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I. EUROPEAN STUDIES AND PUBLIC POLICIES

Melania - Gabriela CIOT, Cristina-Matilda VĂNOAGĂ, Luciana-Mirela BUTIȘCĂ ⇔ *Green Deal in Focus: Regional Perspectives and Their Influence on Electoral Income*

Andrea AMZA-ANDRÁS ⇔ *An Attempt to Systematically Revisit the Process of Conceptualization and Political Maturation of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI)*

Cristina-Matilda VĂNOAGĂ ⇔ *Romanian Legislation Based on The EU Green Deal Strategy*

Ioana Mădălina MIRON ⇔ *Russia's vision of the european green deal: insidious protectionism or opportunities for collaboration?*

GREEN DEAL IN FOCUS: REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON ELECTORAL INCOME

*Melania- Gabriela CIOT**
*Cristina-Matilda VĂNOAGĂ***
*Luciana-Mirela BUTIȘCĂ****

Abstract. *European Green Deal policies and strategies has sparked vivid debate in the European Parliament in the last EP mandate, especially after a row of world-wide and regional crises, such as COVID-19, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and high energy prices. There was registered disagreement in terms of fulfilling the EGD desiderates at a fast pace. If the Greens have lately received less support, the far-right, very vocal when it comes to Green Deal strategies and legislation, seems to be more appalling to voters throughout Europe. The 2024 EP elections were to a discourse level a mirror for all the above-mentioned aspects. Our article analyzes if EGD themes are present in the electoral programs of the main parties and independent EP parties/ independent candidates in Romania and if they are also present in the electoral discourses reflected on the main media platforms during the campaign.*

Keywords: *European Green Deal, EP elections, Romania, electoral discourse.*

Introduction The European Green Deal is a package of policy initiatives, which aims to set the EU on the path to a green transition, with the goal of reaching climate neutrality by 2050. It supports the transformation of the EU into a fair and prosperous society with a modern and competitive economy. It underlines the need for a holistic and cross-sectoral approach in which all relevant policy areas contribute to the ultimate climate-related goal. (European Commission, 2019) The package includes initiatives covering the climate, the environment, energy, transport, industry, agriculture and sustainable finance – all of which are strongly interlinked. To be able to reach these targets on time, the European Commission created a dedicated action plan known as the EU Green Deal which covers a wide range of policy areas. (European Commission, 2019)

The flagship European Green Deal project created a legal commitment for the EU and its member states to become the first net-zero continent by 2050. The Green Deal orchestrated a series of proposals to revise and create new laws aimed at efforts to reduce emissions in all sectors. Action plans on chemicals, the circular economy, transport and agriculture set out a host of ambitious initiatives to ensure that all sectors of society play their part in protecting the planet. (Ciot, 2021:1-2) For example, the 2021 Fit for 55

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Package set a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 through legislation, including revised renewable energy directives and the emissions trading system and a new mechanism adjustment of the carbon border. Most of these files have now been agreed and are being transposed at national level and represent a success for Von der Leyen and the Commission (Hilff, 2024).

While mainstream parties still make up more than 60 per cent of the 720-member body, the far right was the election's biggest winner, claiming around a quarter of seats. Far-right parties won the plurality of vote in several member states, including France, Italy, and Austria. This electoral success will give the far-right a chance to influence EU decisions more than ever before. (Hurrellmann, 2024)

Climate change mitigation may be one of the policy areas where the far right's growing clout is most painfully felt. The EGD — a package of measures to turn Europe into “the first climate-neutral continent” by 2050 — will stay in place, but greater far-right influence is likely to result in less ambitious climate policies. (Hurrellmann, 2024)

Following a succession of crises (COVID-19, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and high energy prices), disagreement over the speed of Europe's climate transition is fueling the rise of far-right parties in Europe, at the expense of the Greens, who did well in the 2019 election but are now receiving less support from voters. This has led to the reduction or, in some cases, cancellation of legislative initiatives, especially files impacting the agricultural and chemical sectors. The agricultural sector has been one of the most vocal when it comes to attacking the Green Deal, with farmers' protests causing chaos in Brussels and other European capitals. Meanwhile, falling public funding for the climate transition risks undermining the development of new clean technologies in Europe, which could also threaten the EU's global standing as competitors such as the US and China step up development of solar, battery and hydrogen power, backed by serious funding. (Hurrellmann, 2024)

The next five years will be crucial for determining whether Europe achieves its 2030 climate change targets. Three more or less simultaneous processes will be defining for the future of the EGD in the next 5 years - the negotiations in the European Parliament regarding the priorities of the coalition, the "strategic agenda" that will be adopted in the European Council at the end of the month, and the program of work of the European Commission - which is defined by the end of the year. The new coalition in Parliament is likely to focus on making the transition to an economically viable and socially just net zero economy, reducing energy dependency, promoting green jobs and ensuring competitiveness. (Metalucci, 2024)

In Romania, local elections were held on the same day as the EU vote, which has meant that issues related to Brussels have been left on the back burner, with voters focusing on topics such as the housing crisis and corruption at the municipal level, reports the mentioned publication. The country's two largest parties - the center-left Social Democratic Party and the center-right National Liberal Party - governed together in a grand coalition and ran together in elections at the alliance level. The idea was to ensure stability in Romania's turbulent political climate, with the war in Russia raging near its border, and to fend off the rising far-right party, Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR).

Our study aims at depicting the presence of EGD themes/components in the electoral programs of the Romanian parties or independent candidates and, at the same time, the presence in the electoral discourse, whether on a positive or critical approach.

Research design

The study investigates how Romanian perspectives on the Green Deal influence electoral outcomes of the European election of 2024, uncovering the relationship between national priorities and European approaches. The narratives regarding the negative effects of European Green Deal and their impact on the welfare of the European citizens were differently used in electoral purposes.

We have two main research questions:

- Are EGD components/themes present in the 2024 EP electoral programs of the Romanian parties/candidates?
- Are EGD components/themes present in the 2024 EP electoral discourse of the Romanian candidates?

The methodological approach is qualitative, using the study case and discourse analysis. The findings emphasize the importance of acknowledging differences when promoting the Green Deal. This detailed understanding of Romanian perspectives not only enriches the debates on sustainable development, but also provides valuable insights for political campaigns and policy development in the realm of climate action.

The investigation period is May 10, 2024 (the beginning of the electoral campaign) - June 9, 2024 (the elections for the European Parliament in Romania). During this period we daily accessed the main online journals: Adevărul, Calea Europeană, DC News, Europa Liberă, Gândul, Hotnews, Realitatea, as well as the parties/candidates official webpages.

Findings and Discussions

The PSD-PNL Alliance for the 2024 European Parliament elections had 12 major objectives for the 2024 European Parliament elections (PSD-PNL 2024). A first one relates to attracting funds in Romania. The campaign highlighted that PSD and PNL European representatives negotiated 30 billion EUR allocated to Romania through the PNRR and 1.4 billion EUR through the REPowerEU program, aiming to increase energy independence. A successful negotiation for 2 billion EUR with the European commission will financially support the transition to a green economy, without carbon emissions. In relation to this objective, comes the goal of Romania's energy independence by using European funds and increasing the production of renewable energy, because Romania has all the prerequisites to become a major producer and an important regional energy node. In addition, the coalition promises the most effective measures to protect the environment and the promotion of European directive that increases the penalties for crimes against the environment. (PSD-PNL Alliance, 2024)

Another important aspect in the electoral platform was a profitable agriculture, by increasing the subsidy per hectare. This decision improved the economic performance of every Romanian farmer. In addition, the electoral program underlined the Romanian farmers' protection by rejecting unjustified targets for reducing pesticides and cultivated land. (PSD-PNL Alliance, 2024)

A component of the PSD-PNL program considered the Romanian economy through the promotion of Romanian products in Europe and the protection of the Romanian economy by strengthening the national companies to fight on an equal footing with any external competitor or to face any international challenge. Innovation should be a key-factor for the companies' success, therefore the intention of the PSD-PNL alliance is to support Romanian research and make the necessary steps to double the allocations

from European funds and from the state budget for research and innovation. (PSD-PNL Alliance, 2024)

Other objectives of the platform relate to the important issue of Romania in Schengen – considered a symbol of Romanians equal rights in Europe, the digitization of public services with the help of European funds, the social protection of disadvantaged categories, the support of young people toward a European personal and professional development, especially through ERASMUS, the support of diaspora citizens willing to return in Romania, and the support of the Republic of Moldova by advocating for the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the EU, as soon as it meets the conditions required by the European Commission. (PSD-PNL Alliance, 2024)

We observe that the PSD-PNL Alliance has a Green Deal component in the electoral program. Let us further observe the presence of this component in the electoral discourses of the candidates for the European Parliament.

In the case of the PSD-PNL Alliance, the topics regarding the EGD were mainly supported by Mihai Tudose (PSD), who opened the list of the coalition for the European Parliament. A HotNews editorial on May 20, 2024 cites Tudose's social media posts showing possible concerns for the future of Green Deal together with the hope for new ways and strategies in its implementation:

“The war in Ukraine risks turning the Green Deal into a sci-fi fad, light years from reality. But as a war means not only losses but also opportunities, the green transition quickly gained a new momentum: REPowerEU”. (HotNews, 2024)

Tudose's intention of supporting Green Deal is also presented by Free Europe Romania, which cite him as follows: “supporting Romanian industry in the decarbonization process and industries that produce clean energy” (Manolache, 2024) and “it is necessary to activate and finance more than one billion euros from the Innovation Fund for support regarding decarbonization at the level of Romanian companies” (Manolache, 2024). Also belonging to the PSD-PNL Alliance, Vasile Dîncu, (PSD) discusses “the European funds to support the smart economy and start-ups working with high technologies” (Manolache, 2024) and promises that “Transylvania will become Romania's locomotive in Europe, and Cluj a European smart city” (Manolache, 2024). In the same political alliance, Siegfried Mureșan (PNL), without directly mentioning Green Deal, shows support towards related objectives: “We are ready, with our candidates, to offer solutions on the topics that will be serious, difficult in the coming years: citizen safety, security, economy, increasing living standards, industry development, jobs, European funds that are safe for Romania until 2027”. (Bădulescu, 2024)

Other candidates for the European Parliament in 2024 come from another political alliance, The United Right Alliance, made of USR, PMP and the Force of the Right, with a set of 12 priorities in their political vision of Romania as a Member State: Romania as part of Schengen; economic stability through the transition to the EUR currency, prosperity through industrialization, trade and innovation; the continuation of state reform and anti-corruption fight; the protection of the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights, as opposed actions to the PSD-PNL Alliance, health and education to European standards; the attraction of EU funds for the country's modernisation; financing the agriculture and protecting the rural areas inhabitants and activities; the support of the Republic of Moldova in the EU accession; Romania contribution to EU reform, the defence of the Romanian workers throughout EU, a clean environment and European armies better integrated in NATO. The clean environment priority states:

The need to phase out highly polluting energy sources and transition to less or no polluting energy sources is an unquestionable necessity. This transition can no longer be postponed and should be carried out at a balanced pace, considering the specifics of each state. Investments in the production of renewable energy are the key for Romanian citizens to benefit from energy at affordable prices. At the same time, it is necessary to make the energy transition considering the national energy resources, including production capacities in the band - nuclear and natural gas, green transition fuel. (Dreapta unită, 2024)

Number 11 on the list of 12 priorities, the clean environment or any other EGD topic appeared during our research period only in one statement made by Cristina Prună, as a signal for the necessity of change in the field of energy production and stocking:

“We see the effects of the acute lack of investment in the energy system. Renewable projects advance at snail's pace, and prosumers have become the enemies of the people at ANRE. The energy system needs storage, but it is almost completely lacking. There are legislative solutions, some of which I submitted and promoted myself, but Mr. Burduja has other concerns. This while the market is blocked, waiting for the European money that comes hardly to none, because of the bureaucracy of the governors. And so energy production stagnates and, as such, prices skyrocket”. (USR Editorial, 2024)

The Alliance for the Romanians' Union (AUR) comes with a large proposal for Romania's presence in EP, structured on 11 chapters: Romania in relation to EU, reduced poverty and social assistance, education and youth's future, access to EU funds, health services for all citizens, agriculture and rural development, the development of Romanian companies, culture and identity, defense and external relations, tourism, and environment and energy. In terms of Green Deal themes, the platform mentions in the last chapter the importance of environment, sustainability and protection of biodiversity for Europe to a legislative level in 2019-2024. AUR expresses its support for a green circular economy, at the same time with the opposition to the tendency coming from Brussels that tries to destroy the country's energetic autonomy and to the “so-called ‘environmental’ measure that has aim impoverishment of the middle class, limitation of the right to free movement of citizens and the imposition of new aberrant rules”. (AUR, 2024) The energetic independence appears to be supported by the exploitation of all local resources, without any expressed preference for green energy, some even in contradiction with the EGD desiderates:

“Romania is a country rich in natural resources, which are valuable not only for their own economy, but also for the European Union. These unbeatable resources such as the Black Sea, the Danube, the forests, the waters geothermal, coal, oil fields and many more others must be exploited and processed by companies Romanians to ensure the strategic independence of this country”. (AUR, 2024)

AUR also proposes in the same chapter a responsible exploitation of resources. The chapter dedicated to the Romanian companies also includes the promise of supporting the funding with priority of solar and photovoltaic panels. (AUR, 2024)

To a discourse level, any reference related to EGD is in fact virulently critical to the green policies and considered in total contradiction with the national interests. Cristian Terheș, AUR's candidate attacks Green Deal in his discourse, considering it a utopia and questioning alternative renewable energy sources:

“My position on the issue of gas emissions is that you cannot destroy society and the way we live today, based on such a utopia [green energy]. If you look, they want to stop wood stoves. You can no longer heat yourself with gas because we pay more. We

asked what the solution was, and they told us 'you heat yourself with electricity'. Very good, but what do you produce electricity on? 'On renewable energy'. Ok, how is that energy produced? 'Well, through wind and solar'. Very good, but what do you do if it's not windy or sunny outside? Now they want to put nuclear energy in a register where it is not green". (Vasile, 2024).

The same candidate to EP declares that green energy is a disguise for other practices and, in the process of applying it, Romania is forced by a coalition of the EU Commission President and USA to renounce to its natural resources:

"And not just for that! But also because mining in Romania is disappearing, at the behest of the EU and globalist bureaucrats! The EU wants so-called green energy, which is not green at all, to replace traditional sources such as coal. Thus, Romania is obliged by Ursula von der Leyen, and the "coalition" of the united states, to close its thermal power plants and mines". (Realitatea, 2024)

Another AUR candidate, Claudiu Târziu, also criticizes the steps Romania has taken toward meeting the EU objectives, including EGD in this regard, considering such steps are in the disinterest of Romanian economy and social measures. Therefore, his discourse is not only against EGD, but mostly against EU desiderates:

"Romania is the first to comply with all the measures coming from Brussels against the national interest: Green Deal, PNRR, Pact on migration... The results are measured in disastrous figures for the economy and in degrees on the social earthquake scale". (AUR Editorial, 2024)

To the same pole against the EGD comes the discourse of the S.O.S. Party candidate Diana Șoșoacă. The party's program regarding the elections for the European Parliament includes four chapters: measures to directly improve the lives of all Romanians, the defense of rights and freedoms, the achievement of peace and prosperity, as well as the defense of tradition and faith. (Partidul S.O.S., 2024) The party's objectives are in contradiction to the EGD objectives, as follows: "The S.O.S. Party Romania defends the right of Romanians to use firewood and gas plants, and we will reopen the coal mines". (Partidul S.O.S., 2024)

The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) had the following objectives for the EP elections program: the support of the EU rules for the protection of minorities; EU funds accession; EU contribution to new jobs for youth in Romania, not abroad; the support of the principle of the EU minimum wage; the decision-making process in the management of migration within the competence of the Member States; EU support for the Romanian agriculture and not for the export of Ukrainian cereals; more support for small and medium enterprises; less bureaucracy; Bruxelles revision of the protected species directive as soon as possible and the removal of the strict protection status of the brown bear; stronger actions against extremism; Europe relevant in the world; a fair not forced ecological transition (point 10 in the program):

"The EU should adapt its ambitious climate goals to the economic potential and social tolerance of the member states. The EU leadership wants to impose regulations that are not only inconsistent with reality, but also impose huge burdens on citizens, on farmers, increase their costs, and reduce their competitiveness. Eliminating internal combustion engines and forced electrification of mobility are major mistakes. We, on the other hand, are in favor of technological diversification: synthetic fuels, hybrid technologies, with strong support for research and development. The introduction of a European carbon tax will destroy the competitiveness of the industry and drive away investors. Instead, we support high-tech factories, sustainable industrial production and

exports that create good-paying jobs. Abandoning nuclear power and natural gas threatens energy security, instead we support new sustainable technologies where nuclear power and natural gas can continue to play a long-term role". (UDMR, 2024)

Although the green component appears in the electoral program, we did not find any UDMR statement EGD related during the research period.

An independent candidate, Nicolae Ștefănuță, currently a Vice-President of the European Parliament, presented to the electorate a program with the following objectives: youth housing, free public transportation, a percentage of 30 of green spaces in each district, free mental therapy (up to 30 therapy sessions), 100% green energy, 6% of Romanian GDP allocated to education, a guaranteed right to abortion for women, stopping discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals and couples, forbidding dangerous pesticides, and forbidding cutting trees in protected areas. (Ștefănuță, 2024)

To a discourse level during the campaign, Nicolae Ștefănuță acknowledges two directions in his political activities, the green component and progressivism. He states that his priorities in the European parliament are "The environment, obviously. Continuation of the Green Deal, which is both an environmental and an economic policy". (Dinu, 2024) He also identified the necessity and extension of EGD components in areas beyond environment:

"I don't like to be the only green MEP in Romania, I would like to be more, but someone has to start somewhere, seriously, assumedly. (...) The environment and the quality of life are concerns for Romanians. People don't want to get sick from bad air, they don't want their children to get sick, to develop all kinds of ailments. They don't like eating food with pesticides and using bad public transport. Romanians care about all these elements and that is why these issues are part of my program, which is a purely green program after all". (Dinu, 2024)

A party who has no representatives in the European Parliament after the elections in REPER. Still, we identify EGD as significant for the party, by presenting on the official site the guide *Money for the Romanian Energy: A Comprehensive Guide to Funding in the Energy Field for the Authorities, the Private Environment and Consumers*, which was achieved at the initiative of REPER member and EP Ramona Strugariu. Still, to a discourse level during the research period, we did not find anything EGD-related on the platform we observed. (Renew Europe, 2023)

Conclusions

The new European Parliament and Commission will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of climate policy. The newly elected Parliament shifted further to the right, but this does not mean that climate policy will be removed from the agenda. Right-wing and populist parties gained strong votes, particularly across the bigger member states Germany, France, and Austria, while Green parties have seen the biggest losses. However, even with a smaller Greens mandate, Europe's climate agenda will likely stay on course as climate impacts remain high on voters' minds. The Conservatives are among the biggest winners of the elections and are supporters of the EU Green Deal, paving the way for some continuity for the next five years.

These policies are unlikely to be withdrawn. But the new post-election setup raises questions about the future of the EU's wider environmental agenda. Even as the continent faces record heat, drought and floods, and polls show most Europeans favor doing more to tackle climate change, analysts warn that several parties are using climate policy as a political scapegoat, blaming it for higher energy prices and rising living costs.

The upcoming negotiations on the next European Commission president and her/his policy agenda will be decisive for Europe's capacity to address the severe impacts and risks of climate change for Europe and EU's global climate leadership.

The big takeaway from the European Parliament elections: the center has held, but a trend of far-right gains continues. This means that Europe's fight against climate change can continue, but it faces a more complicated political landscape at a time when big decisions need to be made. A fair and environmentally friendly industrial/competitive agreement still seems within reach in the negotiations for the future European Commission. However, EU leaders will face a major test in securing sufficient funding to make it a reality.

