socio-economic situation of this ethnic group. For example, a connection was established between a low level of trust in socio-political institutions (26%) and the predominance of a critical attitude towards the exercise of one’s rights in the field of education, when resolving housing issues, when applying for a pension, in the health care system, in education, and in hiring. 70% of respondents noted the strict dependence of social advancement, especially in the civil service, on ethnic origin. As one would expect, the social capital acquired by Russian respondents (knowledge of the Latvian state language, high professional qualifications and relatively high social status and income level) reduces the degree of social frustration that is widespread in this ethnic group as a whole and contributes to the establishment of optimistic assessments of economic life in Latvia for the success of an individual professional career and acceptance of the established values of the dominant professional and organizational culture. At the same time, the most favorable forms of economic activity from the point of view of the respondents themselves were identified. Over 40% of respondents believed that they could achieve the greatest success in entrepreneurship and trade. Culture, art, sports, industry were recognized as areas of successful careers by 26–28%, financial and banking spheres by 20%, science, education, healthcare and socio-political activities by 10%, public service by 6% (Skrinnik, 2006: 65, 81, 95). It is obvious that these socio-economic expectations reflect the system of ethno-social stratification that has actually developed in Latvia.

Available official statistics in Latvia after the restoration of state independence in 1991 do not contain information on the nature of the representation of the country's ethnic groups in the system of social class stratification, in the system of professional division of labor, as well as on the proportion of ethnic groups in the state and political elite. In this sense, statistics from the times of the Russian Empire, the Republic of Latvia (1918–1940), as well as the USSR show a much more complete picture of the nature of ethnosocial stratification in these periods of Latvian history than in modern conditions (Volkov, 2013: 178 – 181). The lack of data in published official statistics on the nature of the representation of ethnic groups in various professions and areas of employment makes it extremely difficult to analyze the current socio-economic system and the dynamics of socio-economic expectations of representatives of various ethnic groups.

However, analyzing the available information about the composition of the state-political and social elite of Latvia, we can say that the Russian population is practically not represented in it, with some exceptions. For example, Vyacheslav Dombrovsky as a representative of the Reform Party in the period 2013–2014. was the Minister of Education and Science, as well as the Minister of Economy; from 2021 Maria Golubeva as a representative of the “Development/For!” party She served as Minister of the Interior for less than a year (Ministru 2021). Nil Ushakov in the period 2018–2019 was the mayor of the Latvian capital Riga. But among the advisers to the prime minister (Darbinieku 2021) or the 19 heads of departments and departments of government departments, there is no one with a Russian name and surname (Valsts 2021). There is also not a single Russian among the rectors of all sixteen state universities, academies and higher schools. Proportional participation of ethnic minorities in Latvia is implemented mainly in the management of private universities, where only five out of eleven rectors are representatives of these ethnic groups (Augstākās, 2021). There are also practically no Russians in the management of large Latvian businesses. Among the 20 largest taxpayer enterprises in 2019, representatives of ethnic minorities were managers in only one company, occupying the last place in this list, and among the 60 largest companies - in only six (BERLAT GRUPA, SIA; GREIS, SIA; GREIS loģistika, SIA; Accenture Latvijas filiāle; LIVIKO, SIA; BITE Latvija, SIA) (Calculated by: TOP, 2021).

The obvious underrepresentation of the Russian population in the economic, political and cultural elite of Latvia, the spread among this ethnic group of ideas about smaller socio-economic opportunities compared to the opportunities of ethnic Latvians cannot but influence the characteristics of the entrepreneurial and organizational culture, the norms and values of which are shared by this ethnic group. To clarify these features of organizational culture, the author of the article in 2021 organized a sociological study "Economic environment in Latvia: the interaction of ethical and ethnic values."

3. Methodology and Data of the Sociological Research.

The author of the article adheres to the understanding of organizational culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions adopted by a group in solving its problems through external adaptation and internal integration” (Schein, 2010: 10). The most important feature of the organizational culture that has developed in the economic life of a particular national state, such as Latvia, is the degree of its internal differentiation, which depends primarily on the ethnic diversity of society. The ethno-cultural diversity of Latvian society is the most important factor influencing the differentiation of organizational culture in commercial enterprises and government organizations, depending on the proportion of certain ethnic groups working in these enterprises. In addition, ideas about ethnic groups as carriers of different types of organizational culture, business ethos, etc. are taking root in society. The interaction of economic and ethnic factors was also revealed in the studies of Latvian sociologists. On the one hand, the significant role of the economy in the integration of Latvian society and the formation of common values for ethnic Latvians and ethnic minorities was noted. On the other hand, the study shows a significant division of the business environment along ethnic lines. Some Latvian sociologists consider the level of use of the Latvian language in business communication between representatives of different ethnic groups to be the most important criterion for ethnic differences in economic life. For example, when applying for a job in a company, Russians are more likely to focus on informal connections than ethnic Latvians. Both ethnic Latvians and Russians have negative stereotypes about each other as employees. Among representatives of these ethnic groups, there is a pronounced “feeling of threat, isolation from other ethnic groups” (Zepa et al., 2004; Zepa et al., 2005), which indicates the presence of signs of ethnic favoritism. Sociological literature usually emphasizes ethnocultural differences, mainly in the organizational culture of the ethnic Latvian and Russian populations (Mouls, 2003). At the same time, the role of moral norms in the formation and functioning of a unified corporate culture of multi-ethnic organizations and companies is not particularly considered.

The culture of organizations in Latvia turns out to be the intersection of two important factors, which, as practice shows, are often contradictory in nature. On the one hand, the high degree of integration of the Latvian economy into the European and world division of labor, the liberal nature of the market economy and Latvian labor legislation requires workers, regardless of their ethnic origin, to follow uniform norms of organizational and professional culture for the successful implementation of the goals of companies and organizations. On the other hand, the different access opportunities for ethnic Latvians and ethnic minorities to prestigious areas of employment contribute to ethnic favoritism in economic life, which ultimately largely erodes the equal value of organizational culture in the minds of ethnic Latvians and ethnic minorities. The interaction of employees in organizations and companies turns out to be primarily a form of intercultural communication, as shown in the studies of Geert Hofstede (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The author of the article recognizes the value of Hofstede's theory in understanding the characteristics of organizational cultures, if it is necessary to take into account the heuristic ideas contained in the criticism of this theory about the need to recognize the internal differentiation of organizational cultures in accordance with ethnocultural lines in society (*Ailon, 2008*). At the same time, the author of the article believes that in the context of the ethnocultural diversity of the internal environment of organizations and companies in Latvia, one of the most important criteria for the development of organizational culture is the ability to form among employees the idea of a company or organization as a moral community in which representatives of different ethnic groups evaluate representatives of other groups, based on the principles of moral equality.

The results of the study showed a contradictory situation with the role of the ethnic factor, and, consequently, ethnic favoritism in the organizational culture practiced by the respondents. When asked to choose between non-ethnic and ethnic values for a successful career of employees of enterprises, companies, state and municipal organizations, in this case respondents gave preference to the professional qualities of team members over the desire to work in an ethnically sterile team (Table 1). For example, if such a factor as the desire to work in a team where its members are competent in their profession was preferred by 86.6% of ethnic Latvians and 74.1% of Russians, then the desire to work in a team whose members share the same national culture as the respondents was chosen by 20.1% of ethnic Latvians and 9.5% Russians. Although, as can be seen, the level of ethnic favoritism among Russians turned out to be half that of ethnic Latvians.

Table 1. The need for a set of conditions for the successful career of employees in the workplace (%).

Necessary conditions for a successful career	All	Latvians	Russians	Mann Whitney U test
Employees are competent in the profession	81.7	86.6	74.1	0.000**
Close interaction of employees on the problems of professional activity	69.1	73.2	59.6	0.000**
There is a creative approach to the implementation of professional duties	65.9	72.2	55.5	0.000**
Close interaction of employees and management on the problems of professional activity	59.3	66.3	52.3	0.000**
The freedom of employees to defend their opinion	55.2	61.6	45.5	0.000**
A sense of moral justice should prevail over the performance of professional	35.9	36.3	32.9	0.203

Necessary conditions for a successful career	All	Latvians	Russians	Mann Whitney U test
duties				
Close informal interaction of employees	34.4	34.3	33.2	0.369
Most employees share the same national culture with me	17.3	20.1	9.5	0.023*
Most employees share the same ethnicity as me	13.6	15.8	8.2	0.290
Most employees have the same religious affiliation as me	11.0	12.3	8.6	0.019

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

At the same time, when respondents were asked to make a choice of factors that determine the ethnic composition of teams (between ethnically Latvian and Russian teams), the level of ethnic favoritism increased in both ethnic groups. Thus, 24.9% of ethnic Latvians strive to work or study in an ethnically pure Latvian environment, and 12.8% of Russians, respectively, in an ethnically pure Russian environment. And only less than half of ethnic Latvians (45.2%) and Russians (38.5%) admitted that the ethnic factor does not play a role in solving problems in companies or organizations (Table 2).

Table 2. The degree of importance of the ethnic composition of the team for solving problems in a commercial company, government agency or in a student environment (answer: "very important", %).

Preferred ethnic composition of the team	All	Latvians	Russians
Team with a significant dominance of ethnic Latvians	16.4	24.9	4.0
Team with significant Russian dominance	6.8	3.4	12.8
Ethnically mixed teams (where the proportion of Latvians is approximately 50% and the proportion of Russians is approximately 50%)	16.9	12.8	23.4
Ethnically mixed teams (where the proportion of Latvians is approximately 50% and the proportion of other ethnic groups (not Russians) is approximately 50%)	5.6	4.5	6.1
It does not depend on the ethnic composition of the team	43.0	45.2	38.5
Don'tknow	11.3	9.2	15.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Ethnic favoritism is widespread both among ethnic Latvians and Russians and when assessing the presence of positive qualities (reliability, loyalty, commitment, openness, honesty, efficiency, creativity, innovativeness, consistency) of employees in the ingroup and outgroup. Both Latvians and ethnic Russians always attribute positive qualities to representatives of their ethnic groups more often than they see these qualities in the opposite ethnic group. (And there is only one exception regarding political consciousness: Russians believe that they are less patriotic than Latvians) (Table 3). The materials of this table especially clearly show that the level of ethnic favoritism among Russians as a whole is mirror in nature in relation to the level of ethnic favoritism of ethnic Latvians.

Table 3. Respondents' opinions: values held by teams of different ethnic groups (%).

Values	Opinion of ethnic Latvian respondents		Opinion of Russian respondents	
	For Latvians	For Russians	For Latvians	For Russians
Reliability	40.3	21.0	14.3	33.6
Loyalty	31.8	21.9	15.6	21.0
Commitment	31.3	19.7	21.5	31.3
Openness	21.2	14.1	25.0	30.4
Honesty	33.3	18.1	11.9	20.0
Efficiency	23.7	13.3	14.0	26.1
Creativity	30.6	11.6	16.0	18.2
Innovativeness	19.5	11.3	12.6	16.4
Consistency	19.4	9.8	8.5	14.9
Patriotism	46.1	34.3	15.2	13.4
None of these properties	8.1	11.4	12.3	10.0
Hard to say	29.2	35.8	41.1	31.2
Total	334.5	222.3	207.8	266.4

The assessment of the role of the ethnic factor in respondents' choice of profession turns out to be even more significant. One of the objectives of the study was the need to determine the role of the individual need for self-realization, as well as the role of ethnic origin and the role of social status in choosing a profession. It turned out that, although for respondents, both ethnic Latvians and Russians, the role of such a factor in choosing a profession as "Good opportunities to achieve at least an average level of material well-being" turned out to be dominant (for more than 89% of ethnic Latvians and Russians), then the factor of orientation towards typified opportunities characteristic of reference ethnic groups turned out to be equally significant. Such a factor as "Relatively good opportunities for people with similar ethnic origins to achieve an average level of material well-being" was chosen by over 72% of both ethnic Latvians and Russians (Table 4).

Table 4. The most important factors in choosing a profession and the nature of education (summated answers: "high importance" and "medium importance", %).

Factors in choosing a profession and the nature of education	All	Latvians	Russians
Good opportunities to achieve at least an average level of material well-being	89.3	89.7	89.1
The need to realize one's abilities	88.4	88.7	87.8
Good opportunities to achieve a high level of material well-being	82.8	84.0	81.5
Comparatively good opportunities for people with similar abilities to achieve an average level of material well-being	78.3	79.1	78.5
Comparatively good opportunities for people with similar social backgrounds to achieve an average level of	77.6	78.4	76.9

Factors in choosing a profession and the nature of education	All	Latvians	Russians
material well-being			
Relatively good opportunities for people with similar ethnic origins to achieve an average level of material well-being	71.7	72.3	72.5
Relatively good opportunities for people with similar ethnic origins to achieve a high level of material well-being	67.3	67.9	67.5

The spread of ethnic favoritism in Latvian society leads to the ethnicization of ethical values, to a decrease in the importance of universal moral norms in regulating interethnic relations both in society as a whole and within companies and organizations. Respondents were asked to assess the ability of various groups of people (relatives and friends, work colleagues, representatives of various social and ethnic groups) to make moral assessments based on the principles of justice. It turned out that respondents least of all recognize the presence of this ability in representatives of other ethnic groups. 36.4% of ethnic Latvians and 41.7% of Russians believe that representatives of other ethnic groups are able to evaluate people's behavior based on the principles of moral justice (Table 5).

Table 5. Respondents' opinions about the ability of Latvian residents to assess whether the behavior of other people complies with the principles of moral justice (summed answers: "everyone can do this" and "the majority can do this", %)

Ability to assess behavior of…	All	Latvians	Russians
close people (family, friends)	61.7	63.1	62.4
people/colleagues with similar social status at work (business, studies)	51.2	50.1	54.2
people of similar ethnicity	50.9	49.1	56.8
people/colleagues of higher social status at work (business, studies)	44.8	43.8	47.8
of people/colleagues of lower social status at work (business, studies)	43.9	42.7	45.1
people of other ethnicity	38.1	36.4	41.7

Therefore, less than half of the respondents of all ethnic groups surveyed (ethnic Latvians, Russians, Poles, Belarusians, Jews, Roma, Ukrainians, Lithuanians) admitted that when resolving conflicts with representatives of other ethnic groups in companies, organizations, student groups, they are guided by the same moral principles, as when resolving conflicts within their ethnic groups (Table 6).

Table 6. The share of respondents who are guided by the same moral principles of conflict resolution both with representatives of their own ethnic group and with representatives of another ethnic group at work or in a student group (%).

Possible conflict with	All	Latvians	Russians	Mann Whitney U test
Ethnic Latvians	-	-	44.9	-
Russians	-	51.4	-	-
Poles	47.3	49.4	41.6	0.009**

Belarusians	47.5	48.8	42.3	0.069
Jews	44.4	46.3	38.6	0.040*
Roma	38.9	40.8	33.6	0.019*
Ukrainians	47.1	48.8	42.3	0.028*
Lithuanians	47.3	49.3	41.5	0.012*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4. Conclusion

The study of the economic environment and organizational culture in Latvia as an ethnically diverse environment is not yet a priority task of Latvian sociology. Since there are two ethnocultural poles in the ethnic diversity of Latvia - ethnic Latvians, who form the core of the Latvian national state, and Russians, as the largest ethnic minority in the country, the author of the article focused on the problem of the nature of ethnic differences in the Latvian organizational culture. The conducted sociological study showed that the ethnic differentiation of Latvian society influences the existing organizational culture in commercial enterprises, companies, state and municipal organizations, as well as the perception of the professional qualities of Russians by ethnic Latvians, and vice versa, the perception by Russians of the professional qualities of ethnic Latvians. These ethnic groups are characterized by ethnic favoritism in a more positive assessment of the business qualities of “their” ethnic group compared to the professional qualities of the “other” group. Ethnic favoritism affects such a fairly common phenomenon as the presence of elements of ethnic segmentation of economic life. Despite the fact that in the social, including economic life of Latvia, there are institutions and value systems that contribute to the integration of society, the creation of a standardized national culture, including in economic life, there are ethnic boundaries in organizational culture. This is manifested in the weakening of the role of universal moral norms (for example, the ideal of justice) in regulating relations between ethnic Latvians and Russians in public life, including economic life. Thus, the formation of moral communities in multi-ethnic companies, government organizations, and student groups is weakened by ethnic favoritism. Russians, although not completely, still reproduce attitudes towards ethnic favoritism, which is more pronounced among ethnic Latvians. This is largely due to the subordinate position of Russians in the socio-political life of Latvia, the underrepresentation of this group in social and economic activities, in the management system of large companies and the country’s economy as a whole. Russians often choose companies that may not be the most successful, but those where representatives of their ethnic group dominate. However, this only reinforces the rigid ethnic favoritism of Russians, and does not sufficiently promote ambitious social and economic goals in this group. The materials of our sociological research have shown that the formed and reproducing collective identity of the Russian population of Latvia is under the determining influence of the institutional and value environment of the Latvian national state, which has a legal and political nature. Moreover, the nature of political institutions, as well as political values, is also manifested in the economic life of the country, in the peculiarities of the organizational culture, which is shared by ethnic Latvians and ethnic minorities. It is clear that for successful political, civil and socio-cultural integration of Latvian society, the integration of economic life is also necessary, the formation of a common organizational and economic culture, the norms of which are shared more or less equally by both ethnic Latvians and representatives of ethnic minorities of Latvia and, above all the largest ethical minority as Russians.

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INTEGRATION OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES INTO ROMANIAN SOCIETY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract. *This article presents a research on the integration of Ukrainian refugees in Romania in the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine, addressing ways of adaptation and factors influencing this process. By using a mixed approach, combining the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, the study aims to capture the magnitude, characteristics and dynamics of the migration flow, as well as the subjective perspective of refugees on the process of their integration into Romanian society. By applying relevant theoretical frameworks, examining up-to-date statistical data and consulting primary information, this research aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the process of integration of Ukrainian refugees into Romanian society.*

Keywords: *inclusion; barriers; perceptions; media; perspectives*

1. Introduction

The armed conflict in Ukraine, triggered by the Russian invasion in February 2022, triggered the largest humanitarian crisis of unprecedented proportions in contemporary Europe since World War II. Almost a year after the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the massive wave of refugees generated continues to have a major impact on the entire region. According to UN data, more than 13 million Ukrainian citizens have had to flee their homes and lives to flee violent conflict and repression.

This crisis has particularly affected countries neighbouring Ukraine, such as Romania, which has been one of the major destinations for Ukrainian refugees. Of these, about 8 million have sought refuge in neighbouring European states, while another 5 million have become internally displaced in Ukraine.

Romania has become the first destination for a significant wave of Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war, with more than 5 million people entering the country since the start of the Russian invasion. The Romanian authorities responded promptly, declaring a state of humanitarian emergency, thus opening the border gates to all Ukrainian citizens affected by the war and providing humanitarian assistance to all those affected. Civil

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society has mobilized exemplarily through fundraising campaigns and essential products to support the authorities' effort.

At the same time, about 92,000 Ukrainians remained on Romanian territory. In the short term, the intention of most Ukrainian refugees seems to remain in Romania until hostilities cease and stability is returned to their country. However, as the war drags on, long-term integration into Romanian society is essential to ensure their well-being and inclusion and remains a major challenge for both refugees and the host society.

The present article aims to present some theoretical benchmarks as a foundation of own research, a brief presentation of the research methodology, the results of quantitative and qualitative studies undertaken, conclusions and suggestions formulated based on own findings.

2. Theoretical perspectives on the dynamics of refugee integration

Integration process Ukrainian refugees represent a complex challenge that involves adaptations on multiple levels - cultural, economic, social. In order to better understand the mechanisms of this process, it is necessary to examine the main theories and models that have been developed in the field of migration and intercultural studies, as well as the conclusions of studies already undertaken in this field.

2.1. Perspectives and theoretical models on the dynamics of refugee integration

The two-way acculturation model developed by Berry (John W. Berry, 2005) conceptualizes how both minority group and majority society undergo cultural changes in interaction. This process involves preserving the cultural identity of origin, combined with the adoption of host society values, and provides useful insight into how refugees can preserve elements of their home cultural identity while adopting traits of the host society.

The theory of systemic integration developed by De Haas et al. (De Haas, Castles, & Miller, 2019) points out that the integration process is influenced by complex factors, highlighting the role of economic, political and social factors in the assimilation of migrant groups, as well as the integration policies adopted by the host country. Access to the labour market, education, healthcare and civic participation contribute significantly to successful integration.

Also, the model of stress and crisis of cultural adjustment (Sam & Berry, 2006) explain personal experience of cultural change and stages of adapting to a new majority culture. Thus, psychosocial stages and challenges of cultural change for migrants are described, as well as resilience factors.

These theoretical frameworks provide a useful perspective on the process of integration of Ukrainian refugees in Romania.

2.2. Relevant academic articles on the integration of Ukrainian migrants in Romania

The integration of Ukrainian refugees in Romania has been the subject of numerous scientific articles published in the specialized press in the country and abroad. To verify that the research findings are supported by previous studies on the topic, we analyzed relevant academic creations published between 2022 and 2023.

Andronic and Constantin (Andronic & Constantin, 2022) analyzes the psychosocial factors that shape the adaptation of Ukrainian refugees in Romania. The study highlights the role of cultural integrity and community support in reducing post-traumatic stress disorder.

Cimpoeru (Cimpoeru et al., 2023) examines public integration policies from a comparative perspective, highlighting the imperatives of protecting human rights and administrative challenges. The author proposes an approach centered on the individual needs of refugees.

In a multidisciplinary study, Stănescu et al. (Stănescu, Dan, & Tasențe, 2023) investigates the impact of professional integration on refugees' well-being. The results suggest that access to the labour market and recognition of qualifications contribute significantly to mental health and social inclusion.

Also, Leuștean (Hudson & Leustean, 2022) explores the cultural challenges of preserving Ukrainian identity in the context of adapting to the values of Romanian society. The book emphasizes the role of culture as a factor of resilience and community cohesion.

Finally, the study conducted by Lățăianu et al. (Lățăianu, Burcea, & Ștefan, 2022) notes that language barriers and discrimination hamper integration in the long term.

These articles highlight the interdisciplinary approaches and complexity of refugee integration. Psychosocial, political, economic and cultural perspectives make complementary contributions to our understanding of the phenomenon.

The findings are largely similar to the results of this study:

- Community support and access to education/work are conducive to integration;
- Cultural factors and identity play a significant role;
- Language barriers and discrimination remain important challenges.

The analysis confirms the validity of the main findings of our research.

3. Integration of ukrainian refugees into romanian society. Own research

The research aims to examine the process of integration of Ukrainian refugees in Romania, exploring the ways of adaptation and the challenges associated with this phenomenon.

3.1. Research methodology

The purpose of this study is to estimate the dimension of the Ukrainian migration phenomenon, the process of integration of Ukrainian refugees in Romania, exploring the ways of adaptation and the challenges associated with this phenomenon, as well as the factors that facilitate or hinder this process.

The objectives pursued will guide the two levels of quantitative and qualitative analysis and will aim at:

- Estimating the size of the Ukrainian refugee phenomenon in Romania based on the analysis of available statistical data
- Identifying perceptions of Ukrainian refugees regarding the conditions and factors of the integration process into Romanian society

Through careful analysis of the integration process, we will pursue a deeper understanding of how Romanian society responds to this humanitarian crisis and how it can provide an appropriate environment for the effective and sustainable integration of refugees.

We hope that the results obtained will contribute to improving the authorities' response and strengthening integration efforts in the future. They can also be useful in improving understanding of the difficulties encountered in the integration process and in developing effective support policies and programmes.

Methods used

In order to achieve the objectives proposed in this research and to capture the complexity of the phenomenon of integration of Ukrainian refugees in Romania, we applied a mixed methodology, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches.

The quantitative *part* consisted in monitoring a set of secondary statistical data, collected from the main institutions, national and international, involved in managing the migration phenomenon at national level. Thus, we analyzed databases on the size of migration flows, the number of registered refugees, socio-demographic characteristics of refugees, evolution on the labor market, integration into the health system, etc. The data came mainly from the National Institute of Statistics, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN Agency), the International Organization for Migration (UN Agency) and the European Union. These data cover the period February 2022 - July 2023 and provide an overview of the dimension and dynamics of the migration phenomenon in Romania.

For the qualitative approach, we used the technique of content analysis, applied to multiple media and academic sources. Thus, we extracted and synthesized relevant information from 60 media articles, 35 posts on online social networks and 5 previous studies on this topic. We aimed to draw qualitative conclusions about the experiences and challenges of refugees. We also included some testimonies expressed by Ukrainian refugees in Romania, in interviews, to capture their subjective perspective and experience.

We extracted relevant elements regarding integration experiences, challenges, facilities and the impact of invasion on adaptation. We aimed to identify the main themes, experiences and challenges. The results of the qualitative and quantitative analyses will provide an overview of the integration of Ukrainian refugees in Romania.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches allows to complete the vision of the subject by triangulating the results of statistical and content analysis. This makes the ideas and conclusions drawn more robust and relevant from a practical point of view.

3.2. Research results

Next we will present the results of the two types of research carried out on each type of research according to specific objectives.

3.2.1. The dimension of the migration phenomenon. The impact of migration on Romania

For a comprehensive quantitative perspective on the migration phenomenon in Ukraine, we analyzed the latest statistical data available from different national and international sources, quantitative data providing an updated picture of refugee integration in Romania.

Romania responded generously and promptly, offering support and opening its doors to those affected. About 5 million Ukrainians have entered Romania legally since the conflict began, and of these, about 1.8% have sought shelter on Romanian territory. Labour market integration and access to education were significant aspects of the adaptation process.

For a more up-to-date quantitative view, we analyzed the statistics published most recently (August 2023) by sources such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MAI), the National Institute of Statistics (INS), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the National Employment Agency (ANOFM) or the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the data illustrate the extent of flow management and the high degree of socio-economic integration already achieved on the market Labour.

According to data provided by the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, at the beginning of August 2023, the total number of Ukrainian citizens who entered Romania as of February 10, 2022 amounts to 4,903,442. Of these, 4,806,458 have already left the country, leaving 96,984 refugees in Romania.

According to the clarifications provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, until the end of July 2023, a total number of 84,308 Ukrainian citizens (77,545 adults and 6,763 children), most of them women, benefited from temporary protection in Romania. In terms of integration into the labor market, INS data indicate that over 39,000 Ukrainian citizens were employed in Romania at the end of June 2022.

According to statistics provided by the National Employment Agency, since the beginning of the conflict until now, a total of 18,246 Ukrainian people have benefited from information, counseling and mediation services on the labor market.

The most important counties that register applications for temporary asylum remain Suceava, Galati and Neamt. Bucharest, Timis and Constanta attract the most refugees who find jobs, mainly in IT, retail, agriculture and services.

These quantitative data provide an updated overview of the extent of the Ukrainian refugee phenomenon and their degree of integration into the Romanian labour market. It also highlights the extent of the management of the migratory flow from Ukraine and the importance of integrating Ukrainian citizens into Romania's economic and social fabric in the medium and long term.

3.2.2. Media and public perception of Ukrainian refugees in Romania

The media play a key role in shaping public opinions and perceptions of socio-political events (Entman, 2010). In the context of the invasion of Ukraine and the wave of refugees, the discourse in the Romanian press is important for how society receives Ukrainian citizens (Kraly, Abbasi-Shavazi, Torres Colón, & Reed, 2023).

To analyze the representation of refugees in the Romanian online environment, we monitored news from 10 major publications between March 2022 and August 2023, using searches with terms such as "Ukrainian refugee" and "Ukrainian immigrant". 60 articles were selected for content analysis and coded based on categories such as: tone dominated, topics covered, integration factors examined, etc.

The results show that the overall tone of the news was positive (63% of articles), presenting the situation of refugees and humanitarian assistance efforts, highlighting the solidarity of Romanian society and the initial success of refugee integration. Most of the news highlights the positive impact of Ukrainians on the local economy through participation in the labor market. ((BNR), 2022)

A balanced approach, addressing both support efforts and existing challenges, was adopted by 24% of the sources. These sources discussed issues such as congestion in refugee centers, housing shortages, difficulties in recognizing qualifications/education, and the lack of funds for social assistance. (HotNews, 2023)

However, some publications took a critical view (13%), presenting in alarmist tones the perceived risks to social problems, such as increased crime or the impact on the health system. Articles with such a tone aimed to increase anti-immigration sentiments and highlighted cultural differences. (Baias, 2022)

The results suggest that the media played an important role in promoting a favourable attitude towards refugees in Romanian society and facilitated social solidarity. However, the polarizing discourse of some publications raises concerns about the possible consequences for public opinion in the long run. (John W Berry, 2007)

Analysis of news content reveals a diverse range of representations, from success stories of successful integration to concerns about security and impact on national resources. Despite efforts to provide accurate and balanced information, it is obvious that some news stories are influenced by stereotypes and misinformation. This underlines the need for a balanced and ethical approach on the part of the media in dealing with these sensitive topics, in order to contribute to a more accurate understanding of the situation.

Media monitoring remains important to prevent the narrative from turning into an anti-immigration one as the conflict drags on and to promote a positive and inclusive narrative about refugees.

3.2.3. Voices from the Ukrainian community

In order to gain a more detailed perspective on integration and to capture the subjective experience of Ukrainian refugees settled in Romania, we have transcribed in full 5 interviews given to Romanian media publications. These participants shared their personal experiences regarding finding shelter, finding jobs, accessing education, interacting with the Romanian community, adapting to the new life and the challenges they faced in the adaptation process.

Challenges related to language barriers and recognition of professional qualifications were highlighted. However, many refugees mentioned that they were warmly welcomed by Romanians and felt a sincere desire for integration and cooperation. Although there were difficulties, many voices stressed that they received support and solidarity from Romanians, which facilitated the integration process.

We conducted a thematic content analysis on the responses, and the main recurring themes identified are:

- The feeling of gratitude towards the solidarity of Romanian society

Ex: "I felt welcome here. People provided us with food, clothes and housing. I'm grateful for all the support." (Julia, 35 years old)

"With all the hardships, I think I was lucky to find refuge here. I thank Romanians for all the help they received in this country" (Vladimir, 41 years old).

- Positive impression of reception

Ex: "I was pleasantly surprised by the warmth with which they welcomed us. It's a welcoming community. I am grateful for the support." (Olena, 28 years old).

"I felt welcome, people were always welcoming." (Anna, 43 years old)

- Difficulties in the integration process caused by not knowing Romanian

Ex: "I still don't speak the language well, which makes it harder to get hired." (Inna, 27 years old).

"Children have adapted quickly to school, but language remains a challenge" (Oksana, 33 years old).

- The hope of being able to continue life in peace

Ex: "We dream of the peace and reconstruction of our house. When possible, we'll be back." (Tatiana, 38 years old).

"We dream of rebuilding our lives in peace. We hope that in the future we will be able to return home" (Natalia, 32 years old).

"We hope that one day peace will return home." (Yana, 42 years old)

- Attachment to Ukrainian culture and identity

Ex: "For me it is important to preserve the traditions and speaking of the mother tongue." (Tania, 48 years old)

"We hope that one day we will peacefully rebuild our lives in our country" (Bianka, 30 years old)

"The first few months were difficult, but we got used to life here." (Zoriana, 28 years old)

The subjective perspective of refugees adds value to understanding the integration process. The interviews highlight enthusiasm, but also challenges related to language learning, professional recognition and adjustment to social norms. A significant aspect is the connection with the local community and the maintenance of cultural identity. These testimonies come to confirm the positive receptivity of the Romanian society and the feeling of gratitude of the refugees. The initial adaptation went relatively smoothly thanks to local solidarity.

3.2.4. Social Media Analysis

We also conducted a qualitative content analysis of content generated on online social networks by Ukrainian refugees settled in Romania. We tracked 80 public posts on Twitter, Facebook and online groups between 2022 and 2023.

The main themes and impressions expressed were:

- Appreciations of support received from the local community and government (40% of posts);
- Sharing experiences of adapting to a new culture (30% of posts);
- Thanks to Romanians for their relief efforts (20% of posts);
- Concerns about the evolution of the conflict in Ukraine or the need to stay in Romania in the long term (10% of posts).

Thus, the online discourse of refugees mainly emphasizes the feeling of gratitude for the support received, as well as the process of cultural adaptation and integration.

At the same time, the complexity of the situation in Ukraine remains a source of anxiety for future integration.

3.2.5. Refugee stories ((UNHCR), 2023)

Katerina is proof that adaptation depends less on external factors and more on one's spirit. Although he arrived with few things, his optimism and creativity allowed him to quickly find his place. Learning the language and building new friendships were key to successful initial integration.

Ivan proves that age should not be a hindrance. Work and the desire to contribute are values that transcend any barrier. His professional retraining illustrates that adaptation involves openness to change and acceptance of new challenges.

For Maryna, knowing the culture and history of her host country was essential. Through his work as a tour guide, he promotes mutual understanding and cultural enrichment. It is proof that refugees bring added value to the society that receives them.

Daniil, despite his young age, is fully aware of the importance of the language learned. She learns Romanian with passion, ready to take an active part in the life of the community that gives her shelter. It is the hope that the future will bring a successful integration.

Valeriya's values – hard work, passion for learning and cultural openness – are the ingredients for successful integration. Through his daily effort to learn and gain new knowledge, he shapes the path of other refugees.

4. Towards an inclusive society. Discussions and conclusions

The research results underline the importance of sensitivity to refugee needs and integrated policies for successful integration. Access to social services is essential to help them rebuild confidence and independence. Only by identifying specific problems and corresponding solutions can remaining barriers be removed.

The analysis highlighted the crucial role of community solidarity for the initial warm welcome. The analysis highlighted initial solidarity as a key factor in the positive reception of refugees. The involvement of civil society and volunteers facilitated access to vital resources in the first critical months. The initial positive welcome and solidarity shown is a success that must be strengthened by sustainable Community support.

The involvement of civil society is vital in ensuring continuous long-term support, especially for vulnerable categories such as children or the elderly. Only through mutual understanding and cooperation can the conditions for successful integration be created.

Access to education and the labour market are fundamental pillars of inclusion. Access to education has been fundamental to children's adaptation to the new culture. However, full-time school integration remains a challenge in resource-limited areas. Additional resources would support the participation of all categories of refugees. Early employment was an important factor in well-being and autonomy. However, recognition of qualifications and combating discrimination for some groups remain challenges that require more effort from authorities and at the same time the implementation of integrated policies.

Language barriers hinder effective communication and real inclusion, they can undermine overall uptake if not addressed systemically. Public host language learning programmes adapted to all ethnic groups are essential to facilitate communication and general well-being.

Cultural difficulties can undermine cohesion in the long run. Cultural pressures can affect adaptation in the host society, especially for younger generations divided between inheriting origins and adopting new values. Intercultural education and diversity promoted at all levels are vital already in the education system for successful integration.

Language and cultural barriers are obstacles with a major impact on full socio-economic assimilation.