In general, the key thesis about the European parliamentary elections, based on the analyses, is that these elections are not necessarily about European issues, as we might imagine. Because everyone says there are European Parliament elections, we are thinking about what will happen to the Green Deal, what will happen to the European defense industry, how Europe will position itself vis-à-vis the war in Ukraine, how we will try to increase competitiveness. Most of the time, in practice, these European elections are what are called second-order elections. Voters use this opportunity to send a signal as to whether they are satisfied with the election in office. In Romania, people do not vote on what Ursula von der Leyen has done in the last five years or on the future of the European project, but if, for example, they are satisfied with what PSD and PNL have done in the last years in government.

The European elections in Romania were overshadowed by the overlap with local elections. 52% of Romanians voted in the European Parliament elections. The percentage has increased with each election round since 2016, when 39% voted. From our country, 19 MEPs from the PSD-PNL Coalition (48.7%), six from AUR (15%), three from the United Right (8.6%), two from SOS (5%), two from UDMR (6.5%) and the independent candidate Nicu Ștefănuță (3.1%). (BEC, 2024)

The juxtaposition of the local elections and EP elections cast shadows on the EP dedicated discourse, most of the time the EP candidates endorsing the local candidates by mentioning funds accession and local development. Still, because Romanians are much more interested in local elections, there was also an increased presence in the European Parliament elections. In conclusion, the merger has also reduced the little interest in the European Parliament elections, but at the same time it makes us have a higher turnout including in the European Parliament elections.

As answers to our research questions, we conclude that all the candidates present programs which include EGD components, both in terms of support and rejection of the EU Green Deal objectives. At the same time, even if present in the programs, the EGD related statements are rarely present in the electoral statements.

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AN ATTEMPT TO SYSTEMATICALLY REVISIT THE PROCESS OF CONCEPTUALIZATION AND POLITICAL MATURATION OF THE THREE SEAS INITIATIVE (3SI)

*Andrea AMZA-ANDRÁS**

Abstract. *The main purpose of the study is to provide an informed and contextually relevant view of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), which adds to the geographical and thematic cooperation formats already in place in the European Union (EU). This work tests the Initiative's relevance and examines how it can contribute to the consolidation of the Eastern flank of the European Union, thereby strengthening the resilience in this part of Europe, which has been seriously shaken by the impact and consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine since 2022. The paper reflects on the role of the 3SI in the aftermath of the war on Ukraine and draws preliminary conclusions about the growth potential of the Initiative in the near future, both in political and geopolitical (integration of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) and in economic terms. The 3SI should not miss the momentum once the reconstruction of Ukraine effectively begins, and it should contribute substantially to the process of political and economic integration of the Eastern neighbourhood.*

Keywords: *Three Seas Initiative (3SI), European Union, Intermarium, geopolitics, Russian aggression in the Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, cohesion, interconnectivity.*

1. Introduction – Topic Selection, Theoretical-Methodological Approach, Data Sources

The purpose of this paper is to provide an informed description of the emergence and establishment of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI/The Initiative), to offer a systematic approach for tracing the milestones of the Initiative's conceptualisation and maturation process and, finally, to reflect on its future potential against the backdrop of a fundamentally changed geopolitical environment resulting from the unprovoked Russian aggression against Ukraine.

As an introduction to the history and origins of the Initiative, the paper revisits the Intermarium project. It then outlines the most important steps in shaping the idea for the Three Seas Initiative and elaborates on the specific relevance of each chronologically introduced milestone in the conceptualisation process of the 3SI. It also discusses the main outcomes of each stage of its development thus far and the roles of key actors whose contributions were instrumental in defining the project's goals.

The Three Seas Initiative supplements to the geographical and thematic cooperation formats already in place in the European Union (EU). Described as form of

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“minilateralism” or a minilateral format, citing Lang and Von Ondarza (2018: p. 1), the Three Seas Initiative is examined in this work for its relevance and its potential contribution to the consolidation of the Eastern flank of the EU, thereby strengthening the resilience in this part of the continent, which has been severely shaken by the impact and consequences of the war that Russia initiated on Ukraine since 2022. In addressing the research question posed above, additional sub-questions are considered: Why a “minilateralism” involving a group of Member States from this part of Europe? What are the benefits for the members, for the partner states of the Initiative (starting with the U.S. as one of the most prominent supporting partners of the format), and for the broader European integration project? What are the prospects for the 3SI in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine? These questions are applied while analyzing the various stages of the 3SI’s development process.

Due to the formal limitations of this paper, only materials and documents of particular relevance to interpreting the various stages of the Three Seas Initiative's development have been selected from publicly available sources. These documents include official statements, declarations, and decisions adopted at the highest political level during the 9 Summits of the I3S held so far (2016 – Dubrovnik, 2017 – Warsaw, 2018 – Bucharest, 2019 – Ljubljana, 2020 – Tallinn¹, 2021 – Sofia, 2022 – Riga, 2023 – Bucharest, 2024 – Vilnius). In addition to these sources, accompanying documents such as the annexes to Summit declarations and the List of the priority interconnection projects adopted in 2018 (Three Seas Initiative Summit Slovenia, 5-6 June 2019, Priority Interconnection Projects. 2019 Status Report) have also been considered in the analysis. The collection of official data is supplemented by press releases and interviews with relevant stakeholders, offering valuable insights into the attitudes and priorities of the respective national representatives toward the 3SI.

Clearly, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has created a new geopolitical reality, which has undoubtedly influenced the Initiative. This paper argues that the war in Ukraine has marked a new phase in the 3SI’s affirmation process, providing a platform of high visibility for showcasing its strong geopolitical character and the relevance of a broad range of issues emphasized by 3SI projects, such as energy security and diversification of sources, resource security, the need for a more interconnected and digitalized regional network in terms of transport and energy infrastructures, resilience, and countering cyber threats. The Russian aggression in Ukraine could be seen as a validation of the concerns voiced by some Member States when advocating for a geopolitical format, thereby creating an opportunity for resilience-building decisions and measures. These developments have resulted in the granting of special status to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova within the 3SI. In light of both the constraints on action and the opportunities that have arisen, this paper offers some preliminary conclusions regarding the project’s relevance and potential impact in the era of a "geopolitical Union." (Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission: “The EU has matured into a geopolitical union,” State of the Union speech, 2023)

¹ Virtual Summit due to the Covid 19 - context

2. The Relationship between Intermarium and the Three Seas Initiative

During the document analysis, attention was paid to the origins of the Initiative and the similarities between Intermarium and the Three Seas Initiative. A considerable amount of academic research on the origins and aims of Intermarium suggests that the guiding principle behind the Intermarium project is essentially one of the key regional narratives that have been periodically relaunched in various forms over time, as argued by several scholars, such as Bartoszewicz (2021), Crețu and Ardeleanu (2018), Friedman (2017), and Tomaszewska and Starzyk (2017). In fact, Bartoszewicz (2021) argues, in an analysis conducted through the "optics of critical geopolitics," that Intermarium is an attempt to break away from everything preventing the region "between Berlin and Moscow" from being a subject, rather than an object, of political affairs. (Bartoszewicz, 2021: p.1)² Laruelle and Rivera (2019), in their work *Imagined Geographies of Central and Eastern Europe: The Concept of Intermarium*, emphasize that the idea of a major regional project between Germany and Russia is a recurring concept, with numerous manifestations in recent history. Their introductory remarks set the historical context as follows: "Like the proverbial cat, some concepts have several lives. Or, like the mythological phoenix, they can be reborn from the ashes. This is certainly the case with Intermarium, a geopolitical concept that envisaged an alliance of countries stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea, serving as a third power bloc between Germany and Russia. Intermarium belongs to a long genealogy of geopolitical concepts seeking and promoting Central and Eastern European unity: sandwiched between a *Mitteleuropa* under German leadership in the nineteenth century and a *Near Abroad* under Moscow's supervision after 1991, the 'middle of Europe' or the 'land between the seas' has been searching for historical models in everything from the Jagiellonian dynasty and the Polish-Lithuanian *Rzeczpospolita* to the Austro-Hungarian Empire". (Laruelle and Rivera, 2019: p. 3) Mainstream literature on Intermarium suggests that, in the given historical context, the Polish Intermarium was intended both as a counterweight to the Russian threat and as a potential tool for Poland's regional ambitions. The idea of a regional security alliance in Central and Eastern Europe is, therefore, not new; it was promoted by Polish President Józef Piłsudski in the 1920s. His vision was to establish a confederation of states that would guarantee the independence of former communist states in Eastern Europe, located between the superpowers of Germany and Russia, while ensuring greater stability in the region (Kostiantyn and Umland, 2017).

The Three Seas Initiative can be defined and contextualized in the present as a rebirth of the Intermarium idea, embodied in the form of a "minilateralism" format within the EU. Its aim is to create a cohesive and convergent regional area. However, the underlying philosophy of the Three Seas Initiative differs from that of Intermarium in one crucial aspect: the 3SI is not primarily and exclusively defined as a security project. Rather, it focuses on economic convergence, which aims to foster better connectivity in key sectors such as energy, transport infrastructure, and digital communication, thereby contributing to the overall security environment. The outcome of the first 3SI Summit, the Dubrovnik Statement, stipulates: "(...) The Three Seas Initiative as an informal platform for securing political support and decisive action on specific cross-border and macro-regional projects of strategic importance to the states involved in energy, transportation, digital communication, and economic sectors in Central and Eastern

² See also A. Tycner (2020)

Europe; (...) The Three Seas Initiative is open to partnerships on specific projects with interested state or business actors from around the world who are committed to the fundamental values and principles of the European Union." (The Joint Statement on the Three Seas Initiative, 25th August 2016).

Although the concept behind the Three Seas Initiative undoubtedly includes a security component, it is not the sole focus of the new format. In fact, security is just one of the important themes under consideration, all of which are linked in one way or another to the broader goal of strengthening interconnectivity and ensuring a secure regional context. The concept of a security dimension emerged before February 24, 2022, so there is no direct correlation or causal relationship with the war in Ukraine that needs to be emphasized. This development occurred almost naturally as a result of regional consolidation efforts in areas such as political cooperation, infrastructure networking and interconnectivity, environmental protection, and digitalization.

An important argument stressed by D. Popescu, president of the Association Black Sea House Romania³, relates to the fact that by prioritizing the economic and infrastructural consolidation of the region, the Three Seas Initiative has achieved an important paradigm shift from the Intermarium and its numerous relaunches over the past decades. While the Intermarium project was primarily a defensive concept, conceived in a historical context as a response to potential threat scenarios, the Three Seas Initiative reinterprets this legacy. It frames the discourse on the Initiative as an ambitious convergence project, signalling power and an emerging, geopolitically expansive regional strength. (Popescu, 2017)

3. Short History and Main Features of the Three Seas Initiative

The Three Seas Initiative was launched in 2015 at the initiative of the Croatian and Polish presidents, Mrs. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović and Mr. Andrzej Duda. The 3SI brings together 13 Central and Eastern European member states of the European Union: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. With the exception of Austria and the most recent member, Greece, which joined as the 13th member state, all other participants belong to the "club" of the "new" EU Member States that completed the process of European integration after 2004. Polish President Andrzej Duda has been a strong advocate for the 3SI, emphasizing to the Polish news agency PAP that the Initiative represents a strategic response to regional challenges. (PAP, 2021)

The 3SI can be framed as one of the "new multilateralisms" (Lang and Ondarza, 2018: p. 1) that have emerged within the European Union, possessing a well-defined regional focus. In terms of its institutional architecture, the 3SI remains relatively informal; it operates as a loose forum at the highest political level (Heads of State) with a strong geopolitical focus. The participating small and medium-sized Member States of the European Union, listed above, are geographically situated between the Baltic Sea, Adriatic Sea, and Black Sea. The Initiative prioritizes practical cooperation, particularly

³ The Black Sea House Association (BSH), a non-governmental and nonprofit organization was established in 2017, in Constanta (RO) and is a think tank for political analysis and prediction in the Wider Black Sea area. According to the official website (casamariinegre.ro), the objective of the BSH is to provide strategic insight and policy solutions for decisionmakers in the region to strengthen trust and maintain security and stability. BSH was founded and is led by dr. Dorin Popescu, a former Romanian diplomat.

in project-related areas such as energy, infrastructure, and digital communication, which underscores its economic focus. According to the official 3SI website (Three Seas Summit, The Three Seas story), the participating countries represent nearly one-third of the EU's population, yet their average GDP per capita is just 78% of the EU average. From 2015-2019, the average economic growth in the 12 countries was 3.5%, compared to 2.1% in the EU. The website of the 2022 Riga Summit notes a projected GDP growth rate of 3.2% and highlights an infrastructure deficit exceeding €500 billion, emphasizing the region's economic potential. (Tchakarova and Benko, 2022: pp.17-19; Lang, 2021: p. 1) Recognizing the need to close these gaps, the Initiative aims to enhance the region's economic relevance by supporting convergence through targeted investment projects, bolstered by an Investment Fund and a growing number of international and private financial partners.

The majority of 3SI participants are post-communist countries that have undergone significant structural transformations and reforms during both their pre- and post-EU accession phases. These countries, which are still in the process of completing this transformation, must accelerate and finalize their transitions to bridge their development gaps compared to other EU Member States. This requires overcoming complex social and economic challenges.

The 3SI is not a homogeneous group of interests but rather a coalition of states with distinct and, at times, divergent national interests and foreign policy objectives. What unites these countries and motivates their participation in a regional format is not only the shared memory of the communist era and the common challenges of the transformation process but also their shared aspiration to achieve the level of development and prosperity enjoyed by their Western European counterparts. They are committed to implementing fundamental reforms and ensuring security, peace, and stability.

4. A Systemized Approach to the Development of the Three Seas Initiative (2016-2024)

The process of concept development and the political maturation of the 3SI can be examined through four major phases:

a. The first two summits in Dubrovnik (2016) and Warsaw (2017) mark the initial phase of the emergence and formalization of the concept, with efforts focused on conceptualizing and operationalizing the Initiative. The *Warsaw Joint Declaration of the Presidents* established a Business Forum to accompany the annual summits, with the first edition organized by Romania in Bucharest (2018);

b. The *Bucharest Summit* (2018) initiated the phase of consolidation and materialization, which was further strengthened at the Ljubljana Summit (2019). The virtual Tallinn Summit (2020) added a digital dimension, marking the start of the 3SI's digital era alongside its institutional consolidation. Business Forums also became a regular component of the summits;

c. The summits in Riga (2022), Bucharest (2023), and Vilnius (2024) took place against the backdrop of the unprovoked Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. As an expression of solidarity, Ukraine (2022) and subsequently the Republic of Moldova (2023) were invited to join the 3SI process as associate partners. Greece joined as the 13th member state, adding territorial flexibility to the Initiative.

4.1. The First Phase: Creation and Conceptualization of the Three Seas Initiative - Summits in Dubrovnik (2016) and Warsaw (2017)

The Three Seas Initiative was formalized during the first summit, held in Dubrovnik at the invitation of the Croatian President from August 25th to 26th, 2016. Preparatory to this event, a kickoff meeting was convened on September 29th, 2015, in New York, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.

The *Dubrovnik Summit* adopted the first official document of the 3SI in the form of a *Joint Summit Declaration* (Three Seas Initiative, The Joint Declaration on the Three Seas Initiative – The Dubrovnik Statement, 2016). This document set out the conceptual framework for cooperation, emphasizing the strengthening of regional networking as a core objective. It also underscored the inclusiveness of the format, aiming to avoid duplication of efforts with existing initiatives. The projects under the 3SI were intended to enhance regional economic development and, consequently, contribute to the overall consolidation of the European Union. By promoting joint ventures in energy, transport infrastructure, digital communication, and economic cooperation, Central and Eastern Europe aimed to improve its security, stability, and competitiveness. At the same time, the Initiative sought to bolster resilience at the EU level, as articulated in the Dubrovnik Joint Statement: "Convinced that by expanding the existing cooperation in energy, transportation, digital communication, and economic sectors, Central and Eastern Europe will become more secure, safe, and competitive, thus contributing to making the European Union more resilient as a whole." In addition to collaboration with the EU, the Declaration stressed the importance of transatlantic cooperation, highlighting the relevance of the transatlantic link for Central and Eastern European participants. The summit also agreed on completing the long-planned *Via Carpathia* motorway, connecting the Baltic States to Thessaloniki in the Aegean Sea. It also pushed forward a key energy project: the establishment of liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals in Poland (Świnoujście) and Croatia (Krk Island), enabling the import of American LNG. This decision reflected, even as early as 2016, concerns among Central and Eastern European countries about growing EU dependence on Russian energy supplies. These concerns were validated by 2022 when energy independence from Russia became one of the most pressing challenges for European countries.

The process of shaping and conceptualizing the 3SI gained momentum leading up to the *Warsaw Summit* (July 6th, 2017). In terms of both content and participation, this summit represented a milestone in affirming the Three Seas Initiative. The meeting reinforced the transatlantic character of the Initiative and demonstrated its complementarity and mutual reinforcement with the EU. The strong transatlantic dimension was already evident at the Dubrovnik Summit, where U.S. representative General James L. Jones, former National Security Advisor to President Barack Obama, emphasized that the 3SI should play a significant role in the development of the EU, particularly in consolidating its security. Jones pointed out the Initiative's potential to counter Russia's geopolitical dominance ambitions, driven by its energy policies, through a series of North-West investment projects aimed at boosting regional interconnectivity (Remarks by General James L. Jones Jr. at the Dubrovnik Three-Seas-Initiative-Presidential-Roundtable, 2016). The U.S. commitment to actively support the Initiative was highlighted at the *Warsaw Summit*, where President Donald Trump attended in person. He called for stronger partnerships with the 12 participating EU Member States and announced U.S. support for the diversification of their energy sources. Acknowledging the security dimension of the 3SI and the rising risks of Russian

influence, Trump stressed that the U.S. would never use energy as a coercive tool, reiterating support for free-market principles (President Donald Trump's remarks at the Three Seas Initiative Summit in Poland, July 7th, 2017, Warsaw). Trump's speech was significant because it reconfirmed the transatlantic dimension of the Initiative, underpinned by pragmatic elements like cooperation on energy security. Furthermore, his presence elevated the international visibility of the 3SI, an opportunity that was effectively leveraged to enhance the Initiative's attractiveness within the EU and in alignment with Brussels' political agenda. Although the 3SI initially addressed regional security concerns only to a limited extent, there is a clear link between expanding U.S. involvement in the natural gas market and bolstering energy security in the region (Górka, 2018: p. 60). One of the most important objectives of the Initiative is to achieve greater energy independence from Russian oil exports, thereby reducing Moscow's ability to use energy supply as a geopolitical tool to exert pressure on its neighbors. The Warsaw Summit Joint Declaration (3SI Research Center. Declarations - Project the Three Seas Initiative Research Center) encapsulated these priorities under the motto "3C – Connectivity, Commerciality, Complementarity." It outlined principles for implementing 3SI projects, while also encouraging the active involvement of national governments, businesses, and NGOs. The Initiative continued to function as a flexible forum at the highest level of representation.

4.2. The Second Phase: Implementation and Materialization of the 3SI Objectives – Summits in Bucharest (2018), Ljubljana (2019), Tallinn (2020) and Sofia (2021)

The third summit of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), held in Bucharest in 2018, marked the transition from the conceptualization phase to a period focused on implementation and tangible results. This summit aimed to demonstrate that the 3SI was not merely a political forum but a practical framework with the capacity and tools to achieve its objectives.

For Romania, hosting the 2018 summit provided a platform to project itself as a committed pro-European and transatlantic member state, just a year before it took over the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union (January 1, 2019). Romania's focus on highlighting the complementary nature of the 3SI reflected its desire to avoid associations with ideas such as a "multi-speed Europe" or exclusive groupings that might fragment the EU. Romanian President Klaus Werner Iohannis emphasized the importance of the 3SI aligning with broader EU goals, stating: "We do not want to develop initiatives that separate us from the rest of the European Union. We want to develop initiatives that help our own countries, but which fit perfectly into the European Union's broader objectives [...] we want to be part of projects that develop Romanian infrastructure and contribute to and benefit from energy security." (Presedintele Iohannis: Summitul Initiativei Celor Trei Mari se va desfasura in 2018 in Romania)

The **Bucharest Summit** was an opportunity to show the effectiveness of the Initiative by translating ambitious political statements into actionable plans and projects. Among the achievements was the compilation of a list of strategically relevant projects in transportation, energy, and digitalization. The summit also hosted the first 3SI Business Forum, as agreed upon in Warsaw, which saw a message of support from the U.S. president. High-level political participation continued, with U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry representing the U.S. administration, demonstrating continued transatlantic support for the Initiative.

Although Germany initially viewed the 3SI with skepticism—concerned that it might counterbalance the Franco-German axis within the EU—its Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, attended the Bucharest Summit. He signaled a shift in Germany's stance, stating: “We will talk to the eastern Member States about how we can move the European Union forward together—on energy issues, on infrastructure, and also on relations with our neighbours” (Zeit, September 17, 2018). The participation of the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, further emphasized the EU's engagement with the 3SI, advocating for collaboration between East and West in the EU. The **Ljubljana Summit** (2019) built upon the Bucharest outcomes, accelerating the materialization of 3SI objectives. Politically, the summit emphasized the importance of integrating the 3SI into the broader EU institutional framework, reaffirming the member states' commitment to a strong and cohesive Union. The summit also strengthened the transatlantic link and opened the Initiative to potential participation from non-EU countries, such as the Western Balkan states and Ukraine. Key tangible results included the organization of the second Business Forum, the creation of a network of 3SI member states' chambers of commerce, the establishment of an investment fund for financing priority interconnection projects, and the decision to publish annual progress reports.

The **Tallinn Summit** (2020) and **Sofia Summit** (2021) took place in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, marking the first major crisis faced by both the 3SI and the EU since the financial crises of the previous decade. This period, however, acted as a catalyst for progress, particularly in digitalization, with the Tallinn Summit held virtually. Given the pandemic's significant economic impact on the 3SI countries, the Sofia Summit in 2021 focused on strengthening economic networks, boosting interconnectivity projects, and attracting investments to the region.

4.3. The Three Seas Initiative in the Context of the Russian Aggression on Ukraine: Summits in Riga (2022), Bucharest (2023) and Vilnius (2024)

The Russian aggression in Ukraine marked a pivotal moment for the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), accelerating its development and redefining its objectives in the face of a fundamentally changed security landscape in the EU's immediate neighborhood. Paradoxically, the invasion spurred a proactive momentum for advancing projects and strengthening regional cooperation. In response to the evolving geopolitical context, the 3SI expanded its influence, showing solidarity by granting Ukraine (2022) and the Republic of Moldova (2023) associate partner status. This new form of status allowed for strengthening cooperation with the two countries in a series of infrastructure projects without formal decision-making power (Wojcik, 2024), as full membership is reserved for EU Member States under the 3SI statute.

It was the second Bucharest Summit (2023) which formalised the invitation of the Republic of Moldova and the first-ever enlargement of this format, with Greece becoming the 13th Member State of the EU to join the 3SI, and therefore proving its territorial elasticity. Wojcik (2024) correctly notes that following this summit, the US announced a €300 million contribution to the 3SI-Investment Fund (3SIIF) and that the list of 3SI flagship investment has been doubled in comparison to 2018, which now includes over 100 infrastructure projects. Wojcik also emphasizes that one of the most important results of the Bucharest Summit was the creation of a new financial instrument within the format, the 3SI Innovation Fund, intended to fund environmentally friendly infrastructure, renewable energy, and digital investments. (Wojcik, 2024)

From Bucharest 2018 to Bucharest 2023 – Romania’s Vision for the 3SI

Having organized two of the nine Summits of the 3SI to date, Romania seized the opportunity of both high-level events to put its visions regarding the 3SI’s role in the region and in the EU into the spotlight. The process from Bucharest 2018 to Bucharest 2023 demonstrated that the 3SI has grown into a mature policy platform meant to address the major development gaps within the EU, specifically between East and West, and North and South. Senior Romanian officials view the 3SI as a catalyst for consolidated resilience in Europe and a vector for increasing the economic security of the EU, especially in times of geostrategic and geo-economic turbulences. (Embassy of Romania to Austria official website, H.E. Ambassador Emil Hurezeanu’s remarks on the objectives of the 3SI Summit 2023 in Bucharest in a debate at the premises of the Embassy, 2023). As highlighted in the public statements and remarks of various Romanian representatives, while the main objective of the Initiative is to improve infrastructure, energy and digital connectivity between participating countries, it also has significant geopolitical implications. In addition, the 3SI can contribute to social stability and political resilience in the participating countries by supporting economic development and creating jobs. The Initiative is considered an important tool in addressing some of the economic and social challenges that can lead to instability and insecurity. Last but not least, Bucharest sees the 3SI as an additional European platform for promoting *cohesion*, a principle which has been guiding as leitmotiv work of the first Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2019. Romania used the second Summit in 2023 to boost the engagement for the Investment Fund and, parallelly, to emphasize the significant transatlantic support the 3SI enjoys.

5. Conclusion

The Geopolitical Argument

Friedman (2017) argues that the emergence of this regional initiative was inevitable in the context of Russia’s resurgence as a regional superpower. According to the author, the Intermarium/3SI⁴ is only an idea, an instrument for regional cooperation. It is not an alliance at present, but was conceived as such, a fact that brings with it certain problems and challenges. Among the challenges of developing multinational institutions, Friedman mentions the factors of time, money and political will. In such *minilateralisms*, Lang and Von Ondarza (2018) argues that the geopolitical dimension is simply indispensable. The geopolitical dimension is part of the core idea of the project *per se*, which makes the 3SI a valuable approach at a time when the EU acts as a geopolitical Union, as mentioned in the State of the Union speech of the (re)elected president of the European Commission.

Internal Challenges

The most important challenge lies in managing conflicting or competing political goals among the Member States and preventing the compromise of loyalty and solidarity for specific benefits and self-interests, such as Hungary’s position between the EU and Russia. In order to preserve the 3SI’s viability and functionality, members should avoid attempts to use the format instrumentally in order to claim regional leadership roles. Nevertheless, geopolitical considerations also play a role for some of its members, Lang and Von Ondarza (2018: p. 4) rightly conclude.

⁴ The Three Seas Initiative as a concept is sometimes referred to by the author as Intermarium.

Furthermore, another problematic issue is the concern that it might become problematic for some capital cities to associate themselves with Member States that have a particularly critical attitude towards the EU. Some scholars also warned about the possibility of a counter-movement along the Berlin-Paris axis that could hinder positive developments within the 3SI. None of these was the case, and so far, nothing has succeeded in bringing the 3SI to failure, which means that the *cohesion* within the format and the *pragmatic approach* have prevailed.

The necessary funds for implementing the projects are critical, as is typical for most of the newly initiated intra-EU-formats. For the first time, in 2023, the Business Forum of the 3SI was attended, in addition to the representatives of the governments and the business sector, by the representatives of the major financial institutions and investment funds, parliaments, and representatives of civil society, further underscoring the cohesion between the different levels in achieving their shared common goals.

Outlook and Perspectives: The Reconstruction of Ukraine After the End of the Russian Aggression

Based on the shared values and interests of the 3SI member states and their associate partners, as well as the interest in the initiative from countries such as the UK, Japan, the UAE, and South Korea, it can be stated that the 3SI is now ready for further growth and consolidation.

In its nearly decade-long course, the Initiative has managed to achieve a number of conceptual and pragmatic steps and, thanks to the high-profile support of the US in the early years of its existence, was also able to attract international attention. The interest of the aforementioned third countries confirms the potential of the 3SI; a major issue in this regard is the role the Initiative might play after the war in the process of reconstructing Ukraine.

Against the backdrop of arguments claiming that the existence of the Initiative is inertia and that the 3SI lacks funds for the common projects – thereby weakening its relevance⁵ – one argument of this paper is that *it is the war in Ukraine and the prospects of the country's reconstruction that create the next momentum* for the 3SI. (The first important momentum of the Initiative was provided by the challenge of creating synergies to use EU and other funds in order to increase the region's interconnectivity and reduce development gaps.)

Joining forces to aid in the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine as a facilitator network/platform is a significant undertaking; yet it also presents a challenging opportunity to strengthen the region's standing and establish visibility as a geopolitical actor.

According to Friedman, the Intermarium (which, in his usage, is the 3SI, as previously stated) sets the stage of a more integrated economic drive. It will be within the EU, but it will operate differently from the EU – more entrepreneurially, resembling the United States. This could create stress within the EU, which does not need any additional strain. (Friedman 2017)

Creating synergies and emphasizing complementarity with EU projects is seen as necessary condition ahead of this monumental task. The good news in this regard is the simultaneous decisions to grant Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova the status of associate partners of the 3SI, as well as the opening of negotiation talks with the European Union.

⁵ For a collection of further scholar's views to be consulted: emerging-europe.com

Cited in the analysis “Can the Three Seas Initiative Be Saved from the Irrelevance?” (Emerging Europe, 2023), Istrate⁶ argues that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has created an opportunity for the 3SI to place itself at the forefront of reconstruction efforts. Ukraine — designated a ‘participating partner’ of the Initiative at its 2022 summit in Riga, with full membership being the privilege of EU Member States — could offer the 3SI a path towards relevance. Improved infrastructure links will be key to the country’s integration with its western neighbours—not to mention its future security. The Initiative’s overall goal of securing investment in cross-border transport, energy, and infrastructure projects to finally close the regional development gap is exactly what Central and Eastern Europe needs in the wake of Russia’s ongoing war, says Istrate. This assessment is shared within the same analysis by Hartwell⁷: “The 3SI might have a role in terms of being on the front lines of Ukraine’s reconstruction and bringing Ukraine into better connectivity with the eastern frontier of the EU, but that really cannot begin until the war is over.” The conclusion of the author is that helping Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova would be the biggest contribution the 3SI can make once the war in Ukraine is over. (Ibidem)

In conclusion, the reconstruction of Ukraine as a near-future task is the best proof of the dual character of the 3SI, being both *geopolitical and economical*. K. Lang argues that, in this respect, the Three Seas Initiative is an economic and infrastructural cooperation framework with a pragmatic self-image, into which influential participants simultaneously project geopolitical aspirations. (Lang, 2021: p. 2) This aligns with and reinforces the Romanian approach, with Bucharest believing in the potential of the 3SI to support the reconstruction of Ukraine in due course⁸. Given its geopolitical position at the frontline of the joint EU efforts to support Ukraine, Romania can rightly claim a role in the architecture of the reconstruction efforts. This is consistent with the conclusions formulated by Mihai Sebe (2022) regarding the potential of the Initiative, stating that the 3SI has immense potential in the region, given its characteristics of singular integration initiative. The author also emphasizes the growth potential of the Initiative not only in economical but specifically in political terms, mentioning that the 3SI started as an infrastructure completion-based project and is now a project based on solidarity and cohesion. (Sebe, 2022: pp.151-153) The external shock of the Russian aggression in Ukraine can be seen as one major factor enabling the 3SI to start realizing its vast geopolitical and economical potential.

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⁶ Dominik Istrate, senior analyst for Central and Eastern Europe at Aretera Public Affairs

⁷ Christopher Hartwell, professor of international business policy at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences School of Management and Law

⁸ The Romanian President Klaus Werner Iohannis wrote on the X platform: "I had a substantive discussion with the Ukrainian President Volodimir Zelenski in Vilnius on the margins of the Three Seas Initiative Summit. We reiterated our strong support for Ukraine in all relevant areas and our determination to strengthen regional connectivity, sustainable cross-border cooperation and energy security."

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ROMANIAN LEGISLATION BASED ON THE EU GREEN DEAL STRATEGY

*Cristina-Matilda VĂNOAGĂ**

Abstract. *The present paper presents some of the latest Romanian legal provisions to support the European Green Deal objectives and the adoption of the "Fit for 55" package. Our paper presents some of the latest Romanian legislative initiatives and programs as part of the joint European effort to make Europe the first green continent. Thus, we briefly discuss The National Integrated Energy and Climate Change Plan 2021-2030, Emergency Ordinance 71/2021 on the promotion of non-polluting road transport vehicles, in support of low-emission mobility, Rabla Plus Program 2024, Emergency Ordinance 108/2022 regarding the decarbonisation of the energy sector, the proposed National Hydrogen Strategy and presents the modifications to the Law 220/ 2008.*

Keywords: *European Green Deal, legislation, Romania, Fit for 55, energy, sustainability.*

Introduction

Establishing strict energy efficiency standards for new construction and promoting sustainable, ecological transport through sustainable mobility projects is essential to combat climate change. The European Green Deal emerged in this context in response to one of the most significant challenges of our generation. As pollution and ecosystem degradation increased following rapid industrialisation in the 20th century, scientific studies began to highlight the devastating effects of pollutant emissions on the environment and human life, culminating in global agreements such as the 2015 Paris Agreement, which aims at the progressive reduction of emissions and the achievement of climate neutrality. (European Commission, 2019)

The European Climate Law, adopted in June 2021, makes climate neutrality by 2050 a legal obligation for the European Union. This provides, in addition to the long-term objective, an intermediate target requiring the reduction of net greenhouse gas emissions, compared to 1990, by at least 55% by 2030. These targets represent the EU's contribution to the goals of the Paris Agreement. Energy, industry, transport, and agriculture are targeted as critical areas. EU Regulation 2020/852 is a crucial Green Deal pillar. It establishes the sustainability criteria for economic activities and defines the economic impact on the environment. It also encourages sustainable investments by granting facilities and incentives. Sustainable economic activities reflect the achievement of the main environmental objectives, such as emissions reduction, adaptation to climate change, the protection of water and marine resources, the emergence of a circular

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economy, pollution control, and the restoration of biodiversity. (European Commission, 2021)

The Package “Fit for 55”

A package of proposals, adopted in 2021, "Fit for 55", includes several projects aimed at covering the following sectors: EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) reform; a new EU system for trading emission certificates for construction and road transport fuels; the Social Fund for Climate; Effort Sharing Regulation; Regulation on Land Use, Forestry and Agriculture (LULUCF); CO2 emission standards for cars and vans; Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM); Renewable Energy Directive; Energy Efficiency Directive; Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR); RefuelEU Aviation Regulation, FuelEU Maritime Regulation. The "Fit for 55" legislative package was completed in 2023 by the revised Renewable Energy Directive and the RefuelEU Regulation in aviation. The first directive establishes a renewable energy target for 2030, a minimum of 42.5% from the current target of 32%. Europe should reach a 45% share of energy from renewable sources by 2030. The second directive regards the rules for promoting sustainable aviation fuels - SAF.

The EU establishes clear, legally binding climate targets for all vital economic sectors. The EU sets a price on CO2 emissions and introduces a yearly cap for emissions in sectors such as transport, shipping and heating fuels. This cap brings financial responsibility to polluters and ensures revenue for the Member States, ensuring funds for the green transition. A carbon border adjustment is set to ensure that the imported products also pay a carbon price. This adjustment and the EU's emissions trading system reduce the risk of businesses moving production outside Europe, where the environmental standards may be more permissive.

Moreover, the allocation of 86 billion EUR through the Social Climate Fund, with an amount of 65 billion EUR from the EU budget, is meant to assist the most vulnerable categories of citizens and businesses in the process of transitioning toward a sustainable economy on green principles.

Energy efficiency will improve by 11.7% until 2030, especially in the public sector, aiming for a yearly saving target of 1.9% and focusing on improving energy efficiency with priority among people affected by energy poverty. Another objective is the elimination of polluting vehicles by 2035. The new vehicles registered in Europe will have zero emissions by the targeted term. Also, in the interim phase, the average emissions of new cars will have to decrease by 55% by 2030 and those of new vans by 50% by 2030. In addition, implementing electric recharging and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure along European roads is mandatory, along with using alternative fuels in land, sea and air transport.

The energy efficiency of buildings is another priority area within "Fit for 55". The reduction of energy consumption is regulated by the proposal of a Directive on energy efficiency as part of the package that will impose on member states a progressive increase in the annual energy-saving targets required for heating the buildings. The public sector in each member state will have to renovate a minimum of 3% of its buildings to high energy efficiency standards. Increasing the energy efficiency of old buildings is also an important objective which, through the cumulative effect of stopping energy waste (it is about millions of homes targeted, at the level of the entire EU), will generate a vital economy and, implicitly, a consistent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Stricter protection of EU forests is a distinct objective of "Fit for 55". Protecting and restoring forests through massive reforestation programs, restoring soils, and protecting wetlands and biospheres are other directions of action promoted by the "Fit for 55" package. The focus will be forest conservation measures and transparency in managing logging and reforestation programs. It is also intended to increase the green area per inhabitant.

Romanian measures and legislation according to the European Green Deal

Romania is part of the "Fit for 55" Package as a Member State. It has the obligation of implementing it by making sure that the national legislation is up to the package's standards.

To support the European Green Deal strategy and the "Fit for 55" Program, Romania adopted **The National Integrated Energy and Climate Change Plan 2021-2030**. It outlines the following targets for 2030: Emissions Trading System (ETS) -43.9% compared to 2005, non-ETS -2% compared to 2005, the overall share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption 30.7%, the share of renewable energy in the electricity sector 49.4%, the share of renewable energy in the transport sector (SRE-T) 14.2%, the share of renewable energy in the heating and cooling sector (SRE-H&C) 33.0%, primary energy consumption -45.1%, final energy consumption -40.4%, primary energy consumption (Mtoe) 32.3 and final energy consumption (Mtoe) 25.7. (Guvernul României, 2023)

Additionally, the European Commission recommended that Romania increase its ambition level for 2030 to at least 34% renewable energy. As a result, Romania has recalculated its target to 30.7%, up from the initially calculated 27.9%. This way, national macroeconomic forecasts align with those in the "Ageing Report: Economic and Budgetary Projections for the 28 EU Member States (2016-2070)."

Although ambitious, the plan has some significant gaps, according to an analysis by the Energy Policy Group (EPG), a non-profit, independent think-tank specialising in energy and climate policy, market analytics and energy strategy. EGD signalled: a lack of detailed implementation plans and specific sectoral measures; the inadequacy of the use of renewable energy in industry and buildings; insufficient details on the decarbonisation of the transport sector; failure to fully comply with the requirements of the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) and the objectives of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III); a lack of ambition in long-term renovation strategies and global emissions reductions; the absence of plans to reduce gas consumption and improve energy storage; a lack of concrete measures to support research and innovation in the field of renewable energy technology and adaptation to climate change. (Energy Policy Group, 2024)

Along with the National Integrated Energy and Climate Change Plan 2021-2030, a series of other recent Romanian actions may be mentioned. We present the following part of the Romanian legislative measure supporting the EGD desiderate.

In 2022, the Romanian Govern issued **Emergency Ordinance 71/2021 on the promotion of non-polluting road transport vehicles, in support of low-emission mobility** (OU 71/2021). In the context of the European Green Deal, boosting the market for clean, energy-efficient road transport vehicles in support of low-emission mobility is gaining ground and influencing the market for mass-produced standardised vehicles such as cars, buses, coaches and trucks, ensuring a level of demand for clean and energy-

efficient road transport vehicles high enough to encourage manufacturers and industry to invest in and develop low-energy, low-CO₂ and other vehicles pollutants. (OU 71/2021)

By the provisions of Directive (EU) 2019/1161, the objective of which is to increase the degree of spread of non-polluting vehicles on the market in public procurement procedures and, therefore, to contribute to the reduction of CO₂ emissions in the road transport sector, as well as competitiveness and economic growth, the Ordinance contains distinct provisions regarding the object and the targeted objectives, the scope of application, the allowed exemptions, the definition of specialised terms and expressions, the establishment of minimum targets regarding public procurement, as well as regarding reporting and the revision compared to the provisions in the matter previously regulated at the level of national legislation. (OU 71/2021)

The Ordinance provides for the regulation of obligations for contracting authorities and contracting entities to take into account the energy and environmental impact during their lifetime, including energy consumption, CO₂ emissions and certain pollutants, when purchasing certain road transport vehicles; promoting and stimulating the market for clean and energy-efficient vehicles and improving the contribution of the transport sector to the Union's environment, climate and energy policies; establishes the obligation to comply with the ordinance provisions for all purchase, leasing, rental or instalment purchase contracts of road transport vehicles, awarded by contracting authorities or contracting entities; regulates the categories of vehicles subject to the emergency ordinance, by the provisions of Directive (EU) 2019/1161; aims to set minimum targets for purchases of clean vehicles. (OU 71/2021)

The main socioeconomic impact of the normative act refers to the market introduction of clean, energy-efficient vehicles in support of low-emission mobility. The purchase of non-polluting and energy-efficient road transport vehicles allows municipalities to demonstrate a responsible attitude towards the environment and ensure a healthier living environment for citizens. At the same time, by reducing other pollutants, the use of non-polluting road transport vehicles contributes to increasing the quality of life and improving the population's health. The use of non-polluting, energy-efficient road transport vehicles in support of low-emission mobility is likely to improve air quality in urban areas and contribute to the reduction of CO₂ emissions in order to meet the EU's shared objective of achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

As a support for the purchases of energy-clean vehicles, **the Rabla Plus Program** was introduced. As part of the program, the applicant benefits from an eco-ticket when purchasing a new vehicle in exchange for renouncing at least one used vehicle for scrapping. A maximum of two used vehicles can be handed over for scrapping.