The protracted conflict induces anxiety and uncertainty among refugees, which are difficult to bear in the long run. Psychosocial support is insufficient for anxieties generated by prolonged conflict. Public policies need to provide more psychosocial support and specialised counselling to reduce stress and promote resilience. Additional programmes are needed to promote resilience. Only by addressing the complex needs of refugees can real inclusion be ensured.

Insufficient financial resources can affect equitable access to services. Adequate funds are indispensable to meet basic needs. Limited resources and protracted conflict generate anxieties that can undermine social cohesion in the long run.

Dynamic monitoring is key to optimising policies according to the changing needs of refugees. Their involvement in decision-making could ensure the right answers and services at any stage. Dynamic monitoring of refugee needs and continuous policy adaptation are necessary to maintain initial success.

The inclusion of refugees is a shared responsibility. Cooperation between relevant stakeholders and involvement of beneficiaries is essential for integrated management of challenges. Education for diversity and anti-discrimination play a key role in developing trust and belonging.

The conclusions highlight that the integration of Ukrainian refugees in Romania has been both successful and challenging that require integrated approaches to ensure full long-term inclusion.

5. Building an inclusive society: the role of integrating ukrainian refugees. General conclusions

The main conclusions of the present research on the integration of Ukrainian refugees in Romania are:

Romanian society responded generously to the crisis, providing significant assistance that facilitated the initial adaptation. Continued solidarity is vital for successful integration in the long term.

Active community and private sector involvement has contributed substantially to supporting the needs of refugees. Cooperation between relevant actors remains essential.

Early access to education and the labour market has created a good basis for initial inclusion. Such services must be maintained and continuously improved.

The initial positive adaptation is largely due to the efforts of civil society and authorities to support refugees. However, real integration requires more than emergency assistance. A long-term commitment is required.

Language and cultural barriers are significant obstacles to full assimilation. Integrated and lasting programmes need to address these challenges. Language and cultural barriers undermine full socio-economic inclusion, affecting long-term well-being.

Protracted conflict generates long-term anxieties and limited resources can affect social cohesion. Factors such as prolonged conflict or limited resources generate anxieties and can diminish social cohesion. Monitoring the impact of these factors is important. Dynamic monitoring of refugee needs and impact of integration factors is crucial for policy optimisation.

Promoting diversity and intercultural understanding plays a key role in building an inclusive society that meets the needs of all its members. Education for cultural diversity and anti-discrimination strengthen trust and belonging.

Integrated approaches sensitive to integration factor dynamics are necessary to maintain initial results and ensure long-term success. The active involvement of beneficiaries in policy development makes them more sensitive to realities on the ground.

Therefore, the main conclusion is that the integration of Ukrainian refugees in Romania has experienced both successes and difficulties. In order to consolidate initial results and ensure long-term success, integrated policies and actions are needed, sensitive to social dynamics, responding to the real needs of beneficiaries as they evolve. Continuous monitoring, applied research and active cooperation of all parties involved are essential for building a multicultural society based on inclusion and sustainable solidarity.

Further research is needed for a deep understanding of integrated dynamics, especially from the perspective of beneficiaries.

6. Recommendations

Taking into account the analysis carried out and the conclusions drawn, we can formulate the following recommendations aimed at strengthening long-term integration:

- Development of public programs for sustainable learning of Romanian language for children and adults

Sustainable Romanian language teaching programs remain essential for overcoming long-term communication barriers. There is a need for complex initiatives, adapted to all age groups and level of education.

- Implementation of flexible schemes for equivalence and recognition of studies/qualifications

The diploma equivalence scheme needs to be reviewed to promote faster recognition of qualifications and the employment of qualified refugees. Flexibility is key to facilitating inclusion in the labour market.

- Support the activities of community-based associations promoting inclusion and diversity

Awareness campaigns on the importance of cultural diversity are necessary to combat prejudice among the general public. Promoting interethnic understanding strengthens social cohesion.

- Regular monitoring through research of the impact of factors on refugee integration

Government-NGO partnerships can monitor the continuing needs of refugees and develop integrated programs of social assistance, counseling, labor intermediation. Meeting all needs is essential for inclusion.

Longitudinal research is indispensable for understanding the dynamics of factors that shape long-term assimilation. Only through continuous monitoring can policies be adapted to realities.

Permanent cooperation between academia, NGOs and authorities optimizes public policies through joint experience and feedback from the field. The involvement of all parties is vital.

- Increasing cooperation between areas responsible for refugee inclusion
- Developing a culture of tolerance and acceptance of diversity across society

Community involvement in debating refugee issues, as well as in developing and implementing solutions, gives them legitimacy and relevance. Only constant dialogue and cooperation can lead to policies appropriate to local realities.

Promoting social cohesion by educating the general public about diversity and human rights strengthens an inclusive multicultural society.

Analysis of media discourse on immigration is necessary because it can negatively influence public opinion and attitudes towards refugees, affecting social cohesion.

In conclusion, successful integration of Ukrainian refugees requires integrated and long-term approaches from all relevant actors.

7. Limitations and future research directions

This paper approached the topic of integration of Ukrainian refugees in Romania through a complex assessment of the current context and relevant factors. However, there are some limitations worth mentioning:

- The source of statistical data was predominantly based on those publicly available at national level, without access to its own primary database.
- The perspective of the refugees analyzed was extracted from the testimonies available in the press, without direct consultation of the beneficiaries.
- The phenomenon of integration is dynamic, with the possibility that certain conclusions will change with the evolution of the context.
- The approach mainly targeted Ukrainian refugees, without extending to other migrant groups present in Romania.

To overcome these limitations, future research may consider:

- Collecting their own raw data through questionnaires and interviews applied to refugees.
- Monitoring of long-term integration factors through a longitudinal approach.
- Comparing the experiences of Ukrainian refugees with those of other migrant groups.
- Expand the analysis to integration efforts in other EU countries hosting refugees from Ukraine.

In conclusion, this article provides a useful insight into the current context, but further research is needed for a deeper understanding of integrated dynamics in the future.

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THE CHALLENGES OF THE EUROPEAN PROJECT: EUROSCEPTICISM AND NATIONALISM. CAUSES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract. *The last few years have been marked by a series of challenges for the entire Western world. It is about a succession of crises, among which we recall the institutional, economic, political, social and sanitary ones that have befallen Europe. The pandemic and the conflict at the border of the European Union represent only recent crises with a strong impact on the European construct. In this context, the nationalist discourse legitimized itself as revenge and alternative at the same time. Thus, almost naturally, the phenomenon of Euroscepticism fueled by the effervescence of nationalism also began to grow. Through the present study, we aim to understand to what extent the growth of the nationalist-Eurosceptic phenomenon within the European Union represents an imminent danger or an opportunity for the consolidation of the European project. In the first part we will make a brief presentation of the causes and problems that led to the growth of nationalism. Then, our study will present the evolution of Euroscepticism and the emergence of the populist vote within the EU – a vote that was most often associated with EXIT-type projects. The last part aims to present a perspective through which we can evaluate whether the recent crises are not actually opportunities to combat destabilizing phenomena.*

Keywords: *European Union, scepticism, nationalism, crisis*, *identity.*

Introduction

Regarding the European project as a whole, perhaps we often forget the original logic of the European construction, namely the immediate material benefits. It is true that after this stage important efforts were made for a more comprehensive European integration, but nevertheless the challenges related to community cohesion still remain the most complex challenge in the European integration process (Petrila, 2014:107).

In this sense, we consider it appropriate to sustainably identify the resources in the social and cultural structures that contribute to a deep integration and with few gaps and differences between the member states. A reflection on the socio-political phenomena inside the European Union (EU) but also from the border of the community space can offer us the prospects of a serious understanding of the recent

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challenges, ongoing or those that are even expected by different opinion leaders or analysts of international politics.

Through the present study, we propose a socio-political incursion in order to have a more realistic overview of the current moment that the EU is going through. The analysis also takes into account the perspectives emerging in relation to the elections for the future European Parliament (EP) which will take place in 2024. In some countries there have already been national elections, and in others it follows after the round of European elections for the EP.

The hypothesis from which this analysis starts is that the numerous crises in the EU area produced a rematch of national and regional identity to the detriment of the European one, and the visible effect through the prism of the electoral options expressed by voting marked the development of Euroscepticism, nationalist sovereignty and populism.

The research questions are: 1. Are the development of Euroscepticism, nationalist sovereigntism and populism cyclical phenomena generated by the institutional crisis or EU values? 2. Can the identity crisis structurally affect the process of European construction?

The last two decades in Europe have been characterized by political phenomena with important implications for the European Union. There are researchers who claim that these socio-political phenomena are of a populist nature and others consider them to be of a nationalist-Eurosceptic nature (Mișcoiu-Pantea-Petrila, 2023:195). There are also situations in which European integration is associated with the destruction, dilution of national identity or sovereignty, a fact that also leads to the consolidation of the Eurosceptic and populist phenomenon. Even if terms like Euroscepticism or populism are not synonymous, we will refer to them somewhat in tandem because in terms of their political expression they end up containing roughly the same type of discourse.

The context of successive crises and identity rematch. The return to national

In the contemporary period we are witnessing an effervescence of the national, this despite the progress made at the European level in terms of strengthening the European identity. The process of European construction was accompanied by a certain blurring of the national, at least at the expression level of nationalist-extremist movements. European identity appears as a superior identity that reduces the forms of expression of national and regional identities. That's at least in theory. On the other hand, in the current context, we are justified in believing that the European identity has acquired a form of manifestation parallel to the national or regional levels, without being in a very close relationship with them. That is, the reduction or amplification of forms of manifestation at a certain level does not lead to a counterbalance at another level (Brie, 2018: 237).

Diachronically, stimulated by the phenomenon of globalization, by the success of the EU, especially by the European expansion to the east and the disappearance of the "Iron Curtain", the European identity experienced an exaltation both at the level of public discourse and at the everyday level. In our opinion, the phenomenon also has another facet: the identity revenge of the current period. As an effect of the crises that have become systemic at the EU level (economic, financial, social, institutional or legitimacy), of the new geopolitical realities in the proximity space (e.g. the situation in Ukraine, the Near East, North Africa), but also as an effect of migration massive, we find a return to local, regional or national identities (See for further details Brie and Blaga, 2015: 255-273).

Without proposing on this occasion to make an analysis of political realities, respectively of the speech of political leaders, in the European space, but not only, we are witnessing in this period, more than in other stages of the history of the last hundred years, a radicalization of the speech with an emphasis on the national. Political movements take on more and more national, ethno-cultural and identity nuances. Not only populism is gaining ground, but also the xenophobic, tribal debate of fear and danger painted in the image of the other (Brie, 2018: 238).

The European Union, Russia, globalization, the immigrant, multinationals, national minorities, but also others who are not part of the beleaguered national community, are real scapegoats that the political leaders in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, for example, use to generate emotion and to capitalize on the increasingly populist and nationalist expressions present in these countries.

When analyzing the international scene, we notice the fact that nation states are and will remain for a significant future period the main form of state construction. States base themselves and ensure their survival from a very strong national and ethnic surplus (Poenaru, 2012; Brie, 2021a: 132-134). The concepts of national and ethnicity not only do not become obsolete, but we note the fact that there is an "almost obsessive direction of the contemporary world towards ethnicity, towards national specificity" (David and Florea, 2007: 645).

Put in relation to the somewhat systemic crises of the European Union, we might be tempted to think that it is a zero-sum game between the tendencies to assume the European identity and those of the national identity. The preservation of national identity is the fundamental mission of the European peoples, which they tried to put in a global context of European integration. In crisis situations, states do nothing but appeal to the essence and foundation of existence and survival: nationality, ethnicity. In this context, the current trend of European peoples can only be the preservation of cultural/national identity (Brie, 2021a: 133).

It would be fundamentally wrong to attribute this trend to ineffective management on the part of the European Union. Let's just think about what happened in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of communism. The tendency was a strong return to the national, to the consolidation of the state based on the logic of the nation-state. Where states did not exist, all energies were focused on the formation of the nation-type state. Dozens of new national states appeared in the European political landscape. Then, in most of the former communist states of Central and Eastern Europe in the 90s, nationalism played an essential role on the political scene. Let's just think about the role that the nationalist parties played in Romania until around the year 2000. These tendencies were somewhat blurred under the effect of the European integration process, so that in recent years we have witnessed the emergence of extremist groups and manifestations in most European states. Without reducing everything to the theory of the classic struggle for resources, we cannot fail to notice the divergent positions and the repositioning of states on national criteria in relation to the economic problems faced by European states, the European Union as a whole. In the context of the crises of the last 15 years, cooperation and dialogue have often given way to suspicion and competition. Many political leaders built their public discourse on the fault of the other European partners and hence the radicalization observed in the space of public opinion (Brie, 2019: 371-391).

At the conceptual level, identity constructions appear, apparently placed on the same level of analysis, which can have different connotations. Identity, regardless of the level of reporting (European, national, or regional/local), is found as a form of expression in the public space despite the universalist currents, globalization or standardization of community values, characteristics or expressions. The elements of ethno-religious identity can be found in the global public space, including in multiplied forms through the channels of global propagation. Therefore, not only the global multiplies, but also the particular, the specific. The latter, often taking the form of extremism, nationalism, populism or ethno-religious violence, see themselves multiplied by gaining followers thousands of kilometers away. Then, the national and ethnic state, associated with the national territory, managed not only to survive the pressures of the "global society", but demonstrated an even greater capacity for affiliation (Brie, 2021b: 322-340). Identity globalization has been shown to be stronger in urban and industrialized societies, and where there are consistent rural areas, a rich cultural heritage and tradition, a resistance to globalization has developed (Poenaru, 2012). Thus, the local, national-cultural identity is more strongly preserved in the rural-agrarian environment and in the reference proximity area of cultural sites. Such a reality does not exclude the possibility of parallel development and consolidation of a supranational European identity. Conceptually, this seemingly antagonistic relationship emerges: European identity versus national/local identity (Brie, 2016: 360).

Conceptually, the entire identity edifice has at least two elements of specificity since its construction (Brie, 2016):

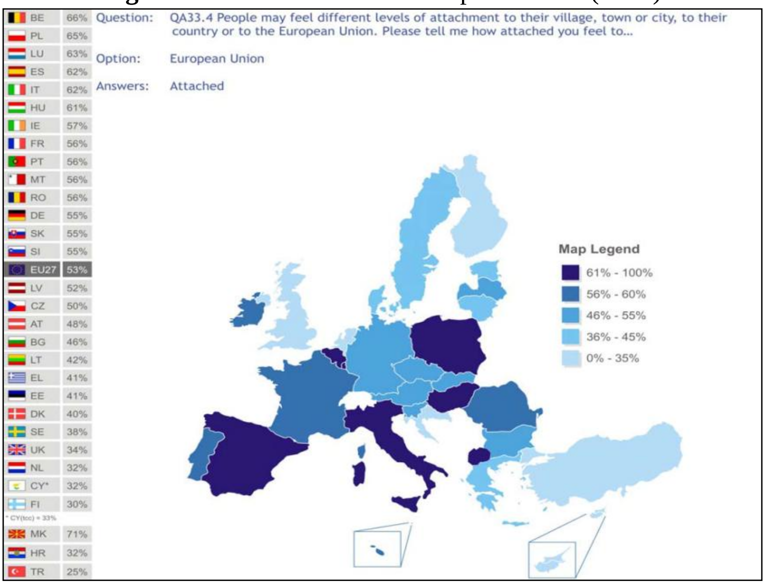
- national identity born from ethnicity
- national identity born from civic/citizenship

In the first case, national identity serves a certain ethnic group often in competition with other ethnic groups (most often present in the same reference space). The perspective gives rise to expressions of a nationalist-tribal nature that may involve the exclusion of representatives of other ethnic groups.

In the second situation, the civic dimension serves the state, most often leading to patriotism (the perspective is rather positive compared to the first situation when we are dealing with a perspective with negative connotations!).

The analysis of the two dimensions has led some analysts to identify the main differences in the conceptual debate regarding identity in Central-Eastern Europe versus the United States of America. The essential difference is that the European national identity answers the question of who is Romanian, Hungarian, Slovak, etc. (so what makes us different from each other), and the American one seeks to identify those elements that citizens have in common (what makes different citizens in many ethno-cultural situations American?) (Bujalos, 2011: 79-91). This conceptual dispute between European and American national identity/nation can also be extrapolated to the level of European space. The idea of nationality is perceived differently in Western and Central-Eastern Europe. In most Western countries, national identity has been built mainly around the identity of citizen, and status territory has consequently become the fundamental term of reference for "national territory" – the civic dimension of national identity. Eastern Europe had a different path of development, where ethnicity, ethnic membership played a fundamental role in building national identity – the ethnic dimension of national identity (Gabor, 2011: 116). Thus, the Western model of the nation emphasizes the centrality of the nation's national territory or homeland, while the Eastern model is concerned with ethnic origin and cultural ties. A fundamental characteristic of the state constructions of the nation-state type in Eastern Europe is their permanent lack of legitimacy or, rather, their incomplete legitimacy. By identifying the state with a single national identity, the other national communities inevitably found themselves outside of this legitimation process, which constituted a fundamental source of inter-ethnic tension. This reality led to the sacralization of state territory considered national territory (Gabor, 2011: 118-128) (the rightful property of a single nation/nationality!), and the cultural-historical philosophy is to delegitimize as much as possible the contribution of other national communities (Brie and Blaga, 2015: 255-273).

Figure 1. Attachment to the European Union (2007)



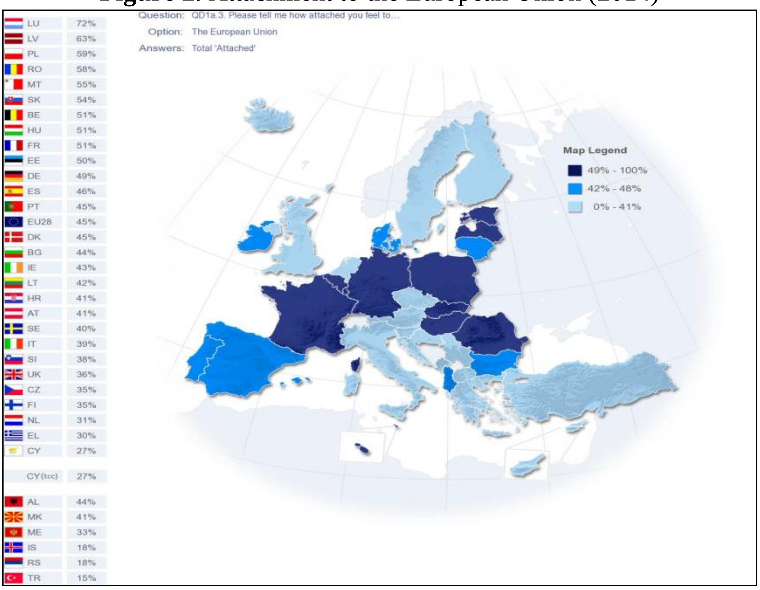
Source: *Eurobarometer 67*, 2007: 85

Reported at the European level of analysis on the concept of identity, the legitimate question is to what extent we are talking about a common European identity or, in contrast, about the presence of identity borders in the European space. A certain identity cleavage can be observed between Western and Eastern Europe. This reality is given by the historical, cultural, religious and political heritage.

Whether it is internal or external causes, that the case is political, institutional-administrative, socio-economic or cultural-religious, the European identity has weakened during the crisis after 2008 in relation to the national or regional-local identity. We reached this conclusion by reference to the attachment that the European citizens feel towards the European Union in relation to their own states or settlements where they live. Methodologically, we studied the information that we have available from the Eurobarometer. We picked for review two years, 2007 and 2014 respectively, to see if the crisis significantly influenced the Europeans' options (See for this comparative analysis Brie and Blaga, 2015).

If in 2007 the average commitment of European citizens towards the EU was 53%, in 2014 it dropped to 45%. With few exceptions (including Poland and Romania - two countries in the East, one in which there has not been economic recession during the crisis and another, Romania, where its citizens have got to have more confidence in Brussels to tackle corruption and poverty only its own state institutions), in European countries the proportion of those who feel attached to the EU declined. It is interesting to note, however, how this decline has occurred in some states. In 2007 we have a high level of adherence to the EU for citizens of countries like Italy, Spain, Belgium, Hungary and Poland. By 2014, the citizens of this state attachment evolved very differently. Poland is the only country where the EU attachment is on the increase slope. Hungary and Belgium are two states which show similarities because although knowing a significant decline in the level of attachment to the EU, they do not seem to be cases concerned to transfer that attachment to their countries or places of residence (see comparative fig. 1-4). Of these five countries, Spain and Italy constitute a special group. In these countries, which have benefited greatly from membership of the European Union, there is a very strong local and regional identity, but also with significant immigrant communities. The drop in devotion to the EU is very steep in Italy (from 62% - 2007 39% - 2014) and Spain (from 62% - 2007 46% - 2014). In these countries, hit hard by the recession, with serious problems of over-indebtedness, where large communities of immigrants accept jobs poorly paid, with high levels of unemployment among natives, attachment citizens are not transferred even to own countries (the attachment in one’s country is among the lowest in the EU) but in places of residence, at local or regional level. The strong local or regional identity captures the citizens’ attachment to these countries (see Fig. 4).

Figure 2. Attachment to the European Union (2014)

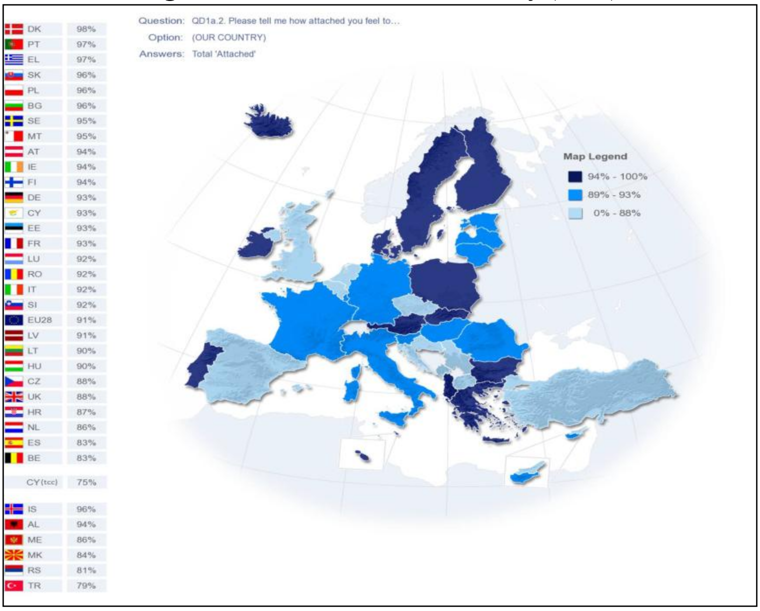


Source: *Eurobarometer 82*, 2014: 10

By comparing the two times (2007 and 2014) we found that the attachment to the European Union moves to two categories of states: states in a geographically central axis and to Eastern states. This group of states includes France, Belgium and Germany (central states in the process of European construction), to which, in the same central axis, we would place also Poland, accompanied from the eastern axis by Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and the Baltic States. The logic compels us to accept that in crisis situations, countries such as Germany, France and Belgium and their citizens understand the meaning, role and importance of the European Union. In this equation of confidence in the Union we can place the newly entered EU member states from the east. We wonder, is this the same in the case of identity? The essence and the future support of Europe lies in the New Europe?

By comparison with the attachment to the European Union, the attachment to their own country reveals a different behavior of citizens of European states. Note that this attachment is high in all European countries, the EU average being 91% in 2014. In the group of countries with a higher share of the population who feel attached to their country except for Austria, the other countries are geographically positioned at the EU's periphery, in the west, north, south and east. We note the geographical distribution of these countries compared to the somewhat compact middle position of countries where the population feels attached to the European Union (2014).

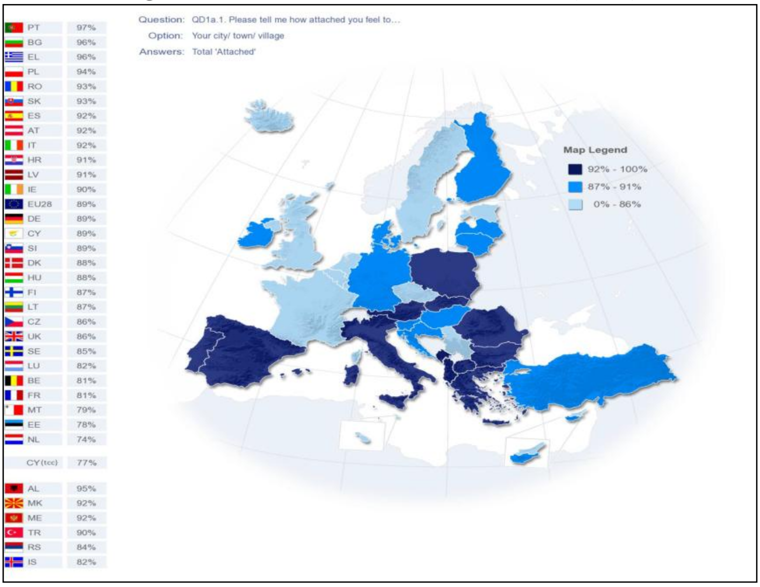
Figure 3. Attachment to own country (2014)



Source: *Eurobarometer 82*, 2014: 7

A strong attachment to home settlements, to local or regional area, is obvious in the countries of southern and eastern flanks. Together with Portugal, Poland, Austria, Slovakia and Greece, whose populations are proving to be very attached to their country, the group of countries with the population attached to the local factor lie countries like Italy, Bulgaria and Romania. These latter countries are found to be related to the local community also because of the failure of national policy.

Figure 4. Attachment to home settlement (2014)



Source: *Eurobarometer 82*, 2014: 6

In the current geopolitical and socio-economic context, the sense of belonging is changing towards the national-regional space. The EU's lack of response to the problems of European citizens, the European systemic and institutional crises are eroding the European identity. Under these conditions, the state remains the citizen's "refuge" in crisis situations. Moreover, ethno-cultural claims increase in the context of the "conflict" for resources and access to power. Last but not least, national identity is increasingly present in the public space through association with nationalist-extremist groups and populist-sovereignist currents (Brie, 2021: 142).

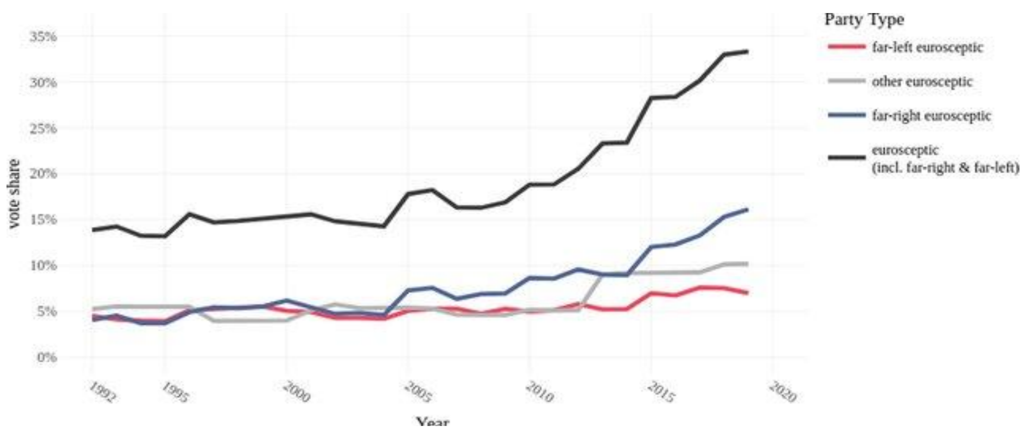
Eurosceptics and the evolution of the populist vote in the EU: the emergence of the EXIT phenomenon

It is true that there are certain reservations and it is quite complicated to define the term populism without showing its nuances and the evolution of the term over time. A very laborious exploration of the definitions, classifications and theorizations of populism from the general to the particular can be found in the work Populist parties and personalities in post-communist Romania (Gherghina, Mișcoiu: 2010). Perhaps one of the most relevant definitions of populism is: "in short, populism is an expression of persecution and resentment, an ideology of rescue and reparation, which is supposed to offer an immediate remedy and which mobilizes individuals and groups who, rightly or wrongly, they perceive themselves as losers of democratic transformation and liberal-procedural democracy" (Tismăneanu: 2010). We therefore observe that a source of populism is represented by the difficulties that society feels at a given moment in the midst of challenges of modernization, democratization or towards a solid economic development.

And in terms of defining Euroscepticism there was the challenge of nuances because the Eurosceptic phenomenon and discourse does not always start from the same issues and contexts. One of the definitions we consider appropriate is: "European political doctrine that advocates disengagement from the European Union. Political parties that espouse a Euroskeptic viewpoint tend to be broadly populist and generally support tighter immigration controls in addition to the dismantling or streamlining of the EU bureaucratic structure" (Britannica: 2023).

We can say that the expression of populists in matters of foreign policy and interstate cooperation is related to the spread and cultivation of Eurosceptic sentiment. The graph below shows a certain constancy of Euroscepticism until 2005. We cannot say that this increase in Euroscepticism is due to the enlargement waves of 2004 (the largest in the history of the EU), 2007 or 2013, but the possible correlation is worth noting. It is important to remember this possibility of interpreting developments, especially since this year the EU gave an extremely clear signal by starting EU accession negotiations with Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia Herzegovina (European Parliament News: 2023). Ukraine is the first country at war with which the EU begins accession negotiations, and the Republic of Moldova is in an extremely vulnerable geopolitical situation and even with a serious challenge inside the country: the problem of Transnistria.

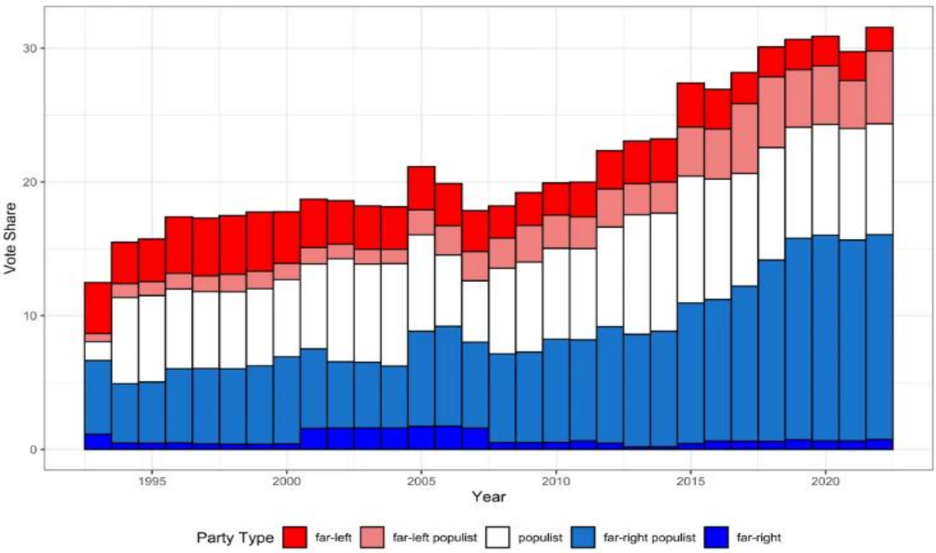
Figure 5. Share of Eurosceptic, far-right and far-left parties votes weighted by population size



***Source*:** Fortunato-Pecoraro, 2022: 1

The literature speaks of certain stages regarding the emergence and consolidation of populism in the EU elections. So between 1979-1989 we are talking about the first period of populist support when at the European level we had only six populist parties, and the most relevant example is PASOK in Greece which obtained over 40% in 1984 and then it decreased but not significantly. The second period also represented the period of expansion of populism and took place between 1994-1999. The most important results are found in: France (10.5% in 1994), Greece (37.6% in 1994), Austria (23.4% in 1999), Belgium (10.8% in 1994; 10.9% in 1999), and Italy (37.2% in 1994; 29.7% in 1999). The third period took place between 2004 and 2009 and was characterized by a wide spread of populism in Europe. And finally, the last period analyzed by us is the period between 2014-2019 when far-right populism was consolidated. If in 2014 we were talking about 16 countries where they achieved results of over 10%, in 2019 we have 22 countries that exceeded that result (Zulianello-Larsen: 2021).

Figure 6. Votes shares for populist parties 1995-2020



Vote shares of (1) far-left, (2) far-left populist, (3) populist, (4) far-right populist, and (5) far-right parties in 31 European countries, weighted by population size.

Source: PopuList, 2023: 1

The emergence of Brexit, beyond the challenges of the process itself, has opened many possibilities of vulnerability at the level of European construction. Immediately after the creation of this precedent, in any political, social or economic crisis, we were immediately met with a series of Eurosceptic speeches. Headlines such as: Nexit, Frexit or Grexit? The countries that could follow Britain out of the EU (CNBC: 2017), were increasingly on the front page of the most important news portals. Brexit is the clearest and most concrete manifestation of Euroscepticism to date. In fact, Great Britain is the one that created the framework of Eurosceptic discourse since 1988 when Margaret Thatcher in a lecture at the College of Europe in Bruges expressed her opposition to the possibility that British sovereignty would be suppressed by that of the EU (Thatcher Foundation: 2023).

The recent elections in the Netherlands tell us that the experience of Brexit was not a lesson but that it can be repeated. The far-right party led by Wilders came first in the autumn 2023 elections in the Netherlands. Among the promises made in the campaign are: closing the borders to migrants, banning the Koran and starting the procedures for Nexit (BBC: 2023). The victory of the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands is much more important to analyze because compared to the previous elections where it had 10.8% of the votes, this year it obtained 23.6%, i.e. more than double (Politico:2023). Other extremist leaders from Europe jumped in his support, and Marine Le Pen declared that the Dutch people can decide their European future as the British did (Euractiv:2023).

The most recent national elections were held in Slovakia, and the winner of these elections was the former Prime Minister Robert Fico who had a tough speech regarding the issue of migration but also a promise to stop aid to Ukraine (Reuters: 2023). Talks of ending military aid to Ukraine and limiting certain facilities and privileges for war refugees from Ukraine are more recent items on the populist agenda in Europe, perhaps as a sign that the Western world is feeling a certain fatigue regarding this military conflict.

In the last five years, an extremely extensive study coordinated by the University of Amsterdam has been carried out. The project was called The PopuList and had in mind the detailed analysis of the populist phenomenon in Europe. Beyond the many results and elements of nuance, the main result of the study shows that almost a third (32%) of Europeans vote with populist or extremist parties (Rooduijn, Pirro, Halikiopoulou, et al: 2023). Political scientist Cas Mudde believes that the problem of populism and implicitly the Eurosceptic phenomenon is also due to the fact that some tolerance has been created towards extreme parties (Mudde, 2016: 297).

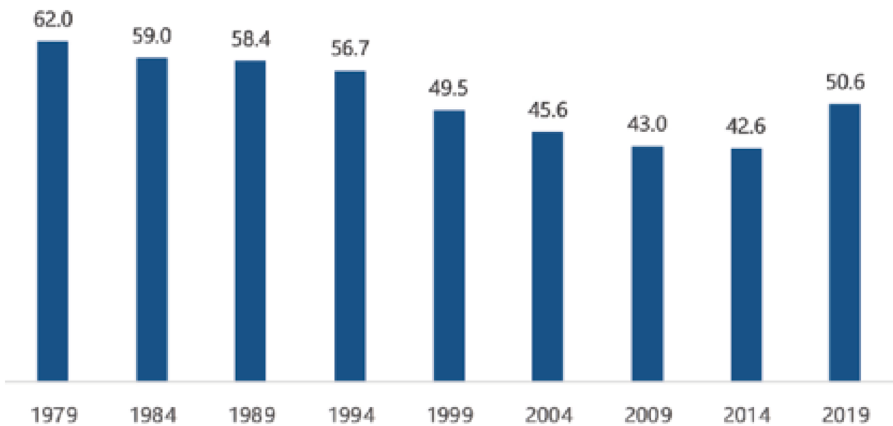
It is important to remember what the specialist literature has already pointed out, namely that such groups or parties appear especially in times of crisis (Stoica: 2021). After the economic crisis at the end of 2008, the EU has always been engaged in various efforts of an economic, social, political and health nature. Moreover, throughout Europe, populist parties and sympathizers of Euroscepticism have latched onto the health crisis, believing that certain global corrupt forces want to destroy the dignity of honest citizens. The different measures taken by member states in the context of crises (be it the economic one, the migrant crisis and the recent health crisis) instead of increasing the idea among citizens that each state responds to crises through national governments have shaped the idea that certain Europeans are more European than others – in the sense that they would have more rights and privileges.

One of the reasons for the increase in populism and implicitly the questions about the meaning of European integration was represented by the acute phenomenon of migration (Petrila, 2019: 75). Also, populism and implicitly Eurosceptics gained momentum due to the multitude of political and economic problems. Faced with these problems, the leaders in Brussels often looked for solutions, but they either proved to be inappropriate or were poorly implemented in the territory. Problems related to minimum social needs, but also the fact that intolerance towards immigrants began to grow, ultimately represented the most important areas that built the discourse of populist parties in Europe before the elections for the European Parliament in 2014. One of the most important results in 2014 were registered by the National Front in France, which obtained almost a quarter of the total votes ahead of the popular movement party which obtained five percent less and in other states the populists managed to pass 10%, as followed by: 19.7% in Austria, 14.6% in Hungary, 13.2% in the Netherlands, 12.9% in Finland and 11% in Poland. Similarly, the left-wing populists won seats in ten states, and the most important result was obtained by SYRIZA in Greece, which together with the Communist Party obtained almost a third of the votes. The choices of European citizens reflect not only a certain populist trend but also the fact that European values and policies regarding solidarity and the desire to overcome socio-economic challenges together are not so well outlined in the collective mind. So the success of the contesting parties of the left-wing power was greater in Europe - 15%, by condemning the anti-austerity measures in Greece: Podemos obtained over 17%, 6.3% in France, 9.6% in the Netherlands, while right-wing populist parties succeeded and obtained the majority of votes in the Nordic states and Austria. It is important to remember that the last European elections, namely the elections for the European Parliament in May 2019, did not lead to such an important rise of populism in Europe that many feared. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of Euroscepticism remains a significant force to be taken into account in the development of national and EU public policies ((Mișcoiu-Pantea-Petrila, 2023:198; Popa, 2017:5).

Even before the last European elections in 2019 there was some concern about a possible success of the Eurosceptics. The European populist movements can also represent an alarm signal for the European Union, because although they are most often incoherent and lack viable or concrete proposals, they still emphasize the important fracture lines within the European construction, thus preventing the realization of realistic, sustainable strategies and above all long-term (EURACTIV: 2017).

The results of the 2019 European elections show that somewhere over 20% of those elected do not come from pro-European parties or movements (EU affairs: 2019). As a short summary of the 2019 results, we can say that the big surprise of the elections was the significant turnout at the polls. More than half of European citizens with the right to vote were present at the polls. It is also the largest turnout at the polls after four rounds of European elections with a continuously decreasing turnout.

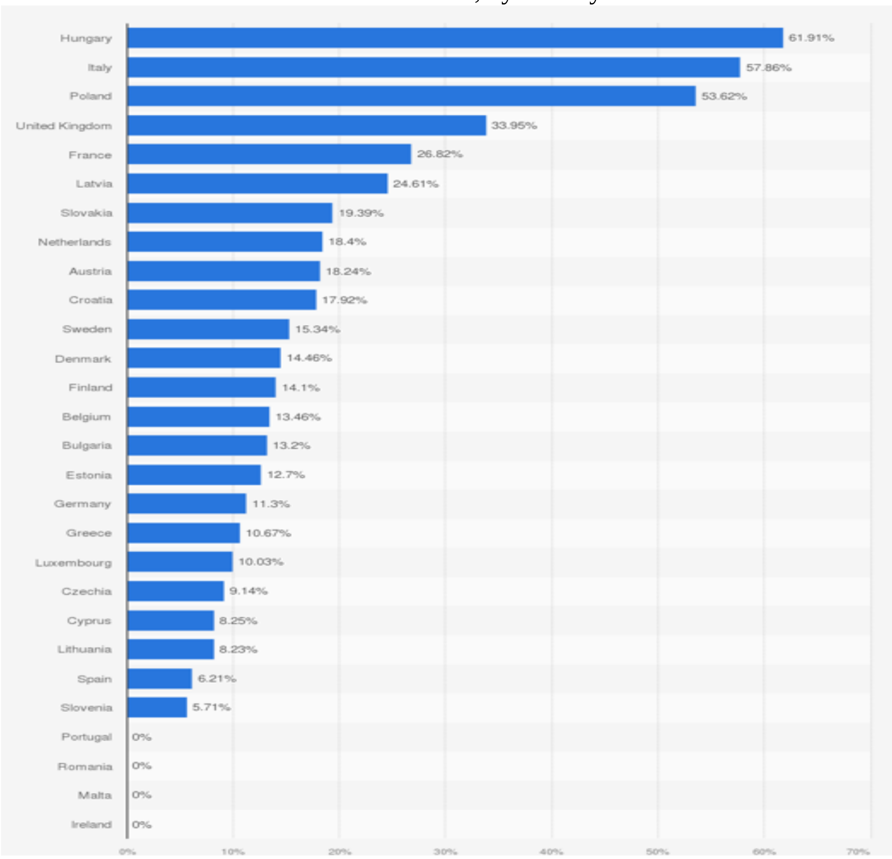
Figure 7. Prezența la alegerile europarlamentare 1979-2019



Source: Statista, 2023:1

It is considered that among the causes or explanations of this important score of electoral attendance we can include protests against environmental policy, strikes and the desire to counter Eurosceptic and right-wing populist parties. The result showed that the right-wing populists improved their result, but overall we can say that we were dealing with a trend in which the big (mainstream) parties lost their weight, so the European Parliament became much more diversified and with complications in achieving majorities (Riegert - DW: 2019). The following tables show the dynamics and trend of political formations within the EU.

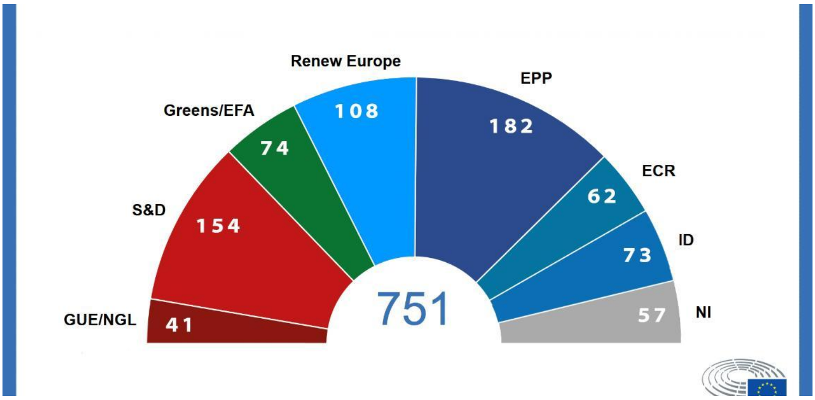
Figure 8. Share of votes for populist an nationalist parties in the European Parlamentary Elections of 2019, by country



Source: Statista, 2023:1

Even though in terms of turnout, the 2019 European elections proved to be a good exercise for European democracy, but after the distribution of the vote for populist parties, the 2019 elections give a signal for Europe. Corroboration of the European elections in 2024 with the national ones will clarify much more clearly the perspectives regarding European construction and consolidation. With the exception of Spain and Germany, all major EU countries have populist party representatives in the European Parliament. Until 2014, the European Parliament mainly had representatives of the mainstream parties, but for several years the flanks on the left and the right have begun to increase and even consolidate their percentages. These political realities will become extremely important if the mainstream loses weight in future political grouping equations.

Figure 9. Distribuția pe grupuri politice în PE 2019



Source: European Parliament, 2023:1

The COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical instabilities: opportunities to counter Euroscepticism

In 2010 when the Europe 2030 strategy was adopted: Project for Europe 2030. Challenges and opportunities, no one thought about the series of crises and challenges that would come over the entire Western world. The points in the Europe 2030 strategy regarding economic governance, investments in human capital, policies regarding work, energy and immigration still remained the main challenges of the European construct (Bărbulescu, 2015:591).

Immediately after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a series of complaints about the EU considering the delayed reactions, but especially the lack of a unitary response to this health crisis. In this context, the populist parties directed their activities more through blocking actions (actions against vaccination campaigns but also other actions against certain preventive measures). This is how the speech of the populist parties was no longer directed only against EU policies, but the speech began to be directed against national governments (Statista: 2023).

We need a Europe that is more solidary and that is a much more visible global actor (Luzarraga-Llorente, 2011:66). In fact, since the middle of the Covid - 19 pandemic, EU leaders have taken unprecedented measures: the recovery and resilience plan - a project that makes available to all EU countries the largest allocation of funds in the history of the EU. This plan is intended to repair the damage caused by the health crisis, but at the same time to speed up the modernization of the EU, especially through projects related to green energy, climate and digitalization (European Commission: 2020).

The health crisis seemed to have exhausted all recent challenges, but in February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine so that from that moment the EU also has a security crisis with a war on the border in a region marked by many tensions and geopolitical complexities. The invasion of Russia represents the most powerful attack on a European country since World War II. The United States of America and the European Union have shown their solidarity and support for the Ukrainian people even though these things have come with a series of problems especially for Europe. EU sanctions against Russia have led to some tensions in the energy markets. So the countries that were linked to Russian gas began to identify solutions regarding energy independence (Free Europe: 2022). In parallel with these new realities, the indirect role that the war in Ukraine has in strengthening the European project and implicitly to reduce the populist phenomenon in European countries and to understand more deeply the importance of belonging to NATO and the EU is being discussed more and more (Center for European Policy Studies: 2022).

We can say that starting with the crises of 2020, the European Union has proven that it is capable of reacting promptly, and thus we can talk about a revival of European integration. The pandemic crisis proved to be the opportunity for recovery and resilience for the entire European project. The new realities caused by this crisis make possible the emergence of a public opinion at the European level through which citizens believe that it is much better to act at the European level and not only at the national level (Kahn: 2021).

Beyond the expected, normal and quick reactions that the EU had after the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, there are other less optimistic perspectives regarding the European elections in 2024 and the long-term implications for the EU.

Far-right political forces propagating ideas of European disintegration had their biggest victory with Brexit and expect further victories in other countries where Euroscepticism is fueled. As we stated above and as we could see from the distribution of the populist vote in 2019, Hungary, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Poland, Latvia and even Austria are countries where we have increased risks. If the European elections had been immediately after the pandemic I think we would have had a serious problem considering the enormous suffering endured during this health crisis and the social and economic tragedy that seemed to await us.

Immediately after the start of the pandemic, there was a lot of pessimism and scapegoating. The dean of the school of governance in Brussels Luc Soete then took a public position of assumption and call for joint action: The time has come for a new European patriotism. New, because it must necessarily be rooted both in national communities remobilized on the theme of solidarity, and in transnational networks. The millions of employed citizens, volunteers, health workers and voluntary associations of civil society, active in the fields of work essential to the survival of our society, come together as one: this is the solid human basis for a new phase of the idea of Europe, this is the way to link Europe's core values with technical and political capacity in an innovative way, this is how we offer the world a message of hope and strength against this unprecedented crisis (Soete: 2020).

Since the pandemic, there has been talk of the possibility that a crisis of this magnitude could threaten the very existence of the EU, deepening divisions and multiplying the seeds of anti-European sentiment. Beyond the risks hovering over Europe at that time, many saw in this crisis the opportunity for the EU to address some of the fundamental deficiencies that exist in the architecture of the euro zone, for example. The response to the pandemic is a chance for Europe to reboot, focusing on a range of mechanisms at hand, including state aid, taxation, reallocation of labor and migration repositioning among others. The EU should not lose sight of wider societal goals such as climate neutrality and digitisation, but rather prioritize them. Finally, if leaders in Brussels manage things maturely, the pandemic may hold within it the potential to bring the EU together like no other event since its founding (Bénassy-Quéré, 2020: 204).

The hundreds of billions of euros put at stake for the recovery of Europe might not be enough if the moral inaction of the pro-European elites continues. The situation in the EU has never been more threatening, and political decisions can push millions of citizens towards Euroscepticism and nationalism with unpredictable consequences (Soete: 2020).

Conclusions

Since the dawn of the European Union project, nationalism has been a great challenge beyond the guarantees of the actors involved in the six founding states. It took many years for European citizens (EU or non-EU members) to understand that EU membership does not mean giving up national sovereignty and identity.

Along with the provocation of the nationalist phenomenon, Euroscepticism was also always present when a crisis engulfed Europe or when discussions regarding institutional reconfiguration, new treaties or discussions regarding the accession of other states to the EU were added to the EU agenda.

On a closer look, considering the graphs and arguments presented (except for the classic examples: Great Britain and the Netherlands), we can identify an identity divide regarding European culture and belonging between Western and Eastern Europe. This reality is also given by the historical, cultural, religious and political heritage on the one hand, but also by unfulfilled expectations on the other. The immediate period after accession came with a number of expectations from citizens. In Central and Eastern Europe, the post-accession period also overlapped with the post-communist transition period so that the expectations of the new member citizens were limitless. It can be seen that failure in national politics is associated with lack of attachment to Europe.

It is very likely that the emergence of these phenomena regarding Euroscepticism and populism also have a natural cyclical character, but they are also indirectly helped or generated by the EU's lack of reaction to certain acute problems.

The question that remains is: can these crises structurally affect the process of European construction? Including through the present analysis we recognize that there are certain implications, but we cannot say that we are dealing with certain consequences that could ultimately affect the European project. We will be able to have a more comprehensive answer after the elections for the European Parliament in June 2024. Then we will be able to observe whether the last European and national elections were the symptoms of certain trends or were the results of certain contexts and conjunctures. The crises of the last period have given rise to a revival for the European idea.

The European integration project emerged after the Second World War, a war that devastated the continent due to extreme nationalism. Let's hope that not too much has passed since then and that the memory of those sad times will prove the lucidity and maturity of Europeans so that Europe becomes even stronger beyond all the crises and challenges it faces.

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IV. COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY. COHESION, VULNERABILITIES AND SOCIAL REALITIES

STAGES OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND ITS CRIMINAL IMPACT ON HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN RELATIONS

Szabolcs MÁTYÁS* *

László BÓI** *

Abstract. *In the Hungarian and international geographical and sociological literature, the stages of urban development are dealt with extremely widely, so the authors refrain from describing them in detail. The relationship between crime and urban development stages is tangential in previous studies. The researchers mention a positive or negative change in the crime rate for each stage but do not go further. They do not undertake to deal with specific criminal values, the structure, or potential solutions for crime prevention.*

This study examines the stages of urban development from the perspective of changes in crime. Among the four stages of urban development, the study deals with suburbanization, deurbanisation, and urbanization. In doing so, it shows what main crimes are characteristic of each developmental stage. The authors also mention a new urban development phase that characterizes some European cities. These settlements are mainly located in Central Europe. As a result of the new type of forced industrialization, tens of thousands of new workers are arriving in some settlements. Some of them are foreign workers, which also has a criminogenic effect.

Keywords: *crime, urban development, suburbanization, deurbanization, urbanization, border*

1. Introduction

Research into the relationship between urban development and crime dates back a relatively long time, as researchers from the Chicago School have already investigated the relationship between spatial structure and crime. Nevertheless, the area is among the under-researched topics. Research in this direction can only be found at the Hungarian and international levels.

The authors believe that crime (the volume, structure, intensity, etc.) of crime also has geographical causes in the case of urban development. The authors present these geographical reasons in the study.

It is no exaggeration to say that the present research is unique both in Hungary and abroad since no crime geography analysis of this aspect has been carried out before, which would have examined the relationship between urban development and crime.

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In the study, the authors present the stages of urban development and its impact on crime, i.e., its criminological effects. After this general but novel approach, the authors examine the impact of urbanization in the Hungarian-Romanian context. This is also a topic that neither Hungarian nor Romanian researchers have yet investigated from this aspect. Hungary joined the European Union in 2004 and Romania in 2007. Hungary is a member of the Schengen area; Romania is not yet but is expected to join the Schengen countries soon. Despite the fact that Romania is not yet a Schengen country, the border between Romania and Hungary has become "lighter." There is still passport control between the two countries, but it is symbolic that you can cross the border quickly (especially before 2015). As a result, economic cooperation between the two countries accelerated in the border region. Every day, thousands of people go to work in another country. After Romania joined the EU, passenger traffic "only" increased for the first time. After a few years, however, more and more Romanian citizens bought houses in Hungary near the Romanian border. They are the ones who, due to the lower real estate prices, go to work in Romania every day. What made this possible? The rapid development of Oradea, the suburbanization, deurbanization, and the significant increase in real estate prices in Oradea.

The authors formulated the following hypothesis.

H1: As a result of a significant number of Romanian citizens moving to Hungary, the number of criminals and victims with Romanian citizenship did not increase significantly.

The authors base their findings on the fact that the people who moved to Hungary are primarily people with families and jobs who have a low level of criminality. And the people who live here mostly live in small villages, where there is little chance of becoming victims of crime.

2. Literature review

Researchers from the Chicago School were the first to examine the impact of settlement structure and urbanization on crime. In the 1800s, Chicago experienced extremely dynamic population growth. The city's population on the shores of Lake Michigan was only 4,470 in 1840, but by 1890, it had already reached 1.7 million. The extremely rapid growth of the population resulted primarily from the development of industry, which mostly "absorbed" many workers. However, population growth also had its downsides, including unemployment, prostitution, alcoholism, homelessness, and an increase in crime (Mátyás, 2020: 20).

Many large American cities have experienced significant population growth over the past few decades. These resulted in changes that attracted the interest of criminologists and sociologists. Christopher Prener examined the city of St. Louis, where the homicide rate increased significantly, ahead of Baltimore and Detroit. Among the immigrants, Bosnians and Latin-speaking people arrived in significant numbers. St. Louis describes a specific trajectory among American cities, so it is impossible to generalize if we talk about settlement sociology research. According to the author, it is better to compare settlements with each other or to put a settlement in context and not to single out a city with a unique pattern, as this can lead to stereotypes (Prener, 2020: 53).

Ocejo and his co-authors draw attention to an interesting fact. Settlement sociology mainly examines the sociological conditions of large settlements, such as immigration, inequality, gentrification, and the development of crime. Smaller cities were mainly left out of these studies. Even though these factors had the same impact on the lives of the residents here as those living in the big city, they experienced them differently due to the size of the settlement. According to the author, it is also necessary to examine smaller settlements and increase theoretical knowledge in this area (Ocejo et al., 2020: 3-15).

A surprisingly large number of sources deal with the relationship between urbanization and crime in the case of Third World countries. This clearly shows that urbanization processes appeared late only in developing countries. Most of these countries are facing the negative consequences of the urban explosion in the past decades and today. In their case, it can be established that the urban explosion is not the result of a "pull effect," i.e., it is not the rapidly developing industry, whose "suction effect" generates the flow of the population to the cities, but the "push effect." In the case of many African and Asian countries, this means escaping from famine and a hopeless future (Pirisi et al., 2018: 150-158).

Pakistani authors "test" crime research in many scientific fields, including geography. The urbanization process can be considered positive, but its negative side is the increase in crime (Jalil – Muhammad 2010: 741-755).

Rapid urbanization is also a problem in Nigeria. The influx of people into the big cities increased the number of crimes. In addition to traditional criminological research, spatial data and satellite images were used better to understand the problem (Adegbola – Oluwole, 2019: 247).

Andrew Burton draws attention to an interesting negative phenomenon of urbanization in Tanzania. The cities are mostly young men who are called "wahuni" (hooligans). Once in the city, these young men become marginalized and commit crimes. Burton talks about "demographic distortion" in his work, as there will be a disproportionately high proportion of young men in cities. The author separates two stages of urbanization from the European one: 1919-1946 – African urbanization, 1947-1961 – urbanization of the colonial period. Nowadays, most black African countries suffer from the consequences of over-urbanization, as the number of incoming population significantly exceeds the volume of economically "absorbable" population (Burton, 2005: 301).

In the framework of empirical research, Rupesh Gupta investigated crime in New Delhi. In doing so, he established a positive correlation between the population influx caused by urbanization, the increasing number of motor vehicles, and the increase in crime. The author identified places with higher crime rates (e.g., parks, vacant lots, isolated places) (see: Risk Terrain Model). According to Rupesh's research, 30% of the respondents did not use public transport because they feared crime (Rupesh, 2020: 138-160). Similar findings can be made in the case of India's big cities; as in the case of African cities, the large cities cannot handle the excessive population flow, leading to an increase in crime. However, we can note that, based on the last decade's data, India's population growth has significantly lost its dynamics. Therefore, Indian society is heading towards the end of the second population cycle, unlike Africans.

The relationship between urbanization and victimization was investigated in a sample of 9,000 households in Stockholm and Gavleborg counties. The research established a direct correlation between the degree of urbanization and becoming a victim. In other words, the greater the proportion of urbanization, the greater the number of victims. The authors explain this by the magnitude of social cohesion. In less urbanized areas, the relationship between people is closer, they pay more attention to each other, etc. These factors reduce the magnitude of victimization (Wikstrom – Dolmen, 2001: 121-140).

Philip J. Levchak examined the relationship between urbanization and homicide. During the research, the author analyzed the homicide data series of 57 countries between 1993 and 2005. Mathematical and statistical methods were used during the correlation study. Levchak found that there is a strong positive correlation between the degree of urbanization and the number of homicides. In the case of rapid urbanization, the infrastructure of cities cannot keep up with the increased demands. The housing conditions will only be suitable for some new residents, and the employment opportunities will also be insufficient. The number of unemployed will increase, which may have a criminogenic effect. Levchak notes that the degree of correlation largely depends on the specific geographical location and the quality of the social environment (Levchak, 2016: 225-243).

3. Methodology

The authors used geographical, criminological, and sociological sources to write the article. Regarding the number of Romanian citizens living in Hungary, the authors used the database of the Hungarian Statistical Office. The crime data was made available to the authors by the National Police Headquarters.

The fact that "foreign citizen" is included in the statistical database appeared as a methodological problem. The "foreign citizen" category consists of those foreign citizens who live in Hungary, as well as those who are tourists. In other words, it cannot be determined whether a victim or perpetrator stayed in Hungary as a tourist or lives here permanently. This is a problem not only in Hungarian statistics but also in the statistics of other European Union countries. Based on this, it is difficult to assess the number of injured tourists, for example. Despite this, the authors analyze the statistical data of Romanian citizens who became victims and offenders in Hungary based on five years of data. Moreover, conclusions are drawn from the trend.

Another methodological problem was that many of those who buy real estate in Hungary are dual citizens (Hungarian-Romanian citizens) and, therefore, appear in the register as Hungarian citizens. Therefore, it is impossible to know the exact number of people who moved from Romania. It is also a methodological problem that local governments do not keep records based on citizenship, so even though the authors wrote an inquiry, the local governments could not respond. The register of the Hungarian Statistical Office has national data. This does not reveal how many foreign citizens bought real estate in each settlement.

4. Results

4.1. Stages of urban development and their criminological effects

4.1.1. Urbanization

Urban explosion is the first stage of urban development. This stage of development is only tangentially dealt with in the research, as it is currently a stage of urban development that does not exist in developed countries.

The main indicator of the urban explosion was the Industrial Revolution. The population of rural areas swelled, flowing into the cities. The Industrial Revolution was welcomed in different periods in each country, so the population flow to cities also occurred in different periods (Pirisi – Trócsányi – Hajnal, 2018).

The large population pouring into the cities significantly changed the life of the big cities of the time, contributing to the change in the number and structure of crimes. Urbanization is currently observed in many developing countries, causing serious social problems.

4.1.2. Suburbanization

Suburbanization processes (relative deconcentration) were primarily triggered by the fact that inner-city and urban areas provided less and less ideal housing conditions for the people living there. They have become overcrowded, which causes health, traffic, parking, etc.-generated problems. The more affluent citizens could afford to move to the city's edge or outside the city and buy a new house with a garden (Kocsis, 2000). With the generalization of cars, suburbanization accelerated even more, as even more people became independent of public transport and could reach places important to them more quickly. In the United Kingdom, large-scale suburbanization started at the beginning of the 20th century, in other countries later, and in the United States after the World War (Pirisi – Trócsányi – Hajnal, 2018: 150-158).

Businesses that require much space and provide various services will soon appear everywhere along the roads leading out of the big cities (e.g., logistics centers, shopping centers), and the population of the suburbs creates the conditions for the establishment of educational and health institutions. These "edge cities" sooner or later "come to life on their own" since they have all the functions a city should have.

In the case of suburbanization, several factors that increase the number of crimes can be identified. Most of the families who moved out of the central parts of the cities were replaced by people with a lower level of existence, as a result of which the crime rate in the inner-city areas mainly increases. Among the crimes committed, property and violent crimes are present in a higher proportion.

The next area of crimes related to suburbanization can be linked to residential and single-family areas located on the city's outskirts and outside the city. Most of the residents go to work in the town, which means that the population in these areas is low during the day, thus providing an "ideal" environment for criminals (e.g., burglary, theft). Near the new residential areas, along the exit roads, large area shopping centers are buildings. The number of machinery break-ins and thefts is significant here.

4.1.3. Deurbanization

In deurbanization, the population of not only the cities but also the suburbs begins to decrease. That is why this process is also called absolute deconcentration. During deurbanization, the movers leave the city and move to rural areas, sometimes tens of kilometers away.

Deurbanization affects far fewer people than suburbanization. Large-scale deurbanization cannot be observed anywhere (Kocsis, 2000: 311-321). The main reason for this is that the more affluent people can afford to travel more (travel costs) and, due to the distance, to work from home several days a week. The acceleration of deurbanization was helped by the pandemic caused by COVID-19, which showed that working from home can be solved in many areas. Despite this, deurbanization can still be considered massive.

The criminal effects of deurbanization are more challenging to measure than in the case of the stages of urban development presented earlier. There are several reasons for this. On the one hand, it covers a smaller time interval, so there is less time to observe the negative phenomena. On the other hand, it affects far fewer people than the previous stages of urban development.

4.1.4. Reurbanization

The latest stage of urban development. The social and economic need for revitalizing the inner-city areas gave rise to reurbanization. If the real estate developments are successful, the population exchange can start, initiating favorable processes (Pirisi – Trócsányi – Hajnal, 2018: 1501-158). In the case of newly built or renovated properties, the wealthiest people can only pay relatively high prices.

The opinion is unanimous that it has only positive criminal effects (source). According to the authors, this is only partially true. The population of the rehabilitated area will be replaced, which will really have a positive return in a given area. However, the sources forget to mention that in many cases, the people living in these areas are moved elsewhere. We have also seen this in the case of many Hungarian cities, where the inner-city population living at a low social level was moved out to the outskirts of the city. In these garden city areas, the residents' subjective sense of security and the new place's property security were significantly worsened (Sóvágó, 2007: 43). Debrecen can be cited as an example of this.

In addition to physical rehabilitation (renovation of buildings), social rehabilitation is also necessary. In this process, in addition to the renovation of the buildings, it is also necessary to raise the population living there, who, in many cases, are marginalized.

4.2. A new type of urban development

In European countries today, we cannot speak of an urban explosion, but there are many big cities – in Hungary and Romania – where the population growth can be observed. Behind this growth is the significant labor demand of industrial plants within a short time, which results in a dynamic increase in the population of individual settlements (e.g., Debrecen, Kecskemét, Oradea).

What criminal relevance does the above process have? The industry employs a higher percentage of male workers. The percentage of men will be higher in settlements where new factories are established mainly based on male labor. It is a criminological fact that men commit more crimes (Santana, 2009). The new type of urban development stimulated by industrial development has a criminogenic effect. Szabolcs Mátyás called this process "neo-industrial criminality" in his book "Criminal Geography" (Mátyás, 2023: 122).

Let us also mention the process experienced in many Central European countries, which bases industrial development not on domestic but on foreign labor. The primary reason is that there is not an adequate number of qualified workers in a given country, so workers come from abroad in the framework of temporary labor hire. This can also have a criminogenic effect.

4.3. Urban development and urbanization on both sides of the border

Debrecen and Oradea are, the two big cities on the border, have been competitors for centuries. Sometimes one and sometimes the other city was the one that developed better. Between 1945 and 1989, the two cities were separated, the border cutting the relations in two. After the change of the regime, the relationship between the two cities became more lively in economic and cultural terms. And not only between the two cities but also between the two countries. Many tourists traveled to the other country, and economic traffic between the two countries also increased significantly.

In the former socialist countries, the process of suburbanization was delayed and only started to appear towards the end of the 1980s. After the change of the regime, this process sped up, and suburbanization made its impact felt more and more. At the same time (a few years later), deurbanization and reurbanization also appeared. What was the consequence of this? Oradea increasingly regained its former glory. The city was renewed and beautified. The city center has been re-enchanted, and many parts have been rebuilt. Real estate prices in Oradea started to rise (Rostás – Bálint, 2023), so it became more and more difficult for many, especially young people, to afford an apartment. They first bought real estate around Oradea, and after their prices rose, several bought real estate on the other side of the border, in Hungary. However, we can mention Oradea and the cities of Arad and Satu Mare. Real estate prices in these settlements also rose, and many people bought houses on the Hungarian side of the border.

After Romania joined the European Union, the border did not separate people but connected them. Those who bought a house in Hungary crossed the border daily to work in the Oradea area and returned in the afternoon. This process will be completed when Romania joins the Schengen Convention, and the borders will disappear completely. (The authors hope this will happen in 2024.)

Table 1. Statistical date about victims and perpetrators

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of Romanian citizens in Hungary	22.747	21.017	22.162	18.220	16.601	16.542
The number of victimized Romanian citizens in Hungary (person)	448	393	341	300	296	-
The number of perpetrator Romanian citizens in Hungary (person)	1150	1068	1290	1294	1595	-

Source: Hungarian Statistical Office, National Police Headquarters

The question arises as to what causes the significant real estate price difference in Hungary and Romania. The small settlements on the Hungarian side of the border are "urban-deficient" settlements; they lost their centers after the First World War (e.g., Oradea, Arad), and in Hungary, they were too far from the big cities. The economic backwardness of these settlements along the border region was constantly increasing, and their population was constantly losing. There were not enough job opportunities, so young people emigrated. These settlements have become aging, so real estate prices have become very low (Rostás – Bálint, 2023). After Romania joined the EU, many people decided to buy cheap houses, renovate them, and live in Hungary. As a result, the population of the depopulated villages began to grow, young people arrived in the settlements, which saved these settlements from destruction.

Interestingly, the number of Romanian citizens living in Hungary has decreased significantly in recent years (Table 1). In 1995, 68,439 Romanian citizens resided in Hungary, which fell to 57,343 in 2000 and 28,641 in 2015 (KSH). A significant decrease can be observed as time progresses. According to the authors, there are three main reasons for this.

1. In Hungary, since 2010, it has been possible for a foreign citizen to become a dual citizen in a simplified manner. Many Romanian citizens have also acquired Hungarian citizenship, so many are listed as Hungarian (and not Romanian) citizens in the statistics.

2. The desire to buy real estate has decreased. Many Romanian citizens are disappointed. Until 2015, crossing the border was fast; daily crossings did not cause any problems. As a result of the wave of refugees in 2015, border crossings were tightened on both the Hungarian and Romanian sides, and it is much slower to cross the border. Added to this was the Russian-Ukrainian war that broke out in 2022, which slowed down border traffic even more. It happens that thousands of Ukrainian refugees arrive in Hungary from Romania every day, which also increases the time it takes to cross the border. The increased transit time has discouraged many people, as it is increasingly difficult to manage the daily commute.

3. The previous high values included working in Hungary as a guest worker with Romanian citizenship. Nowadays, this has decreased significantly. Wages in Romania have increased significantly in the past decade, so it is not worth working in Hungary.

The fact that the number of offended Romanian citizens in Hungary has significantly decreased is positive (between 2018 and 2022 with 34%). On the other hand, only 28% of Romanian citizens living in Hungary, i.e., fewer and fewer Romanian citizens, are offended. This is a national trend in Hungary; the number of foreign victims is decreasing (www.ksh.hu). However, these are national data, so obtaining data for border settlements was impossible. However, based on informal conversations, it can be assumed that the number of Romanian citizens offended in the border settlements is very low. The authors are both police officers from Hajdú-Bihar county, and they asked their former colleagues how often they meet Romanian victims living in Hungary. Every police officer interviewed mentioned a very low value.

Annually, 1,000-1,500 Romanian citizens become criminals in Hungary. Considering the number of Romanian citizens coming to Hungary, this cannot be regarded as a high value (most tourists come to Hungary from Romania) (www.police.hu). In this regard, this is also national data, which means that it is not known in which part of the country these crimes are committed. Among the crimes, the proportion of traffic crimes is high (e.g., causing an accident), i.e., it is not intentional. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the number of Romanian citizens (tourists) coming to Hungary is constantly increasing (Lőrincz – Keller – Mátyás, 2023: 101-116).

The hypothesis formulated by the authors was confirmed. Based on the criminal statistics data, the number of victims with Romanian citizenship did not increase significantly. Similar conclusions can be made about criminals. Although the number of criminals with Romanian citizenship has increased in Hungary, the number of tourists arriving in Hungary has also increased significantly, so it can be assumed that Romanian citizens who have moved to Hungary are law-abiding citizens who do not commit many crimes.