The amount of the eco-ticket, regardless of the number of used vehicles handed over for scrapping, is 25,500 lei for the purchase of a new purely electric vehicle or a new vehicle with a hydrogen fuel cell, excluding motorcycles; 13,000 lei for the purchase of a new hybrid electric vehicle, excluding the motorcycle, which generates a maximum of 80 g CO₂/km in the WLTP system; 13,000 lei for the purchase of an electric motorcycle. The eco-ticket is granted for purchasing an electric vehicle whose value does not exceed the sum of 70,000 euros, including VAT. Public institutions and administrative-territorial units benefit from an eco-ticket for 120,000 lei when purchasing a new vehicle without being obliged to hand over a used vehicle for scrapping.

In 2022, the Romanian Government issued the **Emergency Ordinance 108/2022 regarding the decarbonisation of the energy sector** (OU 108/2022). The emergency

ordinance establishes measures for the coordination and implementation of the decarbonisation process through the establishment of the Interministerial Coal Committee, the Advisory Committee and the Working Group for the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the measures established by the draft normative act, as well as the possibility of restarting closed energy groups, by the decision of the Government of Romania and at the proposal of the Ministry of Energy, in a situation of energy crisis and in correlation with the measures included in the emergency plans related to the energy sector. (OU 108/2022)

The normative act establishes the legal framework for closing and preserving energy groups based on lignite and coal; closure of lignite quarries and coal mines; support measures for closure and preservation of lignite-based electricity production capacities and coal; support measures for the closure of lignite quarries and coal mines; the measures to mitigate the social consequences of the closure and conservation of electricity production capacities on the base of lignite and coal and related quarries and mines; sources of financing of state aid measures; measures for the coordination and implementation of the process of decarbonisation. (OU 108/2022)

From a socioeconomic point of view, the Ordinance reduces costs, balances the BVC of the economic operators involved, and reduces the cessation of the subsidies granted from the state budget to the mining sector within the coal-based electricity-producing companies. As a result of the restriction of electricity production activities based on coal and extracting the necessary lignite and oil, the number of staff was reduced through retirement and collective dismissals. Part of the laid-off staff could be absorbed by securing the holdings mining and land greening. Staff redundancies due to closure and conservation energy groups operating on lignite, coal, quarries, and related mines impact the employment rate of the force of work and the unemployment rate. The impact cannot be quantified as an essential part of the staff laid off will be re-framed for mining operations and land greening safety activities. By supporting and promoting alternative activities to mining, by supporting local economic operators in diversifying offers of goods and services, by creating a stable environment and predictably, by promoting entrepreneurship and encouragement of entrepreneurial initiatives, by creating a favourable ecosystem investment and, implicitly, by increasing the attractiveness of localities for investors and job creation can be estimated a positive impact.

In 2023, the Ministry of Energy has put into public debate a draft of the **National Hydrogen Strategy**, with implementation until 2030. According to the document, hydrogen can be a substitute for fossil fuels used today, such as steel, fertilisers, and cement, or it can be used as an energy storage option. Hydrogen from renewable sources will be necessary, obtained by water electrolysis. (Ministerul Energiei, 2023)

Through the PNRR, Romania allocated 148 million euros for 100 MW of electrolysis capacity provided for companies interested in developing renewable hydrogen production capacities. Several economic sectors (chemicals, refining processes, steel production, etc.) could reduce carbon emissions by up to 70-95% through renewable hydrogen. (Ministerul Energiei, 2023)

Hydrogen is used in the Romanian industry, but it is not the so-called "clean hydrogen"; its production processes produce carbon dioxide emissions. Most hydrogen is produced by steam reforming of methane, catalytic reforming and, to a lesser extent, by electrolysis of water consumed in the industrial processes required for production. Obtaining hydrogen by catalytic reforming and steam reforming methane produces

carbon dioxide emissions. In Romania, there are no industrial facilities to capture these emissions. (Ministerul Energiei, 2023)

The project under public consultation shows that to decarbonise, the production of grey hydrogen should be replaced by renewable hydrogen and, to a lesser extent, hydrogen with a reduced carbon footprint. Renewable hydrogen is produced by electrolysis of water, using electricity from renewable sources, so any renewable energy source could be used: wind, solar, hydro, biomass and biogas. (Ministerul Energiei, 2023)

Biomass power plants, regardless of technology (direct combustion, conversion to biogas, or other technology, e.g. pyrolysis), represent a non-variable source of energy (base production, unlike wind and solar) but in significantly smaller volumes and at a cost environment in real terms (LCOE) much higher than that of wind and solar plants. Thus, hydrogen produced by water electrolysis from biomass electricity would contain an uncompetitive cost component, and the resulting volumes would be shallow, making hydrogen transportation and distribution inefficient. The production of renewable hydrogen using biomass electricity harms the environment, especially on "carbon sinks" and biodiversity. (Ministerul Energiei, 2023)

The biogas resulting from different raw materials (residual sludge, food or biological waste, etc.) is a "green", clean gas, which can be improved by purifying CO₂ and other residues, becoming biomethane. Thus, biogas, especially biomethane, can be considered a complementary energy source to hydrogen with a low carbon footprint, with its role in decarbonising the national energy mix. Moreover, the technical characteristics of biomethane do not differ from those of "natural" methane so that it can be used directly in domestic or industrial consumption. It can be mixed with methane, contributing to the reduction of the carbon footprint. (Ministerul Energiei, 2023)

Using hydrogen produced from energy from variable renewable sources (solar or wind) on an industrial scale will create the need to develop substantial hydrogen storage capacity. Although it involves considerable investment costs, this offers an efficient way of storing renewable energy and avoids the congestion of the electricity transmission network, which is currently one of the factors slowing down the development rate of the production capacity of energy from renewable sources in Romania. (Ministerul Energiei, 2023)

The National Hydrogen Strategy, although published after a series of delays, proposes an approach correlated with the decarbonisation objectives of the Romanian economy. The National Hydrogen strategy must promote the efficient use of this resource.

In the field of renewable energy, the Romanian legislation includes several normative acts:

Last but not least, the **Law no. 220 of October 27, 2008** (Legea 220/ 2008) for establishing the system to promote energy production from renewable energy sources was updated per the EGD goals. Its consolidated form include modifications according to the following normative acts: GD no. 1535/2003 regarding the approval of the Strategy for capitalising on renewable energy sources; GD no. 750/2008 Regional state aid scheme regarding the exploitation of renewable energy resources; Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the promotion system for energy production from renewable energy sources; OG no. 29/2010 regarding the amendment and completion of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy production from renewable energy sources; Law no. 139/2010 regarding the amendment and completion of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy

production from renewable energy sources; GEO no. 88/2011 regarding the amendment and completion of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy production from renewable energy sources; Law no. 134/2012 for the approval of GEO no. 88/2011 regarding the amendment and completion of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy production from renewable energy sources; GEO no. 57/2013 regarding the amendment and completion of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy production from renewable energy sources; GEO no. 79/2013 regarding the amendment and completion of the Land Improvements Law no. 138/2004, for completing GEO no. 82/2011 regarding some measures to organise the activity of land improvements, as well as for the amendment of letter e) of paragraph (6) of article 3 of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the promotion system for energy production from renewable energy sources; GD no. 994/2013 regarding the approval of measures to reduce the number of green certificates in the situations provided for in art. 6 para. (2) lit. a), c) and f) from Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy production from renewable energy sources; Law no. 23/2014 for the approval of the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 57/2013 regarding the amendment and completion of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy production from renewable energy sources; Law no. 122/2015 for the approval of some measures in the field of promoting the production of electricity from renewable energy sources and regarding the modification and completion of some normative acts. Unfortunately, the GD no. 1535/2003 regarding the approval of the Strategy for capitalising on renewable energy sources; GD no. 750/2008 Regional state aid scheme regarding the exploitation of renewable energy resources; Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the promotion system for energy production from renewable energy sources; OG no. 29/2010 regarding the amendment and completion of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy production from renewable energy sources; Law no. 139/2010 regarding the amendment and completion of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy production from renewable energy sources; GEO no. 88/2011 regarding the amendment and completion of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy production from renewable energy sources; Law no. 134/2012 for the approval of GEO no. 88/2011 regarding the amendment and completion of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy production from renewable energy sources; GEO no. 57/2013 regarding the amendment and completion of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy production from renewable energy sources; GEO no. 79/2013 regarding the amendment and completion of the Land Improvements Law no. 138/2004, for completing GEO no. 82/2011 regarding some measures to organise the activity of land improvements, as well as for the amendment of letter e) of paragraph (6) of article 3 of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the promotion system for energy production from renewable energy sources; GD no. 994/2013 regarding the approval of measures to reduce the number of green certificates in the situations provided for in art. 6 para. (2) lit. a), c) and f) from Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy production from renewable energy sources; Law no. 23/2014 for the approval of the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 57/2013 regarding the amendment and completion of Law no. 220/2008 for the establishment of the system for the promotion of energy production from renewable energy sources; Law no. 122/2015 for the approval

of some measures in the field of promoting the production of electricity from renewable energy sources and regarding the modification and completion of some normative acts. Unfortunately, despite the entire history of modifications, the Ministry of Energy's official website does not offer the public the consolidated form of the Law for renewable energy, directing them to a scan with the form from 2010. (Ministerul Energiei, 2024)

Conclusions

As part of the EU family, Romania understands the challenges of climate change. It respects the legally binding EU normative, adapting the national legislation to correspond to the objectives of the "Fit for 55" package. In its path toward a green future, Romania has not just obligations in regard to the EU green goals but also the EU support, as the CE shows: "Thanks to the adoption of its Territorial Just Transition Plan (TJTP), Romania will receive €2.14 billion from the Just Transition Fund (JTF) to support a just climate transition to a more attractive and greener economy". (European Commission, 2022).

Romania clearly takes concrete actions and harmonises the legislation, together with a series of plans dedicated to EGD-related goals. Still, during our research, we did not find a thematic centralised situation of all the legislative measures in the field. Due to its importance, such a measure will be welcomed by each citizen interested in the change brought about by the EGD policies. (Ciot, 2021: 1-2)

On the other hand, we observe that the majority of changes in the legislation in this direction are established through Emergency ordinances of Government directives, which denote a lack of initiative at a parliamentary level or a lack of good practices in initiating and adopting green legislation. The new national and, at the same time, European green goals deserve more coherent legislation and increased interest among the Romanian legislators.

Another question that arises is the continuity of the measures in the new legislative mandate following the elections for the Romanian Parliament in December 2024. The PE elections in Romania did not highlight an increased interest of the candidates in discussing the EGD, due to the juxtaposition of PE elections with the local administration ones, generating an electoral discourse focused more on local issues than European ones. The new Parliament members will have to find the legislative means to ensure Romania's compliance with the European EGD objectives and to ensure its support among citizens not only by highlighting its importance but also by ensuring a centralised, structured and updated access to all the programs and norms in the field, together with the opportunities offered by the EU in overcoming any difficulty in the process of transitioning towards a green Europe.

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RUSSIA'S VISION OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL: INSIDIOUS PROTECTIONISM OR OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION?

*Ioana Mădălina MIRON**

Abstract. *The current paper provides an analysis of the European Green Deal on the territory of the Russian Federation. The development of relations between the European Union and Russia throughout the green transition has a significant impact on global prospects for deep decarbonization. This paper will demonstrate that the European Union cannot simply replace these imports with primary goods from other countries, and that Russia is not motivated to cut GHG emissions unless the European Union provides extra incentives. The current research emphasises the European Union and Russian Federation's common dependence on a carbon-intensive goods flows. Throughout this article, I will draw a parallel between the opportunities that the European Green Pact can offer to the Russian Federation's territory and the challenges that are perceived as a bad process for the economy and Russian exports. I will also present how essential this possibility for cooperation is for both governments, as well as the impact of the issues that have exacerbated the relationship between the EU and Russia, which has recently been brittle because of the causes of recent disputes.*

Keywords: *Post-Soviet Russia, European Union, European Green Deal, greening.*

1. Introduction

The current paper proposes a thorough analysis of the European Green Deal and the impact that it has on the interdependence between Russia and the European Union, given the constraints imposed by the current conflict and the factors that have contributed to the deteriorating of the partnership between the European Union and Russia, which I will discuss in this paper. During this paper, I will additionally draw parallels between Russia's vision of this Green Deal in order to provide as clear a comprehension of what the European Green Deal represents for Russia as possible. On the one hand, it is a challenge or, as former prime minister Dmitry Medvedev put it, treacherous protectionism; on the other hand, this pact is perceived as an opportunity for cooperation. In the first section of this paper, I will provide Russia's perspective on the country's greening efforts, which, as we all know, have the primary goal of providing a healthy environment. This term has two connotations in this context: first, it refers to environmental care, and second, it refers to the health of the people in the respective states. We will see what applies and what doesn't, with a focus on the Russian Federation, where greening hasn't been a top priority in years. In the second section of the article, I will discuss the extent to which the European Green Pact is viewed as murky

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protectionism emanating from the West, and how this process can have a detrimental impact on Russia's exports of consumer goods. If the European Union achieves its goal of decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, it could be viewed as treacherous protectionism against Russian exports to Russia. In the third section, I will discuss how Russia sees the European Green Pact as helpful to its own exports since it can open up prospects for collaboration between the EU and Russia, which, as we will see throughout the work, requires significant political will from both countries. I elaborated in this paper by referring to the main studies made by famous experts on the consequences of the European Green Pact on the territory of the Russian Federation, such as Igor Makarov, James Henderson, and a number of professionals with analyses written in Russian. I thus agree with the assessments made by the aforementioned writers, highlighting both the prospects and risks/emerging problems of the European Green Pact from Russia's perspective, as well as the development of a robust and sustainable cooperation in the sphere of green transition.

2. Russian Perception of the process of environmental greening

Climate Watch, a website that gathers information regarding climate development around the world, published a report in 2018 highlighting the fact that the Russian Federation has made the commitment provided for in the Paris Agreement, which was intended to register a 5% reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions. (Climate Watch, 2018) With the revival of the economy, these big changes, position the Russian Federation as a valuable actor on the international climate change scene. In 2004, Russian President Vladimir Putin accepted the Kyoto Protocol, an agreement calling for substantial decreases in greenhouse gas emissions that have been thought to be inflicted severe changes in the environment. This protocol covers the following hazardous substances: carbon dioxide (CH₄), nitrogen oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆). (Tardi, 2024) The protocol was signed on December 11, 1997, and 172 governments have already approved it. The protocol includes 28 articles and two annexes: the first contains a list of greenhouse gases and economic sectors, and the second brings together the 38 Protocol parties that have agreed to reduce emissions of environmentally damaging gases. By ratifying this Protocol, Russia has agreed not to increase its greenhouse gas emissions above the existing level. Since 1990, Russia has experienced the most drastic decrease in greenhouse gas emissions of any country, with emissions falling by about half, owing mostly to the deep crisis, upheaval that followed the dissolution of the USSR, and sectoral economic reorganisation. (Deutsche Welle, 2004) At the same time, Russia has one of the most unfavourable export-related specialisations in the world. Russia is the world's largest exporter of fossil fuels (hydrocarbons, coal, oil, and natural gas, which are the fossilised remains of dead plants and animals) and one of the primary suppliers of energy-consuming industrial goods (such as electricity). (United Nations, 2010)

Given the Russian Federation's economic situation since the beginning of the 2000s, under the leadership of current President Vladimir Putin, Russia has never shown an appetite for drastic climate change, neither to itself, nor to other international political actors. For example, former President Dmitry Medvedev wanted to make ecology a mandatory subject in schools, mentioning the fact that there were no such essential subjects in the past, but that there has been little progress in the field of ecology on Russian Federation territory since then and until now. The Presidential Decree, drafted by the Russian Federation and signed by President Putin in 2020, further called for a

substantial decrease in emissions of greenhouse gases. The executive order also stipulated for a shift in the techniques applied to use in agricultural land (use and change of the method of use of agricultural land) and forestry (volume of wood production) across the Russian Federation's territory, according to LULUCF (Land Use, Land-use Change and Forestry). (United Nations.Climate Change, 2020) This indicates that modifying present agricultural and forestry practices across the Russian Federation can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which have a negative impact on climate, land, and, eventually, human health. The target formed from this presidential decree could further drive an increase in greenhouse gas emissions relative to the scenario in 2020. This can happen if we do not take into account what we indicated earlier, namely the phrase LULUCF (Land Use, Land-use Change and Forestry). According to the Ministry of Economic Development, a long-term strategy to minimise carbon emissions published in 2020 states that by 2050, carbon emissions, or GHG, on Russian territory will be higher than they are now. (Makarov, 2020:3)

Russia takes an aesthetically conservative approach to carbon neutrality. What exactly does this mean? This necessitates a balance between carbon emissions and the control of carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere. For example, many industries in Russia engage in mining, which generates a large amount of emissions that have a negative impact on the environment. Russia is heavily reliant on fossil fuel exports, and GHG emission reductions are viewed as a means of alleviated negative consequences on the national economy rather than addressing climate change. In contrast to the other leading countries, where domestic climate agendas serve as the foundation for international commitments, in Russia, international developments drive national climate policies. (Makarov, 2020:3) In Russia, common people have a vague understanding of greening. Some non-governmental organisations argue that the issue of greening is more about adaptation than a specific trajectory for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition, the topic of greening on Russian Federation territory says little about what precautions the country has done to combat greenhouse gas emissions, which continue to have a harmful impact on the environment and human health. Furthermore, in Russia, all of these non-governmental organisations are seen with suspicion, as the perfidious hand of the West. The European Green Pact is also a Western influence viewed sceptically by the Kremlin, as a challenge, and as something beneficial, which would bring many opportunities for cooperation between the EU and Russia. I will explain why Russia sees the European Green Pact as a challenge or shadowy protectionism in the following chapter.

3. The European Green Deal as a treacherous protectionism for Russia

Given that Russia is the world's largest exporter of fossil fuels and one of the countries manufacturing a wide range of carbon-intensive commodities (I should emphasise that Russia is a producer of crude oil and natural gas). The most important component of the measure affecting Russian exports is the European Union's proposal to minimize greenhouse gas emissions without increasing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Igor Makarov, one of the leading experts in this sector and the person I chose for the purpose of this study, examines the first challenge for Russian fossil fuel exports. According to Makarov's estimates, if the European Union meets its nationally determined contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement (-40% greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990), Russian coal exports to Europe will drop by up to 55% and Russian gas exports to Europe will fall by 6% compared to a normal scenario, as shown in Figure 1.