5. Summary

During this research, the authors presented the stages of urban development. In doing so, the four stages of urbanization were not examined from the traditional geographical point of view but from a criminological point of view. The authors presented the factors that cause increased crime at each stage. It has been established that in the case of urbanization, large-scale immigration and people who have become rootless cause criminological problems in many cases. In addition, infrastructure and services could not keep up with immigration. Suburbanization created new neighborhoods that were "empty" during the day. These residential areas provide "ideal" conditions for home burglaries. The effect of suburbanization is that large shopping centers have been created on the outskirts of cities and along the roads leading out of the city. Car break-ins and car thefts can be observed in their parking lots. The criminological effects of deurbanization are more challenging to study because they affect fewer people. Similar conclusions can be made with this section as with suburbanization, although its criminological impact is much milder. The effect of reurbanization is twofold. There is less crime in the renewed downtown as its population changes. The new residents are mostly young, wealthy, and intellectual. On the other hand, the population moving out of the city center has a negative effect on its new place of residence. Crime will be higher wherever they move.

The authors examined the impact of urbanization in Hungarian and Romanian contexts. As a result of the increased real estate prices in Romania, thousands of Romanian citizens moved to Hungary. This process is a consequence of suburbanization and deurbanization in Romania. The authors examined whether this resulted in an increase in the number of Romanian citizens who became victims or criminals in Hungary. They found that the change was not detectable in either case.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF IOT IN EVERYDAY LIFE AND IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Endre NYITRAI*

Abstract. *Every day, we leave behind more and more digital data, which is related to the use of modern technical devices as well. This can speed up the flow of information. With the emergence of the Internet of Things, when machines communicate with each other and machines with people and exchange information. It has become essential to get to know the applications behind each device, as well as to analyze and examine the process of digital citizenship formation. The study presents modern technical devices, applications, data and digital citizenship from the Hungarian point of view, as well as the related decisions.*

Keywords*:* *IoT, EoT, forensics, technology, mobile devices*

Introduction

We are surrounded by many sensors that sense our environment and detect the set-up - physical, chemical, biological, etc. – status changes, as well as contact and communicate with each other and the user via the Internet (Haig, 2018., 97-98).

In the 21 st century our everyday life is shaped by technology (Tóth, 2021a). We are living in an era of the fourth industrial revolution of Western civilization; digitalization, when rapid technological development and globalization pose new challenges to the protection of personal data (Mátyás, 2020) and to the right to knowledge based on being given appropriate information too (Tóth, 2020). Nowadays, the Internet of Things (Internet of Things, hereinafter: IoT) plays an increasingly important role, the scope of which is quite broad, as it permeates the whole of society, such as agriculture, industry, transport, education, public administration, law enforcement, as well as the activities of circles that commit crimes.

The concept of IoT: in Hungarian translation, the "internet of things" is a socio-technological framework concept, which describes that products, objects, devices are connected online, communicate with each other, and perform tasks, without necessarily having a user interface. Technically, this is how we describe a multitude of natural or man-made objects that have an IP address and are able to distribute data via the Internet network (IVSZ, 2014-2015). So IoT is a worldwide network of interconnected objects, devices, objects that can be individually addressed and have their own IP address (Haig, 2018, 97).

IoT devices are able to communicate with each other by connecting to some kind of network - The connection can be realized on the one hand using technology

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based on the use of licensed frequencies (e.g. 4G; 5G), on the other hand using frequencies that can be used without a license (e.g. SigFox), or using private technologies (e.g. Wi-Fi; Bluetooth) (Gellért, 2022, 56.)

Legal background of IoT

According to some predictions, by 2025 there will be approximately 100 billion IoT devices and 2 million sensors will be installed every hour (URL1).

As the number of devices increases, it is expected that the number of attacks against IoT devices will also increase. Directive 2013/40EU of the European Parliament and Council is important from the point of view of protection. In order to comply with this, in our country, the LXXII of 2014. Act amended § 423 of Act C of 2012 on the Criminal Code, the "Breach of information system or data" fact. The Civil Code According to § 459, point 15, "the information system is the equipment that ensures the automatic processing, management, storage, and transmission of data, or the set of such equipment in connection with each other." This definition includes computers, IoT devices, communication and telecommunication networks and systems, as well as different types of SIM cards, and the definition does not distinguish between the transmission of signals, therefore it includes electronic, optical and various information systems created by radio waves and satellite radiation (Gellért, 2021, 18). In compliance with Directive 2013/40/EU of the European Parliament and Council, we also adopted the concept of data: "the appearance of facts, information or concepts stored, managed, processed or transmitted in an information system in any form suitable for processing by the information system, including the program which ensures the execution of a function by the information system" (Act C of 2012).

The importance of SIM

The most important element of data management, the SIM card (subscriber identification module), is built into IoT devices for the purpose of identifying the smart device (Gellért, 2021, 58.) Nowadays, the use of an environmentally friendly eSIM card is gaining more and more space as a convenience aspect, which will also expand the data request aspects of law enforcement authorities. For eSIM-capable devices, it is easy to download the profile of the subscriber to the chip card built into the mobile phone, which contains the characteristics of the subscription. Another advantage is that eSIM profiles can be easily and quickly changed between devices; the PIN and other security codes can be viewed at any time in the online account, and eSIM phones can also be used as dual SIMs (URL2). These options (profiles) also support the work of the investigative authority in identifying the perpetrator. Finding out the facts and identifying the perpetrator is the primary task of the investigation. (Vári, 2015)

However, it must be said that in terms of IoT devices, iSIM (integrated SIM), which is considered a new generation of the subscriber identification circuit, has appeared, which enables the device in question to be even smaller by integrating the SIM card functions into the main processor of the device (Sipos).

In the case of iSIM, according to some forecasts, by 2025, humanity will be able to use 488 million devices intended for the consumer market. Advantages of iSIM over eSIM:

- eSIM requires a separate processor, while iSIM functions are integrated into the main processor;

- eSIMs work on a separate chip, in the case of the iSIM there is no need for such a chip, nor is there a separate space for SIM services;
- iSIM does not require further development from the operator's side (Sipos)

With the use of smart devices and 5G technology, digitization will become even stronger and play an even greater role in creating a digital society. With the 5G network, the data transmission speed will increase, and by the end of the decade it will be possible to connect billions of devices (Sipos)

So 5G will have an impact on the spread of IoT devices, and will also contribute to the development of existing and emerging areas. These are the following:

- self-driving cars will be provided with a real-time connection,
- with the development of healthcare applications, "distance healing" will become more and more common,
- creating IoT and IoE with smart home devices,
- spread of holographic augmented reality,
- augmented reality (Ürmösné et al, 2022) based map, navigation,
- 3-dimensional holographic communication,
- virtual online purchases,
- it will also affect the agricultural deployment of sensors and sensors.

The above groups will already enrich the field of IoE tools and methods, and with the development of the network of connections, we will encounter a triple formation when we talk about communication between machines, between machines and people, and between people using technology.

The "Internet of things/objects" and the "everything Internet" are already present in parallel in our lives and in the future, so this will define our everyday life even more, and thus also the work of law enforcement agencies. Therefore, the application of artificial intelligence and network science research methods will be of great importance in the processing and use of the mass of data generated during the IoT.

We are starting to use IT devices that were even unheard of a few years ago, and our homes are also becoming smart (Krasznay. 2020, 122). The number of Iot devices is expected to increase to 125 billion by 2030 (URL3). These devices will communicate with each other and form a digital ecosystem, a connection network, a map. The network of these devices takes the form of smart homes on a small scale, and smart cities on a larger scale. The network of a smart home can connect to the network of another smart home, thereby creating an even more complex network, or the network of smart homes or smart homes can connect to the network of a smart city.

Digital citizenship

The development of information and communication technologies brings with it a radical transformation of our lives. This is how the relationship between the state and society is placed in the digital space, and modern government digital interfaces and services are created. The draft law on the creation of digital citizenship creates the foundations for the implementation of the National Digital Citizenship Program (hereinafter: DÁP). The goal of the Program is to enable Hungarian people to manage their affairs more easily and faster than ever before with the help of a central mobile application. With the help of the mobile application, they will be able to prove their identity and arrange their payments to the state with the push of a button. During the implementation of the

Program, one of the most important principles is that the user decides whether to take advantage of the opportunities offered by digital citizenship (URL4).

It was formulated as a goal for citizens to be able to manage almost all matters concerning public administration online - primarily on a portable info communication device. With the help of the mobile application, they will be able to verify their identity and settle their payments to the state with the push of a button, and with the phone, they can prove their identity to the police and tobacconist only that they are over 18 years old. In addition, utility bills will be available and paid through the DÁP application. At the same time, they would also introduce market services that, for example, make the warranty card available and downloadable when purchasing a product.

Utility bills will also be available and paid through the DÁP application. At the same time, they would also introduce market services that, for example, make the warranty card available and downloadable when purchasing a product. In the digital space, the user profile based on the digital citizen ID is used for primary contact with the state. Digital citizenship is based on data managed in state registers.

In the future, it will be possible for everyone to manage their affairs in offline mode through the DÁP application. The customer registration body can provide the investigation authority without the customer's consent for the purpose of preventing and detecting crimes, conducting criminal proceedings or executing punishments and measures. So, the prison service will be one of the the next autorities to use such modern information and communication technologies. (Czenczer, 2020; Ürmösné, 2019). Also, the use of the data generated during the use of the application will create another data collection opportunity for the police.

Data-driven research such as network research, which is based on the analysis of the huge amount of data around us, will be important in order to understand the operation of the complex systems found in everyday life and to reveal their connections that are invisible on the surface. The toolbox of network research makes it possible to connect and analyze dynamic data cadastres that are scattered or not found in one data set. Network thinking plays a significant role in mapping the financial networks of criminals and criminal organizations (Ürmösné, 2018), as well as in creating a diagram of the relationship between criminals.

It is necessary to create an EU law enforcement ecosystem that supports e-investigation processes, thus reducing the reaction time of the investigating authority. The data obtained during e-investigation can also serve as the basis for network research analyses, and the results established in this way can also contribute to the development of the criminal digital ecosystem.

Summary

Efficiency and the widespread use of new technologies, processes and procedures are also natural in law making, especially in the field of cybercrimes and cybersecurity (2021b).

We have seen that when using modern technical devices and applications, a lot of digital data is generated, which gives the opportunity to create a profile.

However, it should be avoided that certain sections of the law allow the collection of inventory data, thereby creating a profile, as these legal provisions are not in line with the constitutional requirements stemming from the right to respect for privacy contained in the Basic Law, as well as the right to the protection of personal data.

Furthermore, network research helps to fulfill the basic principle of the completeness of the investigation, because if the system of connections can be mapped, then during the analysis, all the perpetrators and all the illegal acts can be revealed in relation to the investigated event.

Today and in the future, digital data and modern technical tools will help the work of law enforcement agencies, and thus also detection and proof.

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2012. évi C. törvény A Büntető Törvénykönyvről

INEQUALITIES IN RETIREMENT AGE AND LIFE EXPECTANCY

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Abstract. *In the countries of the world as well as in the European Union, the continuous growth in life expectancy at birth is accompanied by an increase in retirement age. Comparing these age limits to the expected lifespan for men and women, we find huge differences between the expected years spent alive after retirement. In this paper, we examine one aspect of sustainability of different European pension systems, concentrating mainly on life expectancy and retirement age. On a large sample, we analyse how the governments change the retirement age for men and women and how it relates to demographic factors such as ageing and fertility. Considering that the pension system is also a redistribution mechanism, sustainability can be seen as a trade-off between fairness and efficiency.*

Keywords: *life expectancy, retirement age, European pension systems*

1. Introduction

The increase in life expectancy poses a challenge to the pension systems of the world's countries, both developing and developed ones (see Gruber – Wise 1998, Garba – Mamman 2014 or Álvarez-García et al. 2020). As people live longer and longer, they spend more and more years in retirement, which puts a strain on the pension system and pension funds.

In European countries, life expectancy generally shows an upward trend, which has prompted political decision-makers to reevaluate the retirement age and the parameters of their pension systems. Many European countries have adjusted their retirement age to meet the challenges of an aging population. Governments have implemented reforms to gradually raise the retirement age. The tendency is to link the retirement age to life expectancy, sometimes adjusted to reflect changes in longevity (see, e.g., approaches to automatic adjustment in the work of Knell 2018).

European countries have a variety of pension systems and the sustainability of these systems varies. Some countries have well-funded and responsive pension systems, while others face more serious challenges. Scandinavian countries, for example, are often referred to as having a more sustainable pension system due to a combination of factors such as a flexible retirement age and strong social policy (a good overview of the Norwegian system can be found in e.g. Brinch et al. 2018 and

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Hernaes et al 2013, and on the lessons learned from the Swedish pension system see María del Carmen Boado-Penas, Poontavika Naka and Ole Settergren 2020).

Comparing all pension systems in the world is a particularly complex and almost impossible task. The sustainability of the pension system is influenced by countless factors, some of which we will now list. The question of how the state invests these payments is beyond the scope of this article. We also do not want to deal in detail with how contributions and payments compare in each country. We would like to focus primarily on the two main demographic factors such as life expectancy at birth and retirement age. Of course, many other demographic factors influence the sustainability of the pension system, such as employment, labour force participation, fertility rate, aging, child mortality, infant mortality and migration. In our article, we mainly focus on the mandatory state pension, where the state also plays a redistributive role. The sustainability of this system is greatly influenced, among the above mentioned factors, by life expectancy and the retirement age (see more details in Álvarez-García et al. 2020 or Saure – Zoabi 2011).

It is quite obvious that the state enforces redistribution aspects through the pension system as well (Stiglitz, 2000). Redistribution reduces income inequality, but worsens productivity and efficiency. If it were to operate on a completely voluntary basis, mainly poorer people would participate in it, which would lead to adverse selection. Therefore, the state always takes a strong role, and membership cannot be avoided.

Considering European and Asian countries, there are already relatively large differences in life expectancy between countries. It is also an interesting and well-known fact that women live longer than men. This difference is so significant that it can be seen there is currently no country on Earth where men live longer than women on average. In some countries by only half a year, in others by 12 years, but women live longer everywhere. In many countries, however, the regulations are such that women can retire earlier.

2. Literature review

Continuous growth in life expectancy at birth is accompanied by an increase in retirement age (Naumann 2014). Comparing these age limits to the expected lifespan for men and women, we find huge differences between the expected years spent alive after retirement (Riekhoff 2023). Considering that the pension system is also a redistribution mechanism, there is a trade-off between fairness and sustainability (Wahrendorf et. al. 2017). According to Preston (1975) there is a strong positive correlation between life expectancy at birth and aggregate income. This pattern shows that at low income levels, an increase in income significantly increases life expectancy.

So the research questions based on the literature are as follows. Is there still scope for raising the retirement age in certain countries in terms of sustainability and fairness? How big is the difference between life expectancy after retirement of men and women in each income group?

3. Methodology

Our goal is to compare the retirement age and life expectancy for women and men in countries with different levels of development. Development is measured by GDP per capita at purchasing power parity (PPP). European countries do not show great variability in terms of retirement age, therefore countries outside the European Union and some South-Asian countries were also included in the analysis. The full list of countries is shown below in Table 2. The 52 countries were grouped into 4 quartiles based on income per capita (see Table 3). The first quartile contains the most developed states of the European Union and some rich microstates. The second quartile also includes stable EU member states. The following table shows which variables were used during the analysis. The abbreviations used later can be found in the left column of Table 1.

Table 1. List of variables

Abbreviations of variables	Description of variables
Country	Name of the country
Code	Code of the country
fullfem	Retirement age with full benefits, female
fullmale	Retirement age with full benefits, male
dfullmf	The difference in retirement age between female and male
lifefem	Life expectancy at birth, female
lifemale	Life expectancy at birth, male
lifetot	Life expectancy at birth, total
difflife	Life expectancy difference between female and male
GDPPC	GDP per capita (constant 2015 US$) 2021
Quartile	Quartiles are based on GDP per capita
dlifefullfem	The difference between life expectancy and retirement age, female
dlifefullmale	The difference between life expectancy and retirement age, male

The following table (Table 2) actually contains the entire database that we used during the investigation. This table summarizes the mandatory retirement age and life expectancy at birth for women and men for each country. In addition, the table also includes total life expectancy and GDP per capita.

Table 2. List of countries

Country	Code	Fullfem	fullmale	lifefem	lifemale	lifetot	GDPPC
Albania	ALB	61,3	65	79,173	74,087	76,463	4857,112
Andorra	AND	..	..	..	..	..	36616,1
Armenia	ARM	63	63	77,35	66,554	72,043	4522,319
Austria	AUT	60	65	83,8	78,8	81,23902	45238,39
Azerbaijan	AZE	63	65	73,287	65,646	69,366	5345,441
Belarus	BLR	58	63	77,697	67,298	72,37068	6457,752
Belgium	BEL	65	65	84,4	79,5	81,89024	42971,06
Bosnia H.	BIH	65	65	77,53	73,108	75,3	5947,821
Bulgaria	BGR	61,8	64,4	75,1	68,1	71,51463	8641,819
Croatia	HRV	63	65	79,6	73,4	76,42439	15396,11
Cyprus	CYP	65	65	83,204	79,209	81,203	28329,32
Czechia	CZE	62,2	64,2	80,6	74,3	77,37317	20085,46
Denmark	DNK	67	67	83,3	79,6	81,40488	58359,58

Country	Code	Fullfem	fullmale	lifefem	lifemale	lifetot	GDPPC
Estonia	EST	65	65	81,3	72,4	76,74146	21707,24
Faroe Islands	FRO			85,7	81,4	83,49756	56689,35
Finland	FIN	64,3	64,3	84,7	79,3	81,93415	46259,2
France	FRA	67	67	85,5	79,3	82,32439	38045,9
Georgia	GEO	60	65	76,681	66,803	71,694	4931,733
Germany	DEU	65,9	65,9	83,38	78,54	80,90098	42726,49
Greece	GRC	67	67	83	77,5	80,18293	18907,85
Greenland	GRL			72,72	69,65	71,14756	48514,53
Hungary	HUN	65	65	78	71,1	74,46585	15533,61
Iceland	ISL	67	67	84,5	81,8	83,11707	53825,26
Ireland	IRL	66	66	84,1	80,2	82,10244	88966,67
Italy	ITA	67	67	85,1	80,6	82,79512	31600,71
Kazakhstan	KAZ	60,5	63	74,03	66,33	70,23	11298,36
Kosovo	XKX	65	65	79,553	74,151	76,806	4429,976
Kyrgyz Republ.	KGZ	58	63	76,1	67,9	71,9	1151,097
Latvia	LVA	64,3	64,3	78,2	68,6	73,28293	16609,08
Lithuania	LTU	63,7	64,3	79	69,9	74,33902	18233,63
Luxembourg	LUX	65	65	84,9	80,7	82,74878	107792,2
Moldova	MDA	60	63	73,547	64,443	68,846	3661,303
Montenegro	MNE	62,3	66	77	70,8	73,82439	7390,305
Netherlands	NLD	66,6	66,6	83,1	79,9	81,46098	48301,53
North Macedonia	MKD	62	64	76,77	72,41	74,53683	5365,476
Norway	NOR	67	67	84,7	81,7	83,16341	77805,01
Poland	POL	60	65	79,7	71,7	75,60244	15850,29
Portugal	PRT	66,6	66,6	84,3	78	81,07317	20835,11
Romania	ROU	61,9	65	76,7	69,4	72,96098	11617,99
Russian Fed.	RUS	56,5	61,5	74,77	64,21	69,36122	10301,67
San Marino	SMR	66	66	..	..	..	45269,47
Serbia	SRB	63,3	65	75,64	69,96	72,73073	7113,575
Slovak Republ.	SVK	62	63	78,3	71,3	74,71463	18513,09
Slovenia	SVN	65	65	84	77,9	80,87561	24744,84
Spain	ESP	67	67	86,2	80,3	83,17805	26125,87
Sweden	SWE	62	62	85	81,4	83,1561	54422,92
Switzerland	CHE	64	65	85,9	81,9	83,85122	87339,76
Tajikistan	TJK	58	63	73,734	69,568	71,594	1281,961
Turkiye	TUR	58	60	79,121	73,04	76,032	13341,56

Country	Code	Fullfem	fullmale	lifefem	lifemale	lifetot	GDPPC
Ukraine	UKR	60	60	74,36	65,16	69,6478	2452,983
UK	GBR	66	66	82,8	78,7	80,7	45334,16
Uzbekistan	UZB	55	60	73,39	68,334	70,862	3356,033

Source of data: World Development Indicators (WDI 2023)

The countries were arranged in descending order based on GDP per capita and divided into four equal parts, resulting in four quartiles. We also displayed the countries in descending order within the quartiles (see Table 3).

Table 3. List of countries in the four quartiles*

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Luxembourg	Austria	Slovak Republic	Belarus
Ireland	Belgium	Lithuania	Bosnia and H.
Switzerland	Germany	Latvia	North Macedonia
Norway	France	Poland	Azerbaijan
Denmark	Andorra	Hungary	Georgia
Faroe Islands	Italy	Croatia	Albania
Sweden	Cyprus	Turkiye	Armenia
Iceland	Spain	Romania	Kosovo
Greenland	Slovenia	Kazakhstan	Moldova
Netherlands	Estonia	Russian Fed.	Uzbekistan
Finland	Portugal	Bulgaria	Ukraine
United Kingdom	Czechia	Montenegro	Tajikistan
San Marino	Greece	Serbia	Kyrgyz Republic

Source of data: World Development Indicators (WDI 2023)
*The quartiles are based on GDP per capita

The following table (Table 4) provides the main descriptive statistics for the entire sample. So we can see the average, the minimum and maximum value and the range for the main variables. It can be seen from the sample element number (N) that there are only a few missing values.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of variables

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
fullfem	49	12,00	55,00	67,00	63,1469
fullmale	49	7,00	60,00	67,00	64,6347
lifefem	50	13,48	72,72	86,20	80,0107
lifemale	50	17,69	64,21	81,90	73,9180
lifetot	50	15,01	68,85	83,85	76,8995
lifediff	50	8,10	2,70	10,80	6,0927
GDPPC	52	106641,09	1151,10	107792,19	27700,3082
Valid N	48				

Source of data: World Development Indicators (WDI 2023)

The following table (Table 5) presents the main variables by quartile. From this we can learn that in the first quartile there is only a very small difference between the mandatory retirement age for women and men. However, as income decreases in the further quartiles, women can retire earlier than men. This difference is already significant in the poorest quartile. Compared to this, the difference in life expectancy at birth also increases as we move downwards, but in favour of women. In the last two columns of the table, we calculated how many years men and women live on average after retirement. Based on the above, with the decrease in income, the number of years spent as a pensioner is increasing among women and men. Below the median income, men live only five years after retirement and women 15 years. It directly follows that there is no scope for raising the retirement age in the poorer Eastern European and South Asian countries.

Table 5. Means in the four quartiles

Quartile	fullfem	fullmale	dfullmf	lifefem	lifemale	lifetot	difflife	GDPPC	dlifefullfem	dlifefullmale
1	65,54	65,63	0,09	83,45	79,69	81,52	3,76	62990,74	18,81	14,93
2	65,23	65,81	0,58	83,73	78,03	80,81	5,70	30610,33	18,51	12,22
3	61,72	63,96	2,25	77,32	69,83	73,50	7,49	13064,70	15,60	5,87
4	60,64	63,38	2,75	76,09	68,88	72,42	7,21	4135,46	15,45	5,50
Total	63,15	64,63	1,49	80,01	73,92	76,90	6,09	27700,31	16,96	9,24

Source of data: World Development Indicators (WDI 2023)
*The quartiles are based on GDP per capita

If we only focus on these two variables (the difference between life expectancy and retirement age of male and female), we can see that there is a huge difference between the richest and the poorest countries in this respect (Table 6, Figure 1. and Figure 2.). In Sweden, men live almost 20 years, in Austria, women live more than 23 years after retirement.

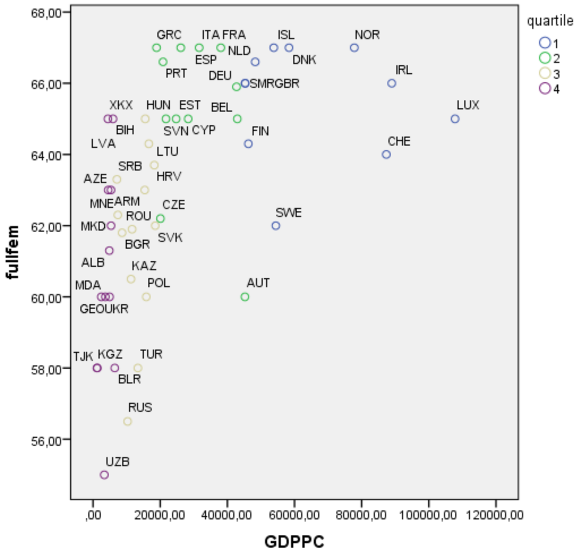
Table 6. Differences in the four quartiles

Quartile		dlifefullmale	dlifefullfem
1	Mean	14,9300	18,8100
	Minimum	12,60	16,30
	Maximum	19,40	23,00
2	Mean	12,2208	18,5070
	Minimum	7,40	16,00
	Maximum	14,50	23,80
3	Mean	5,8723	15,6047
	Minimum	2,71	12,34
	Maximum	13,04	21,12
4	Mean	5,4971	15,4517
	Minimum	,65	10,29
	Maximum	9,15	19,70
Total	Mean	9,2448	16,9566
	Minimum	,65	10,29
	Maximum	19,40	23,80

Source of data: World Development Indicators (WDI 2023)
*The quartiles are based on GDP per capita

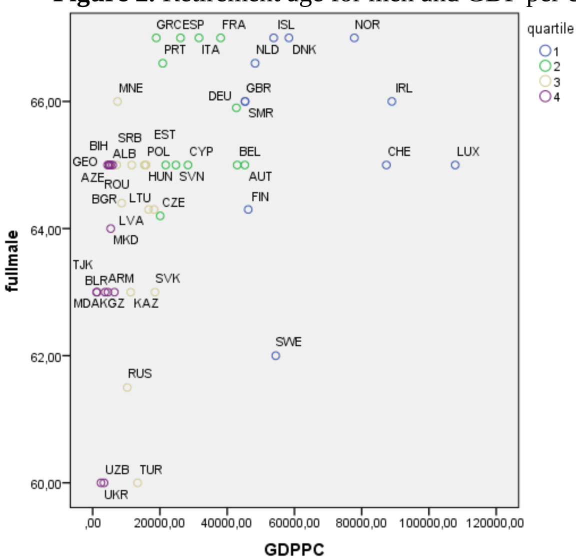
As income increases, the mandatory retirement age for men and women also seems to increase (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). These curves are similar to the Preston curve (1975) as the retirement age is somewhat adapted to life expectancy. Inequality between men and women is observed mainly in poorer countries.

Figure 1. Retirement age for women and GDP per capita



Source of data: World Development Indicators (WDI 2023)
*The quartiles are based on GDP per capita

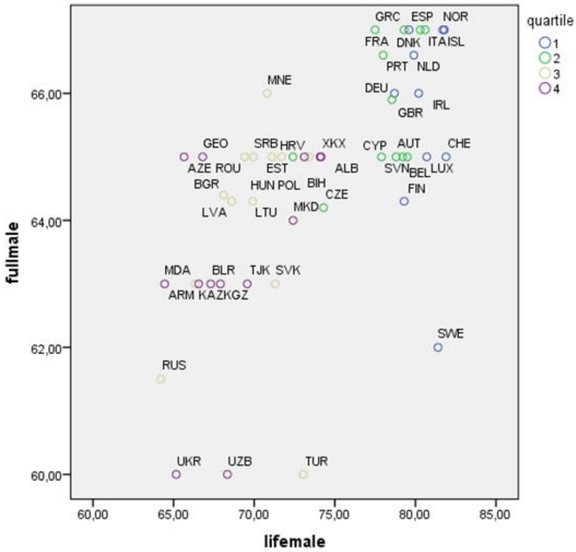
Figure 2. Retirement age for men and GDP per capita



Source of data: World Development Indicators (WDI 2023)
*The quartiles are based on GDP per capita

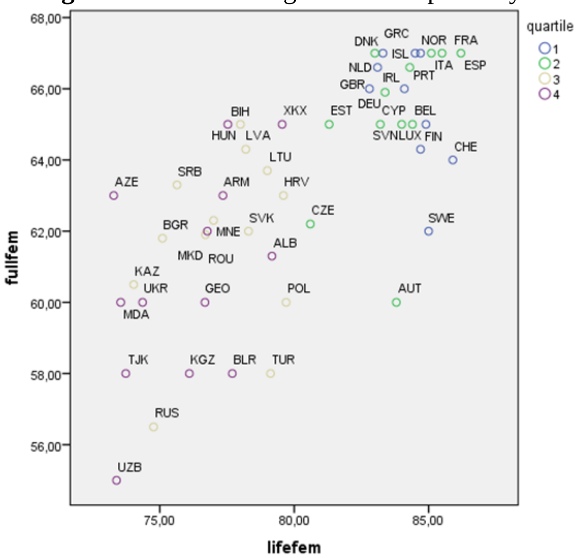
A positive correlation can be observed between men's life expectancy and retirement age (Figure 3). However, there are outliers, in Sweden and Turkey the retirement age is relatively low compared to life expectancy.

Figure 3. Retirement age and life expectancy for men



Source of data: World Development Indicators (WDI 2023)
*The quartiles are based on GDP per capita

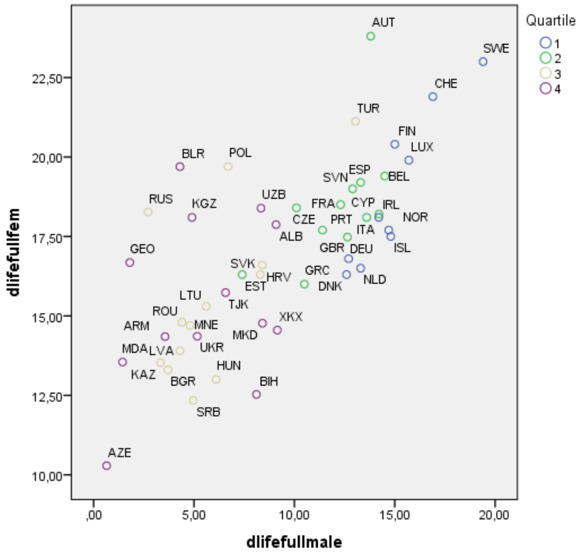
Figure 4. Retirement age and life expectancy for women



Source of data: World Development Indicators (WDI 2023)
*The quartiles are based on GDP per capita

We can observe outliers in the case of women as well (see Figure 4). Sweden, Austria and the Czech Republic keep the mandatory retirement age for women relatively low.

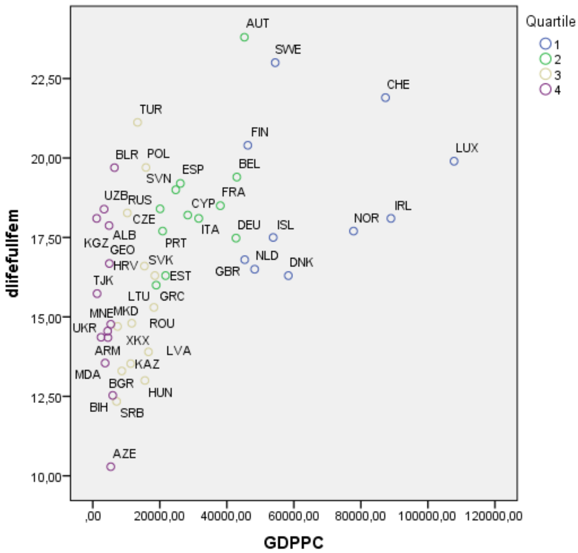
Figure 5. Years after retirement age alive for men and women



Source of data: World Development Indicators (WDI 2023)
*The quartiles are based on GDP per capita

Based on the Figure 5 above, having a look at the scales in the X and Y axes, women clearly live more years after retirement than men, the difference is particularly large in poorer countries.

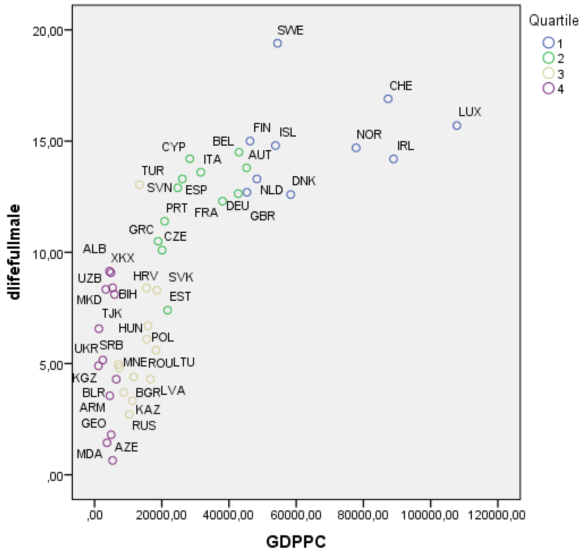
Figure 6. Years after retirement age alive for men and GDP per capita



Source of data: World Development Indicators (WDI 2023)
*The quartiles are based on GDP per capita

In Figures 6 and 7, we followed an approach similar to the Preston curve, with the difference that the vertical axis does not show life expectancy, but the number of years after retirement. A similar pattern can be observed as the Preston curve especially for women. As income increases, the number of years of retirement increases strongly, and further income growth no longer means a significant increase in the number of years after retirement. So the sustainability problem is more serious in poorer countries, because it would not be fair to raise the retirement age, especially for men.

Figure 7. Years after retirement age alive for women and GDP per capita



Source of data: World Development Indicators (WDI 2023)
*The quartiles are based on GDP per capita

4. Conclusions

The results of the article can be briefly summarized as follows. In Eastern European and Asian countries, there is much less scope for raising the retirement age. In poorer countries, the relative situation of men is much worse (compared to richer countries or women). The figures of the paper point out that it would not be fair, especially for poor countries, to raise the retirement age for the sake of sustainability, because then the retirement age would be very close to or exceed life expectancy. In richer countries, the retirement age can and probably should be raised for the sake of a sustainable pension system. There is a trade-off between a fair and a sustainable pension system (in terms of retirement age).

The analysis clearly shows that there is a positive relationship between retirement age and life expectancy. While life expectancy is an endogenous variable that also reflects people’s health status, the retirement age is an exogenous factor that is only a matter of political decision as to whether it adapts to life expectancy. As income increases, life expectancy increases faster than the retirement age, so the average number of years of retirement is higher in richer countries.