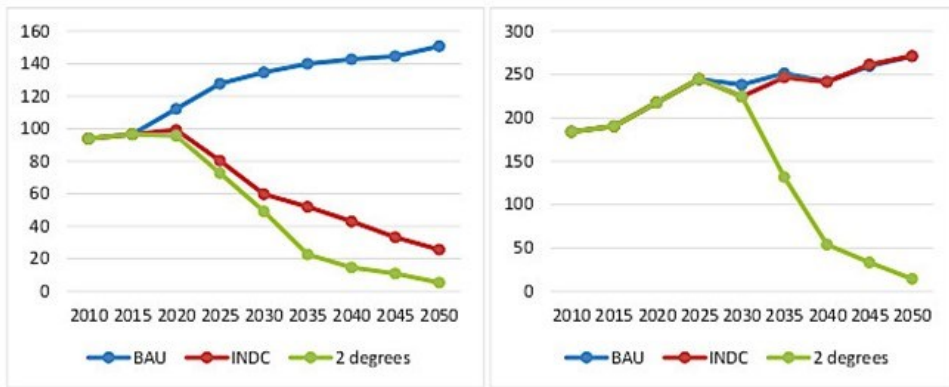


Figure 1. Russian exports of fossil fuels in Europe. BAU=Russian exports of business-as-usual scenario; INDC=exports based on the EU's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris Agreement; 2 degrees=exports based on goal of limiting global temperature increase to 2° Celsius. (Igor Makarov, et al., 2020).

A second issue that may operate as a barrier to Russian exports is CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism), which poses a risk to Russia that extends beyond 2030. The carbon border adjustment system was not established until 2022, after which a number of discussions were held between European institution members and EU trading partners.

According to former Russian Commissioner for Human Rights Vladimir Lukin, the BCG estimates potential losses ranging from 3 to 4.8 billion dollars per year, KPMG estimates a loss of 4 to 8 billion euros per year (Makarov, 2020:5), and the RAS Institute of Economic Forecasting estimates a loss of 3.6 billion euros per year. (Широв,2021) All of the data estimated by the two Russian professionals demonstrate that matching the piece in the Russian economy's game is highly perilous and poses dangers due to the fragility of oil and gas exports, which are not totally covered by CBAM. Igor Makarov predicts losses that are totally contingent on CBAM, including sectoral coverage and the principles of creating the carbon price at the border. (Makarov, Chen, Paltsev, 2020: 1242-1256)

Over the years, there have been several debates within European Union structures aimed at implementing the above-mentioned measure (the CBAM Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism); these debates have sparked numerous contradictory discussions on Russian Federation territory. Dmitry Medvedev, the former prime minister and current deputy chairman of the Russian Security Council, convened an assembly on the main topic, or better said, a central objective, of applying the CBAM measure to Russian consumer goods exports to the EU, as well as calling the European Green Deal and CBAM treacherous protectionism “it would have a significant impact on the Russian economy: our basic industries such as iron and steel, non-ferrous metallurgy, chemical industry, the energy sector may suffer. Due to such transnational regulation there may be a significant decrease in consumption of Russian oil and coal.” (Security Council of the Russian Federation, 2020)

Ruslan Edelgeriyev, the President's climate advisor, and other business and political elites emphasized that the best way for Russia to respond to the CBAM would be to implement domestic carbon pricing, which would eliminate any payments to the EU while keeping all carbon fees within the country. (Edelgeriyev, 2020) The Union of

Russian Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RUIE), a group of activists who solely support the nationalist economy, plays an important role in the Russian Federation's political and corporate domains. RUIE further claims that the CBAM is a protectionist measure that infringes both the Paris Agreement and the World Trade Organization (WTO). (Давыдова, 2020) The European Union has consequently asked Russia to request that the Dispute Resolution Facade (WTO) prohibits the implementation of the Carbon Frontier Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). Looking back at former Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's statement, we can conclude that his view of the European Green Deal now appears to be the dominant concern among the elements that contribute to a political decision, and finally, actors dealing with the European Green Deal game should not view it with skepticism, but as a profit for Russian exports and an opportunity to work with the EU to reduce climate change. In the following, I shall examine the potential provided by the European Green Pact to the Russian Federation.

4. The European Green Deal is seen as benefits of cooperation between Russia and EU

As I said in the last chapter, CBAM and the European Green Deal are viewed by a significant portion of Russia's political and corporate elite, as either sneaky protectionism or a genuine threat to the country's national economy. The European Green Deal may provide benefits (opportunities) for Russia, as well as obstacles and negative consequences, but for all of these to be effectively implemented, the EU and Russia must change their mindsets. One of the primary benefits of the European Green Deal is the ability to slow climate change. Carbon neutrality in the European Union's economic sphere, which accounts for only 10% of total global emissions, would have little impact, with the exception of Russia making exports of various consumer goods (in this case, carbon intensive goods, various raw materials, and intermediate goods) available to the European Union, which would aid in decarbonization. Russia's emissions are not purely a domestic affair and its own responsibility about a third of them are generated for the production of goods for exports, mostly to the EU. (Makarov, Sokolova, 2017: 21)

To some extent, Russia's exports of fossil fuels and decarbon-intensive goods reflect increasing consumption in the West. This is evident in the table's last column, which shows a clear distinction between developed countries, major consumers of carbon-intensive goods, countries with a significant level of net carbon consumption, and BRICS countries, including Russia. This line of demarcation may be expanded in the future, moving the European Union closer to carbon neutrality (reduction of carbon intensive emissions), and it may even replicate an element to replace goods from Russian exports, which have increased carbon intensive emissions in the BRICS countries, to which Russia also belongs.

Country	Production-based emissions		Consumption-based emissions		Net exports of emissions	
	Mt	% of world	Mt	% of world	Mt	% of national emissions
OECD, total	12 602	34.6%	13 865	38.1%	-1 264	-10.0%
Canada	587	1.6%	588	1.6%	-2	-0.3%
France	332	0.9%	442	1.2%	-110	-33.3%
Germany	755	2.1%	862	2.4%	-106	-14.1%
Italy	348	1.0%	466	1.3%	-118	-33.8%
Japan	1 136	3.1%	1 312	3.6%	-177	-15.6%
Spain	270	0.7%	288	0.8%	-18	-6.6%
Sweden	42	0.1%	71	0.2%	-29	-69.5%
United Kingdom	380	1.0%	540	1.5%	-160	-42.1%
United States	5 425	14.9%	5 767	15.8%	-343	-6.3%
BRICS, total	15 178	41.7%	13 554	37.2%	1 624	10.7%
Brazil	467	1.3%	489	1.3%	-22	-4.8%
China	9 957	27.3%	8 960	24.6%	997	10.0%
India	2 591	7.1%	2 355	6.5%	237	9.1%
Russia	1 691	4.6%	1 415	3.9%	277	16.4%
South Africa	472	1.3%	335	0.9%	137	29.0%

Figure 2. Production and consumption based emissions in OECD and BRICS countries in 2018. (Pierre Friedlingstein, et al., 2020).

Taking Russian-origin carbon intense emissions as a worldwide issue, it can provide us with a clear image of a solution to climate concerns and Russia's high carbon level, but also there may be significant energy losses due to outdated infrastructure. I could deduce that because of this infrastructure, Russia has a minimal opportunity to cut carbon-intensive emissions. Another benefit of the European Green Deal is that if reducing carbon intensive emissions in the Russian Federation is less expensive than in the European Union, Russia will be able to participate in shared market mechanisms. This could lead to other opportunities, such as attracting European investors willing to finance low-carbon projects by establishing common markets; however, all of this is still in its early stages in Russia; At the moment (given the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine), such projects have frozen, and in the future, it will be up to the government alone to promote and broaden such projects to reduce carbon intensity emissions that are beneficial to reducing climate change. If national carbon pricing is implemented in Russia over the next decade, the country will gain considerably from tying it to the EU Emission Trading System (ETS). (Makarov, 2020: 7)

The proliferation of energy from renewable sources in Russian Federation territory has occurred in segments. Its development is motivated by technology policy: the Russian government is attempting to close a technological gap with other nations by establishing an export-oriented renewable industrial sector that receives government support in exchange for manufacturing localization. (Henderson, Mitrova, 2020: 104-105)

Another possibility provided by the European Green Deal to Russia is its reliance on the hydrogen market. Russia has a relatively large capability for producing lower-carbon commodities utilizing nuclear and hydropower energy, which are the most basic resources. Blue hydrogen, derived from methane, is a Russian variant of green energy because it exhibits modest carbon fluctuations. The production of hydrogen has the potential to expand the development of wind and solar energy in the Russian Federation. Russia's significant advantage as a potential hydrogen supplier to Europe is a pipeline network that might transition, at least partially, from gas to hydrogen. (Henderson, Mitrova, 2020: 104-105)

The first step toward cooperation between the European Union and Russia is the development of hydrogen production facilities on Russian Federation territory.

5. Conclusions

The goal of this analysis was to explain and demonstrate what the European Green Deal may provide to Russia. Starting with the premise that, despite the current crisis, which threatens Russia's dependency with the European Union, developing beneficial collaboration in the field of green energy is a difficult task. Through this work, I hoped to capture an overview of Russia's perception of the European Green Deal: on the one hand, the Green Deal is viewed as shady protectionism emanating from the West and tending to undermine Russian exports to the European Union; on the other hand, the European Green Deal is viewed as a process full of opportunities for Russian exports and the economy. The European Union, through this Green Deal, should be accessible to Russia, which is regarded as a key player in addressing climate issues.

Of course, the most crucial stage in this process of solving challenges in the field of green transition is a transformation in perspective for both parties involved in the European Green Deal table, and with this shift in mindset, additional doors of opportunity will open up in a variety of fields. Joint projects (between Russia and the European Union) involving lower carbon emissions, carbon commerce, and, in the case of renewable resources on Russian Federation territory, of course with the involvement of technologies from the European Union, can also be carried out within the framework of cooperation between Russia and the EU, as can supplies of low-carbon hydrogen from the Russian Federation to the European Union. The difficulties produced by climate change in recent years necessitate a green agreement that includes a lucrative and sustainable interdependence between Russia and the EU.

All of this requires an effective basis of interconnectedness through possibilities for financing, commodities, and innovations. Establishing and upholding a partnership like this between Russia and the European Union over a longer period of time is a dangerous endeavor that requires a strong political will, but it has the potential to be beneficial and bring many opportunities for Russia and the European Union in terms of low-carbon or other goods exports. Environmental issues are important and must be addressed by both Russia and the EU. Given the ongoing crisis between Russia and Ukraine, it is difficult to discuss a relationship between Russia and the EU because of the sanctions imposed. Even though these sanctions remain in place and political negotiations differ between Russia and the European Union, a potential partner in the greening process that leads to significant progress in mitigating climate change should not be avoided; in short, Russia should see the European Green Deal as progress toward many opportunities that benefit both sides.

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II. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND SECURITY STUDIES

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CYBERATTACKS AND THE EROSION OF STATE SOVEREIGNTY

*Ana Maria COSTEA**
*Mihail CARADAICA***

Abstract. *This paper will tackle the issue of cyberattacks and the Erosion of State Sovereignty as cyberattacks have become a significant challenge to state sovereignty in the 21st century, threatening traditional concept of territorial control as well as the modern reliance on digital infrastructure. As technology evolved, cyberattacks developed the ability to bypass national borders and undermine state authority, creating a significant impact on how sovereignty is understood and protected. Considering the theoretical contribution of Carl von Clausewitz on new forms of warfare and Joseph Nye Jr.'s on cyber deterrence, the aim of this paper is to analyze examples such as WannaCry, Stuxnet, SolarWinds, and Heartbleed and to reveal the extent to which cyber operations can erode state sovereignty and challenge international norms.*

Keywords: *Cyberattacks, sovereignty, warfare, deterrence, cyberwar.*

Introduction

The article addresses an important issue for international arena today, which is the impact of cyberattacks on state sovereignty. The methodology of the study will employ in theoretical and case study analysis. Using the theoretical contribution of Carl von Clausewitz on warfare and Joseph Nye Jr. on deterrence, the research builds a theoretical framework to understand the cyber threats as distinct and influential force in modern stated affairs. These theories allow us to analyse the strategic and political dimensions of cyberattacks and to investigate how these new digital threats are challenging the framework of understanding of state sovereignty without relying on traditional warfare. In addition to the theoretical background, the research focuses also on four case studies meant to illustrate the practical implications of cyber deterrence and sovereignty erosion. WannaCry, Stuxnet, SolarWinds, and Heartbleed were selected to highlight how various cyber operations disrupted critical infrastructure, exploited technological vulnerabilities, and impacted state sovereignty. These incidents are examined for their impacts as well as to highlight more general trends in cyberwarfare, like how simple it is to cross national borders online and how challenging it is to assign responsibility for attacks.

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Clausewitzian Approach to Cyber Warfare

Carl von Clausewitz was a military theorist of the 19th-century who dedicated his main work to the nature of war, focusing on its strategic, political, and psychological dimensions. Nowadays, Clausewitz's concept of war as an extension of politics is still valid, but it needs to be adapted to the new realities. While traditional warfare involves the mobilization of physical force in order to achieve its political objectives, a cyber warfare is conducted in a virtual environment involving digital targets and tools.

The Clausewitzian approach and the emergence of the so-called new types of wars have divided the academic community. There are scholars who have deepened the idea of new wars, stating that the ongoing revolution of military affairs has changed the very nature of warfare (Lambeth 1997, 75). In their view, both the traditional Westphalian state-centric model and the Clausewitzian approach have faced several challenges dictated by security dynamics nowadays (Wilkinson 2003, 29): i.e. when referring to low-intensity conflicts. Also, there are scholars who consider that the Clausewitzian theory is not yet outdated. They emphasise that Clausewitz's ideas still have the lead (Gray 1999), and that even the low-intensity conflicts can be viewed and understood through the Clausewitzian lens. Besides, in their opinion, this would be the only way to view such actions (Smith 2003, 19). It all depends on how Clausewitz's words are interpreted. **In our paper, given the aforementioned arguments** (and the diverse nature of actors involved in a cyberwar: international organisations, national states, organised crime, organised and unorganised groups of individuals, and individuals), **we tend to agree with the latter definition.**

Another example in this sense could be a successful cyber-attack on the bank system or the electric grid of one major city like New York, London or Berlin, etc. This would have a huge impact upon the security of the society. Individuals would not have access to their financial goods, and consequently they would not be able to provide for fundamental needs such as food or water. This could generate riots, a flare-up of criminal acts, and thus physical destruction. In the case of an attack on the electric grid, we could deal – in the worst-case scenario – with a situation similar to the Stone Age, since nowadays society is dependent on electricity. In the academia, it is accepted consensually that we have not yet seen a fully-fledged cyberwar, but if it is going to happen, its results will be very costly, and it might even be lethal (Junio 2013). In order to frame it, the terms 'force' and 'violence' need to be deconstructed, and related to the matter of lethality (Stone 2013). Hence, cyberwar can take different forms and have multiple consequences, but it is definitely war.

Secondly, as Clausewitz mentioned, war represents a paradoxical trinity. From this perspective, Thomas Rid (2012) considers that a cyber offensive act may be deemed an act of war, if it is "*violent, instrumental and political*" (Rid 2012, 2). According to him, no single cyberattack has yet met all the three criteria. In this sense, he gives the examples of the 1982 blow up of the Siberian Pipeline, the 2007 Estonian attacks, the Russian cyberattacks during the war with Georgia, etc. (Rid 2012, 10–15).

Thus, in our research, we shall consider that a cyberattacks becomes possible especially due to the impact of globalisation on the weapon systems, impact that generated deep transformation in technological areas, such as sensors, communications or computers. Thereby, the depth of the transformation encompasses the war's arena (space and cyberspace), and the way war is waged (speed and weaponry) (Larsdotter 2004, 135). From this perspective, time and distance are tremendously reduced, while critical digital infrastructure (such as large amounts of data, servers or telecommunication

networks) becomes one of the main targets of a probable – in our view – future war. Yet, the rationale behind such actions remains the same: the continuation of politics with other means.

Types of Deterrence in Cyberspace: Joseph Nye Jr.'s Framework

Another theoretical approach used to better frame the cyberattacks and their impact on state sovereignty is called deterrence in cyberspace and it has been introduced by Joseph Nye Jr. According to him, in the physical world, deterrence often relies on the threat of retaliation or punishment, while in the cyberspace the lack of clear attribution, the velocity of attacks, and the involvement of non-state actors make deterrence more complex. In this regard, Nye outlines several types of deterrence in cyberspace (Nye Jr. 2017):

- **The threat of punishment.** This is the classical type of deterrence in which the enemy chooses not to attack you for fear of your retaliation (Nye Jr. 2017, 55). Thus, the cost of war is too large for him/her to consider the attack, if he/she is to be rational in terms of costs and benefits.

- **Denial by defence.** This strategy refers to one's capacity to defend, recover and respond, and thus underscores the resilience of the country under attack (Nye Jr. 2017, 56–57). In simple terms, the walls are so high, that the enemies consider an attack to be futile, because they will not succeed in penetrating them.

- **The entanglement.** This type of deterrence refers to the high level of interdependence created by the globalisation phenomenon for the majority of entities (organisations or states). From this angle, although there is no fear of retaliation and/or of defence against the attack, the attacker may consider that the status quo is more beneficial, and therefore he will choose not to attack (Nye Jr. 2017, 58).

- **The normative taboos.** This fourth type of deterrence is rather similar to the previous one, except that here norms are the main element that discourages an actor from launching an attack for fear of losing his status or part of his soft power projection. An example in this sense could be the possibility of using a nuclear weapon in a low-level conflict (Nye Jr. 2017, 60). Another example adapted to cyberspace would be an attack conducted by the US against France's or Germany's critical infrastructure. Such an action would damage the Image of the US as a reliable partner, thus affecting its position at the international level.

Therefore, it is rather difficult to believe that deterrence really works in the cyberspace, due to various reasons, such as: the issue of attribution, the multiple types of actors involved and their numerous rational/irrational strategies and motives, the absence of a standard and the inability to use the same weapon twice with the same effect.

At the same time, the concept of cybersecurity involves some specific challenges with regard to the application of deterrence strategies (one of the main elements of Article 5). Joseph Nye proposes four layers of deterrence. However, the direct applicability of this conceptual framework is not without difficulties. Deterrence through the threat of punishing or of a retaliatory cyberattack is not as simple or as conventional as nuclear deterrence. Firstly because “cyber-weapons” cannot be standardized by calibre, firepower, range, TNT kilotons, or the power of a nuclear warhead. Secondly, cyber-tools are by definition stealthy, concealed: they cannot be displayed or presented as potent punishment weapons to deter the adversary.

Concluding, Nye emphasizes the importance of normative deterrence, while international norms and agreements create a collective understanding of unacceptable

behaviour in cyberspace. However, the effectiveness of these norms is often challenged by the difficulty of attributing cyberattacks to specific state actors and, also, by the lack of enforcement mechanisms. As this paper will show, the SolarWinds attack raised critical questions about the limits of cyber deterrence. Initially, it was attributed to Russia, but the complexity of responding to such a widespread espionage operation without escalating tensions, emphasised the limitations of both deterrence by denial and punishment in cyberspace.

Case studies of Cyberattacks

This chapter focuses on a comparative analysis of four major cyberattacks – WannaCry, Stuxnet, SolarWinds, and Heartbleed – that are emphasizing the evolving nature of a cyber warfare and its deep profound socio-political and economic impact. While these attacks vary in origins, targets and objectives, they still share similarities like the ability to exploit technological vulnerabilities and disrupt critical infrastructure through ransomware (WannaCry), espionage (SolarWinds), or security flaws (Heartbleed).

WannaCry, the first case study, is probably one of the most relevant examples of cyberattacks with wide-ranging and complex consequences and lessons learned. Launched on Friday, May the 12th, 2017, this virus was targeting Microsoft Windows systems and affected more than 230,000 computers in 150 countries (Ehrenfeld 2017). The WannaCry ransomware exploited a vulnerability of un-patched, not updated Microsoft Windows OS and, disrupted the operation of some public institutions and private companies such as Deutsche Bahn, FedEx, the Russian Central Bank, Telefónica, Megafon, or Russia's Interior Ministry (Mattei 2017). The first reaction of governments (Egloff and Smeets 2023) and private companies was to blame the USA, Microsoft or users who did not implement security upgrades (Huss 2017). However, after investigations, many accused North Korea because the first affected devices were the POS terminals of businesses in South Korea (Volz 2017). In the United Kingdom, the WannaCry attack particularly affected the NHS, even if it was not a specific target. In England, it affected at least 80 out of the 236 trusts, 603 primary care and other NHS organisations (Morse 2017). The total financial impact for NHS was £92 million, but its worldwide damage was around \$4 billion (Kaspersky 2023). From a national/ regional security perspective, WannaCry is considered one of the most dangerous attacks. This rose the question whether it could potentially enter under NATO's Article 5 application area, since it affected also the critical infrastructure of state institutions such as hospitals (the medical staff could not even access the patients' files).

Stuxnet is another example of malware that was considered a game changer due to its sophisticated design and its ability to show that potent cyber weapons are not just simple science fiction story, but real political tools. It was discovered in June 2010 and classified as a cyber weapon designed to sabotage the Iranian nuclear programme (Collins and McCombie 2012, 80). Since its initial spread, Stuxnet has infected over 60,000 computers, more than half of them in Iran, and other states like: India, China, Indonesia, South Korea, Azerbaijan, Malaysia, USA, the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Finland or Germany (Farwell and Rohozinski 2011, 23). This attack was a perfect example of state action designed to influence another state's behaviour by generating actual physical damage (i.e., damage to the Iranian nuclear power plants, by programming the centrifuges to rotate to such a high speed that they melted). According to David Fidler, the Stuxnet attack is a clear example of how cyber technologies can directly impact the realpolitik

(Fidler 2011, 56). This attack is of great importance for our research since it clearly had a political and security rationale behind it (to stop the Iranian nuclear program or at least to postpone it). According to public reports, it was supposedly developed by the USA and Israel with the aim of compromising Iran's nuclear programme. It is estimated that the attack has sent Iran 10 years back, since it affected the enrichment capacity of the nuclear fuel due to the physical destruction of the centrifuges. Here again, the question is whether the level of destruction could have been compared with that of an armed attack (*the physical damage, caused by this cyberattack upon a critical point from a military perspective, had large negative effects on the nuclear development programme which is of strategic importance in this field*), thus generating the possibility of a self-defence response under article 51 of the UN Charter (UN, n.d.). If that had been the case, Iran could have responded in a similar way, thus engaging in a cyberwar?

One of the most recent major cyberattacks took place in early 2020, and it was called "**SolarWinds**" – the name of a large-scale USA information technology company. In this case, hackers broke into the SolarWinds systems, and added a malicious code into the internal software called "Orion". The company reported that 18,000 of its 33,000 customers have installed updates that made customers vulnerable to hackers (Canales and Jibilian 2021). USA federal investigators and other cybersecurity experts stated that "*Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, known as the SVR, was probably responsible for the attack. Russian intelligence was also credited with breaking into the email servers of the White House, the State Department, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 2014 and 2015. Later, the same group attacked the Democratic National Committee and members of the Hilary Clinton presidential campaign*" (Canales and Jibilian 2021). Russia has denied its involvement in this attack. Nonetheless, the Biden administration considered enacting sanctions against it, demonstrating that there can be actual political and economic consequences in the case of a high-impact cyberattack. Therefore, the sanctions were mainly applied to Russian technology companies, and they restricted the procurement of ICTS from the Russian Federation (Soliman et al. 2021).

Regarding personal data and how vulnerable the users are in front of cyberattacks, the **Heartbleed** cyber-virus is a perfect case study. It was discovered on April, the 7th, 2014 by both Google Security and a Finnish cybersecurity company. According to some media reports, it affected about half a million of Internet's secure web servers by exposing personal and financial data held by online operators (Banks 2015, 1–2). Heartbleed was in fact a flow in a software called Secure Sockets Layer (SSL), used for electronic transactions, and has permitted hackers to steal passwords from unsuspecting users (Lewis 2014, 294). The 'Heartbleed' bug in OpenSSL was viewed in particular as a case study, given the fact that it had an impact over both communities of influence and stakeholders (Jeske et al. 2017, 174). This attack shows that even secured transactions had a high risk of being exposed, highlighting the limits of sovereign states in the area of cybersecurity.

Discussion: Cyberattacks and the Erosion of Sovereignty

Since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 the concept of state Westphalia in 1648 was central for the theories that tries to explain international relations, emphasizing a state's exclusive control over its territory, political system, and people. In theory, there are two key elements to define sovereignty: internal sovereignty, that refers to the control of the state within its borders, and external sovereignty, where a state is recognized as an independent actor on international arena (Jensen 2012). Even more, realist theory argue

that sovereignty enables states to defend against threats, both internal and external, through military and economic means (Sassen 1999). However, global interconnectivity and the technological development have introduced complexities to this traditional model, challenging the efficacy of state sovereignty in the digital age.

As we already showed, because they may target vital infrastructure and cross-national borders without a military invasion, cyberattacks threaten state sovereignty. Traditional methods of defence and retaliation are becoming less and less successful because these attacks are frequently clandestine, untraceable, and can originate from both state and non-state actors. High-profile events like the WannaCry ransomware attack and the SolarWinds hack, which compromised national security in several nations, demonstrate this erosion of sovereignty (Lotrionte 2012). The difficulty of attribution is such kind of conflict, complicates the enforcement of international law as attackers remain unidentified, creating the conditions for violating another state's sovereignty (Egloff and Smeets 2023). For instance, U.S. and Israeli agencies claimed that Stuxnet, an unprecedented cross-border cyberattack, targeted Iran's nuclear facilities and disabled its centrifuges without a single soldier ever crossing the border (Egloff and Shires 2022). Therefore, in the next paragraphs we will consider the erosion of the state sovereignty from a legal perspective, regarding the role of attribution, the context of global governance and from the national policy making process.

From a legal point of view, international law has been slow to adapt to the challenges posed by cyberattacks. Although using force against a state's political independence or territorial integrity is forbidden by the UN Charter, it is uncertain if cyberattacks are included by this clause. One effort to address these concerns is NATO's Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare. It is still a non-binding document, though, and it raises a number of issues, especially with regard to the standards for determining state accountability for cyberattacks (Egloff and Shires 2022). For this case, cyberattacks like Stuxnet and SolarWinds have pushed scholars in the legal field to rethink boundaries of state sovereignty and the rules governing state behaviour in cyberspace. The idea that sovereignty is linked to physical land is called into question by these attacks, which also make one wonder how international law might change to shield states against cyberattacks that do not employ conventional force. In the context of cyberattacks, the idea of non-intervention—which forbids forcefully engagement in another state's domestic affairs—has drawn special criticism. The application of this principle in the digital sphere is made more difficult by the clandestine character of cyber operations and the challenge of attribution (Nershi and Grossman 2023).

The role of attribution is also a pressing issue in the process of responding to cyberattacks. Unlike traditional warfare, where the identification of the aggressor is easier, cyberattacks are frequently organised by anonymous actors who can hide their identities using different techniques. An excellent illustration of this was Stuxnet, where the role of state actors was only revealed after an in-depth investigation. In a similar vein, it took months to attribute the SolarWinds attack to Russia, and this claim is still debatable in some circles (Trautman and Ormerod 2018). Without clear attributions, it is very difficult for a victim to justify a reaction or to pursue diplomatic solutions. Because of this ambiguity, states can more easily conduct cyber operations without worrying about a response, undermining the effectiveness of international rules. Due to this, cyberattacks such as SolarWinds and Stuxnet have created a situation in which governments can infringe on the sovereignty of other people with a high degree of impunity (Scaife, Traynor, and Butler 2017).

Another sign of state sovereignty erosion are the efforts made by the international community to develop a framework and to govern the state behaviour in cyberspace. At the UN level was established a working group with the purpose to set up new norms in order to shape state behaviour in cyberspace, including the principle that they should not knowingly allow on their territory any cyberattacks against other nations. However, these norms remain voluntary and non-binding, limiting their effectiveness in the mitigation process of cyber threats (Ghafur et al. 2019). This is also because many states view cyberspace as a new domain for asserting power and influence, making them more sceptical to reduce cyber capabilities. Cyber governance has consequently become fragmented, with several nations using various approaches to deal with the issue. As a result, the idea of sovereignty in the digital age is further undermined by a fragmented and frequently ineffectual international response to cyberattacks (Egloff and Shires 2022).

The national answers to cyber threats didn't take long to appear. Many countries have established national cybersecurity agencies and implemented laws designed to protect critical infrastructure from cyber threats. A good example here is the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) that has a leading role in defending against cyberattacks and coordinating responses to incidents like SolarWinds (Beaman et al. 2021). However, these efforts are often slowed down by the global nature of cyberspace. Since attacks can come from anywhere in the world, no state can completely control or defend its digital borders. Because cyberspace is permeable, nations are depending more and more on private enterprises, non-state actors, and international cooperation to safeguard their networks, resulting in a growing sharing of sovereignty. The traditional idea of sovereignty, according to which governments are exclusively in charge of their own security, is called into question by this interconnectedness (Trautman and Ormerod 2018).

Conclusions

This article explores how cyberattacks are increasingly and constantly challenging the concept of the state sovereignty. In cyberspace, where strategic goals are pursued by digital tools rather than physical force, Clausewitz's theory that warfare is an extension of politics is modified. Unlike conventional combat, cyberwarfare takes place in a virtual environment and interferes with systems that governments rely on to maintain their sovereignty, such as electrical grids and financial institutions. Because cyberattacks generate weaknesses that governments find difficult to solve through traditional combat or political means, the classical idea of state sovereignty needs to be revised.

Joseph Nye Jr.'s theory, on the other hand, is also very important for this analysis. According to Nye, deterrence in cyberspace is fundamentally different from deterrence in the real world because of things like the speed at which attacks occur and the difficulties in identifying specific criminals. His approach describes several deterrent tactics, including entanglement, punishment, denial by defence, and normative taboos. These ideas illustrate the difficulties a government encounters when it is trying to preserve sovereignty through digital defences. Comparing with Cold War deterrence model, when nuclear capabilities were quite visible and enemies quite clear, cyber deterrence is more ambiguous, often leading to limited responses to attacks and, ultimately, an erosion of sovereign authority in cyberspace.

The case studies that we have identified in this article, including Stuxnet, WannaCry, SolarWinds, and Heartbleed, showed the vulnerabilities of the sovereign states. For instance, Stuxnet disrupted Iran's nuclear ambitions by demonstrating how cyber

technologies may be used to do physical harm. The SolarWinds hack exposed how even strong states are vulnerable to these kinds of attacks by compromising the digital infrastructure of several U.S. governmental organisations. The Heartbleed cyberattack revealed flaws in vital digital infrastructures that governments depend on to safeguard private data and keep control over their internal affairs, while WannaCry ransomware attack emphasis how cyber threats can disrupt essential public services and critical infrastructure across multiple countries. Each example point the effectiveness of cyber operations in bypassing traditional state defences.

In conclusion, the theoretical frameworks and case studies reveal a significant transformation of the nature of state sovereignty. Westphalian model needs to be revised as cyberattacks are not bound by geographical or physical limitation. Clausewitz's notion of warfare and Nye's deterrence theory are reframed according to new realities and the states are required to reconsider what sovereignty means in an era where digital threats pervade borders without crossing them physically.

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SECURING EU DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP AT WHAT COSTS? REFLECTIONS ON DEFENCE SPENDING BETWEEN NORTH-SOUTH AND WEST-EAST DIVERGENS¹

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***Abstract.** The events produced at the international level today demonstrate and track the recent evolution of the security environment of each member state of the European Union and beyond. The direct and indirect threats to regional and global security and stability require the taking, by the bodies empowered in this regard, of some precautionary measures and the improvement of the already existing military equipment at the level of each structure representing the military force of the states. In order to increase the sustainability and production capacity of the European Union, it is essential not only to increase, but also to optimize national and international investments in this field. This approach is necessary to achieve a significant change in strategy and to strengthen the joint capability to respond to critical needs.*

***Keywords:** defense, budgets, acquisitions, security, culture, E.U., NATO.*

Introduction

Comparing defense resources between EU Member States can be a complex process and involves various aspects, including defense budgets, military forces, technological capabilities, long-term investments in defense research and development. Some states have sizable defense budgets, representing a significant portion of their total government spending (Steinbach et al., 2024), while other states have smaller budgets, but which may be growing due to regional security concerns, especially in the current context of military crisis (Klomp, 2023).

Some member states have large and diverse military forces with extensive power projection capabilities, while others, such as small states, may have smaller but

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specialized forces focused on territorial defense (Saba et al., 2022). Countries with a developed defense industry, such as Germany, France, may have access to advanced technology and high-quality military equipment, whereas other states may depend heavily on imports to meet and maintain their defense needs (Karamanis, 2022). There are efforts within the European Union to strengthen defense capabilities through stronger collaboration and integration between member states, but there are also significant differences in threat perception and defense priorities, as Eastern European countries may have specific territorial security concerns, instead those in the South can be considered threatened by migration or economic, political, social instability (Mölling et al., 2023).

There is no doubt that the European security order has been affected by the outbreak of war between Russia and Ukraine. The resistance shown by European countries and their common institutions in the face of challenges and threats will be decisive in determining whether international security will be maintained. European policymakers have been increasingly concerned about what they perceive to be an increased propensity (Fiott, 2022) on the part of Russia to take risks that affect security. As far as Europe and the European Union are concerned, there is currently no alternative to maintaining the security and resilience of society. This implies the preservation of political unity and permanent, ongoing preparation to defend Europe against imminent threats. It is thus necessary for each state to increase its resistance in Europe to ensure international safety and security. However, military defense is clearly neglected in some EU member states, leading to the weakening of Europe's defense capabilities.

I. Together or apart? Individual vs. collective defence budgeting

The adoption of a geopolitical strategy regarding the provision and maintenance of a state's security leads to the implementation of a narrative of balance, power and the management of strategic competition management (Kruck et al., 2023). In the new context, where the distinction between crisis, systemic conflict and war is disappearing, the concept of level of ambition plays a minor role in national security.

Improving the synchronization of national budget provisions for the financing of defense cooperation programs and safeguarding the budget allocated to these programs are complex issues for each individual state, as each country operates according to its own regulations (Klomp, 2023) regarding annual budgets, long-term investment plans and the direction of the use of allocated funds. The concept of resource pooling is influenced by each entity's security interests and strategic partnerships. The landscape of defense spending among member states has evolved considerably with the increase in spending affected by the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.

Underlining the importance of the existence of military forces capable of resisting external aggressions, as well as the role of the management of defense resources and the alliance in shaping the development of the armament industries results from the efforts made at the level of European countries regarding the consistent investments of the last three years, as well as from the increases defense budgets, which indicates the permanent concern of the Ministries of National Defense for national and international security.

Taking into account the importance given to the development at EU level by each member state, of national resilience, with priority in the current context in which the concept of peace and war cannot be precisely defined, it is necessary to take into account hybrid threats (Fiott, 2024), being the singular actions of a state's military forces are insufficient. They must use the joint actions (Ghulam et al., 2023) of the other bodies that

are part of the civilian sector and unite the capabilities of the military field with those of other resources, including legislative ones.

The budget intended for the defense of a state can be considered a connecting pivot between two parts, that of the defense resource management system and that of forced employment. The resources needed to make up the basic structure of the military force must be increased, depending on the level of preparation and the duration of a military operation. Also, the study analyzed in this paper also reveals the fact that limiting the integrated management of defense resources to annual defense expenditures can have long-term negative consequences both on the economy of a state and on the maintenance of regional security, creating the illusion that only by increasing the financial ceiling will also obtain the safety of the respective state.

1.1.1. Resilience mechanisms during peace time: E.U., NATO

The European Union is a substantial economic mechanism oriented, mainly, towards protecting the individual. European nations showed a desire to balance and restore the world that had gone through armed conflicts that culminated in the Two World Wars between the years 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, as a result of which the entire world suffered. Thus, the foundations of the European Union were laid.

One of the most important projections of the European Union was the implementation of a security policy for the coming years that would lead to supporting, alongside N.A.T.O., the democratization of the states in its vicinity and to avoid the propagation of political instability towards the member states of the Union.

The security link of the member countries of the European Union is given, first of all, by guaranteeing the essential role of N.A.T.O. which aims to increase the internal capabilities and coherence of the states, something that must lead to increasing the efficiency of activities for the prevention and management of regional and international crises that may arise.

So, we are talking about the concept of "strategic culture" (Kruck et al., 2023) which presupposes a community of values, principles, common ideas and, above all, presupposes that all EU member states assume responsibility for risks and opportunities in order to manage crises and the international security environment.

Ensuring national security involves the corroboration of strategies, policies and tools designed to protect a nation's sovereignty, territory, population and interests from internal and external threats. Key tools (Mölling et al., 2023) commonly used to achieve national security objectives include:

- Maintaining robust military capabilities is essential to deter aggression and defend against external threats. These are armies, navies, air forces and specialized units equipped with modern attack and defense weapons and equipment;

- Diplomatic efforts are a crucial element for building alliances, encouraging international cooperation and resolving conflicts by peaceful means. Diplomatic channels are used to negotiate treaties, agreements and alliances that promote common security interests and stabilize the regions of interest of participating states;

- Intelligence agencies play a vital role in collecting, analyzing and disseminating information about potential vulnerabilities and threats to national security. In this sense, it is imperative to monitor external activities, assess all risks and provide timely information to decision-makers for establishing strategies and the decision-making process;

- Creating credible deterrence mechanisms that would cause potential adversaries to desist from threatening or attacking a nation's interests;
- Ensuring economic stability, prosperity and resilience is very important for national security and includes maintaining sound economic policies, reducing dependence on critical resources from third countries and developing a financial environment capable of producing equipment and technologies to counter possible threats and crises military.

1.1.2. Activation mechanisms during war imminences

For any member state, the harmonization of the national legislation with that of the alliances of which it is a part must represent a desire (Charotte, 2023), thereby significantly contributing to the definition and maintenance of a security environment with a very high degree of safety. Thus, it is imperative to adapt the normative and institutional framework to the dynamics of vulnerabilities and international threats, to ensure the resilience of the standards and security requirements of national infrastructures, as well as the development of national and international cooperation.

Recently, two major crises have disrupted the security environment, namely the economic crisis arising from the medical crisis of 2019-2022 (caused by the COVID 19 pandemic) and the military crisis based on the two ongoing armed conflicts in different parts of the globe, respectively in Europe, the Russian-Ukrainian war that broke out on February 24, 2022 and the Israeli-Palestinian war that broke out on October 7, 2023.

Thus, regardless of the nature or reasons for the outbreak of conflicts that can affect global security and generate instability, the reality shows that financial resources have been consumed at unimaginable levels. These are determined, on the one hand, by the funds necessary to finance the war itself, and on the other hand, by the funds necessary for the reconstruction and restoration of the global order after the end of the war, which cannot be borne exclusively by the belligerent states, in particular in the context of the emergence of an economic crisis caused by the war.

According to the Report of the United Nations Panel of Experts on the Reduction of Military Budgets, military spending "is measured as the value of the flows of goods and services in the military sector over a full year"(United Nations, 2005).

The analysis of the determinants of military and defense spending is based, on the one hand, on the volume of funds consumed in different periods and, on the other hand, on differences between states. Thus, several questions are considered that states must find answers to, such as: What is the reason why a state has a low level of military spending? What are the reasons that cause states in the same region or area to have significantly higher expenditures than others?

The alliance of the member states of the European Union and NATO undoubtedly leads to higher expenditures on the part of the main actors for the augury of international security (Özcan, 2022). States must make substantial financial efforts given the high costs of technology in equipping today's armed forces, as well as the vulnerabilities encountered in light of current threats and challenges.

Following the Vilnius Summit in 2023, under the pressure of unfulfilled commitments and the need for resources, it was reiterated that states have committed to at least 2% of GDP in defense investment. Also at that time, the need to create a new joint body, namely the NATO-Ukraine Council, was considered, an opportunity for all allies to be on an equal footing with Ukraine in terms of promoting political dialogue,

cooperation and supporting Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership to NATO.