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THE PERSPECTIVES OF ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA THROUGH ITS INTEGRATION INTO THE NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING SYSTEM

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Abstract. *Gender equality tends to be considered an indicator for developed societies, but developing societies should also provide all the prerequisites (institutional, policy framework, resources, etc.) for achieving this objective. Gender gaps, which are highlighted in the National Development Strategy (NDS) – long visionary development document of the Republic of Moldova, adopted at the end of 2022, were analyzed in terms of the causes, but also the factors that determine them. However, the causes of gender inequalities in education, access to infrastructure, utilities, fair retirement pensions, human security have been omitted in the NDS. There are no records on the level of representation in public consultations of men and women. The version of the NDS adopted by the Government integrates aspects related to the gender perspective to a greater extent than the version of the document, placed for consultations on July 26, 2022 (which only analyzed the gaps in the incomes between women and men). Even if in the analysis of the situation the gender dimension is integrated to a more limited extent, then in the part of objectives, targets and policy directions (Results Framework), the gender perspective, materialized by reducing inequalities and inequities of opportunities and access to resources between women and men is present in all 10 general objectives.*

Keywords: *gender, gap, strategy, objectives, equality, values, commitments*

Introduction

The adoption and implementation of democratic values and principles, the enshrinement of human rights and the development of human-based policies and their needs are issues of major importance to Moldovan society, and the process of integrating the Republic of Moldova into European Union family is a basic component of the country's development strategy.

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The integration of the Republic of Moldova in modern globalization processes, implementation of political and legal reforms have determined to link gender-based political and economic norms (Putina, Iațco, p.266). On June 23, 2022, the European Council granted the Republic of Moldova the status of candidate country, a decision taken following the elaboration and presentation by the latter, in a record period of less than a month, the answers to the Questionnaire of the European Commission [1], submitted in the context of the Moldova's request for accession to the European Union. Although the answers on the situation of implemation of the reforms in the Republic of Moldova in all socio-economic sectors, as well as those of a political nature, especially after the signing of the *Association Agreement between the European Union, Euratom and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part*[2], have drawn the Commission's positive opinion, and at the same time the granting by the Council of the status of candidate country, together with Ukraine, they were issued subject to the fulfillment by the institutions of the Republic of Moldova of 9 recommendations, formulated by the European Commission[3] .

For the effective implementation of the Commission's recommendations, Moldovan authorities, jointly with civil society organizations and business associations have developed and, through the National Commission for European Integration [4] approved, on August 4, 2022, the Action Plan for the implementation of the measures proposed by the European Commission[5], which operationalize the above-mentioned recommendations through 60 actions, in an implementation period targeting the horizon of the end of June, 2023. However, in accordance with the statements of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Mr Nicu Popescu, made at the last meeting of the National Commission for European Integration, the full implementation of the action plan is estimated to be completed at the end of March a.c[6].

Taking into account our topic of interest, through this article, we intend to analyze further, only the ninth condition/recommendation, monitored by the Commission, and which once implemented by the Republic of Moldova, along with others[7], will serve as a basis for advancing bilateral accession discussions to the Union. Thus, we aim to analyze how and to which extent, the national authorities from Chisinau plan to accomplish the Commission recommendation aimed at ensuring

[1] In April 2022, the Republic of Moldova received the Questionnaire from the European Commission containing 2191 questions: 369 related to political and economic criteria and 1822 grouped in 33 chapters of the EU acquis: https://mfa.gov.md/ro/content/maeiexplica-aderarea-la-ue.

[2] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:22014A0830%2801%29

[3] https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/opinion-moldovas-application-membership-european-union_en

[4] https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135139&lang=ro#

[5] https://presedinte.md/app/webroot/uploaded/plan_cnie_04.08.2022.pdf

[6] https://www.ipn.md/ro/implementarea-celor-9-conditii-ale-comisiei-europene-ar-putea-7965_1094949.html

[7] Recomandarea nr. 9 din lista recomandărilor formulate de Comisia Europeană în contextul avizului emis pe marginea acordării Republicii Moldova a statului de țară candidată la UE: *Consolidarea protecției drepturilor omului, în special în cazul grupurilor vulnerabile, și punerea în aplicare a angajamentelor de a consolida egalitatea de gen și de a combate violența împotriva femeilor".*

equal opportunities for men and women, by including gender dimension into national system of strategic planning and public policies. It should be noted that, in accordance with the Action Plan for the implementation of the measures proposed by the European Commission, it is stated that, in order to ensure the promotion and implementation of principles related toequal opportunities for women and men to fully harness their potential[8], the authorities have proposed amending the legal framework in the field of non-discrimination and equality, through following mechanisms and criteria:

(i extension the list of non-discriminationcriteria;

(ii) improving data collection on equality, non-discrimination and diversity, monitoring, evaluation and annual reporting of results;

(iii) strengthening the institutional framework in the field, in order to ensure a better implementation of the principle of equality and non-discrimination.

When referring to gender equality,

In this regard, the authorities from the Republic of Moldova will have to approve a national program on gender equality, which will include measures addressing the reduction of risks associated with inequality in different sectors of socio-economical life, including a separate policy paper to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, which will include measures to fulfill the commitments made under the Istanbul Convention. Being an intersectoral policy area, a fact recognized also by the European Union's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, the measures aiming at ensuring equal opportunities for men and women should be included in other sectoral policy documents proposed by the authorities for implementation in accordance with the mentioned action plan, and here we refer tothe: *National employment program*, which aims tostrengthen active employment initiatives for the integration into the labor market of people in need of additional employment support; and *Program for supporting the Roma population for the years 2022 – 2025*. In this vein, it is crucial to avoid duplication or overlaps between the measures proposed simultaneously by two or more policy documents.

Planning the implementation of certain actions, regardless of their nature, but for which in order to be carried out, the effort and the use of public resources are conditional, requires the authorities to comply with certain rules and methodologies related to the organization and functioning of the strategic planning system, including public budget planning. Thus, we aim to analyze whether the Moldovan authorities, following the goal of gender mainstreaming in the national policy system, do they considere respecting the strategic planning methodology imposed by the legal and methodological framework currently in place in the Republic of Moldova, mainly: (i) Law no. 100/2017 on normative acts[9]; (i) Government Decision no. 386/2020 on planning, elaboration, approval, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policy documents; (iii) Methodological guidelines on integrating the provisions of the national development strategy into public policy and planning documents at the national level [10]; (iv) Handbook on estimating public policy costs in the Republic of

[8] https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135295&lang=ro#
[9] https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=121921&lang=ro
[10] https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/ghid_copertat_coral.pdf

Moldova[11]. However, the successful implementation of the measures proposed by the authorities, no mater how simple or ambitious and complex they may be, whether they derive from the national public agenda or from internationally assumed commitments, as well as the achievement of the beneficial impact they imply,, require as fundamental prerequisites compliance with strategic and budgetary planning rules and techniques.. Otherwise, those measures risk to remain only commitments listed in the policy documents and regulations without being put in place.

Ensuring gender equality, a commitment made by the Republic of Moldova in the context of the 2030 Agenda

The Republic of Moldova is committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda, assuming a future where all key stakeholders in society collaborate synergistically to collectively address and diminish various manifestations of poverty. Moreover, it involves a concerted effort to combat inequalities, resolve environmental concerns, and tackle the pressing challenges posed by climate change. By prioritizing inclusivity, the Republic of Moldova aims to ensure that no individual or group is marginalized or overlooked in the pursuit of sustainable development.Although the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals are not legally binding, the United Nations, under theauspices of which the 2030 Agenda was conceived, aims to ensure that governments take responsibility for them and establish national frameworks (institutional, financing policies, monitoring) conducive to their implementation.

In this regard, the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Moldova have not taken long to appear. In 2016, the institutional framework for coordinating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was created, followed by a complex process of adjusting the goals, targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda to the specificities of Moldova. This process involved all stakeholders: national and local public authorities, the private sector, civil society, academia and development partners.

At the same time, a mid-term evaluation of the National Development Strategy "Moldova 2020", which was being implemented at that stage, was carried out. It was confirmed that the mentioned document was not adjusted to all international commitments of the Republic of Moldova, namely: the 2030 Agenda and the Association Agreement with the European Union, signed in 2014, and therefore, in September 2017, the elaboration of a new national long-term strategy was initiated, targetting the 2030 horizon: the National Development Strategy „ Moldova 2030 ”. This was the basic stage for the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (further SDGs), including SDG 5 on gender equality in the national strategic planning system.

In 2020, the Republic of Moldova presented its first Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the United Nations High Level Political Forum. According to the assessment, one of the vulnerabilities identified in the Agenda implementation process was (and continues to remain), data unavailability for about 1/4 of the total nationalized SDGs indicators (341 indicators for monitoring 157 nationalized SDG targets), or in their absence it is not possible to objectively assess the situation regarding the degree of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The situation is even more alarming when it comes to the availability of data disaggregated

[11] https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/costing_manual_romanian_pentru_aprobare_24_11_2022.pdf

by gender, residence or vulnerability criteria, and this has a quite pronounced impact on ensuring gender equality, including SDG 4 (Quality education for all), SDG 5 (Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls), SDG 10 (Reducing inequalities), SDG 8 (Promoting sustainable economic growth, decent and well-paid jobs for all), SDG 10 (Reducing inequalities), SDG 16 (Strong and effective institutions) which call for information relevant to the situation of women and men, girls and boys in different socio-economic sectors.To address this deficiency,, in 2022, the Government approved the national framework for monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[12] , which creates the premises for the information foundation for reporting on Moldova’s progress in implementingthe 2030 Agenda at the international level, but also at national level to informpolicies in different sectors, including those necessary to ensure gender equality.

Although SDG 5, as is evident from the content of the targets it encompasses, is primarily geared towards ensuring the conditions for the empowerment and fulfilment f the potential of women and girls, gender equality is much more complex, including the male population.

Current situation regarding the assurance of gender equality in the Republic of Moldova

Gender equality tends to be considered an indicator for developed societies, but also developing ones should also ensure all the premises (institutional, policy framework, resources etc.) to achieve this goal. The global population includes over 50% women, in the Republic of Moldova the female population exceeds the male population by about 9% [13]. Despite international commitments and declarations, subsequently taken up at the national level, on the equality of all persons regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, etc., there are still many inequalities between males and females, for example wage gaps, access to financial resources, empowerment problems, etc. And if we look at it in terms of multiple disaggregation, these inequalities are getting even more pronounced connotations (for example: access to resources for a woman with disabilities living in the rural areas). he gender of one's birth should not influence one's dignity and quality of life and one's access to opportunities and resources. access to opportunities and resources.

The analysis of the situation in the Republic of Moldova on the topic of gender equality notices the fact that, although some progress has been achieved in recent years in ensuring equal opportunities and opportunities for men and women (e.g.*: increasing the number of women in elective and decision-making positions, raising awareness and including the gender dimension in some sectoral policies, raising society's awareness and awareness of stereotypes about women's role in society, as well as the institutional and professional strengthening of gender mainstreaming in policy development and evaluation, etc*.) gender disparities continue to persist.

[12] Hotărârea Guvernului nr. 953/2022 - https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135555&lang=ro

[13] https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice__POPrec__POP010/POP011500rcl.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774, accesat la data de 23/09/2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the gender dimension, causing worseningof the situation in the remaining areas, but also regressions in the areas with registered positive indicators. Complementary, the energy crisis further accentuates the vulnerability of the female population, or having access to more limited financial resources compared to the male population (e.g. wage disparities for the same work performed, lower pensions, unpaid domestic work), they are in a position to benefit from fewer energy resources.

The refugee crisis, which took place in the context of the war in Ukraine, calls on national and local public authorities to cope with and respond with support measures, such as living resources, employment, integration into the education system, provision of medical services, social and cultural integration, etc., for approximately 92.4 thousand people, who fled the war and are on the territory of the Republic of Moldova for an indefinite period, of which the female population is about 54.85 thousand people (63.3%)[14].

According to the data presented in the Gender Equality Index, a study developed annually by the Partnership for Development Center[15] in order to measure the level of equality between women and men in the Republic of Moldova, in 2023, the average level of equality between women and men, calculated for six strategic areas assessed, was estimated at 61 points (the target being 100 points), registering, after a progress of 3 points reached in 2022 compared to 2021, a regression of 1 point. Thus, in 2023, 4 areas out of 6 analyzed registered a worsening of the situation, namely: politics, access to resources, health and perceptions and stereotypes. Even as a result of political reforms, in recent years there has been a positive leap in gender equality indicators (an increase of 14 points in 2022 compared to 21), then, over the last two years, several reshuffles have been made in politics in public office, which is why several Female MPshave ceased their tenures and their positions have been filled by men. Worryingly, the general regression in ensuring gender equality is mainly due to the worsening of public perceptions of the role of women and men. Compared to 2022, the accumulated score for perceptions and stereotypes have decreased by just4 points, reaching 59 points on the scale from 0 to 100. Specifically, there was an increase in the proportion of the population who consider that the presence of women in politics is inappropriate and that they do not have the capacity to hold leadership positions, given that during the reference period, women held the most important positions in the state, such as: president of the country, prime minister, 39 deputies out of a total of 101, and members of the cabinet of ministers out of a total of 12 members, including the president of the Constitutional Court.

[14] Republic of Moldova: Daily Population Trends (unhcr.org), accesat la data de 30/09/2022

[15] Studiu realizat către Centrul Parteneriat pentru Dezvoltare, în cadrul programului “Inițiativă Comună pentru Oportunități Egale – Faza II”, implementat din resursele acordate de Agenția Elvețiană pentru Dezvoltare și Cooperare (SDC) și Suedia, accesat la data de 24/09/2022.

Table 1: Gender Equality Index.

Policy areas / Index per year	**2009**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**Tendința**
labour market	61	61	61	62	61	60	59	55	6	+1
Politics	32	36	36	36	40	47	47	61	60	-1
Education	55	54	54	53	53	52	50	50	51	+1
Access to resources	77	74	75	79	77	76	73	75	59	-2
Perceptions and stereotypes	42	47	51	47	54	61	62	63	59	-4
Health	73	66	65	65	65	63	64	66	65	-1
General index	**57**	**56**	**57**	**57**	**58**	**60**	**59**	**62**	**61**	**-1**

Source: Study of Gender Equality for 2022, developed by the Partnership Center for Development

As mentioned above, gender inequalities can be both in related to women and rto men. An example of gender inequality related to men is the health sector. For example,, statistical data indicate a major gender disparity in life expectancy at birth, with women living, on average, 8 years longer than men (73.1 years and 65.2 years respectively). This difference can be explained by the healthier lifestyle for women and the different occupations of the two sexes and as a consequence - the higher level of premature mortality among men. Gender disparities in life expectancy also show the person's environment of residence, so if the gender gap with the given indicator in urban areas is 7 years, then in rural areas, it is 9 years.

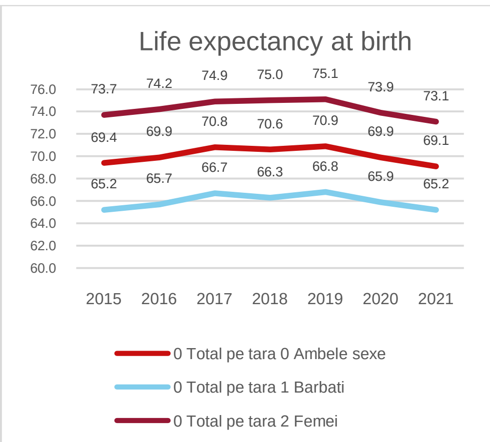

Figure 2: Life expectancy at birth by sex, 2015-2021, total by country.
Source: NBS

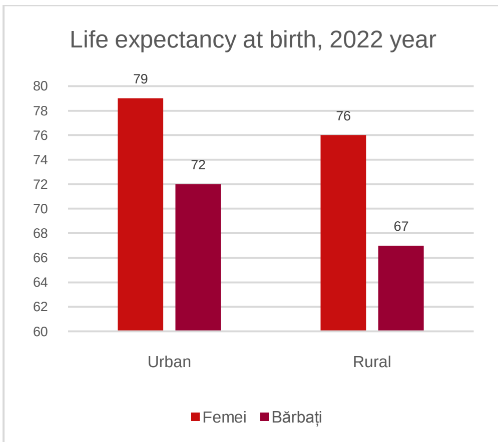

Figure 3: Life expectancy.
Source: NBS

General considerations regarding the national system of strategic planning and public policies in the Republic of Moldova

The national strategic planning system consists of planning documents and public policy documents, by types – strategy and program and distribution of policy documents per implementation period. In order to ensure the coherence and integrity of the policy system, including the linkage with the budgetary planning system, it is crucial that there is ensured a logical interdependence between its components, in which the general objectives set out in the priority strategic planning documents are taken over, planned and properly carried out in the other types of planning or public policy.

Assuming that the National Development Strategy is at the top of the policy system pyramid, a key condition for ensuring its proper implementation is the development of a coherent implementation mechanism, ensuring a clear synchronization between the National Development Strategy (NDS), the sectoral strategies and the National Development Plan (NDP), which in turn will be the basis for further planning at sectoral, institutional level and the budgetary planning framework.

Therefore, in order to ensure the achievement of this goal, in 2020, the Government introduced an instrument for the operationalization of the NDS, the Government Program and international commitments, new for the policy system of the Republic of Moldova, namely the National Development Plan, which is a cyclical document for public policy planning, for a period of 3 years, in which the priority objectives and actions of the NDS are transposed and detailed. The National Development Plan consists of a descriptive and an operational part,, both being structured based on the general objectives set out in the NDS (at the moment there are 10 general objectives based on 10 dimensions of quality of life) and correlated with the objectives of sustainable development and the Agreement on Association between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union and the Moldova-EU Association Agenda.

The second type of key document for ensuring the implementation of the NDS is the sectoral strategy, which in turn is transposed into programs, the medium-term budgetary framework, the annual activity plans of the authorities. Following the NDS approval, ministries and central administrative authorities had to either review and adjust existing public policy documents that do not comply with the NDS, or develop other new documents.

Gender mainstreaming in the National Development Strategy „ European Moldova 2030 ”

Public policies can have a different impact on women and men. Age, ethnicity, skills, residence, and the rules and traditions of the society in which they live influence the activities and responsibilities of women and men (roles of gender), their social status, opportunities and constraints they have in everyday life. The policy makers and decision-makers have to take these differences into account and address them accordingly. Identifying and addressing inequalities in public policy formulation is essential to ensure equal opportunities for women and men, fair access to resources and opportunities, fair representation, resilience to crises and shocks, etc.

Giventhe central role of the National Development Strategy in the national strategic planning system, it makes sense for it to take into account cross-sectoral policies area, which will subsequently be integrated by the authorities into medium and short-term planning documents, as well as sectoral public policies. As mentioned above, gender equality is such an area, thus considering it at all stages of the public policy cycle is a premise that state policies and interventions respond equally to the interests and needs of women and men.

After a rather complex process of elaboration, consultation, repeated approvals by the Government (the political crises of the last 4 years have had a major impact on the process of promoting the document of the NDS, the initiation of which started in 2017, and its first version being approved by the Government in November 2018, as well as by the Parliament in December 2018), on December 21, 2022, Law no. 315/2022 for the approval of the National Development Strategy „European Moldova 2030" was published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova

According to the authors of the document (State Chancellery), enshrined in the ExplanatoryNote, the National Development Strategy „European Moldova 2030" defines the medium and long-term development vision for strengthening the resilience of the Republic of Moldova to regional and global crises affecting our country, thus creating the basis for sustainable and inclusive development. The novelty of the document also consists in focusing on human being, on his/her development needs and aspirations, in contrast to previous national development strategies that were mainly focused on economic development.

Thus, focusing on human being as the ultimatebeneficiary of the benefits of reforms, but not as a resource for achieving them, the general objectives of the strategy were inspired by the concept applied as a standard, at the level of the European Union, for measuring the phenomenon of the people's life quality. According to this, a higher quality of life implies achieving sustainable and broad social progress in ten dimensions:

•*income level;*
•*living conditions;*
•*working conditions;*
•*level of education;*
•*health status;*
•*social climate;*
•*use of time;*
•*quality of government;*
•*public safety and security;*
•*environmental quality*

Thus, the NDS contains 10 general objectives, detailed in 33 specific objectives. For each general objective, the current situation has been analyzed (sometimes using gender - disaggregateddata), the connection with the relevant Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda has been shown, , as well as described how the authorities aim to achieve that objective. It should be noted that despite the mandatory requirements of the methodological framework for public policies, as regards the formulation of specific objectives, they do not meet the SMART criterion .

Following the enumeration ofthe general and specific objectives, the document contains an imposing list of policy directions and priority interventions, through which the specific objectives will be achieved, indicating, for each policy direction, the identification code of the objective to which it will contribute. A brief analysis of of the document allows us to note that for achieving the specific objective *7.1. Building an* *integral, responsible, efficient public administration, transparent and open to citizen participation in decision-making processes* most priority policy directions and interventions (about 130 out of a total of 340) will contribute, which supports and complements the government's statements on the attention it pays to strengthening the public administration system.

The Government has set in the NDS[16] national priorities, connected to the country's commitments under the 2030 Agenda and the Moldova-EU Association Agreement, and the structure and elements of the document underpin the development of the national strategic planning framework, highlighting the vision, priorities, general objectives, relevant long-term directions of intervention.

We further aim to analyze the degree to which the gender dimension has been integrated into the framework of the NDS „European Moldova 2030", using as research methodology the Guide for integrating the perspective of gender equality in the public policy-making process[17] and the Guide on integrating the provisions of the National Development Strategy into planning documents and public policy documents at national level[18], in the part aimed at integrating the principle of leaving no one behind in the development process. These guides are useful tools for developing and evaluating public policies in terms of quality and compliance with the national policy system as a whole, as well as assessing the relevance of their objectives in relation to national priorities and ensuring that needs and concerns of different stakeholders are taken into account. In this sense, the analysis is performed according to the following criteria:

1.Considering the gender dimension at the stage of analysis and definition of the problem

Are the data used in the situation analysis disaggregated by the gender criterion? Are specific gender needs / concerns identified? Isan analysis of the causes that determine gender inequality carried out? Has the process of defining and analyzing the problem allowed the equitable participation of men and women? These are the basic questions, which allow us to assess the extent to which the gender dimension has been taken into account in Chapter „Situation Analysis " of the NDS „ European Moldova 2030 ".

Use of disaggregated statistical data

The NDS `Situation Analysis` chapter is divided into two distinct dimensions: international – to describe the context reflected by *global trends* in economics, industry, labor culture, demography*; potential global and regional threats,* such as: military, energy, climate, pandemic crises; and last but not least, the opportunities identified, such as: *technological and digital progress* and increasing interest and civic awareness among the young population.

[16] The NDS, in all draft versions, integrates the SDG targets considered as accelerators of sustainable development.

[17] Guide for integrating the perspective of gender equality in the public policy-making process: https://progen.md/ghid-pentru-integrarea-perspectivei-egalitatii-de-gen-in-procesul-de-elaborare-a-politicilor-publice/, accessed on 23/09/2022.

[18] Guide on integrating the provisions of the National Development Strategy into planning documents and public policy documents at national level: https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/ghid_copertat_coral.pdf, accessed on 23/09/2022.

Although it is stated that the NDS „European Moldova 2030" changes the paradigm of public policies and that it, unlike the NDS „Moldova 2020", is focused on human-being, on quality of life and on the full use of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the person, as well as that it transposes at national level, the SDGs and the principles of the 2030 Agenda, including the principle „ No one is left behind", the analytical part of the documentlacks references to international rankings focused on human development. This does not allow us to understand whether or not the NDS, the priority objectives and directions of intervention set, take into account the evolution of human development and the components deriving from it, at international level.

A benchmark in this regard could serve the Human Development Reports,, annual publications of the United Nations Development Program, through which, on the one hand, the emerging problems of humanity are analyzed and, on the other hand, the human rights situation, quality of life and opportunities to capitalize on the possibilities of the person in each state are mapped, thus positioning countries in a global ranking. The unit of measurement used to establish the mentioned ranking is the Human Development Index. This is an indicator that measures the average achievements of states, in three basic dimensions of human development - a long and healthy life, access to knowledge/education and the existence of a decent standard of living.

The Human Development Report for 2021/2022, dedicated to the analysis of uncertainties and insecurityof human safety in the context of crises in the last three years, places the Republic of Moldova on the 80th place (since 191), climbing 10 positions compared to 2020, a good result but insufficient, if we compare with the neighboring states that position themselves on the 53rd place - Romania and 77 – Ukraine, respectively. The ranking is led by the Nordic countries.

Table 2: Human Development Index and its components, 2022.

			SDG 3	SDG 4.3	SDG 4.4	SDG 8.5
		Human Development Index (HDI)	**Life expectancy at birth**	**Planned schooling years**	**Average schooling years**	Gross national income per capita
HDI ranking	**Country**	value	(years)	(years)	(years)	(estimated based on purchasing power, $)
		2021	**2021**	**2021**	**2021**	**2021**
1	Switzerland	0,962	84,0	16,5	13,9	66.933
2	Norway	0,961	83,2	18,2	13,0	64.660
3	Icekand	0,959	82,7	19,2	13,8	55.782
53	Romania	0,821	74,2	14,2	11,3	30.027
77	Ukraine	0,773	71,6	15,0	11,1	13.256
80	**Republica of Moldova**	**0,767**	**68,8**	**14,4**	**11,8**	**14.875**

Source: Human Development Report, 2021/2022

Subsidiary, if we are to analyze in depth the essential components of human development, we identify the gender equality aspect, reflected in the Human Development Report through the Gender Development Index, which measures the disparities of the HDI, depending on gender. The closer the ratio is to the value „1", the smaller the difference between women and men. Values for the three components: longevity, education (with two indicators) and income per capita – are also represented by gender. According to this indicator, countries are divided into 5 groups, depending on the size of the calculated HDI gap. The Republic of Moldova is placed in group 1, along with developed countries, including the Nordic ones, which lead the general ranking of human development, which allows us to conclude that our country, internationally, it can be treated as an example of ensuring and promoting gender equality, although inequalities persist, at least in the areas presented in the table below: life expectancy at birth and access to education – inequality with men, wage disparities or other income – inequality with women. These indicators should (in the context of NDS development -) be carefully analyzed and proposed policies and intervention measures to reduce those gaps.

Table 3: Gender Development Index, 2022.

						SDG 3		SDG 4.3		SDG 4.4		SDG 8.5	
		Gender Development Index		**Human Development Index**		**life expectancy at birth**		**Years planned for education**		**Average schooling years**		Gross national income per capita(estimated based on purchasing power, $)	
				Value		(years)		(years)					
PositionHDI	**Country**	Value	Group of countries	F	B	F	B	F	B	F	B	F	B
		2021	**2021**	**2021**	**2021**	**2021**	**2021**	**2021**	**2021**	**2021**	**2021**	**2021**	**2021**
1	Switzeland	0,967	2	0,944	0,976	85,9	82,0	16,4	16,6	13,5	14,2	54.59	79.45
2	Norway	0,983	1	0,950	0,966	84,9	81,6	18,9	17,5	13,1	12,9	54.69	74.44
3	Iceland	0,976	1	0,947	0,971	84,2	81,2	20,3	18,1	13,9	13,7	47.13	64.00
53	România	0,994	1	0,819	0,823	77,9	70,6	14,7	13,8	11,0	11,6	24.55	35.87
77	Ukraine	1,012	1	0,776	0,766	76,7	66,5	15,0	14,9	11,5	10,7	10.37	16.60
80	Republicof Moldova	1,010	1	0,771	0,763	73,5	64,4	14,8	14,1	11,9	11,8	12.087	17.961

Source: Human Development Report, 2021/2022

In the national dimension, the NDS presents the situation in the areas of human rights, income, infrastructure and living conditions, education, culture and personal development, health and social protection systems, public administration, justice, human security and environmental quality.Given that the NDS, according to its declaration and the vision on which it is built, is centred on people and quality of life, a distinct attention is paid to human rights issues, but it is limited to generalities on the human rights situation, without presenting any statistical evidence. Therefore, no data are found on the situation of women's and / or men's rights as social beings with different needs and interests. The report on the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2021[19] could serve as a valuable resource for strengthening that section. However, records, in disaggregated places, are included in the analysis of the

[19] https://cancelaria.gov.md/ro/apc/rapoarte-nationaleinternationale, This page was accessed on September 24, 2022

situation of sectoral areas and especially in the part aimed at capitalizing on the rights of access to justice or access to decision-making positions.

We also attest the use of disaggregated statistical data in the section on *people's incomes*, in which inequalities are recognized and highlighted in the female population. Thus, despite the principles of equal and non-discriminatory treatment, promoted by state policies, Moldovan society still faces a major discrepancy between the incomes of women and those of men, both during the active economic period of life (in the average 20-21 years) and later at the retirement age. Consequently, the gap between the employment rate in urban areas – 38.4 p.p. and rural areas – 21.1 p.p., which denotes more limited economic opportunities for women. We believe that the section could have been strengthened by presenting information on the number of MSEs founded by women and men respectivelyThe next section, related to *infrastructure and living conditions*, omits references to gender-sensitive indicators. Given women's access to more limited financial resources compared to the male population, it is clear that women-led households are in a situation of higher vulnerability, and state authorities must take this into account in the design of support and / or sectoral development interventions.

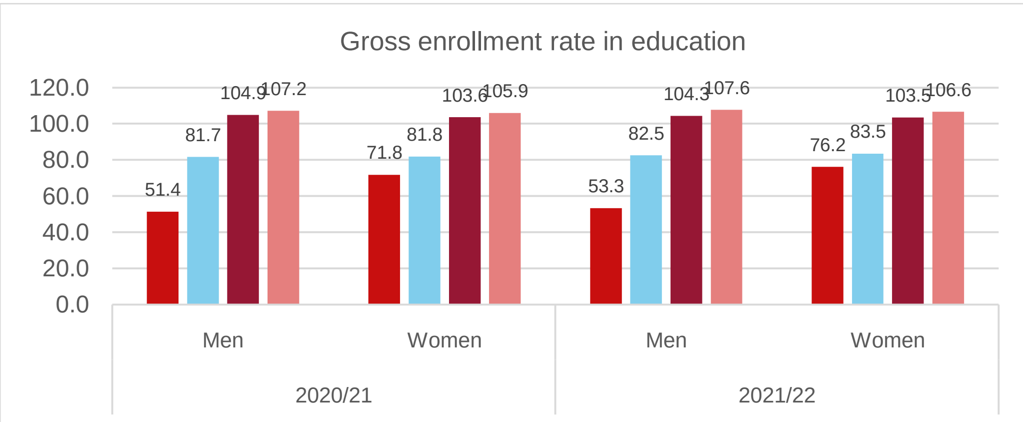

Figure 6: Gross enrollment rate in education at educational levels. Percent.
Source: NBS

The *education* is an area that requires a lot of attention from the authorities, or the level of training and training of specialists on the one hand depends on its quality, but also the creation of the person's life skills. The section reflects the position of the Republic of Moldova in the international rankings on educational performance (PISA, OECD), reveals the general challenges of the education system, but omits relevant information in terms of gender dimension. Thus, a problem of the educational system in the Republic of Moldova, not reflected in the NDS is the significant dropout rate of young people aged between 18-24 years. This increases the share of NEET in the total population. Official statistics show that, although the gross enrollment rate of boys in primary and secondary education is higher than that of girls, the situation is reversed in the secondary and tertiary stages, respectively. Complementary, it is observed that boys are prone to drop out of (second-stage and higher secondary) studies and invest less in obtaining value-added skills in professional development, especially in rural areas. The causes of abandonment are diverse, mainly being of a social or economic nature.

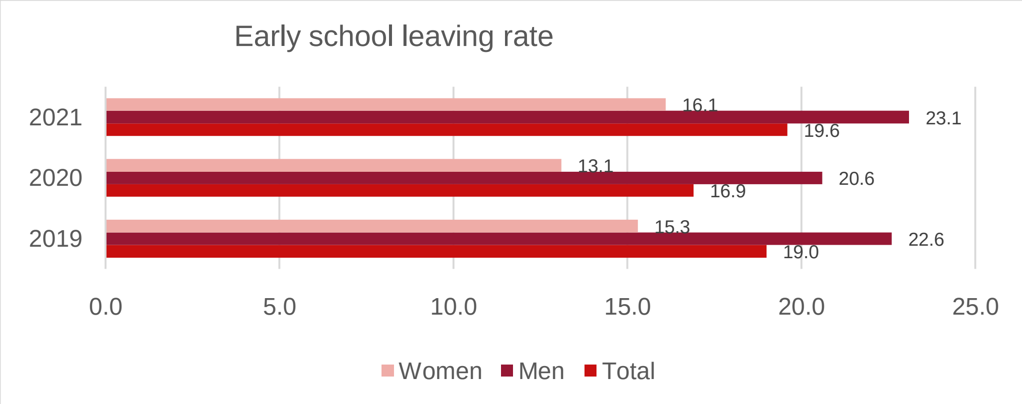

Figure 7: Early leaving rate of the education system of the population aged 18-24. Percent.
Source: NBS

Also, another challenge of the education system is the predisposition for studies STEM (Natural Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) more of boys than girls, choice that is most often influenced by stereotypes about gender relationships.