Data published in NATO's 2022 Annual Report indicated that only seven of the 31 allies met the criterion of spending 2% of GDP on defense. These countries are Greece, United States of America, Lithuania, Poland, United Kingdom of Great Britain, Estonia and Latvia (NATO, 2023).

Because of the complex nature of the economic factor, security and defense are influenced, as it focuses on several trajectories such as governance, revenue, budget deficit, public debt and inflation. Economic factors are the main generators of a state's economy, so that the defense budget of the respective state can be supported through the allocated financial resources. The increase in the financial investments of the states in defense and security was observed in the context of the outbreak of the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine, especially of the states in the vicinity of the conflict zone (Florișteanu, 2023).

II. Case studies in the E.U. For an efficient budgeting and mobilization

Some countries in Europe have become dependent on the peace dividend, so whether security threats are real or not, a tightening of the adjustment of spending priorities is born. While many of the state budgets in Europe show large deficits, the welfare of the state is maintained. Given the context caused by the war between Russia and Ukraine, state companies and European citizens requested financial support to compensate for the expenses caused by the increase in energy prices and inflation.

Financing defense spending through debt is only a short-term solution. As a result of events such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the financing of the defense budget from the public debt of the states is possible without the need to cut the budgets of other areas (Fiott, 2022), but this leads to the false impression that security is granted and guaranteed for free and implicitly to the reduction the pressure for budget adjustment.

II.2.1. North vs. south: evidences from Finland, Lithuania, Romania

So Finland, to ensure its security, kept conscription and continued to invest quite heavily in defense spending. The Finnish army is one of the strongest armies in Europe. Finland's reserve infantry is among the largest in Europe and artillery capacity is high by European standards. The share of military spending slightly exceeds NATO's 2% index requirement (Kivinen, 2024), which is due in particular to major investments in naval and air forces. The decision of Finland's investments in the budget of the naval and air forces was taken before the start of the Russo-Ukrainian war. The basic design of the Navy's four new battleships is nearly complete, and construction of the first assault ship is scheduled to begin in late October 2024. The Navy's first corvette-type warship will be operational in 2027. The total financing of the project is 10 billion euros. Finland's chosen F-35 is a single-engine, command center flying combat weapon platform. It can be equipped with in-hull missiles and out-of-hull weapons for both defense and offense. Finland made steps for the purchase of 64 aircraft with weapons and combat and attack systems (Kivinen, 2024).

The armed forces of Lithuania consist of land, naval, air and Special Operations Forces. Their purpose is to be the main pillar of deterrence against any threat to the nation's security. The state's defense system is based on the concept of total and unconditional defense, and the purpose of the country's defense policy is to form and prepare society for general defense. The country has resorted to restructuring the armed

forces so that one-tenth of the ground forces can be deployed at any time to take part in international operations, while half of the ground forces are prepared for deployment outside Lithuania's borders (Bankauskaitė et al., 2023). Despite all the talk of Russia's hybrid threats, Lithuania's first reaction to managing the country's defense resources was to invest in military equipment and increase its combat capabilities (Bankauskaitė et al., 2023). It initiated a vast program of military acquisitions, namely mobile artillery systems, armored vehicles, tactical combat vehicles, helicopters and tactical equipment. The state is also focusing on critical military infrastructure, so it has upgraded training grounds, military bases, but also built new ones.

Both Lithuania and the other Baltic states are jointly addressing the capability gaps in maritime and air defense in the Baltic Sea region. These states have made clear their demands for improvements in political and military decision-making, peacetime rules of engagement, and force generation procedures and requirements for effective and timely transition from air policy of NATO to their own air defense. In the current security environment and considering the imbalance of armed forces existing in the Baltic region, Lithuania's strong transatlantic connection becomes exceptionally significant for ensuring the security and defense of the entire territory.

According to published data, the Norwegian Army represents the largest branch of the Norwegian armed forces, having modern and well-trained units, being able to defend the entire surface of the territory. The Army has soldiers under its command who conduct international combat operations, guarding, security, surveillance, training and other support functions. The Norwegian Armed Forces has a total of 8,773 soldiers, and the defense budget was NOK 40.8 billion in 2021 (Bjur, 2024). With the unexpected emergence of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, there have been short-term priority changes in Norway's defense mechanisms and resources, so the government has increased the budget for peacetime vigilance, training and standing military activity, training and exercises, being necessary to replenish resources and defense reserves during wartime. Another major change was the abandonment of Norway's traditional policy of not exporting arms to countries in armed conflict (Bjur, 2024). Armed forces, including the Norwegian Intelligence Service, have focused particularly on the northern region of the territory, where the state borders Russia, and oil installations in the North Sea have enjoyed increased protection.

Romania shares the longest border with Ukraine and has faced a series of important challenges since the Russian invasion, having to respond both to the humanitarian consequences caused by this crisis and to the economic consequences following the conflict. The Romanian authorities have signaled a potential change in strategic direction as a result of the outbreak of the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Thus, in October 2023 the Supreme Defense Council of the Country, representing the main decision-making body in the defense field of Romania, emphasized the importance and necessity of developing a sovereign defense industrial base by capitalizing on EU and NATO defense instruments. Another topic on which CSAT focused its attention was the analysis of the Endowment Plan of the Romanian Army for the period 2024-2033, in order to counter the threats by increasing the quantities of ammunition necessary for the fight, as well as the gradual constitution of the costs (Albulescu, 2024). The Romanian Army will concentrate all its strategic efforts in order to strengthen the defense capacity both at the national level and within the alliances. Thus, consideration will be given to equipping the national army with high-performance military technique and equipment, compatible and interoperable with those existing in

the armies of the other EU and NATO member states. Referring to Romania, the data show that arms exports registered significant increases after the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which demonstrates the potential of the industry characterized both by the production of arms and by the country's ability to deliver to other states. For these reasons, the increase in the percentage of GDP allocated to the defense and security sector must be visible and largely dedicated to the purchase of military products designed and manufactured by domestic industry.

In the context generated by the military crisis that broke out between Russia and Ukraine, the defense industry of the EU member states reacted in a timely manner in terms of increasing the production and export of military equipment and modern military systems capable of countering Russia's offensive attacks. The analyzed data indicate that, in Romania, the increase in the export of armaments and ammunition has been achieved, with favorable conditions for the conclusion of partnerships with various companies from the Euro-Atlantic area. It was decided that a large part of the budget allocation of 2.5% GDP (Albulescu, 2024) is intended for the purchase of military equipment that meets NATO standards in order to equip the Romanian army.

II.2.2. West vs. East: Evidences from Germany, France, Poland, Spain

For Germany, the military crisis triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 meant questioning the security that had prevailed in Europe since the end of the Second World War, which led Chancellor Scholz to take the initiative to carry out security and defense changes. Thus, far-reaching changes were announced in the country's policy and, in particular, in terms of defense, i.e. the immediate stop of the construction of the Nord Stream 2 Gas Pipeline, the financing of 100 billion euros for the German armed forces, the provision of the national army with fighter jets F-35 (Lindholm et al., 2024) for participating in NATO actions against the nuclear threat, providing military support and aid to Ukraine, as well as adopting unprecedented sanctions against Russia. Germany wanted at all costs to avoid being perceived by Russia as an active participant in the war. One issue that was raised in this context concerned the ability of the German military, whose budget has been reduced in recent years, to meet its arms delivery quotas. Germany has also pledged to increase defense spending to 2% of GDP by 2024. In April 2023, the Ministry reported that €32 billion of the surplus budget had been allocated and earmarked for new projects aimed at purchases (Lindholm et al., 2024). Germany, for example, in terms of program and objective changes, has taken a different stance on arms deliveries, moving from a cautious emphasis on non-lethal assistance to supporting Ukraine by providing heavy weapons, namely tanks, howitzers, battle tanks, air defense systems. At the same time, Germany saw considerable increases in defense spending, with a budget surplus of 100 billion euros, which required a constitutional change and a major increase in the regular defense budget. Finally, Germany strengthened its deployment of military forces on NATO's eastern flank, including by placing permanent troops in Lithuania, abandoning the rotational deployment. Germany's industrial strength is also reflected in a vast defense industry capable of producing a wide variety of military equipment, vehicles, weapons and ammunition.

France has traditionally been the strongest supporter of European defense since the signing of the Brussels Treaty in 1948. France invested in defense during the years when many European states were reaping the dividends of peace and moving away from collective defense. This is confirmed by the fact that France's defense investments and

spending have never fallen to a low level. The French defense model has always maintained a high degree of military readiness and capability given the fact that it has always focused on crisis management. Own, long-term investment in independent nuclear deterrence has always been linked to the risk of a conflict involving a major power. France's defense resources did not require a significant transformation approach in the context of the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine, as the French forces demonstrated that the current level of training and engagement is capable of rapid deployment, demonstrating their capabilities to send military forces to Romania, while maintaining its omnipresence in Estonia and increasing its air and sea commitments to NATO and the EU in order to maintain international security.

As for Spain, military planners monitor the requirements of the new geostrategic environment created by the outbreak of the military crisis, aiming to adapt the defense concept of the armed forces and their military posture to the new context. Spain is not undertaking significant strategic assessments, and military transformation consists of adopting incremental changes in the employment of military forces and capabilities needed to address the threats and vulnerabilities created by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Spain's defense system aims to effectively manage crises, so there is a need to increase the number of units responsible for the training of the armed forces. Until now, due to existing budgetary constraints (Remiro et al., 2024), Spain has been able to provide a high level of training only to the armed forces on missions abroad and to those permanently on alert within its territory. Expanding military training capabilities requires significant investment in military mobility, logistics, and sustaining military forces' capabilities to meet armed challenges and meet new tasks. The Spanish Ministry of Defense will maintain the percentage of the country's contribution to operations aimed at ensuring international peace and security, as well as the importance of the contribution of the armed forces to security and civil protection missions (Remiro et al., 2024). At the same time, the air force belonging to the Ministry of Defense of Spain is a priority for defense and is going through a period of major restructuring and modernization. There is also a strengthening of the commitment according to which Spain will collaborate and cooperate with other European states, offering its support for the development and assurance of international security and defense.

Due to its geographical position and its potential objective, Poland is the epicenter of most processes related to securing NATO's eastern flank. Poland hosts approximately 12,000 NATO troops (Bornio, 2024) under the umbrella of unilateral and allied commitments, military infrastructure for alliance-led units, and the repositioning of ammunition and weapons to be used in the event of military tensions escalating. The large-scale invasion of Ukraine led to a considerable increase in the level of defense spending, military procurement, and the strengthening of Poland's technological and combat capabilities. In 2023, Poland allocated 3.9% of its GDP to defense spending, while in 2024 it is expected to reach the level of 4.2%, and the process of rapid militarization has been intensified (Bornio, 2024). The country acquired, among other things, American M1A1 and M1A2 tanks, increased the number of HIMARS ordered to 500, bought more than 200 Korean-sourced K2 tanks, about 600 Korean K9 howitzers, 48 FA-50 combat training aircraft and plans to start domestic production of 800 K2 tanks in the Polish version (Bornio, 2024). The Polish army currently numbers around 202,100 soldiers (Bornio, 2024), which gives Poland a considerable potential and major momentum compared to other European Union states.

III. Some solutions to the problem: increasing the industrial productivity of the defence equipment branch

For many systems in production, industrial capacity has been reduced to match demand levels in core domestic and export markets. Defense manufacturers are reluctant to invest without contracts or firm commitments from customers, given that demand may collapse again with the end of the military conflict in Ukraine. Most European states responded to Russia's invasion of Ukraine by significantly increasing defense budgets, human resources, making commitments to strengthen military capabilities by purchasing the necessary equipment often from sources outside the EU.

A comprehensive allied posture focused on collective deterrence and common defense against a common threat must be supported by adequate military stockpiles as well as adequate industrial capacity to meet this task (Bergmann et al., 2023). The problem for European countries is outlined by the fact that consistent, unexpected and prolonged military deliveries to Ukraine have reduced EU military stockpiles to a minimum.

Joint procurement programs are essential for the efficiency and accessibility of multinational solutions regarding the needs of the armed forces, including in order to develop the capabilities necessary to ensure national security. No European country, not even Germany with an extensive defense industry, has in itself a comprehensive portfolio of defense manufacturing technology capabilities in aerospace, land warfare, naval and cyber defense systems. At the European level, states pursue special interests related to industry, defense resources, which is an impediment to interoperability and the deepening of independent defense capabilities. So, the solution consists in developing and maintaining a European cooperation and coordination as close as possible, as well as in the inclusion of a consolidation of common European research in the field of defense and the management of defense resources.

Defense procurement management aims to ensure the efficient use of funds allocated for the procurement of products, services and works required by the military. An important element is ensuring a balance between the expenses necessary for the endowment and those intended to provide goods and services for the military personnel. It also seeks to comply with the regulations on public procurement in the field of defense and national security in accordance with those applicable at the European level.

Anticipating and addressing bottlenecks in national defense supply chains requires a collaborative and strategic vision. This involves sharing and aggregating data on demand and production capacity across the European Union.

It is expected that both the production and the import and export of modern military weaponry will continue to increase globally, as each state is interested in maintaining its security. At the same time, the states will continue to invest in high-performance military systems with which they will be able to defend themselves in the context of the outbreak of new international crises.

The military potential of a state is determined by a number of important factors. First, a critical vector is soldier morale and the nation's will to conduct military operations, which influences defensive capabilities and operational capabilities. The size of a country's army and its military equipment are criteria for determining the degree of defense. In addition, a state's military potential is also generated by land, sea, air, space and cyber capabilities.

It is true that a significant increase in defense spending is observed, but there are also stark differences between the states in the East and North of Europe and those in the

South and West, given the geographical positioning of the former much closer to the borders of Ukraine (Dorn et al., 2024b). Moreover, increasing defense spending will not automatically lead to the strengthening of Europe's military capability, as studies show that investments are being made in available systems and platforms, identified over time as insufficient (Dorn, 2024a; Florișteanu, 2023; Saba, 2022). In many cases, Europe's industrial capabilities are either non-existent or insufficient to meet increased defense demand. We inevitably face a situation where this growth is concentrated in the short term and therefore does not stimulate the development of European military and defense capabilities in the long term. As an immediate reaction determined by the urgency of the moment, European states acquire the equipment that is still available and that can be delivered quickly, relying on uncoordinated national decisions that can ultimately lead to the destruction of international security.

So, the distribution of the defense industry corresponds to the degree of general economic development of regions and countries. An important factor preventing the rapid development of the European defense industry is that decisions on defense and security spending are made at the national political level, with each major state having its own national champions of industry, which reduces technological capabilities and limits the ability to share experiences across borders. The development of capabilities is also hindered by the fact that various universities adopt a restrictive attitude towards cooperation with the defense industry.

Conclusions

Member States should consider pooling national defense contributions (Becker et al., 2021), which would require a collective agreement to commit national funds to a joint European initiative, balancing national interests with the broader objective of security and stability in Europe. Concurrent and complementary defense capabilities enhance Europe's strategic autonomy by promoting a robust integrated defense system capable of ensuring a high level of international security. This competition enhances performance, creating a complex mechanism of resilient strategies against opponents and a singular approach to safety. It is crucial that Europe's defense has varied support capabilities and redundancies to address vulnerabilities.

So, the impact of the military crisis between Russia and Ukraine on the military budgets of the member states depends on the countries involved, their proximity to the conflict, their strategic interests. Eastern European countries, especially those bordering Ukraine (Fiott, 2024), have increased military defense spending in response to threats from Russia. Many European countries have prioritized defense modernization to address emerging threats and improve military readiness and capability, including investment in advanced weaponry and cyber security.

Relative to the Nordic countries, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia led to a more unified perception of security threats. The most transformative impact of the war on European defense is in the northern region of Europe. Given the considerable financial strength of these states, additional investment will lead to significant additional military capability.

Regarding the perspective of the defense of the European states for the year 2030, it is observed that Germany, France, Poland and the Baltic states are making major investments in the field of security and defense, which will prove sustainable in the long term (Bergmann et al., 2023). The countries aim to replace significant stockpiles of

equipment that have been supplied to Ukraine, contributing to the modernization of their own military and armed forces.

Of course, Europe has grown its defense spending substantially given the shock of the military crisis, and in the long run the key variable will become less threat perception and interest in economic growth. As such, as long as there is stability from an economic point of view, the sustainability of defense spending will also be maintained, an aspect that contributes to national and international security.

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ONLINE PROPAGANDA AND DISINFORMATION IN RUSSIAN UKRAINIAN CONFLICT

*Maria ENACHI**

Abstract. *This paper examines propaganda and disinformation in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, paying particular attention to the role that social media and the internet played between March 2022 and March 2023. Both sides in the conflict used the online environment to shape public perceptions: Russia, through an intense disinformation campaign, and Ukraine, by attracting international support. Social media platforms have implemented measures to counter Russian disinformation, raising questions about information control and potential consequences for freedom of expression. Disinformation has had a significant impact on public trust in different types of media, with a trend of increasing trust in traditional (audiovisual) sources and decreasing trust in digital platforms. Russian tactics such as the use of "troll factories" and fake social media accounts have been key elements in this campaign. The importance of this topic is that it illustrates the critical dimension of information warfare in modern conflicts, where the manipulation of public perceptions can influence not only international support but also the legitimacy of the governments involved.*

Keywords: *Propaganda, Disinformation, Misinformation, Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Social media, Information warfare, Information manipulation, Troll factories*

Introduction

This research analyzes the critical role of propaganda and disinformation in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, with a particular focus on the online environment. In the digital age, social media and the internet have become essential tools in shaping public perception and influencing international opinion, thus becoming crucial battlegrounds in modern conflicts. This study examines in particular the period March 2022 to March 2023, when both Russia and Ukraine engaged in large-scale online campaigns, using social media platforms to pursue their respective agendas. The importance of this topic lies in analyzing how contemporary conflicts extend beyond physical battlefields into the realm of information warfare. In this conflict, controlling narratives, disseminating misinformation and manipulating public perception have become as critical as military action. Social media platforms, often the main vehicles for disseminating information, have also been central to this struggle. Their efforts to curb disinformation, especially Russian propaganda, raise important questions about the balance between combating falsehoods and maintaining freedom of expression.

The research uses a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative content analysis with quantitative data collection to assess the dissemination and impact of misinformation. Key methods include analyzing social media posts, identifying disinformation campaigns and assessing public trust in the media. This study seeks to understand not only the strategies used by

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Russia to propagate false narratives, but also how these narratives have influenced the global public's understanding of the conflict. The objectives are twofold: to explore the dynamics of online disinformation in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and to assess the effectiveness and consequences of social media platforms' responses to these disinformation efforts.

This study is guided by two key research questions:

1. What impact has Russian disinformation had on international perceptions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict?
2. How have measures taken by social media platforms to combat disinformation affected freedom of expression and the quality of public discourse?

By addressing these questions, the research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the role of digital platforms in modern warfare, the challenges they face in regulating content, and the wider implications for democratic societies and international relations. In an age where information can be weaponized, the findings of this study will provide insights into the ongoing struggle between truth and manipulation in the digital landscape.

Overall analysis

The current military conflict between Russia and Ukraine has a new front, which has emerged in the armed conflicts not so long ago, namely the modern information space - social media and the internet. The role of social media has been observed since the Euromaidan uprising in Ukraine, the crisis in Crimea and the separatist rebellion in Donbass.

Both Russia and Ukraine have used social media to promote their agenda. Russian-origin sources were observed mainly using social media to spread misinformation about the conflict, while Ukrainian sources sought support from others, mainly Western countries (Fau, 2022). During the conflict, it could be observed that social media took various measures to restrict Russian-origin disinformation news. Blocking access to news of this type, however, demonstrates the ability of social media platforms to restrict a certain type of information, which is a threat if we look at the situation from other perspectives. One of the situations approached from a different perspective may be that of restricting political agendas or any type of information that could be considered as non-compliant with the policies and standards of these platforms.