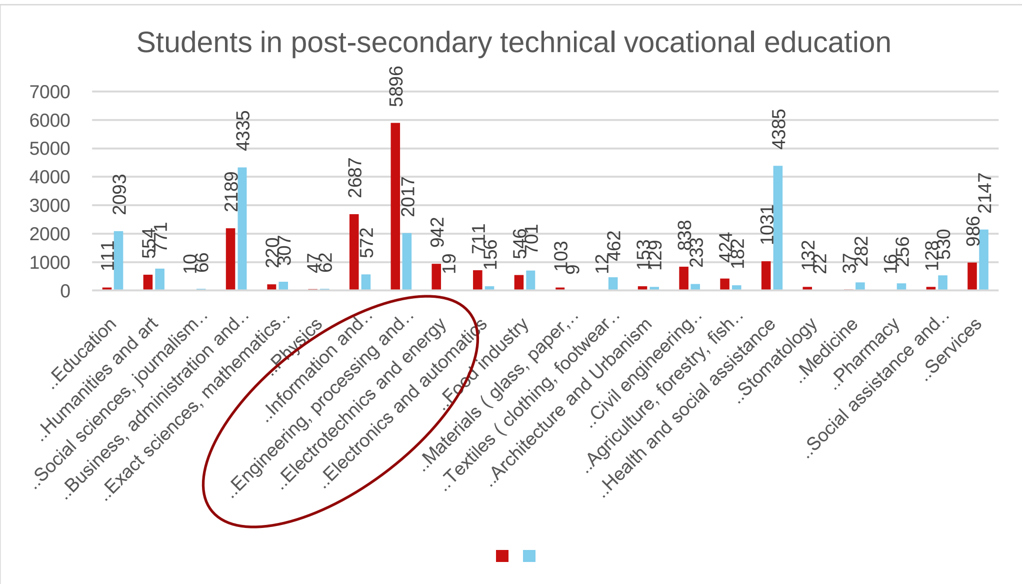

Figure 8: Students in post-secondary technical vocational education by fields of vocational training, academic year 2021-2022. Number of students.
Source: NBS

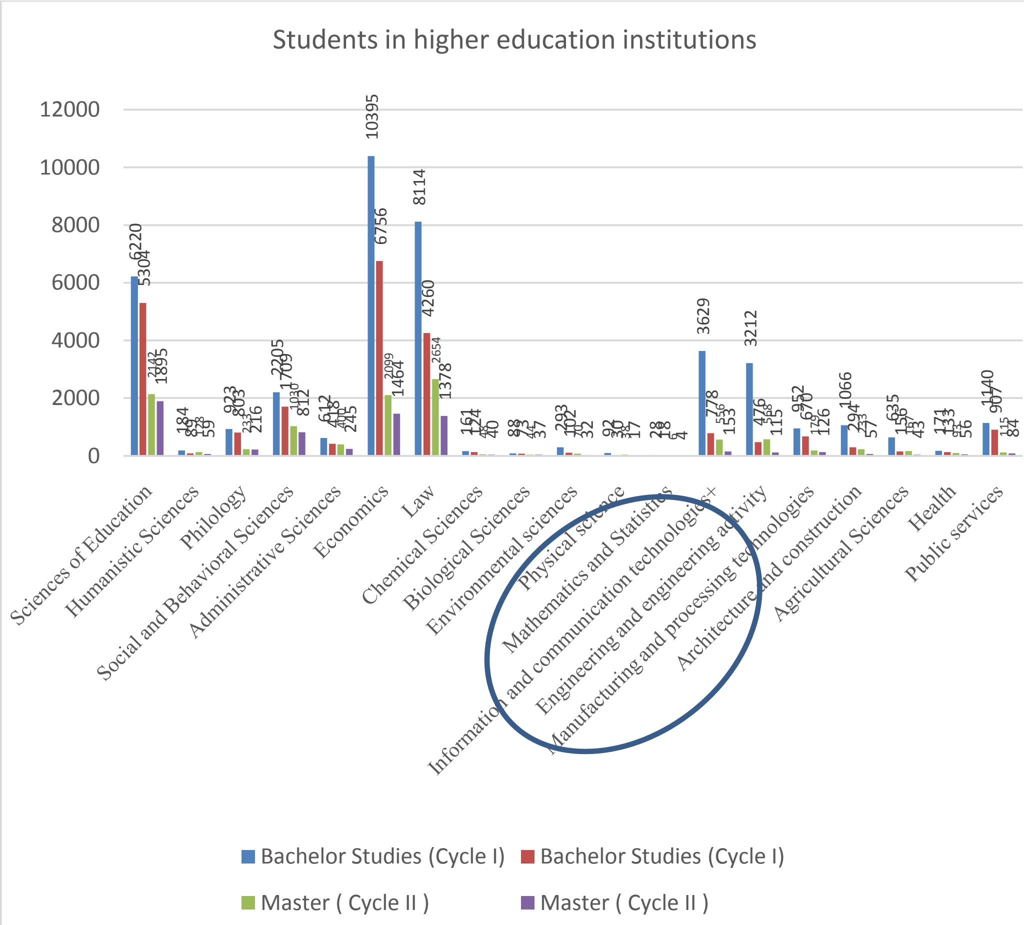

Figure 9: Students in higher education institutions by general fields of study, year of studies 2021-2022. Number of students.
Source: NBS

Options for fields of study influence the career path and, of course, the subsequent earnings of the working period of their lives.

In terms of *Culture and personal development*, although the national statistical system has also disaggregated data according to the gender criterion in the part concerning the annual allocations of households for culture and recreation, the NDS provides provides only an analysis from the perspective of data in territorial profile without assessing this policy area from gender perspective. Thus, according to the information in the table below, taken from the Statistical Data Bank, it is highlighted that, in total per country, the percentage of expenses from the total expenses of a household during a year, intended for culture and recreation is higher in the case of male-led households. The differences are insignificant, but they still highlight the preferences of households in the part aimed at spending free time and investments made in personal development. The smallest investments in culture and recreation are made by rural households, led by men.

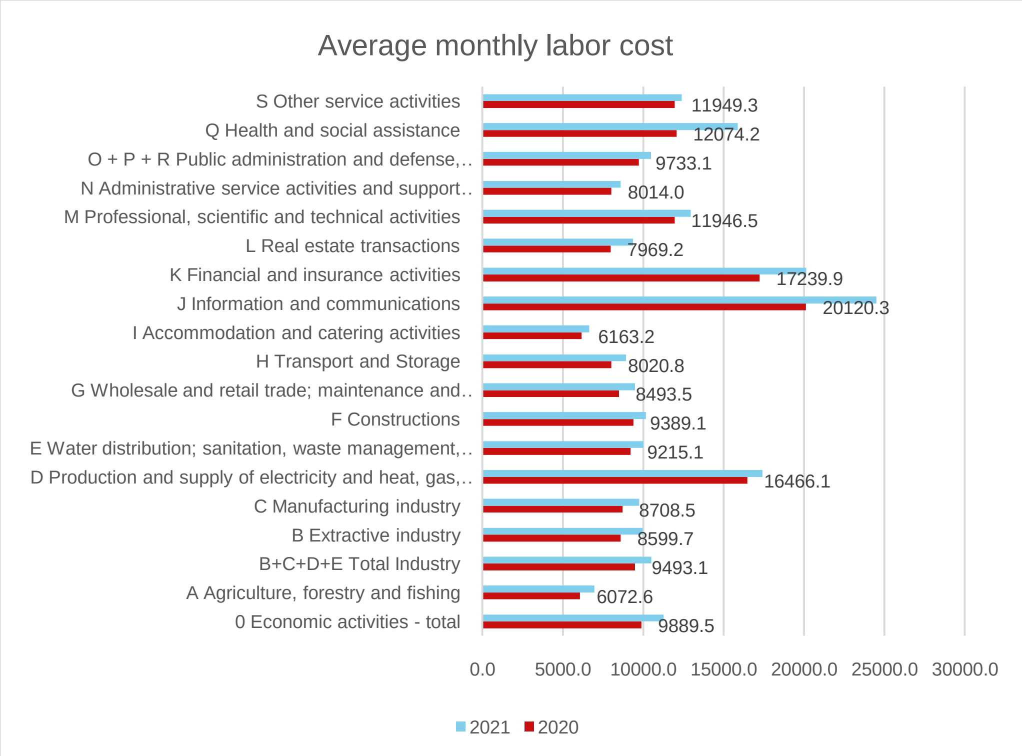

Figure 10: Average monthly labor cost per employee by economic activities (CAEM), Lei. ***Source***. NBS

Total per country				Urban				Rural			
Men		Women		Men		Women		Men		Women	
MDL	% compared to the total	MDL	% compared to the total	MDL	% compared to the total	MDL	% compared to the total	MDL	% compared to the total	MDL	Percentages compared to the total
65,0	2,2	60,9	1,9	128,0	3,4	94,9	2,4	27,8	1,1	33,2	1,3

Table 4: Average monthly consumption expenses per person for Culture and recreation, by Household head sex. MDL and Percentages compared to total household expenses, 2021. ***Source***: NBS

The national statistical system overlooks information on the number of people employed in this sector. However, the data on the average monthly income by types of activity, characteristic of the cultural field, highlight the presence of a significant salary discrepancy among employees in the types of activity specific to the sector. Therefore, salary discrepancies are also a problem for the field of culture and related activities.

The section on *health and well-being* examines issues in the field, including from a gender perspective, highlighting the major gender disparity in life expectancy at birth, women living, on average, 8 years longer than men (73.1 years and 65.2 years respectively). It also mentions the prevalence of cases of morbidity among men caused by both infectious and non-communicable diseases.

Solidarity and social protection analyze the challenges facing the insurance and social assistance system. These include the small amount of pensions and other social benefits to support different categories of the population in situations of incapacity for work/vulnerability, without highlighting the gender gap in the average size of the established pension.

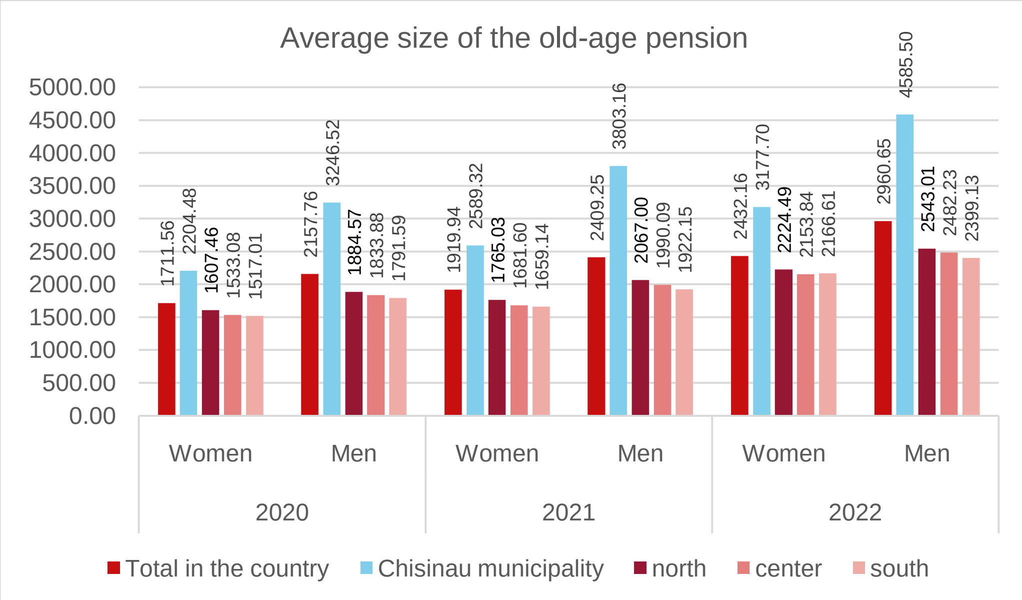

Figure 11: Average size of the old-age pension, Situation on January 1, 2022 MDL. NBS
Source: NBS

In addition, the challenges of the social protection system are analyzed, highlighting its dependence on wage levels, employment rate, informal economy share, aging and population migration.

The sections *Trust in public administration and Trust in justice* analyzes the activity of state institutions with a mandate to exercise executive power – Government, its subordinated entities and local public administration, and, respectively, of the – court. Both systems' major challenges are revealed, which hinder their efficiency in carrying out their missions and, as a result, diminish society's confidence in them. The gender perspective is omitted, or no data are found on gender representation among dignitaries, civil servants (senior management, management, execution), as well as judges. Although the gender dimension is lacking in the analysis of problems identified in the justice sector, it is to be appreciated, highlighting the categories of population in vulnerable situations, including accessing legal aid services.

The *human security*, the penultimate section of the analytical part of the NDS, is analyzed in terms of the problem of economic security of the population, reflected by the indicators of poverty; the problem of food security; energy security; and personal security against risks and vulnerabilities to crime, accidents and hazards. The mentioned problems are treated based on general records, anchored in the statistics by year, territorial profile, as well as estimates related to regional trends. By the nature of the problems presented, arising from those mentioned in other analytical sections of the

the NDS, given the narrower access to resources and the more limited opportunities, the female population is in a situation of inequality, including in terms of human security. However, the respective conclusion is not found in the NDS.

The last analytical section, but no less important, is dedicated to the *quality of the environment*. Among the evaluated aspects are the quantity and quality of water available for consumption, the evolution of climate change; air and soil quality; expansion and sustainability of forest areas. Adapting and mitigating climate change is essential for the protection of the means of well-being and for the continuous progress of sustainable development. Although climate change affects all members of society, its impact may be different on men and women. It is therefore important to consider measures to adapt/mitigate climate change, including from a gender perspective, taking into account the roles and responsibilities of women and men, perceived still differently in society their community[20]. Unfortunately, NDS treats the consequences of climate change only in terms of potential repercussions on the agricultural sector, the environment and public finances, which will worsen if no urgent measures and interventions are taken to combat these changes. The impact on people, men and women is omitted.

Specific needs and concerns

NDS reflects to a minimum the specific needs and concerns from the gender perspective. Overall, the analytical part of the document highlights the generic problems of society, within the limits of the systems reflected in the document. However, connected to people's needs and interests, we retain their problems arising, first of all, from income which, for a significant part of the population, does not cover the need for decent living, limiting their access to infrastructure and utilities, health services, culture and personal development, etc..

To compensate for these shortages, state authorities intervene through support mechanisms, including the social protection system or other types of assistance, which in turn already develops systemic problems: non-sustainability and insufficiency of the income of the population (vulnerable categories) from the insurance and social assistance system; lack of trust in state authorities; lack of confidence in the judiciary and its lack of capacity to provide specialized legal aid services to various vulnerable groups. In addition to the needs of poverty reduction and its effects, the needs and concerns of people on the energy security side are also reflected in a highlighted way, food and personal risks and vulnerabilities to crime, accidents and hazards, however, without considering the gender dimension.

Environmental issues are more presented as risk factors for agriculture, the quality and quantity of natural resources and the public finance system, than as challenges that threaten a person's right to a healthy and sustainable environment.

Analysis of causes and factors that determine gender inequality

The gender gaps, which are highlighted in NDS, were analyzed in terms of causes as well as the factors that determine them. Thus, in the income part, it is reflected

[20] Capitalizing on the gender dimension in sectoral development policies in the context of climate change adaptation: Guide / Valentina Bodrug-Lungu, Ala Druta; ADA / UNDP project: „ Support for the national planning process of adapting the Republic of Moldova to climate change ". – Chisinau: S. n., 2017 (SE „ Central Printing House") 48 p, accessed on September 25, 2022

the unjustified maintenance of salary discrepancies for the same work performed, the lower employment rate for women than men, the different level of labor productivity, the preponderance of men in managerial positions, as well as in fields of activity with more attractive salaries (for example ICT). With reference to the field of health, where there is a gender inequality ttowards men, the lower addressability of men to the doctor is highlighted as causes, less healthy lifestyle, higher consumption of alcohol and tobacco products, especially among young people, etc. The causes of gender inequalities in education and the old-age pension system have been omitted in NDS.

Air participation of men and women in the process of defining the problem (s)

In the Explicative Note, which accompanied the draft law for the approval of NDS (at the promotion stage), in the approval and consultation section of the project, mentions the provision of a participatory advisory process and including, in which all interested parties were given the opportunity to comment on the document.

The public consultation was made by placing the document on the participant.gov.md[21] page, on July 26, 2022, and the deadline for submitting proposals allowed for detailed examination of the document by interested parties (by 15 August). The profile of the authors of the comments, placed on the website, indicates that they come from regions, therefore the importance of NDS and the involvement of citizens in its elaboration, is aware at the level of the local public administration. In addition, the State Chancellery also organized an event to present the document to which the press, the business environment, representatives of civil society, development partners were invited. In the public consultation process, more than 300 proposals were received on the project.

However, there is no evidence of the level of representation in public consultations of men and women. What is certain is that the NDS version adopted by the Government integrates issues related to the gender perspective to a greater extent than the initial version of the document, placed for consultations on 26 July (which analyzed only the income gaps of women and men). This is an argument in favor of the fact that, in the public consultation process, the issues of gender inequality have been addressed, and as a result, the document has become more sensitive to the gender dimension. But as reported above, the analytical part could have included other references and expertise existing in the analysis of gender inequalities in Moldovan society.

2. NDS's results framework analyzed from the perspective of the gender dimension

Are the strategic objectives of the document sensitive to the dimension of gender equality? Are there any positive / reasonable accommodation measures designed to ensure gender equality? Will strategic targets / priority directions for action lead to the achievement of gender equality objectives? Do strategic targets / priority directions provide for special measures for women who are vulnerable groups? The questions presented serve as benchmarks for assessing gender mainstreaming in NDS's priority vision, objectives and directions.

[21] Government web platform, through which public entities inform and consult the society about policy initiatives that they intend to develop or have already been developed

Gender sensitivity of NDS's strategic objectives, targets and policy directions

Even if the gender dimension is integrated to a more limited extent in the analysis of the situation, then in terms of objectives, targets and policy directions (Results framework), the gender perspective, materialized by reducing inequalities and inequities of opportunities and access to resources between women and men is present in all 10 general objectives.

Strategic targets / priority directions for action provide for special measures for women who are vulnerable groups.

As mentioned in the previous section, all 10 General Objectives of NDS include in the strategic targets measures to combat inequalities between women and men. Additionally, in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda principle: Leave No One Behind, we noticed the consideration of vulnerable groups, their needs and concerns in establishing intervention measures. The ExplicativeNote states, among other things, that for each of the 10 General Objectives vulnerable population groups have been identified and measures have been proposed to combat these vulnerabilities, respectively.

NDS being the benchmark for other planning documents, as well as sectoral policy documents, cannot intervene with too many analytical details or detailed multicriteria actions, or we would find ourselves in the situation of a voluminous document, difficult to manage. However, it should „set the tone" or set out the basic principles, which should be taken over later by the other documents, in which the authors (responsible public authorities and inclusive working groups) will analyze in more detail the situations of gender inequality, complemented by other disaggregation criteria: environment of residence, age, disability and will propose remedial solutions based on identified problems and causes.

3.Gender anchoring in the NDS implementation framework

The implementation framework refers both to the planning of resources necessary for the effective achievement of the proposed objectives and to the establishment of a viable monitoring and evaluation system, to assess the progress in the process of implementing the document and to assess its impact on society.

In the light of the gender perspective, it examines whether (financial, human, time, technological, administrative resources) are planned for conducting measures / interventions aimed at reducing gender inequalities and, at the same time, whether monitoring and evaluation indicators are gender sensitive.

On the resource planning side, it should be noted that, directly NDS, according to its nature (visionary long-term development document) does not include the cost estimation component and respectively, there is no way to ensure their planning. However, the costs of the actions must be provided in the National Development Plan (NDP), which is a medium-term planning document and the main instrument for operationalizing NDS. Thus, it is important that at the stage of elaboration of the NDP, the measures proposed by the NDS for the reduction of gender inequalities are taken in full, and for each one, to estimate costs and to ensure their planning in the Medium-Term Budget Framework (MTBF). However, planning under the CBTM is not enough, or to carry out one or another intervention measure, in addition to financial resources, other equally important types of resources are needed, which in turn are to be properly planned and allocated. We refer here to human resources, time, technological, administrative, capabilities, etc. These resources will be planned under the annual institutional action plans.

With reference to the set of gender-sensitive indicators, we note that gender statistics operate with 4 categories sensitive to the gender dimension, namely: disaggregated indicators by gender; specific gender indicators; indicators of gender relevance and, indicators chosen by women rather than men and vice versa[22]. The NDS monitoring and evaluation framework includes a set of general impact indicators, the aim of which is to assess progress in improving the situation of the 10 general objectives. The values of the basic, intermediate and final targets will serve as benchmarks in this regard.

On the gender dimension we have indicators on the representation of women in decision-making processes, as well as the index of gender parity, at the tertiary level of educational institutions. Gender sensitive indicators are lacking for other areas of socio-economic interest. However, similar to planning the resources needed to implement the document, monitoring and evaluating product and outcome indicators, including by collecting and analyzing disaggregated data by sex or other categories of gender-sensitive indicators, should be provided mainly at the planning / development stage of medium-term planning documents (NDP) and operational planning (annual institutional action plans). In both cases, public entities must ensure the coordination of the process of integrating NDS provisions into planning and sectoral policy documents.

Conclusions

An important premise for ensuring the efficient implementation of NDS in the complexity of its objectives, targets and interventions is the manifestation of political support for the process. Unfortunately, many of the failures of public policies have been generated by the inconsistency of political factors with the decisions taken and the need to implement them. The experience of the Chisinau administration reveals that the successor governments, most of the time, ignore and / or repeal the policy initiatives, even the long-term ones, of the successive governments. In order for public policy objectives to be achieved and their impact to have beneficial effects on the population[23], it is crucial to ensure their consistency and sustainability throughout the planned implementation period. Therefore, with reference to NDS „European Moldova 2030", society's expectations are for the document to enjoy the political support needed for adoption, promulgation and, most importantly, creating all the prerequisites and conditions for its implementation.

Gender integration in the National Development Plan, the Government Action Plan and the Institutional Plan of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection

As already mentioned in previous sections, the National Development Plan is a medium-term planning document of the Government, which operationalizes the

[22] Guide for users of gender statistics: https://statistica.gov.md/category.php?l=ro&idc=264, accesat la data de 25 septembrie 2022

[23] Tool used by policy makers to predict what the effects of one or another public policy will be is ex-ante analysis. With its help, the potential multidimensional impacts of the proposed solutions to solve a societal problem are analyzed. Decisions select the solution with clearly obvious benefits for society as a whole, as well as vulnerable groups of the population.

general objectives of the National Development Strategy, correlating them with the commitments deriving from the Government Program (the political document on the basis of which the Prime Minister-designate and his team receive a vote of confidence from Parliament) and the international commitments of the Republic Moldova.

This year, for the first time for the Government's activity, the National Development Plan was approved, as a tactical planning tool, as well as the Government's Annual Plan, as an operational tool, but which includes only measures aimed at developing and promoting draft regulations and public policy documents.

As a structure, the NDP consists of the descriptive part, which repeats the NDS structure, and the operational or tabular part, which integrates the specific objectives and directly the actions, proposed for achieving the general objectives, the terms of achievement, the responsible institutions, the estimated costs of indicating the source, as well as the reference document from which the commitment for the realization of which each action is proposed derives.

NDP for the years 2023-2025 was approved at the Government meeting on February 28, 2023 (at the time of elaboration of this research, it is not yet published in the Official Monitor of the Republic of Moldova). According to it, the document ensures the operationalization of the provisions of the National Development Strategy „European Moldova 2030”, Government Activity Program „Moldova thrives, safe, European” and international commitments, including the Association Agreement Republic of Moldova – European Union, Moldova-EU Association Agenda 2021-2027, commitments deriving from the status of candidate country for EU membership, Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

However, following the analysis of the document, with reference to commitments aimed at ensuring gender equality, it is found that, although the provisions of the Government Program and the Association Agenda relevant to the mentioned policy area are found in the NDP, including recommendation number 9 from the list of conditions/recommendations of the European Commission on granting candidate country status, then we note that, like the NDS, the NDPs are not found as targets to be achieved either, the SDG 5 targets, except being only SDG 5.2., Which creates a risk for achieving a systemic and comprehensive result in this field.

In the same perspective, if our findings regarding the results framework of the NDS indicate an average sensitivity to the gender dimension, materialized by the strategic targets formulated, then in the case of NDP, researching the actions proposed by the authorities to achieve the specific objectives (to note that the strategic targets related to the objectives listed in NDS, in NDP are not found), we deduce that their relevance is vague to achieving positive results in ensuring gender equality and non-discrimination.

More than that, the analysis of the list of indicators proposed by the authorities for monitoring and evaluating the achievement of the specific objectives listed in NDP (transposed from NDS) allows us to conclude that they are largely insensitive to size of the kind, or none of those proposed and approved by the executive provides for gender-based disaggregation, not to mention other criteria of vulnerability. Therefore, even if it is established that NDS and NDP, respectively, are built on a human-based approach, including the principle of the 2030 Agenda Leave no one behind, the type of indicators proposed to assess the results of initiatives proposed by public entities indicates otherwise. Thus, out of the total indicators included in NDP, only two are gender sensitive, namely: (i) reduction of salary disparity by 3.6 p.p. by 2025 (iii) increasing the share of women in public senior management positions by about 4 p.p. until 2025, this provided that, in order to reach the first mentioned indicator, the proposed actions are irrelevant.

Consequently, an important element, mentioned above in the analysis of the NDS implementation framework, is related to the planning of the resources necessary to carry out the reforms in general, and according to the interest of this research, to ensure gender equality. For the PND approved for the period 2023-2025 this aspect represents a vulnerability or, except for a few actions, mainly for the construction of infrastructure and the purchase of software and for which costs have probably been estimated withintechnical assistance projects, the cost estimate per general is omitted. However, the accompanying Explicative Note mentions a total NDP implementation cost of about 51.7 billion. MDL, but how it was calculated remains an open question.

In the part concerning the Government Action Plan for 2023, we ascertain the initiative of the Executive to elaborate and approve in the first quarter of this year the National Program for the Acceleration of Gender Equality in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2023-2027 and the Action Plan for the implementation to it, which we will refer to in more detail in the next section. According to the authors of the note, the approval of a separate policy document on an intersectoral policy area has no place or, this will constitute an additional burden of planning, elaboration, monitoring and evaluation that entities will have, as relevant interventions must be integrated into sectoral policy documents anyway, for example: Employment program - inequalities of opportunities in access to employment and access to resources, feminization or masculinization of certain professions; Health strategy and underlying programs – increase in life expectancy, including reduction of gender disparities in this area; Education strategy and related programs – inequalities present in tertiary education and / or under-representation of girls to STEM specialties, etc.

Unfortunately, the institutional initiatives planned for 2023 by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection[24] in the part related to ensuring gender equality cannot be analyzed, or, Its action plan was not made public.

Program for accelerating gender equality in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2023-2027 and the Action Plan for its implementation

Without repeatedly referring to the relevance and timeliness of a separate policy paper for an area of cross-sectoral policies such as gender equality, we will continue to focus on the content of the Gender Equality Acceleration Program, as ambitious as they are, but at the same time real objectives and activities proposed and what are the expectations of the entities as a result of the implementation of the Program.

The version analyzed in the research is the one subject to public consultations, which is most likely and natural, will be adjusted following proposals and recommendations from all interested governmental and non-governmental entities.

[24] https://particip.gov.md/ro/document/stages/anunt-privind-consultarea-publica-a-proiectului-de-hotarare-cu-privire-la-aprobarea-programului-de-accelerare-a-egalitatii-de-gen-in-republica-moldova-pentru-anii-2023-2027-si-planului-de-actiuni-pentru-implementarea-acestuia/9991, accessed on March 22, 2023

According to the vision established in the document, the Program aims to significantly increase the level of gender equality in areas relevant to the European Moldova 2030 Agenda (NDS) such as health, education, labor market, entrepreneurship, social protection and local development, ensuring a level of ambition and sustainability correlated with the needs, expectations and impediments of the Republic of Moldova in the context of true equality and equity between women and men, girls and boys[25] . Therefore, the policy areas, in which the Government intends to intervene through this program, are areas that indeed, based on disaggregated statistical data, face gender inequalities, both in relation to women and in relation to men.

The results framework of the Program (proposed objectives and actions) are aimed at increasing the number of gender mainstreaming initiatives (in the sectoral policies of the above-mentioned areas), increasing the number of local beneficiaries promoting equality between women and men, improving and expanding categories of social assistance services, strengthening human rights capacities, empowering under-represented women to be part of the decision-making process, increasing the role of men in promoting gender equality. We believe, however, that the objectives set must be better focused on the situations of gender inequalities that our society faces. At the same time, they should be more ambitious, which really aims to produce transformational reforms. Actions should be concrete and accompanied by resource allocations not only financial but also of another kind, such as: institutional and professional, technical, administrative capacities, etc.

In the vast majority, both the specific objectives and the indicators proposed for their monitoring and the actions set are not formulated according to the SMART criterion, and in some situations where this criterion is met, the reference values are missing, stating that they will be estimated during the current year. The question that does not delay appearing in this situation is: how, provided that the reference values for indicators which are proposed to be increased or reduced in weight or value have not been identified, has it been concluded that the data of these indicators indicate a problem requiring Government intervention?.

However, most likely the objectives and indicators proposed to be achieved were taken from the old policy document / identified from inertia and included in the new document, and having no basic reference values or generally measurable targets to target in the field of gender equality, this document will not be able to be monitored and even more efficiently evaluated. We rely on the fact that following the public consultation and interinstitutional approval process, the draft Program will be substantially improved, or not its approval should be considered as one of the measures implementing the EU Commission's recommendations and honoring other international commitments in this area, but directly the positive and sustainable changes it should bring about in the socio-economic fields, but for these changes to take place, in addition to approving a qualitative policy document, efforts, resources and political will are still needed, provided systemically for its effective implementation.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Republic of Moldova has managed to achieve significant results in ensuring equal opportunities for men and women when we refer to their use of rights,

[25] https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/1-mmps.pdf

the freedoms and potential they have. However, much remains to be done, or statistical data indicate the maintenance of certain inequalities between women and men or, worse, in certain socio-economic sectors there is even a decline in relation to the indices of previous years. Since the problems of gender inequality will be combated, the positive impact on the development of society will not be long in coming.

An essential condition for ensuring the achievement of gender equality is, without a doubt, the integration of its dimension into the national policy system by considering it at all stages of the public policy cycle. This is even more critical to ensure that the country's aspirations to integrate into the European Union really form the true agenda of political authorities and leaders. The way in which the Chisinau authorities have chosen to carry out this goal varies from one type of policy to another and, not necessarily, this way of proceeding is based on certain objective arguments.

Although in the NDS, the gender dimension was omitted from the analysis of the situation chapter, however to a somewhat satisfactory extent it was considered in the results and implementation framework, in the NDS operationalization instrument, which also includes intervention measures for the implementation of the provisions of the Government Program and the most important international commitments of the State Republic of Moldova (we refer to NDP), the issue of gender equality is largely omitted.

The Government's action plan for 2023 expressly provides for a single action aimed at ensuring equal opportunities, but we must recognize that this is a rather complex one, or, provides for the development of a separate policy document dedicated to accelerating gender equality. However, analyzing the draft Program subject to public consultation, it is difficult to understand how this acceleration will be ensured because the objectives are vaguely formulated and not necessarily ambitious, and the proposed actions are not focused on solving the concrete causes that determine or fuel the maintenance of gender inequalities in Moldovan society.

We are thus testing a more formal integration of gender issues into national policies, so how reliable is the obvious results in ensuring gender equality?. Can this be caused by lack of capacity? of resources? of political will? or awareness of the importance of the subject (especially on the background of the crises to which the Chisinau authorities had to respond, especially in recent years)? The answer can range from simple to very complex.

What is certain is that more effective mechanisms are needed to plan how the authorities aim to achieve the commitments they make internationally, but also internally, in relation to the citizens in whose service they are. Moreover, it is essential to implement objective systems for monitoring and evaluating the results obtained in one field or another by external partners, by civil society and even the establishment of self-assessment systems based on records of government performance. The performance of a Government is not limited to the number of acts developed and approved, but to the number of measures that it manages to implement and is also created, the conditions for maintaining the results and positive effects of these measures.

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INTERNATIONAL INDICES MEASURING QUALITY OF LIFE

Maria BRONȚ [*]

Abstract. *Monitoring the quality of life by means of appropriate performance indices in order to conclude on the need to implement policies aimed at a real improvement of the quality of life of the individual are the objectives of the present study. Analysis of the nature of the means that can provide adequate information on the reality in question is essential for establishing the right policies to optimise the quality of life. From what can be seen from the data analysis, it is important to link statistics that take a quantitative and general approach with statistics that take a qualitative and particular approach.*

Keywords: *Quality of life, measurement indices, well-being, happiness, health, social integration*

This study aims to highlight some important international benchmarks that monitor quality of life. In this respect, the World Health Organisation's indexes and those of the European Union, which over time have acquired international prestige, are particularly relevant. As can be seen from the analysis of the official data, it is essential to link the indicators that reflect the quantitative dimension of quality of life at macro level with the quantitative dimension at micro level in order to implement policies that will bring about a real improvement in the quality of life of individuals, and this is the aim of this study. Thus, statistical data obtained from a barometer of quantitative economic measurement, such as the Gross Domestic Product, in conjunction with data obtained from an indicator such as that provided by the measurement of Gross National Happiness, can articulately highlight the strengths and weaknesses of social structures both in time and space. These linkages can have a real beneficial impact on improving the quality of life of individuals, highlighting the importance of issues such as environmental conservation or the promotion of local culture in relation to productivity and economic efficiency. The importance of linking the two dimensions is particularly important in a context where pollution, inequality of opportunity, poverty and overpopulation in some urban areas are still very topical issues for the 'global village'.

The concept of quality of life has led from the outset to areas that are difficult to quantify. Even the quality of objects such as a shoe, a bag or a car is difficult to quantify, as the perception of quality is essentially subjective. This does not mean, however, that a generous concept such as quality of life was intended to remain purely theoretical. To this end, sociologists, economists and statisticians have joined forces and combined their skills to operationalise the concept of quality of life. This operationalisation is an ongoing process and subject to refinement (Filipescu, 2018, p. 21).

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Today, quality of life is measured on the basis of quantifiable data, and the most accurate model for reflecting reality is the statistical index. A term that the social sciences have borrowed from mathematics, the index or index is the objective value to which we relate quality of life. The socio-economic phenomena studied by statisticians often consist of many elements, whose weight or influence is asymmetrical, and must therefore be weighted in the mathematical model by which it is calculated.

The index method is one of the most frequently used methods of statistical analysis of socio-economic phenomena, especially since the increase in computing power through computers has facilitated the use of mathematical algorithms. Using specific indices, it is possible to study, for example, a national economy as a whole, as well as specific sectors of it, and individual activities of groups, associations, firms, companies, farms, etc. The index reveals the dynamics of the development of socio-economic phenomena, analyzes the implementation of plans or norms, determines the influence of individual factors on the overall result, reveals production reserves, makes territorial and international comparisons of relevant socio-economic indicators (Filipescu, 2018, p. 24).

A statistical index is a relative indicator that defines the ratio in a given unit of time compared to the plane or space of other socio-economic phenomena. By virtue of the fact that the index is a relative indicator, it is invariably obtained by the ratio of two or more quantities, which may be fixed or variable. In the particular situation where the level of the phenomenon for a period of time in the past is taken as the basis of comparison, dynamic (as opposed to static) indices are obtained. Similarly, in the situation where the level of comparison is based on the level of the phenomenon in a particular space or territory, territorial (as opposed to general) indices referring to a particular area are obtained (Neamțu, 2016, p. 103).

1. World Health Organisation Index

The Quality of Life Index (QLI) is designed to assess the extent to which a country is able to provide its people with optimal conditions for a healthy, safe and prosperous life over a medium time horizon. The QLI is based on a method that combines subjective life satisfaction survey data with objective determinants of the quality of life in a country, combined with an element of perspective (WHO, 2018, www.who.int).

The main determinants of quality of life that make up the QLI are the following:

a) Mental (emotional) well-being. It is illustrated by sub-indicators such as happiness, self-satisfaction, sense of personal identity, avoidance of excessive stress, self-esteem, richness of spiritual life, sense of security.

b) Interpersonal relationships. These are represented by sub-indicators that make a person enjoy intimacy, affection, cultivate friendships, social contacts, social support.

c) Material well-being. It is measured by sub-indicators from the register of property ownership (movable/furnishable), job security, level of earnings, or quality food.

d) Physical well-being. This is expressed in terms of health, physical mobility, availability of leisure time, access to quality health care, health insurance, preferred leisure activities (hobbies). In the English-language literature, optimal fitness is defined by the four 'S's: strength; stamina; suppleness; skills.

e) Independence. It is assimilated to autonomy in life, the possibility to make personal choices, the ability to make decisions, personal self-control, the presence of clearly defined values and goals, self-determination in life.

f) Social integration. Indicates presence of social status and role, acceptance in different social groups, accessibility of social support, stimulating work climate, participation in community activities, activity in civic or political organizations, membership in a spiritual or religious community.

g) Fundamental human rights. Although agreed by all countries around the world, the right to vote, the right to own property, the right to dispose of one's own body, access to education and culture, and the right to a fair and speedy trial are unequally distributed around the world.

h) Empowerment. Refers to professional competence, promotion to higher positions according to ability, participation in intellectual activities, professional skills or abilities, professional fulfilment, institutional or informal training appropriate to the profession (who.int).

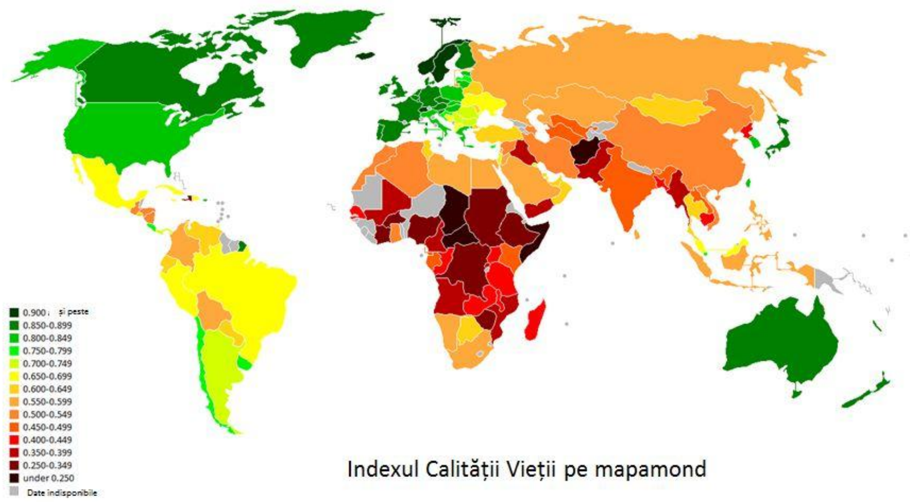

Fig. 1 - Distribution of quality of life in the world, according to the World Health Organization
Source: WHO, 2018, who.int

The main merit of this approach is to take a global view of quality of life and avoid focusing exclusively on local approaches relating to the industrialised world or developing countries. Based on the criteria listed above, the WHO calculates a global index, relating each country to the same standards. Although a comparison of quality between rich countries such as Norway or Australia and poor ones such as Sudan or Haiti may seem irrelevant, each country's score on different indicators and sub-indicators is useful for highlighting weaknesses and tracking their dynamics over time. It also gives developing countries a model to follow in terms of growth on different social, economic and environmental dimensions (WHO, 2018, who.int).

The annual publication of the world ranking has also drawn some criticism from the WHO. Those questioning the relevance of the figures argue that some top-ranked countries advertise themselves internationally on the basis of the QLI, attracting foreign investment and highly skilled labour. At the same time, countries at the bottom are doomed to remain permanently behind, with negative publicity discouraging investment and development prospects.

2. Purchasing Power Standard (PPS)

In 2009, the European Union published the report Beyond GDP, which recognised that measuring progress in a rapidly changing world created the need to develop indicators that would complement Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as comprehensively as possible. These new indicators were intended to reflect the current political and technological context, with the potential to measure progress in both environmental conservation and social inclusion. The report also pointed out that the use of economic indicators as the only way to measure progress was rather rejected by citizens, who perceived a discrepancy between reports of GDP growth and concomitant stagnation in income or levels of social services.

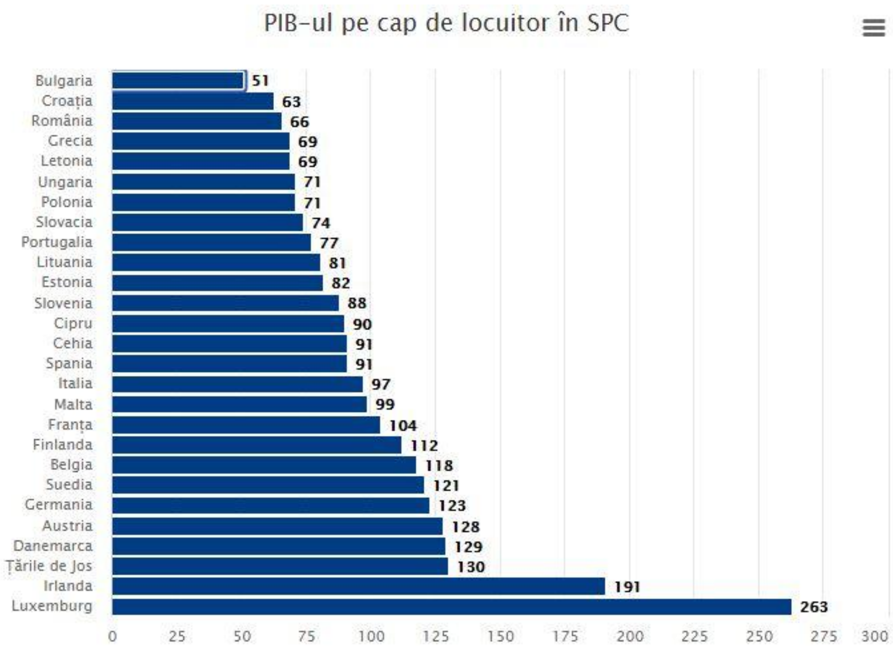

Fig. 2. EU-28 situation from a Purchasing Power Standard (PPS) perspective in 2017
Source: Eurostat, 2018, europa.eu

Among the statistical measurements regularly carried out by the European Union institutions is that of purchasing power, often associated with quality of life. From an EU perspective, standards of living in the Member States can be compared by relating the price of a package of goods and services to the income in each country. As prices, but also incomes, in each Member State differ, statisticians have created the virtual model of a common 'currency', which they have called the Purchasing Power

Standard (PPS). By comparing GDP per capita expressed in PPS, an overview of living standards in the European Union can be obtained, as shown in Fig. 2. EU-28 situation from a Purchasing Power Standard (PPS) perspective in 2017.

The ongoing measurement of CPS is important in view of the European Union's efforts to improve the living standards of its citizens, protecting the environment, encouraging sustainable job creation, reducing regional disparities and connecting isolated communities through the development of cross-border infrastructure.

3. European "8+1" index

The European Union has defined its own set of criteria and indicators against which it measures quality of life in Member States and makes comparisons with countries outside the EU. In 2017, the European Statistical Institute Eurostat published a comprehensive report on the methodological background of the "8+1" quality of life assessment system.

According to the report by experts in various fields, quality of life is a broad concept that includes a number of dimensions. The term 'dimensions' should be understood as those elements or factors that make up a complete entity, which can be measured by a set of sub-dimensions, with an associated number of indices for each. Quality of life includes both objective factors (e.g. material resources at one's disposal, health, occupational status, living conditions and many others) and the subjective perception that the individual has of each of these factors. From a psychological perspective, this perception subjective is formed according to the needs and priorities of each person. As a result, measuring quality of life for different populations and countries is a highly complex task, for which a scoreboard of indicators covering the most relevant dimensions selected for this purpose has been developed (europa.eu).

The macroeconomic account statements of individual countries have become a key indicator of economic performance and living standards in today's society. This is because they allow direct comparisons to be made very easily. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is one of the components of national macroeconomic account statements and is the most common way of measuring the economic activity of a region or country at a given point in time. Because economic activity is dependent on conditions such as seasons, the typical unit of time for calculating GDP is a calendar or fiscal year. In the northern hemisphere, the largest contribution to GDP is made in autumn, while the opposite is the case in winter, when certain branches of the economy (agriculture) go into conservation. Some relevant comparisons, for example between own past and current performance, can also be made on quarterly or half-yearly GDP (europa.eu).

The GDP index is used as an international standard benchmark for many public policy decisions. In economic theory, GDP includes all the finished goods and services that an economy produces and provides a snapshot of economic performance. GDP is expressed in monetary units and is a very useful tool for measuring output for sale, i.e. the market. Although it was not originally intended to be an indicator of social progress and was not designed for that purpose, the national GDP index is considered to be closely linked to the well-being of the citizens of the country concerned.

Experts working for the European Union have highlighted a number of reasons why the GDP index itself is not relevant enough to show social progress. As a result, they have weighted its importance by including a number of other complementary indicators. Building on an earlier report issued in 2009 by a team of researchers at the University of Strasbourg (J. Stiglitz, A. Sen, J.P. Fitoussi apud Filipescu, 2018, p. 86), citizens' living standards can be more adequately monitored using measures of income levels at the household or family level, analysis of consumption and individual citizens' well-being. The report signed by Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi recommended the European Commission to use the main conclusion of the research, namely that citizens' incomes are more relevant to measure well-being and its distribution at the societal level than national production (Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi apud. Filipescu, 2018, p. 87).

In many situations, income per household may evolve differently from GDP, which is why the picture of social well-being is also different. As can be seen in the graph below, which looks at the period 2005-2017, the combined GDP of the 28 Member States that were part of the European Union peaked in 2007-08, then plummeted dramatically just one year later, in 2009. The steep decline in GDP reflected the start of the financial crisis ('Great Recession') facing the world economy at that time. However, in the early years of the crisis, it can be seen that the decline was not replicated at the level of disposable income per household, which seemed to be immune to the collapse of stock markets around the world.

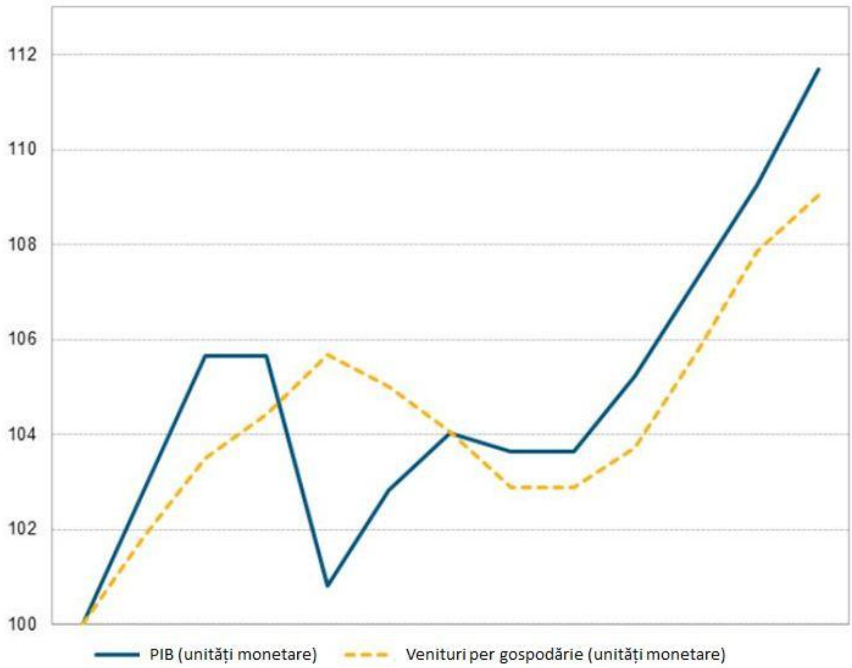

Fig. 3 - Evolution of GDP versus income in the EU28, 2005-2017,
Source: Eurostat, 2018, europa.eu

On the contrary, household incomes increased slightly between 2007-09 and started to decline only from the following year, reaching in 2012-13 the lowest point of the period under analysis. One of the reasons for this apparent inconsistency is that social transfers (social security fund benefits, compensation, etc.) absorbed and limited the effects of the financial crisis, at least in the first few years. Since 2014, the trend has become positive again for both indicators, but it is clear that income per household is lagging behind the increase in Gross Domestic Product. Household incomes therefore remain constantly behind the GDP index, which they will only be able to match if there is another major economic crisis. In the first half of 2020, the pandemic of the new type of coronavirus (COVID-19) has created the conditions for such a crisis with consequences for the global economy and it is expected that the evolution of the ratio between GDP and income per household will experience the same dynamics as during the recession of a decade ago (Zamfir & Zamfir, 2020, p. 31).

Social, economic and environmental progress do not always go hand in hand with GDP growth. For example, if a country decides to commercially exploit all its forests, it will dramatically increase the level of exports of timber and timber products, thereby increasing GDP. If GDP were the only indicator of quality of life, then it would mean that the population of that country had significantly improved its quality of life. However, today it is beyond doubt that deforestation has a strong impact on the quality of life in the medium and long term. Through loss or degradation of natural habitat, soil erosion, landslides and much more, quality of life suffers, for example, from any national programme of unsustainable logging.

It is therefore understandable that GDP measures quantity, but not necessarily other aspects of production, such as the distribution of benefits and the potential impact on the future. If not built on a solid, sustainable foundation, a dramatic jump in GDP can equate to the depletion of wealth resources for decades and generations to come, which would also impact quality of life (Filipescu, 2018, p. 92).

Moreover, GDP is a macroeconomic indicator and cannot give us information about the distribution of wealth among the population. Even in the hypothetical situation where quantity is the only measure of economic performance and quality of life, GDP still does not give us the full picture of living standards. A significant increase in a society's GDP does not automatically translate into better living standards for the majority of its citizens. Only a small part of society, such as the financial and political elite, might benefit from this increase, leaving instead large sections of citizens on the same level of well-being or even worse off than before. As a result, it is clear that general economic measures need to take account of indicators of wealth distribution in order to provide a more accurate picture of realistic on the standard of living and quality of life of citizens (Papalia, Wendkos, Feldman, 2010, p. 91).

3.1 Poverty as a social phenomenon

Although material well-being is not always translated into a high quality of life, it is widely accepted that poverty prevents people from living comfortably. Poverty essentially means a life without the chance to live within a certain minimum standard of living. The minimum standard is relative, differing from country to country, area to area, city to city, culture to culture and so on. The benchmarks for determining the standard that indicates the relative poverty line are insufficient earnings to sustain a daily diet or the need for clothing, heating, transport and other indispensable necessities (Preda, 2007, p. 51).

Sociologists analyse the phenomenon of poverty in relation to the socio-cultural context and state that this context varies in time and space and is distributed within society not only through factors related to the individual, but also through macro-social variables such as race, gender, age, occupational status, educational level and marital status. In terms of the social system's footprint, poverty takes on different forms: poverty in rich countries is different from poverty in poor countries. Also, in highly statistised countries with an authoritarian administration, social poverty takes on distinct forms, regardless of national wealth. The constant content of poverty, regardless of the system of social and political organization, boils down to two key aspects: inequality and deprivation (Nussbaum, 1993, p. 177).

According to the theory of the American political scientist Michael G. Roskin and his collaborators, it is not easy today to define poverty, nor is there a universally valid yardstick in the world, but it is essentially a relative concept. "What 'poor' means today might have meant 'comfortable' in past eras. Consider how Americans were faring during the Great Depression of the 1930s. A statistician at the Department of Labor created a formula in 1963 that has become standard, though many argue it is no longer the norm. The statistician found that families were spending about a third of their monthly income on food, so a "poverty line" is three times the minimum food budget for families of four not living from farming. Using this formula, the percentage of Americans below the poverty line fell from 17.3 percent in 1963, when President Johnson's administration began the War on Poverty program, to 11.7 percent in 1973. In 2007 it was 12.5 percent, but the poverty rate among black Americans and Hispanics is much higher, and one-sixth of American children are below the poverty line," Roskin noted in 2008 (Roskin et. al., 2011, p. 192).

A valuable contribution to the definition of the social concept of poverty belongs to Cătălin Zamfir, who insists on an aspect concerning the complexity of the phenomenon: "Poverty is not only the lack or insufficiency of income, it is in fact its cause. Poverty is a social-psychological-cultural complex" (Zamfir, 1984, p. 51).

3.2 Overpopulation of urban areas

The trend over the last hundred years of human history in terms of people's living environment has been the process of urbanisation, with people migrating from rural areas to cities. There are various explanations for this phenomenon, starting with economic and social ones, namely that the mechanisation and chemisation of agriculture have made it redundant for large numbers of people to live near farms. The distribution of most villages in a territory indicates nothing other than how human resources have been distributed to farm arable land.

Whereas in the past these inhabitants ensured agricultural production by physical, often manual, labour, today this work is increasingly done by high-performance agricultural machinery. As these technologically advanced machines are more productive and require a comparably smaller (and significantly more skilled) number of workers, a large part of the rural population is forced to migrate. Typically, cities offer well-paid professional opportunities for institutionally trained labour in the education system (Preda, 2007, p. 131).

With short breaks caused by wars, natural disasters or major economic crises, when some city dwellers have relocated to the countryside, the trend of accelerated urbanisation is irreversible. At the forefront have been large cities, which have 'swallowed up' metropolitan areas and sometimes formed conurbations with other cities in their vicinity, making the distance between them disappear through organic expansion of the inhabited area. This is how giant cities (megapolises) have emerged, concentrating tens of millions of inhabitants and becoming the most densely populated regions of the planet (Rebedeu & Zamfir, 1982, p. 149).

Increasing population density, pollution-generating human activity and the transformation of the natural environment by maximising the physical space in these large cities have contributed to the degradation of the quality of life of the inhabitants. Moreover, some of these urban agglomerations are surrounded by poor and unhealthy suburbs or slums (known as favelas in the Hispanic world) occupied by those who work in the city but do not earn enough money to afford housing within the administrative limits of the city (Ibid, p. 153).

4. Social Progress Index (SPI)

In 2016, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG Regio) designed the Social Progress Index (SPI) to help each country's regions explore their strengths as well as their weaknesses. The results can serve as a basis for comparison with other European regions with similar economic and social performance. The index has been designed from the outset to measure social progress for 272 European regions, complementing traditional tools for measuring economic progress based on GDP, income and employment (europa.eu).

DG Regiose's Social Progress Index looks at three broad dimensions (europa.eu):

1) essential human needs;
2) basic well-being;
3) opportunities.

Each of the above three dimensions is broken down into four thematic components. This results in 12 sub-components which vary in a number of ways, both within and between EU Member States. The components cover topics of interest such as the level of access of citizens to health services, the quality of housing, affordability, personal security, access to higher education and environmental conservation. Each component also has one or more indicators that operationalise the GPI concept.

The architects of this DG Regio project envisaged that measuring social progress can provide insights into the development strategies of EU regions. Basically, the GPI presents absolute performance on a scale from 0 to 100 for each of the 50 indicators included in the basis for calculating the index components. The overall figures show that the GPI is lowest in the former communist countries in the east of the continent and highest in the northern and western regions. The results also revealed some apparent anomalies, for example in Spain and France, which score high, even though some regions scored significantly lower than the rest of the country. Italy and Greece are in line with the European average, but some of their regions score particularly low, at the level of Eastern European countries (europa.eu).

A number of interesting parallels and conclusions can also be drawn from comparing the GPI with other social and economic indicators. For example, the comparison of GPI and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita shows a strong and positive link between the two. However, the link tends to decrease in strength at higher levels of GDP per capita, and this is particularly evident in capital city regions. Budapest, Lisbon, Warsaw, Prague, but also Bucharest have a relatively low level of GPI relative to GDP per capita. This is while other regions score higher than their GDP per capita would suggest, such as the Nordic regions and most parts of the Netherlands, but also in isolation in the Czech Republic, the UK and Belgium (europa.eu).

5. Exotic" indices

Although the World Health Organisation's index and those of the European Union are internationally recognised and widely accepted, in some countries alternative indices are calculated which take into account aspects that the above-mentioned indices do not include. These are collectively known as 'exotic indices' and each represents an original component of the way quality of life is measured. By the very breadth of interpretation and meaning of the concept of quality of life, these indices complete the overall picture of well-being and fulfilment in the world. Their uniqueness lies in the criteria they use and/or their weight in the overall score structure of countries. Seen as a local curiosity and initially of rather symbolic importance, the exotic indices have entered the mainstream in the last decade, with their inclusion in the reports of global institutions such as the UN (hdr.undp.org).

5.1 Gross National Happiness

The government of the small Asian state of Bhutan, located between China and India, is guided by a political philosophy it calls Gross National Happiness (GNH). Known in the international literature as GNH by its English translation (Gross National Happiness), the concept includes an index used to objectively measure the collective happiness and well-being of the population. The GNH was established as the main purpose of Government of Bhutan, defined as such by the Constitution currently in force, adopted on 18 July 2008.

The notion of Gross National Happiness appeared as a figure of speech in an interview the former King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, gave to a journalist from the Financial Times business publication in 1979. After the British reporter asked him about the economic state of his country and specifically about GDP, the monarch replied that, in religious key, "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross Domestic Product". Becoming a headline in the prestigious financial periodical, the notion of Gross National Happiness gained worldwide fame and the status of a true country brand for Bhutan. But more importantly, GNH has emerged as a central concern for senior officials in the Bhutanese administration (grossnationalhappiness.com).

In 2011, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly passed a resolution entitled "Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development", urging member country representatives to follow Bhutan's example by measuring happiness and well-being of citizens, and to consider happiness a "fundamental human goal". A year later, Bhutan's Prime Minister and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon agreed to encourage the spread of the FBN philosophy around the world. As a result, the UN produced the World Happiness Report and 20 March was declared International Happiness Day (worldhappiness.report).

GNH (Gross National Happiness) is different from GDP in that it emphasises collective happiness as the goal of government, with an emphasis on harmony with nature and traditional values. Gross National Happiness rests conceptually on four pillars of strength:

1) Sustainable and equitable economic development;
2) Environmental conservation;
3) Preservation and promotion of culture;
4) Good governance.

Specifically, the NBF is calculated by assessing nine domains: psychological well-being, health, time management, education, cultural diversity, good governance, community vitality, biodiversity and standard of living. Each domain is composed of subjective (questionnaire-based) and objective indicators. The nine domains have equal weight in the composition of the NBF, but the indicators that make up each domain have a variable weight. The domains are also assessed differently, depending on the GDP generated by each individual. The philosophy of the FBN is a tribute to the Buddhist religion, which promotes balance as a way to achieve happiness (grossnationalhappiness.com).

5.2 Happy Planet Index

As mentioned above, the UN issues a World Happiness Report (WHR) every year since 2012, modelled on Bhutan's FBN. But the criteria are significantly different: GDP per capita, social support, life expectancy, freedom to make choices in life, generosity and perception of corruption. The 2019 report places Finland, Denmark and Norway at the top of the global rankings, with overall scores between 7.76 and 7.55, while the bottom places are occupied by Afghanistan, Central African Republic and Sudan. Romania is ranked in the top third (48th) with an overall score of 6.07 (worldhappiness.report).

Since 2006, the New Economics Foundation (NEF), a UK-based environmental think-tank specialising in "social, economic and environmental justice", has been producing an annual Happy Planet Index, an exotic index that focuses on the sustainability of human activities and looks at the social and economic impact of the world's countries on the environment. Countries that generate more pollution and have a harsher footprint on nature are penalised, while countries that protect the environment best are praised (happyplanetindex.org).

In the most recent (2018) edition of the Happy Planet Index, Costa Rica was in first place, with nine of the top ten positions going to countries in the Caribbean, despite the fact that some of these countries face endemic poverty. The US ranks just 105th out of 151 countries surveyed. The configuration of the rankings can be explained by the fact that the NEF does not take into account GDP or HDI (Human Development Index), which it considers inadequate because they do not account for sustainable and durable development (happyplanetindex.org).

Conclusion

The accelerated pace of technological development coupled with the challenges of migration and global warming are just some of the important aspects of today's world that draw attention to the dynamics involved in the quality of life of the contemporary individual. More than ever, the ability to adapt to new forms of social existence is a common goal for improving quality of life. In this context, an analysis of the nature of the means that can provide adequate information on the reality in question is essential for establishing the right policies to optimise the situation. From what can be seen from the data analysis, linking statistics that take a quantitative and general approach with statistics that take a qualitative and particular approach is essential. The extent to which this link can be made in proportion to the accelerating dynamics of the 21st century world remains a desideratum, one that is quite competitive but not impossible to achieve.

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ARE THE HEALTHCARE POLICIES IMPLEMENTED IN CHINA AND EUROPE EFFECTIVE IN COMBATING FUTURE PANDEMICS?

Anuj NANDY*

Abstract. *COVID-19 came unprecedented, exposing the challenges in the healthcare policies of the EU and China in combating the virus. China's zero COVID-19 policy, although effective in reducing COVID-19 transmissions, was criticized by both the public and healthcare professionals. The policy was only effective in the short term, and once China eased its lockdown, the COVID-19 cases surged. Also, the EU's digital COVID-19 certificates, although vital in determining the COVID-19 status of the visitors during the pandemic, are only acceptable in the EU member states and expose travelers to the risk of contracting the disease. For health policies to be effective in combating future pandemics, they require improvement by involving public members and enhancing global cooperation.*

Keywords: *EU digital COVID 19 certificates; zero-covid policy; quarantine; mass testing; Omicron variant*

1. Introduction

With the global pandemic of COVID-19 behind us, one lesson that nations can learn is that we live in unprecedented times. What started in Wuhan, China, spread rapidly to other parts of the world, putting pressure on the existing healthcare facilities and systems. Nations had to implement health policies and protocols to contain the spread of the virus. However, the lack of a better health contingency plan resulted in deaths in various parts of the world. Post-Covid, countries evaluated their health policies to determine practical areas and improvements. Europe and China, worst hit by the pandemic, need to reevaluate their health policies to decide whether or not they can effectively combat future pandemics.

2. Health policies in china during the pandemic

2.1. Zero-COVID policy

China implemented a zero-covid policy to prevent the spread of the virus. China, in its zero-covid policy-imposed lockdowns, mass testing, and quarantine to combat the spread of the virus (Ioannidis, 2022: 13-21). The zero-covid policy helped keep the infections in China lower than in many countries despite the virus originating in China.

Whereas China's zero-covid policy helped reduce COVID-19 transmission, it faced criticism from the public and healthcare professionals. Zero-COVID-19 was only effective in the short term; when China opened its borders, the COVID-19 cases

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surged. The policy sparked criticism from the members of the public, leading to the outbreak of countrywide protests. The protestors in Shanghai claimed that the zero-covid policy was restrictive and contravened their fundamental rights. The protestors claimed that they could only leave their homes after getting tests.

Fig. 1. Protestors protesting in Beijing against China's zero-covid policy

2.2. Nucleic acid testing throughout the city

With the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant in 2022, the Chinese government set up nucleic acid testing to detect the virus. The nucleic acid test is a diagnostic test for the SARS-CoV-2 COVID-19 virus. Before the implementation of the policy, there was fear of widespread cases of undetected Omicron variant among the Chinese population. Detection was the Chinese intervention policy to identify the cases for appropriate action.

Subsequently, the Chinese government established 15-minute nucleic acid tests for the virus across Chinese capitals and cities with a population of more than 10 million to combat the virus's spread. The deployment of the nucleic acid test was appropriate because the Chinese citizens were required to walk for only 15 minutes from their homes or offices to receive the test. The healthcare professionals in China believed that the nucleic acid testing policy was appropriate for implementation in China because early detection of the virus could help promptly control the outbreak. Li Zhenjun, the director of China Communicable Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), lauded the nucleic acid testing health policy, saying that it would help establish the source of the infection and help control and prevent the epidemic (Jing, 2022:250).

Whereas the countrywide nucleic acid testing was largely successful in preventing and controlling the spread of the virus, it had some challenges that require improvement if it is to be used to combat future pandemics effectively. Firstly, there was a lack of standardized training among healthcare professionals in China. Efficiency in the nucleic acid tests resulted in non-standard operation. There were instances when Chinese citizens felt that healthcare professionals lacked professionalism. The fear of getting false results or being infected prevented the citizens from being tested. Some citizens complained that the healthcare professionals failed to change gloves between tests and used disinfectant water, a standard of disinfecting. Also, the different levels of collection methods among the healthcare professionals created a possibility of failure to collect correct specimens, resulting in wrong results.

Secondly, the non-compliance behavior of the people in the testing queues caused virus transmission in the queues. The Chinese government notified its citizens that they appear for nucleic acid testing without adequate planning. The people who emerged for the testing violated COVID-19 protocols, resulting in infection of the people in the queues. Violating COVID-19 protocols like removing masks, failing to maintain social distancing, and spitting made many people favorable for the virus upon testing. The healthcare professionals conducting the tests were also infected along with the citizens.

Finally, there were inadequate resources to implement nucleic acid testing health policy. COVID-19 came unprecedented, forcing the Chinese government to implement the policy without adequate human resources. The staff available to undertake the tests was insufficient and could not effectively meet the demand. The Chinese government further lacked sufficient resources to recruit additional staff. The available staff who undertook the tests were overwhelmed, resulting in incompetency. Also, some test points were not adequately equipped with personal protective equipment like double-layer latex gloves and N95 masks. The lack of PPE risked the lives of many healthcare professionals in the line of duty, scaring others from joining the profession.

2.3. Forced quarantine for citizens returning home

Whereas the Chinese citizens abroad felt that home was the best place to be safe during the global pandemic of COVID-19, returning home was met by forced quarantine imposed by the Chinese government. In March 2020, China’s State Health Administration, in collaboration with China's General Administration of Customs, launched mandatory quarantine for all Chinese students and workers returning home (Budzyn, 2022:15). Temperature screening was conducted at the entry points, and those found with symptoms of the virus were put in 14-day quarantine for medical observation.

Whereas the mandatory quarantine for those returning from abroad effectively minimized the virus's domestic spread, it faced challenges. The Chinese citizens returning home resented the move, claiming it was unfair and inconvenienced. Some even claimed that the screening devices were faulty, ending up in quarantine unjustly. Failure of the Chinese government to effectively explain the virus to the citizens resulted in resentment, making the health policy ineffective in meeting its objectives of containing the spread of the virus. Some of the people returning abroad escaped the authorities, leading to a lack of screening despite having symptoms of the virus. This resulted in the continued spread of the virus in China.

3. Health policies in eu during the pandemic

3.1. The EU digital COVID-19 certificate

The certificates told whether one was vaccinated against the virus, positive, or recovered. The EU digital COVID-19 certificate allowed citizens to move across the

EU countries (Halpin, 2022:29). However, the EU digital COVID-19 certificates were only accepted in EU member states. Due to lockdowns, EU citizens who wished to travel to other non-EU member states could not be allowed. The EU digital COVID-19 certificates also threatened the lives of many EU citizens. COVID-19 is a highly infectious disease, and human interactions result in the spread of the disease.

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3.2. Providing COVID-19 vaccines

The EU adopted a collaborative effort to vaccinate its citizens across the region. The EU authorized four COVID-19 vaccines for use in the area. To ensure the production of sufficient effective vaccines in the area, the EU signed agreements with vaccine developers and initially secured 4.6 million vaccines for use in the region. The EU aimed to vaccinate 70 percent of the union's citizens by mid-2022. The vaccination health policy within the EU region also saw the donation of COVID-19 vaccines to countries that could not afford the vaccines.

Fig. 2. A woman undertaking COVID-19 Vaccine in Europe

Whereas the COVID-19 vaccination health policy was meant to boost the immunity of the EU's population, vaccine hesitancy remained a significant problem in the region. EU citizens had limited confidence in the effectiveness of the vaccines. The side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines and misconceptions on social media regarding the efficacy of the vaccines made few people within the EU turn for vaccinations. France and Hungary faced the highest vaccine resistance within the EU region. The EU's effort to roll out vaccination programs instead of sensitization on the vaccines' effectiveness led to public resentment. The EU did little to build confidence in vaccines before the onset of the pandemic.

4. What china and eu need to undertake to ensure the health policies are effective in combating future pandemics

Analysis shows that the health policies implemented in China and Europe, despite successfully combating the virus, had certain limitations that limited their effectiveness in tackling the spread of the virus. In developing health policies that will effectively deal with future pandemics, the EU and China need to undertake the following measures.

4.1. Investing in healthcare professionals

Implementing the health policies in China and Europe was ineffective because of limited human resources. For health policies to effectively combat future pandemics, the EU and China should invest in healthcare professionals. The presence of adequate healthcare professionals effectively prevents the spread of the virus. If the EU had had enough healthcare professionals, the virus would not have spread to the levels witnessed, leading to massive deaths. Investing in healthcare professionals needs to start by admitting more students to healthcare institutions. Also, existing healthcare professionals should be motivated to arouse more interest in students joining the profession. Lack of morale among the healthcare professionals while combating the spread of the virus led the students who had claimed to pursue healthcare courses to lose interest. Enhancing the appeal of the professionals will increase delight in joining the profession.

4.2. Availing medical resources

Resources for combating the spread of the virus are adequate for making health policies effective. For the health policies to be effective, accompanying resources must be available. Lack of PPE during the implementation of the policies risked the lives of healthcare professionals. In effectively combating future pandemics, China and the EU should ensure that PPE is always available in all healthcare facilities. Assessments of the healthcare facilities need to be conducted to ensure that the PPE is available all the time. The PPE should be available in advance and not be sourced when the pandemic emerges. During pandemics, there is high demand for PPE, resulting in inadequate supply. Also, ventilators are vital in saving lives during pandemics. The majority of the people in China died because of a lack of adequate ventilators to save lives. In some instances, people in critical conditions had to wait for the ventilators to be available for use. The health policies in China and the EU would have been more successful if the necessary resources were available.

4.3. Sensitizing the public

The public needs to be sensitized on the effectiveness of the health policies and why they are being implemented. In the digital age of communication, social media is a powerful tool that can cause misconceptions and miscommunication, leading to the ineffectiveness of health policies. Sensitizing the public is critical to reducing the level of resistance (Marion, 2020:201). The sensitization process should be conducted when the pandemic emerges and in advance to prepare people for future pandemics. The sensitization programs should focus on correcting the misconceptions and providing the relevant information. The resentments in the EU and China during the implementation of the policies would have been minimized if the members of the public were effectively sensitized.

4.4 Public participation

Involving members of the public is critical in ensuring less resentment of the health policies. The policies are intended to help the members of the people; their involvement is essential to reducing resistance during implementation. China, in formulating health policies like zero COVID policy, should seek the opinions of the members of the public to avoid resentment (Sobczak, Marharyta, Pawliczak, 2023:10).

4.5. Global cooperation

China and Europe must cooperate with other nations to ensure that health policies effectively combat future pandemics. Pandemics are global and affect all parts of the world. Practical cooperation is effective in reducing the devastating effects of the pandemic. Beneficial international cooperation helps provide critical information that is key to preventing pandemics. EU should cooperate with other countries to formulate effective health policies will be effective in the future.

5. Conclusion

Although effective during the pandemic and could help prevent future pandemics, the health policies implemented by the EU and China have specific weaknesses that require improvement to be more effective. Formulating health policies needs to involve the public to avoid resentment during implementation. Also, the EU and China should cooperate with other countries when implementing health policies because the world is a global village, and what affects one part of the world can affect the entire world.

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V. BOOK REVIEWS

THE CRISIS OF GLOBALISATION OR THE CRISIS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM?

Liviu-Vasile ȘERBAN*

Book review of Melania-Gabriela Ciot: *Criza Globalizării sau Criza Sistemului Internațional?*. Presa Universitară Clujeană: ISBN 978-606-37-1864-9, Cluj-Napoca, 2023.

Keywords: *global crisis, globalization, actors, international system.*

The current era we find ourselves in is distinctly marked by profound social, political, and economic changes, changes that indirectly demand us to become more resilient and flexible. As Professor Ciot asserted, the International System is undergoing a process of redefinition, thus the evolution of events continues to influence the ongoing rearrangement of global actors (Ciot, 2021: 9). Today, the world is significantly different from what we imagined a few years ago, for several reasons. The dynamism inherent in the current global landscape underscores the need to be aware of existing global interdependencies and the necessity to develop global collaboration among nations. In acknowledging the dynamics of interdependence, it becomes clearly that the remedy for crises lies in international cooperation (Morillas, 2020: 6). As we will see, the volume discussed in the following paragraphs aims to shed light on crucial aspects of globalization and the current international system.

The volume entitled "Globalization Crisis or International System Crisis," coordinated by Prof. Dr. Melania-Gabriela Ciot and published in 2023 by the prestigious Publishing Press named Presa Universitară Clujeană, stands as a comprehensive analysis of the challenges facing the globalized society. The coordinator of this volume, Melania-Gabriela Ciot, is an eminent university professor at the Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University, with an impressive academic career marked by significant successes and contributions to International Relations and European Studies field. Considering her extensive experience, the volume ultimately offers a unique perspective, especially when addressing current crises in the global context.

This collective work gathers contributions from specialists, mostly doctoral candidates in international relations and European studies (or related fields), covering

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diverse and highly challenging topics that provide an overview of crises threatening the current international system.

Regarding the chosen title, „Criza Globalizării sau Criza Sistemului Internațional?” ("Globalization Crisis or International System Crisis"), it is suggestive and complex, inviting readers to delve into the depth of the topics addressed in this volume. The captivating title indicates from the beginning that the work discusses globally important issues, and the use of words such as "crisis" or "globalization" suggests an analysis of key aspects impacting societies worldwide, indicating an analytical and provocative approach. Moreover, the title urges us to look at complex and interconnected issues, encouraging exploration of the relationships and interdependencies of the contemporary world and, at the same time, exploring the subtleties of global dynamics.

In its entirety, the volume not only provides a detailed analysis, but also invites the reader to a thorough exploration of relevant subjects in today's current related fields of study. With 304 pages, the volume distinguishes itself through its comprehensive approach and exploration of a wide range of current topics. Structured in a clear and logical manner, the work begins with a foreword by the volume coordinator, urging readers to "navigate the turbulent seas of globalization crisis and find the courage to shape a fairer, more sustainable, and prosperous future for all." It then proceeds with three distinct sections, dividing the content into key areas of analysis: (i) EU as a Global Actor in a Changing World, (ii) Globalization - History and Present, (iii) Globalization and Interdependencies in International Relations.

The first section promises a deep exploration of the EU's role in the continuously evolving global context, guiding readers through a vast territory of challenges influencing the EU as a global actor. Topics within this section include: "The European Union - a reference point for strengthening and cultivating bilateral relations between the Republic of Moldova and Romania" (Aliona Rozovel), "The humanitarian crisis of 2015 affecting Europe. A turning point for Serbia within the European Union" (Ștefăniță Puiu), "The role of the European Union in the Regulation of Artificial Intelligence and the Metaverse in the Context of Globalization Crisis" (Oana Băhnean), "The U.S. entry into Afghanistan and Iraq, significant moments in the present of Europe and the European Union" (Dănuț Sopon), "Demographic aging in a globalized world" (Monia-Eliza Motorga), "Digitalization of Education in the Era of Globalization" (Marcela Tanașciuc), "How the European Union addresses cyber threats" (Claudia Gabrian), "The political-economic and security situation in the Republic of Moldova in the context of a year of war at the borders" (Mircea-Ioan Matei), and "Romania and accession to the Schengen area. Analysis of the national approach in light of recent events" (Liviu-Vasile Șerban).

The second section promises to reveal the historical and current perspective of the globalization phenomenon and, at the same time, to guide the reader, from historical origins to contemporary issues, through a journey into what globalization actually means. Topics readers will find nuanced include "The role of indirect private governance in the spectacular return of the M23 rebels in the far east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo" (Andreea Bianca Urs), and "The Era of Globalization and Nationalism" (Ioana Mădălina Miron).

Regarding the last section, it addresses broad perspectives on the networks that define the contemporary political and geopolitical landscape through works such as

"The Internationalization of the Hong Kong Protests 2019-2020: between global support and individual struggle" (Carmen Ștefania Duță), "Cluj-Napoca, from European Cultural Capital to Smart City. Rebranding: intention or necessity?" (Cosmin Irimieș, Laura Irimieș, Oana Rațiu), "Globalization - a 'hostile architecture'?" (Ion Mariș), "Japan in the Era of Globalization: Navigating the Challenges of a Crisis-Stricken International System" (Claudiu Aldea), and finally, "The global economy and rethinking globalization. From globalization to slowbalization: is globalization losing its charm?" (Anis Benabed).

Considering all these nuances, we can conclude that the volume makes an extremely important and relevant contribution to the field of International Relations and European studies, as well as to related fields. The analysis of global challenges from various angles and perspectives contributes to developing an understanding of the complexities and subtleties of the contemporary world. In essence, the contributors not only explore these challenges but also offer clear and well-defined perspectives with solutions to many of the problems the international system faces nowadays. In conclusion, we find that this volume stands out not only as an academic reference but also as a guide for those interested in learning more about what affects us all.

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REGIONALISM AND ETHNICITY IN ROMANIA IN PAST AND PRESENT

Anca OLTEAN*

Book review of Melania-Gabriela Ciot and Ottmar Trașcă (Eds.), *Transylvannian Review*, vol. XXXI, Supplement No.2, 2022, *Regional and Ethnic Communities Past and Present.*

In the *Foreword* of the present volume written by Ottmar Trașcă and Corneliu Pintilescu it is mentioned the fact that German minority enjoyed a special status in Romania during the leadership of Ion Antonescu, benefiting of "equal rights in all fields" with the Romanian majority. (Trașcă&Pintilescu, 2022:7). After fostering a stronger economic, political, military cooperation with Romania, German politicians from Berlin replaced the local leaders of German minority with new leaders more committed to the politics dictated from Berlin. Last but not least, the authors make a brief description of the articles presented in the present volume.

In the article of Ottmar Trașcă, *Pax Germanica. Projections of the Leaders of the Third Reich and of the German Ethnic Group to Solve the Problem of Transylvania between 1940-1944*, it is mentioned the cease of territories of Romania towards Hungary after the Vienna Pact when Romania lost 42,000 kmp and 2,5 millions inhabitants in favor of Hungary. (Trașcă, 2022:10) By this partition, Hitler tried to manipulate two states, Romania and Hungary, is the opinion of the author, making promises also to Romania that it might regain back its territories if it follows the policy of the German Reich. In Romania it was created The German Ethnic Group with his leader Andreas Schmidt which the author describes as a "state within a state", trying to find solutions in the Transylvania issue (dispute). (Trașcă, 2022:14) Concluding upon this article, Ottmar Trașcă says that there are proves that Hitler would have been on Romanian side in the Transylvanian issue if he would have reached the final victory.

Another article is written by Vasile Ciobanu, *The Press of the German Ethnic Group in Romania. Case Study: Schaffendes Volk.* The author presents the researches made regarding the German Ethnic Group in Romania mainly by authors like Johann Böhm, Paul Milata, Michael Kroner, Dumitru Șandru, Ottmar Trașcă, Florian Banu, Cristian Scarlat. German Reich used *Propaganda* in its relation with the German Ethnic Group. This propaganda was lead mainly with the help of the press. A tool with the hep of whom was lead this propaganda was the newspaper *Shaffendes Volk* which promoted the "work" considering the workers as agents of the "new world". (Ciobanu,

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2022: 28) This newspaper promoted German leaders such as Hitler, Göring, Goebbels, Robert Ley, etc and local leaders from the German community of Romania such as Schmidt, Cloos, A. Rührig.

The article written by Daniela Popescu, namely *The German Ethnic Group in the Romania's Propaganda Practices as perceived by the Romanian Authorities*, tries to define the concept of propaganda as "to disseminate or promote particular ideas" by lies and distorsion. (Popescu, 2022: 36) These propaganda tools were used intensively by Joseph Goebbels, minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, spred by television, press, pictures. The author intends to make an account of the propaganda practices of the German Ethnic Group during the time 1930-1944. In this purpose, research has been made in National Archives of Romania and National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives concerning propaganda practiees in Romania.

Ulrich A. Wien, in the article *The exponents of the "National Church" Together with the German Folk Group in Romania 1940-1944 on the Way to "De-Judaization",* presents "significant focal points of the Curriculum. Exemplary Christalogy". He shows that, during the Third Reich, in the German religions approach in Romania, Jesus was perceived as "messanger of God", not as Jew, but as a "Galilean". In Gymnasium, asserts the author, German students learned about "Christianity and National Socialism". (Wien, 2022: 62). Messianism was not an attribute of the German chancellor, only the faith.

In the article of Manuela Marin, "Two Souls in One Chest:" The Creation of the German Ethnic Group as reflected in the Romanian Press. Case Study: Universul", quotes Nichifor Crainic who was the Head of Romanian Ministry of Propaganda and who lectured on "integral nationalism" in a speech at the Institute for Romanian-German Culture in Brașov. By "integral nationalism" he understood to know "how to observe and love the ethnic genius of each national group" (Marin, 2022:71). His pledoary was to disseminate the German culture in Romania. The author presented the reflection of German minority in the newspaper "Universul" which was under censorship as the rest of the Romanian press during June-December 1940, the period of time analyzed by the author. The German state becomes from ally a guarantor of Romanian territorial integrity, considers the author. Universul's discourse was favorizing a stronger German influence in Romania on military and economic plan, attributing a central role to German minority in Romania. (Marin, 2022: 84).

Florian Kührer-Wielach, in the article "Hineingestreut ins überflutete Mutterland". Contigency, Integration and Identity in "Southern German" Postwar Discourse, expressed his opinion that, after the end of Second World War, Germans from Southeastern Europe felt somehow isolated. The method of work for this study it is historical discourse analysis and the time itinerary focuses on the years 1950. The bibliographical sources of the present article focuses on works published in Südostdeutsche Heimatblätter, on selected texts of Heinrich Zillich and fragments from two anthologies: *Wir Donauschwaben and Wir Siebenbürger.*

In the article of Virgil Țârău, *In Search of the Lost Archives. An Incursion into the Archives of the German Ethnic Group in Postwar Romania*, the author presents the objective of his research "Thus, the topic of this study is the fate of the archives of the former German Ethnic Group (CEG) in Romania, an organization that allegedly represented the interests of the country's German minority, but in fact acted as an extension of the Reich in Romania". (Țârău, 2022: 108) The author focuses its attention on documents enacted by the Romanian state after August 23, 1944. For the completion of this study the author consulted the former Securitate Archives and Romanian National Archives. These archives were firstly ravaged by their creators (GEG officials). Another change in the Archives occurred after the deportation of Germans in USSR, then after their take-over of the Romanian Secret Service. A new change occured after 1945, after the liquidation of German organization assets.

Corneliu Pintilescu, in the article *In search of the emigration approval. Transnational and Local Networks involved in the emigration process of the Romanian Germans*, asserts his opinion that each East communist state developed special institution and practices to control the movement of people: "Thus, the closed borders heavily contributed <<to internal political stability" in communist countries" (Pintilescu, 2022: 137). Stalin's death is the opinion of the author had a strong impact in the movement of people behind the iron curtain. After 1960, it was an attraction of the West towards the citizens from Communist block. But the intention to emigrate to West made Easteners guilty in the eyes of their totalitarian states. Mainly, Germans and Jews expressed their intention to emigrate. Jews of Romania, shows the author, emigrated in Israel "in exchange for money or other economic benefits". Between 1968-89, 210.000 of Germans emigrated, also, in RFG in exchange for money and economic benefits. About these emigrations of Jews and Germans from Romania wrote authors like Radu Ioanid, Hannelore Baier, Peter-Dietmar Leber, Florian Banu, Luminița Banu, Florica Dobre and Cosmin Budeancă.

Melania-Gabriela Ciot in the article *Editor's Note* mentions the fact that old regionalism is bypassed and new forms of regionalisms emerged nowadays. Negociations influences "the establishment and the operations of regions in the international system" (Ciot, 2022:161). Regions are the subject of the regional policy of the European Union and they were created as "engines of development".

The author makes a brief description of the paper presented in the second section of the present volume *Regionalism, International System and Negociation*, containing "nine scholarly articles and three book reviews".

Melania-Gabriela Ciot in the article *New Regionalism and Enlargement Negociations in Central and Eastern Europe* emphasizes the importance of new regionalism in the context of Covid-19 pandemic "The Covid -19 pandemic demonstrated that the mature understanding of the role and of the networks of regions could facilitate the innovation of the functionning of globalization" (Ciot, 2022: 162), fostering the contribution of regionalism to "multilateralism" and "global governance". Regionalism was an alternative to a history of conflicts in Europe, for the newly integrated regions emerged from the end of Cold War, is the opinion of Melania-Gabriela Ciot.

Based on a qualitative analysis and having as research methods a case study and a comparative approach, this paper analyzes "the role of new regionalism in explaining the Europeanization process of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries", namely the "European integration process" (Ciot, 2022: 163).

Firstly the author presents the new approaches of the new regionalism and secondly it provides the image of CEE region analyzed from the point of view of European integration.

The importance of new regionalism, emphasizes the author rezides in the fact that is "a current that needs more attention from the scholars of IR and EU studies, mainly because it will provide a deeper understanding of the complexity and dynamics of the contemporary phenomena. It could be a solid basis for a complete explanation and clasification of the European integration process and of Europeanization" (Ciot, 2022: 172). Last but not least, the author wanted to emphasize the role of international negociations in the context of implementing the policies of the new regionalism. The author remarks the increase of the role of non-state actors in implementing the agenda of international system.

Jack Williams in the article *Place over Nation: The Role of Regionalism in Redefining Secession*, points out that at June 23, 2016, the UK citizens voted to leave EU in proportion of 52%. (Williams, 2022: 175) In UK, there were also regions who wanted to maintain UK's membership in EU (like Scotland). There were national parties in UK which oppossed to EU membership of UK such as Front National, UKIP, Dutch Freedom Party.

The author emphasizes the principle of self-determination supported by Woodrow Wilson and includesd as Principle 1of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The author thinks that "The European Project is under pressure" (Williams, 2022: 184). The attitude of UK against EU membership was a manifest of "Euroscepticism", considers Jack Williams. A divisive nationalism within UK, lead to this politics of redrawal and isolation of UK from EU.

Mircea Brie, Islam Jusufi, István Polgar in the article *Is inclusivity necessary for the Legitimacy of New Regionalism? Unpacking the Open Balkan Initiative Negociations* assert that Balkan societies were influenced by identity cleavages during the last decades (Brie&Jusufi&Polgar, 2022: 188). Balkan societies knew, in the same time, a process of national-identity emancipation. Complicated realities are in Bosnia, Herțegovina, Serbias conflict with Kosovo and somehow, Montenegro is the opinion of the authors. In face of these ethnic conflicts, European integration appears as a possible viable solution. But in order to achieve this, it is necessary the implementation of institutional reforms in Balkan states. (Brie & Jusufi & Polgar, 2022: 188). For the moment, European integration in this areal is an "unfinished project". EU, USA, Russian Federation want to influence the region of the Balkan states and in this sense was opened "The Open Balkan Innitiative". There are states which are in favor of this innitiative (Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania) and others from this areal which reject it (Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina). (Brie & Jusufi & Polgar, 2022: 189). This paper intends to analyze the viability of Open Balkan Innitiative in the Balkan states areal. This happends in the context in which European enlargement in Balkans is announced as a priority of EU. (Brie & Jusufi & Polgar, 2022: 204) This integration happends at differemt levels "eonomic, cultural, educational, security integration" is the opinion of the authors. Global crises which hit EU like "economic losses" and "socio-economic insecurity in the context of Covid-19 pandemic" hit also the Balkan States. (Brie & Jusufi & Polgar, 2022: 204).

In the article *Training the International Negociator* written by Paul Willem Meerts the author point out "This article will focus on negociators and negociations in a political and diplomating setting, in other words: on training students, diplomats and other civil cervants in negociation effectiveness, while confronting them with the fit between entitlements and bnefits". (Meerts, 2022: 212) The author presents a lecture on international negociations seen from a realist perspective (Meerts, 2022: 212). He quotes the context in which were signed the peace agreements signed in 1648 in

Westphalia which granted a new type of sovereignty belonging to states not to monarhs; in 1713, it was concluded the Peace of Utrecht, a peace unfavourable to the Dutch, but concluded thanks to French and English powers. Then the author mentions the Congress of Vienna with a peace agreement signed in 1815 where the greatest powers decided the faith of Europe. Then the author points out the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, in the aftermath of the First World War. And last, but not least, he mentions the viable innitiative that was the League of Nations, created after the Treaty of Versailles.

The author points out then the purpose of his article "This article presents the seminar developed and exercised by its author and a group of trainees from the Programme on International Negociation Training (Points). It deals with bilateral, trilateral, ediated, multiparty and mulilateral negociations, as well as with short exercises highlighting important aspects of the processess of international negociation in a political context". (Meerts, 2022: 223).

In the article of Radu Albu Comănescu, *A Historical Approach on Regionalism. Evolutions from Geography and Spatialization to Regional Alliance Systems,* the author concludes that the regions are connected with the fields of "international relations" and "European integration". He defines regions thus: "Regions are, to a large degree, political or functional constructs, with institutional support but not a priori categories". (Comănescu, 2022: 236) To build regions means to rely on new governance institutions and to enhance the existing ones.

The regional policy requires a broadly thinking of our range of actors, state or non-state actors, a strategic thinking that derives from "geographic and geostrategic appreciations" (Comănescu, 2022: 236). To build a region means to create a new form of identity, but also institutions and social groups involved in he decision-making process.

Gabriela Carmen Pascariu, Alexandra Cehan, Corina Brânzilă in the article *International Tourism Regionalization. Major trends and Shock Disruption*, point out that the development of international tourism is connected with the process of globalization and regionalization. The authors consider Europe as having the most important tourism potential with a regional dimension as 80% of the total tourism here being inter-regional. Regionalism is a trend that prevails to worlwide tourism. Tourism is also connected with the general increase of the living standards and in leisure time, these factors determining a growth in tourism activities (p.262). Last but not least, consider the authors, tourism is a "driver of economic recovery" (Pascariu & Cehan & Brânzilă, 2022: 263).

Mihnea S. Stoica in the article *European Identity as a Cornerstone of Regionalism. Perceptions on the Future of Europe*, points out that, during the last years, Europe confronted with several crises: financial crises, refugee crises, Brexit, Covid-19 pandemic. (Stoica, 2022: 267) This leads to the idea that European project must be "revitalized" and the architecture of EU needs substantial change. As consequence of these crises, "Euroscepticism" grew and also "populism". Populism creates an antagonism between EU elites and usual EU citizens.

The author concludes that his paper "adds to the centrality of identity in studies of international relations. Europe identity is what gives meaning and legitimacy to the political project that European Union represents" (Stoica, 2022: 275). In the end, the author wanders which is the sense of existence of European identity and how can it help to the ambition plans of advance of EU project.

Merve Suna Ozel Ozcan in the article *A New Ideology in Russian Foreign Policy. Nationalist Eurasianism,* cocludes that “Putin’s great Russia goal and discourses changed the perception of the 1990s s a society that lacked ideology and lasted only in the past. In this respect, the nationalism that they are trying to create in Russia reveals a Russian people’s discourse that encompasses all segments, and Putin expressed it every so often”. (Ozcan, 2022:292). Nationalism continued to emerge under the controll of the state is the opinion of the author.

Tudor Salanțiu in the article “The Regionalism Quest for World Complexity” asserts that “The complexity of the international environment certainly influences the overview of regionalism from the geostrategic perspective and undoubtedly influences regional integration process”. (Salanțiu, 2022: 306), pointing out that there is a balanced view, in the future of regionalism, between historical perspective and the pragmatical perspective.

The present volume offers us a descriptive image of the German ethnic Group in Romania during the Second World War and its aftermath, and its inter-relations with other local communities from Transylvania and last but not least, the image of local regionalism, from the Romanian territory.

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NAVIGATING CROSS-BORDER REALITIES: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF 'THE LEGITIMACY OF NEW REGIONALISM IN THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS'

Claudia Ștefania SILVĂȘAN[*]

Book review of István-József Polgár, Mircea Brie (coord.), *The Legitimacy of New Regionalism in the European Integration Process*. Supplement of the Annals University of Oradea. Debrecen University Press, Editura Universității din Oradea, Debrecen/Oradea, 2023.

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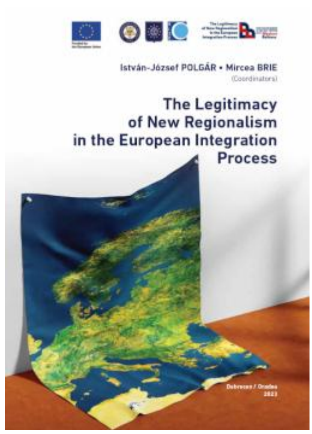

The volume *The Legitimacy of New Regionalism in the European Integration Process,* published in 2023 under the coordination of editors István-József Polgár and Mircea Brie, contains a variety of papers that are focused on the cross-border cooperation.

The volume begins with an Introductory Study by István-József Polgár. In this article, the author presents the evolution of cross-border cooperation between Romania and Hungary, from the 1918-1945 period until present. The analysis of cross-border cooperation history shows how many changes there were in terms of understanding the space of culture, race, religion, city or nation, especially since all these factors have a great impact on developing cooperation. As the author states, the Romanian-Hungarian border evolved since the fall of communism: its status has been changed from hard, close, exclusive border to soft, open, inclusive frontier. (Polgár, 2023: 12-18).

The first Chapter contains five articles and it's entitled *The Role of Civil Society in the Democratisation and European Integration Process of Central and Eastern Europe*. Jubjiana Vila and Iris Buçiqi focused their article on the new regionalism, regional cooperation and reconciliation by examining the regional civil organizations in the Western Balkans. Focusing on the New Regionalism, it is stated that it differs from the other variants of regionalism by the fact that it involves non-state actors, such as civil society organizations, meaning that it focuses also on cultural and social aspects, not only on trade and security matters. As it is presented in the article, civil society organizations have always been engaged in reconciliation and regional cooperation, as they can foster tolerance and shared trust and provide direct

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information, working as intermediaries between the state and the society. (Vila, Buçiqi, 2023: 24-25)

Kudzai Catherine Bingisai focused on civil society organizations as they deepen democratic practices at the local and international levels in order to reflect, support and promote democracy, acting as checks and balance on governance issues. The author defines in the paper "CSOs as development actors that can contribute to the strengthening of socio-economic and political sectors and promoting citizen participation". According to the article, CSOs can only serve as a supplement to the government by encouraging it to act more responsible, open and effective in the interests of good democratic governance. CSOs in Romania have a role in "promoting governance structure, policy discourse and service provision", serving as an intermediary variable between the people and the government. (Bingisai, 2023: 42-45)

István-József Polgár uses the term "civil society" in this specific context as "a diverse range of nonstate entities, which can influence formal and informal territorial cooperation related rules, practices and processes". As presented in the article, even though since the Cold War is emerged the rivalry between the East and West because of how the idea of regionalism also included elements of competitiveness and regional fragmentation, the countries of the Western Balkan region share a main common goal, to be part of the European Union. There is a general belief that joining the European Union will be challenging for both the Western countries and EU, especially since there is a lack of progress in EU membership and, as the author presents, the EU's credibility and influence area has been undermined. Polgár concludes by stating that the view of civil society groups, even though they are crucial to the growth of territorial cooperation, and their actions in the context of territorial cooperation were adversely affected by illiberal inclinations. The political polarization is making it harder for civil society to interact with official institutions, also, simultaneously, the civil society sector is expending and many of the newcomers are less willing to operate inside the constraints of the system and engage in constructive discourse (Polgár, 2023: 72-80).

The second Chapter is entitled *The Role of Regional, Transnational and Cross-Border Co-operation in the European Integration Process*, and it is constructed by eight articles. Aurora-Elena Gavriș explains in the article that the administrative structure of the country is established by the Romanian Constitution and legislation, and according to the national law, the public administration system's structure reflects how public administration is organized as an activity. The author considers that the most suitable for the current Romanian society in terms of managing public affairs and within the framework of Romania's EU membership is the administrative decentralization principle, which transfers some of the decision-making authority in administrative matters from the state administration to legal entities separated from the state. In this case, these entities act as representative bodies of local communities and are elected by "universal, equal, direct, secret and freely expressed vote by the population with the right to vote and having their domicile in the electoral constituencies corresponding to the special law on the subject" (Gavriș, 2023: 107-109).

Reina Zenelaj Shehi and Dragana Kurti explore the factors that led to the formation of different types of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans and to determine the degree to which regional cooperation has altered the character of regional politics. As the authors explained, regionalism has emerged as a force that both threatens and supports nations' effort to adapt to the demands of globalization and also to maintain their historical dominance in world politics. This means that states, especially new-independent states, willingly participate in regional agreements frequently with the express intent of solidifying their status as actors. The authors concluded by stating that while regionalism has been effective in introducing market-oriented programs and increase connectivity in the economic area, it has not yet resulted in the creation of a peaceful, stable and cohesive regional community with a shared identity. (Zenelaj Shehi, Kurti, 2023: 156-163).

The third Chapter is entitled *Security Versus Openness of borders. Social, Confessional and Cultural Differences Between Communities* and it is constructed by eight articles.

Svetlana Cebotari and Victoria Bevziuc focused their article on repercussions from the Russian-Ukrainian war, exploring all the areas of life that were significantly impacted in Ukraine and Republic of Moldova: economy, energy sphere, social, medicine, transport, infrastructure, education, ecology. The writers provide information on the negative effects of the conflict on the two nations, and it is clear that Ukraine suffers the most from both the perspective of the areas mentioned before and that of its people. The authors conclude by pointing out that the side effects of war will be felt for many years to come, but minimizing them will largely depend on governments working together to increase their capabilities and efforts, especially the Western powers whose elimination of damage is conditioned by the invasion of Ukraine by Russia (Cebotari, Bevziuc, 2023: 208-219).

Dragoș Dărăbăneanu and Ionuț-Mihai Oprea’s article is based on a 2020 diagnostic study that explores migration issues in Bihor-Hajdu-Bihar cross-border region and it is focused on problems related to border security, illegal migration, human trafficking, cross-border transit, and labor force movement, with the aim of understanding the impact of borders on the construction of European identity and assessing whether they have a positive, negative, or neutral effect. As stated, the European Union has difficulties fighting cultural homogeneity and harmonizing values, especially because of how migration affects national groups. The study's authors discuss public interventions in the field of migration and emphasize the need to avoid formalizing policies that impede the development of cultural networks. The analysis of migration is presented as a methodological model, which is important given its role in Romania's failure to join Schengen (Dărăbăneanu, Oprea, 2023: 227-229).

Mircea Ioan Matei’s article critically assesses the effectiveness of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine analyzing both the good and the bad, with an emphasis on soft power strategies and a mixed technique that uses focus groups and surveys to assess its applicability. On the positive sides, the author stated that the OSCE and SMM were crucial in lowering tensions, facilitating infrastructure repairs, supplying independent information, holding violators accountable, and, even though their influence on human rights was limited in separatist areas, serving as a deterrent to violence. On the negative side, they faced limitations such as lack of enforcement power, access constraints and other obstacles were funding dependency on OSCE member nations, criticism for not stopping the violence, and Russia's veto that resulted in the mission ceasing (Matei, 2023: 238-239).

The focus of the article written by Florentina Chirodea and Ioana Lucia Bordeianu is on the EU's active response to security challenges, particularly at its external borders following the war in Ukraine. It underscores the importance of information exchange to combat illegal immigration, terrorism, and cross-border criminality. The analysis conducted by the authors affirms that the establishment of Frontex, now known as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, was a strategic decision aligned with the EU's integration process and the principle of free movement. Despite increased budget and capabilities post the 2015 migration crisis, challenges persist due to Member States' reluctance to relinquish national sovereignty. The implementation of the Entry-Exit System and ETIAS, coupled with close cooperation between Frontex and Member States, is deemed essential for securing borders and managing growing traveler numbers, supporting the hypothesis regarding the future role of biometrics in border management (Chirodea, Bordeianu, 2023: 253-254).

Cristina Ejova presented in her article how the rise of terrorism in Europe in the early 1970s led to the establishment of specialized anti-terrorism legislation, prompting collaborative efforts among European states for national and international legal frameworks. Today, the European Union and the Council of Europe actively contribute to effective counterterrorism policies, upholding values like human rights and the rule of law. Additionally, the OSCE plays a crucial role in consolidating joint counterterrorism initiatives in the region (Ejova, 2023: 268-269).

Cebotari and Buzev's article assesses the challenges faced by the Republic of Moldova in managing the refugee crisis stemming from the Russo-Ukrainian war. It focuses on issues such as providing humanitarian aid and safeguarding the rights of refugees within Moldova. The article discusses security risks, potential terrorism, and broad implications of the Ukrainian refugee crisis. It emphasizes the need for a collective response from EU Member States, aspirants, and Moldova, as millions, mainly women and children, are displaced, posing challenges for regional stability. The author concluded by stating that the refugee crisis from the Russian aggression in Ukraine underscores the Republic of Moldova's efficient response, emphasizing the need for a new national security strategy aligned with European principles (Buzev, 2023: 272-279).

Mircea Brie concludes the chapter by exploring the intricate relationship between linguistic individualization and political motivations in Eastern and Balkan Europe, focusing on the Republic of Moldova and Northern Macedonia. The study traces the historical evolution of national consciousness in the European space and underscores recent challenges to a unified European identity. Moldova's identity controversies, notably the Moldovanism debate, concluded in 2013 with the recognition of Romanian as the official language. The analysis delves into geopolitical influences, script selection, and identity boundaries, drawing parallels to identity challenges in North Macedonia. Survey data reveals a reluctance to compromise on historical narratives, language, and minority status. The author emphasizes the central role of language in shaping identity, shaped by geopolitical dynamics (Brie, 2023: 283-293)

The last chapter entitled *Europenization & Eurosceptism. New Policy Trends in South Eastern Europe*, containing eight articles, it is initiated by Radu Vladimir Rauta, exploring the evolution of whistleblowing in the European Union's rule of law context. Utilizing a rational choice institutionalist perspective, Rauta examines Serbia, Albania, and Kosovo as case studies, emphasizing EU conditionality. Whistleblowing, seen as an act of justice or dissent, involves revealing significant wrongdoings in the public interest. The study underscores factors influencing effectiveness and the EU's role in promoting whistleblowing through civil society engagement in the Western Balkans, particularly evident in Serbia and Kosovo. The research portrays diverse EU support levels for whistleblower protection laws in Serbia, Albania and Kosovo, attributing Serbia's progress to external influence, highlighting the challenges of Albania's early adoption, and emphasizing the need for robust top-down initiatives in Kosovo's institutional design (Rauta, 2023: 299-310).

Avdi Smajljaj's paper examines the transformed geopolitical landscape in the Western Balkans post-Ukraine war, spotlighting the competitive roles of the US, EU, and Russia. The analysis underscores historical rivalries, Russia's strategies in maintaining a balancing act, and the EU and US responses to increased competition from Russia and China. The study emphasizes the need for a reassessment of the enlargement process, focusing on resolving regional challenges and promoting economic and political reforms to counter non-democratic influences (Smajljaj, 2023: 319-324).

The article written by Cătălin-Gabriel Done aims to assess how economic integration in Scandinavia navigates the balance between open trade and protecting domestic industries, revealing the region's economic significance and challenges. Protectionist measures coexist with regional collaboration, reflecting the nuanced approach to balancing national interests and global trade (Done, 2023: 336-342).

Edina Lilla Mészáros's article examines Serbia's evolving relationship with the European Union (EU) through a two-decade analysis of public opinion. The study reveals persistent ambivalence among Serbian citizens regarding EU membership, citing the Kosovo issue, dissatisfaction with EU conditionality, and an oscillation between the EU and Russia as influential factors. The paper concludes that Serbian citizens prioritize tangible gains over normative values in their EU relationship and highlights the significant role of public opinion in shaping future actions (Mészáros, 2023: 352-362).

The article by Balázs Horváthy, László Knapp, and Nikolett Trenyisán-Papp explores new regionalism in the context of the EU's regional policy, specifically focusing on challenges faced by border regions. It delves into legal and administrative barriers hindering their development and examines the European Commission's proposal for a mechanism to address these issues. The study provides historical context, traces the evolution of EU border policies, and discusses initiatives and instruments contributing to resolving challenges in border regions (Horváthy, Knapp, Trenyisán-Papp, 2023: 367-381).

The main goal of Dan Apăteanu's paper is to provide a comprehensive overview of the European Union (EU), covering its structure, historical origins, key institutions, and unique characteristics. The paper delves into the EU's involvement in various policy areas, its expansion, and the evolution of decision-making processes, with a focus on the growing influence of the European Parliament. Additionally, it explores key treaties, appointment procedures, the impact of the financial crisis, and theoretical frameworks, contributing to a deeper understanding of the EU's development and potential challenges to its integration (Apăteanu, 2023: 291-292).

The article by Zsolt Radics and Enikő Harman examines the challenges faced by Central European countries, with a focus on Hungary, following the 2004 EU enlargement. Emphasis is placed on the development gap and the role of regional policy in addressing it. The study analyzes Hungary's response to challenges over four phases (2004-06, 2007-2013, 2014-2020, and 2021-27), exploring shifts in objectives, programs, and institutional frameworks within EU regional policy. The findings reflect Hungary's adaptation to changing EU frameworks, revealing a dynamic interplay between centralization and decentralization (Radics, Harman, 2023: 395-399).

The chapter concludes with Zsolt-Botond Bottyan's article, which explores liberal democracy as a response to the historical evolution of the North Atlantic center. It asserts that liberal democracy requires specific conditions—economic prosperity, cultural legitimation, and social cohesion—to function effectively. The article argues that social cohesion relies on an integrative culture fostering a shared identity, and multicultural societies, including the EU, may face challenges in maintaining a functioning democratic system. The Brexit referendum, emphasizing national identity, highlights political and cultural divergences within the EU. The article calls for a re-examination of preconceived ideas about Europe's future, advocating for a responsible strategy that preserves national cultures and differences to ensure the survival of democracy and European cooperation (Bottyan. 2023: 404-415).

In summary, the Volume offers a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities in the European integration process. The inclusion of varied perspectives adds richness to the narrative, contributing to a holistic exploration of regionalism's complexities.

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