According to Figure 1 we can analyze which were the most viewed articles in English on Wikipedia in 2022, so in the top we find articles such as *"2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine"* with about 50 million views, followed by articles titled *"Vladimir Putin"* or *"Ukraine"*. Wikipedia is not the most trusted source of information, but this factor is not known by the general public who use this online encyclopedia as their first source of information. The diminished trust in Wikipedia stems from the fact that every user of the platform can make changes to the information provided on the page, which are not always checked by the editors. Thus, it is easy enough to promote certain misinformation on Wikipedia, and those who do not inform themselves from multiple sources tend to trust the popular internet encyclopedia.

Article title	Number of views
Cleopatra	55,882,835
Jeffrey Dahmer	54,010,852
2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine	50,314,503
Deaths in 2022	46,512,168
2022 FIFA World Cup	46,435,339
Elizabeth II	43,566,103
YouTube	39,227,778
Elon Musk	27,875,674
Vladimir Putin	25,464,698
Bible	23,730,279
Ukraine	23,558,137
Cristiano Ronaldo	22,693,305
Skathi (moon)	22,445,809

Showing entries 1 to 13 (100 entries in total)

Figure 1 Most viewed English articles on Wikipedia in 2022, Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1358978/wikipedia-most-viewed-articles-by-number-of-views/> accessed on 17/04/2023

Thus, some users who are able to distinguish fake news from the real news by noticing the presence of fake news on popular news sites and various media sources have started to question the reality of what they see and read online, which increases trust in traditional media across Europe. According to Figure 2, public trust in traditional media (audiovisual and print) has improved over the last year, but trust in the internet and social networks has declined.



Figure 2. Trust in the media, Source: <https://www.ebu.ch/news/2017/05/trust-gap-between-traditional-and-new-media-widening-across-europe> accessed on 19/04/2023

More detailed data can be seen in Annex 1, according to which audiovisual media is the most trusted in Europe. Radio is considered to be the most trusted source, with 59% of EU citizens trusting this medium, closely followed by television at 50%. Over the last five years, trust in both media has increased across Europe.

Confidence in print media has also increased over the last five years, despite the fact that a large proportion of EU citizens do not consider these sources to be trustworthy. At the same time, it can be seen from Annex 2 that trust in the internet and social networks continues to decline, with trust in social networks at an all-time low. Only 36% of EU citizens trust the internet, while only 21% of EU citizens trust social networks. In all 33 countries surveyed, the same pattern could be observed - the number of people who do not trust social networks was higher than those who trust it.

Some major regional variations could also be observed. For example, citizens in South-Eastern Europe and the United Kingdom have the least trust in print media, while citizens in Western Europe have the least trust in social networks. Nordic countries have the highest level of trust in radio and television. In Finland, for example, 82% of people trust radio and 78% trust television.

Asked *which of the following news sources they pay more attention to in relation to the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine*, according to Figure 3, citizens from different countries responded in different ways. Engaging with news about the war between Russia and Ukraine occurred mostly via television or online media in the five countries selected for this study, and German consumers were the most likely to receive updates about the war via television, with 46% of them saying they did so.

Meanwhile, over 20 percent of Brazilian respondents paid the most attention to social media for news on the topic, compared to just six percent of Germans. Indeed, German respondents were generally less likely to have received updates via online news channels and, along with the Polish audience, were the most likely to have used radio as their main news source for updates on the Russia-Ukraine invasion.

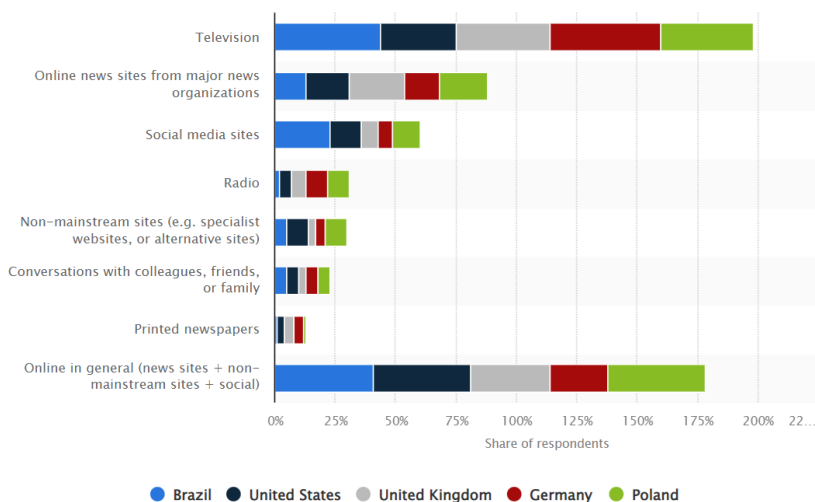


Figure 3. News sources with the most attention for news about the war between Russia and Ukraine in selected markets around the world on February 20, 2022, Source: <https://bit.ly/3OJ3OWA> accessed on 15/04/2023

To create a more global picture of the adult public's level of trust in the media, we analyze a study that examined media perspectives in 40 countries. According to the results of this study, presented in Appendix 3, levels of trust differ considerably around the world, although, for the most part, trust in the media in Europe is highest. Western Europeans in particular trusted the media more than citizens in other parts of the world, with 65% of Finns, for example, trusting the news.

The United States and Slovakia ranked at the bottom of the world in terms of consumer trust in the media, along with Hungary, Taiwan and Greece. Media sources in some of these countries can be seen as insufficiently independent from state institutions. In general,

globally, social networks are considered to be a less reliable source, as can be seen in Annex 2. In the current climate of political events, both younger and older generations find it increasingly difficult to trust the media.

With a decreasing level of trust in the available sources of information, we observe varying opinions of European citizens on certain events related to the current Ukrainian conflict. For example, in May 2022, around 90 percent of people in Finland believed that Russia was primarily responsible for the outbreak of war in Ukraine, compared to five percent who believed it was the fault of Ukraine, the European Union or the United States, as shown in Figure 4. In ten different European countries, an average of 73 percent of citizens believed that Russia was responsible for the war, with Italy having the lowest percentage of people who believed this, at 56 percent.

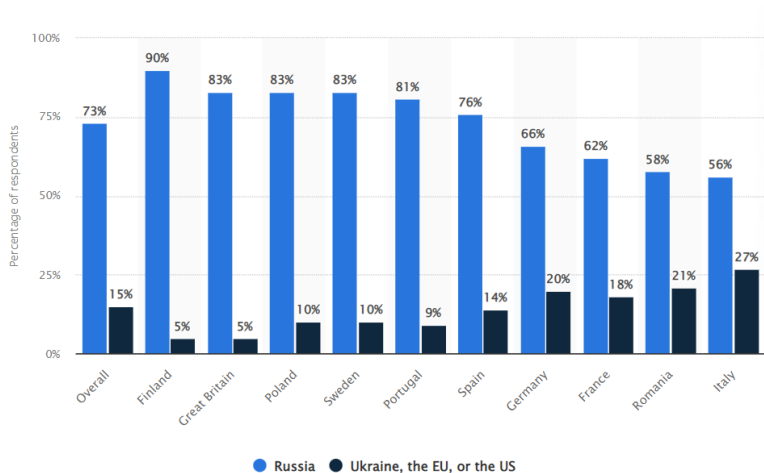


Figure 4. Who is mainly responsible for the outbreak of war in Ukraine, Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1314900/europe-survey-on-responsibility-for-war-in-ukraine/> accessed on 18/04/2023

As we have seen in Figure 4, even if with a large discrepancy, the opinions of European citizens are nevertheless different. As we have identified, a large majority consider Russia to be the aggressor country and to blame for the current conflict, but there is also a minority who have a different opinion, and claim that the blame for the conflict lies with Ukraine, the EU or the US.

In order to see in more detail who are the supporters of Ukraine and Russia in the current situation on social media, we will analyze the share of posts containing the message of *#IStandwithUkraine* or *#IStandwithRussia*, represented by Annexes 4 and 5. Annex 4 presents us with data that, as of December 2022, social media posts from Ukraine accounted for the largest share of global posts containing the hashtag *#IStandwithUkraine*, expressing support for Ukraine in the Russian invasion that began in February 2022. Posts originating from the United States followed closely behind with a share of over 32%, followed by Canada, Germany and Australia.

Annex 5, on the other hand, presents us with information that, as of December 2022, social media posts from India accounted for the largest share of global posts containing the hashtag *#IStandwithRussia*, expressing support for Russia in the war in Ukraine. Posts from the United States followed with a share of over 16%, followed by South Africa and Pakistan.

As a result, we can see that there is a parallel between the sources used by citizens for information, the level of trust in the media and the level of trust in the information about the Russian-Ukrainian war. The media plays a critical role in shaping public opinion, and the lower the level of trust in the media, the less trust the public will have in the information provided, even if some of it is true news, proving that trust in these sources is an important variable in creating well-informed societies.

Disinformation tactics

Disinformation is false, inaccurate or misleading information deliberately created, presented and disseminated, as we have previously identified. The actions taken by Russia fall squarely within the definition of disinformation (Leshner et al, 2022). Often information from Russian sources is false or conceals part of the truth (Cadier et al, 2022). Russian actors use various strategies to introduce, amplify and spread false and distorted narratives around the world. The methods by which they spread information rely on a combination of fake and artificial accounts, anonymized websites, and state media sources to distribute and amplify content that promotes their interests and undermines competing narratives (Cadier et al, 2022).

Russian propaganda and disinformation actions are produced on a massive scale and are distributed in massive numbers across various types of information media, both online and traditional media. Among the producers and promoters of this type of content are the notorious Russian trolls, who will be discussed later. The disinformation tactics used, however, can be as diversified as one can imagine. Thus in 2020, Facebook identified a Russian military operation targeting Ukraine, where the participants of this operation had created fake profiles on Facebook and pretended to be journalists, creating fake news stories where they tried to spread disinformation in a way that could appear more credible to the public (Facebook, 2021).

Similar tactics could also be observed during the current conflict, which may indicate the continued presence of disinformation approaches and the constant need to adapt and create new methods once previous ones are revealed. Thus, one of the new tactics used was even uncovered by the British government, who found that some influencers on TikTok were being paid to promote pro-Russian content (The Guardian, 2022). Attempts to manipulate public opinion on social media have also taken place on Twitter and Facebook, with efforts being extended to other platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok.

The Russian government also runs coordinated information and/or disinformation campaigns on its own social media accounts. An example being 75 Russian government Twitter accounts, with 7.3 million followers amassing 35.9 million retweets, 29.8 million likes, and 4 million replies, tweeted 1,157 times between February 25 and March 3, 2022 (Thompson & Graham, 2022). Approximately 75% of the tweets targeted Ukraine, and many of them promoted disinformation that questioned Ukraine's status as a sovereign state, drew attention to alleged war crimes committed by other countries, and spread conspiracy theories (Thompson & Graham, 2022). Some accounts have used the "typo squatting" method, making a record on websites using a deliberate misnomer of similarly named websites of popular media platforms in order to mislead (Dwoskin, 2021). An example being the creation by Russian trolls of a fake website of the Polish daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* to spread misinformation about the reported atrocities in Bucha (Stefanicki, 2022).

These disinformation tactics have been used for many years, even before the current Ukrainian conflict. The actions of the Internet Research Agency, the notorious troll factory which we will discuss in more detail later, have been known for many years. In 2017, Facebook exposed 126 million of its users promoting disinformation before the 2016 US elections, as well as the fact that more than 50 countries have been targeted by false information shared by those accounts since 2017, the most frequently targeted during that period being the US, Ukraine and the UK (Stamos, 2018).

Another disinformation tactic used is the feedback loop method. One such loop has been observed in the case of a conspiracy theory that emerged about biological facilities in Ukraine masquerading as a secret biological weapons program. The initial theory was promoted by a number of Twitter accounts related to conspiracy theories in the United States, amplified by mainstream media, being television news in this case, only to be shared by Russian state propaganda (Ling, 2022).

Which audiences believe the pro-Kremlin disinformation?

Pro-Russian disinformation primarily targets current pro-Russian supporters, who support the ruling Russian party and the views of the Russian government (Kragh & Åsberg, 2017). In the U.S. there are also supporters of the Kremlin regime in the U.S., often identified as partisans, who seem more likely to believe information congruent with their political beliefs (Pereira et al, 2018). Another group targeted by pro-Kremlin disinformation news are those who do not trust the US government, an example of which is Russia Today which shares its messages to this specific audience (Yablokov, 2015).

Another study identified yet another correlation with trust in pro-Kremlin disinformation. From one point of view, studies show that Ukrainians tend to avoid political choices based on ethnicity or language (Erlich & Garner, 2021), being accommodated to an existing difference (Wanner, 2014). However, the current foreign policy implemented by Russia tends to reunite the "fragmented world of Russian-speakers" (Makarychev, 2014), and to protect the Russian language (Tsygankov, 2015). At present, we can see that the Russian government sees the ethnic and linguistic diaspora as a potential supporting force for its foreign policy (Lange-Ionatamišvili, 2015). Thus, considering Russia's current policy with reference to language and ethnicity, as well as the fact that the spoken language has become more a matter of choice, identification with Russian ethnicity and the use of Russian can be correlated with belief in pro-Kremlin claims and distrust of true statements (Wanner, 2014).

Another category would be citizens who lack political awareness and political information (Carpini et al, 1993). In theory, those with political awareness should be better able to discern true news from fake news. Awareness should also be positively correlated with educational attainment, which has been shown to be a variable in citizens' news awareness (Seo et al, 2020). Nyham (2010) indicates in this context that increased news consumption in general may increase consumers' trust in fake news. A sub-category in this context may be citizens in rural areas, where a smaller number of news is present, the number of social media users is also lower due to the unavailability in some areas of internet access, thus this category is more vulnerable to pro-Russian statements and news.

The Impact of Social Media

The impact of social media on the current conflict in Ukraine may indeed be significant. The war has been dubbed as the first TikTok World War by several news media, such as The New Yorker or France24 (2023), due to users who continued to spread

relevant information in real time, thus creating a channel on the platform called "WarTok" (Brown, 2023). While some information is shared by real user accounts, a concern about fake or bot accounts is growing more and more, due to the misinformation they promote. Thus, according to Figure 5, we can see some recent statistical data from 2019 showing the level of concern about fake information on the internet or social media platforms in Ukraine and Russia in the post-Euromaidan and Crimean occupation period, before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

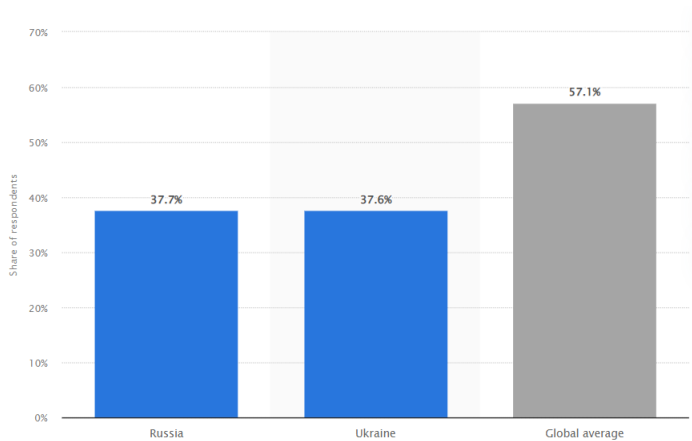


Figure 5. Concerns about false information on the internet or social media platforms in Ukraine and Russia 2019, Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1346417/ukraine-russia-concern-false-information-internet-social-media/> accessed on 25/4/2023

According to this 2019 report, 37.7% of the Russian population was worried about fake information on the internet and social media platforms, with 37.6% of Ukrainians sharing the same concerns. The overall average level of concern was 57.1%.

During the early stages of the conflict in Ukraine, several posts with similar content could be observed on several social networks, some of which were promoted by non-authentic identities, but not all of them were related to the current conflict. Some of this information contained spam, or even a bitcoin fraud scheme was uncovered claiming to support the Ukrainian resistance (Brian, 2022). Social media platforms such as Meta, YouTube, Google, Twitter, and TikTok, have taken important steps to restrict Russia's use of social media for disinformation. As these platforms have a large reach, the measures they have implemented have truly impacted a large number of people (Kern & Scott, 2022b). However, it should be noted that different platforms have implemented different positions in this regard. Some of the most common measures implemented by social media platforms include lowering the ranking of Russian state-affiliated media posts, meaning removing them from recommendations on YouTube and Twitter, placing them lower in the Instagram stories feed, etc (Suciu, 2022). Other measures involved banning Russian media pages such as RT or Sputnik on social media platforms (Suciu, 2022).

Another significant measure implemented was the banning of advertisements or sponsored posts from social networks and the demonetization of Russian state-affiliated accounts. Here, social media platforms implemented this measure in a different way. Twitter banned all ads originating from Russia and Ukraine, YouTube and Meta demonetized

Russian state media outlets, and Google completely stopped selling ads in Russia and banned these media outlets from buying and selling ads through its platforms (Kern & Scott, 2022b). As for some more specific measures, Meta has adapted its platforms' content moderation policies to *avoid deleting content that originates from ordinary Ukrainian citizens expressing resistance and anger towards the invading military forces, an action that is considered unacceptable* (Kern & Scott, 2022a). This measure has sparked controversy, with Meta being accused of Russophobia by Russians, claiming that the measure allowed and facilitated hate speech against the Russian population and Russian soldiers to go uncensored.

TikTok has acted differently from other social media platforms. While the other social media platforms managed to implement a number of measures against misinformation, TikTok did not take any official stance, and was even accused of spreading fake news about the conflict (Al-Saied, 2023). Finally, TikTok blocked Russian state-controlled media for EU users, and stated that it would label content from state-affiliated media. Therefore, despite the controversies surrounding TikTok, all of the platforms mentioned have taken steps to combat misinformation about the conflict, most of which are directed against Russian state-affiliated media by restricting their access or visibility on the platforms. While this is being done for a legitimized and widely supported cause at present, the measures put in place, as mentioned earlier, could be a threat if used for other purposes.

The Impact of Troll Factories

Russian troll factories have played a significant role in reshaping the truth in the current Russian-Ukrainian conflict, both domestically and internationally. In addition to conventional propaganda, social media bots and trolls are becoming the main actors of computational propaganda. They automate or distort their identities to impersonate real users to collect, disseminate, and communicate news and information, creating false consensus or promoting discord.

On March 1, 2022, just days after the Russian invasion of Ukrainian territory, a set of Russian-language Twitter accounts spread a lie that Ukraine had manufactured civilian casualties. One Twitter account shared a video of a man standing in front of rows of dark gray body bags that appeared to be filled with corpses. As he was talking to the camera, one of the shrouded bodies behind him raised his arms to stop the top of the bag from flying off. The video was taken from an Austrian TV report about a climate change demonstration in Vienna in February (YouTube, 2022), but this Twitter account claimed the footage was from Ukraine. That post was in turn picked up by countless other Russian Twitter accounts, these were subsequently removed by Twitter for violating the platform's manipulation and spam policy (ProPublica, 2022b).

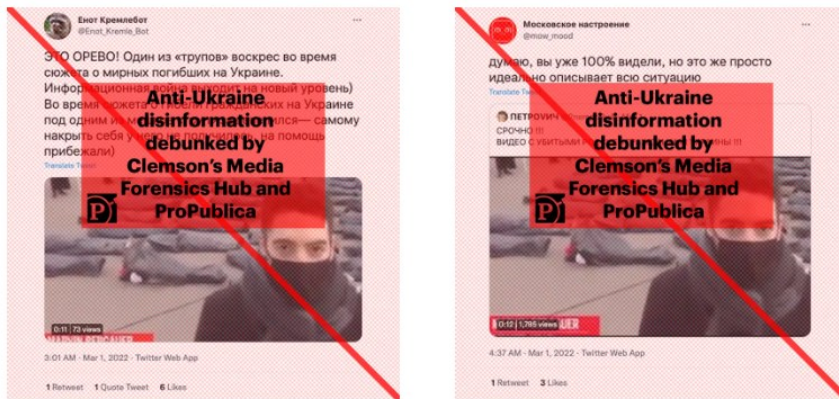


Figure 6. Two Russian-language Twitter accounts have posted a video which they say shows that the Ukrainian media has falsified reports of civilian casualties, Source: <https://bit.ly/3qeNkv6> accessed on 25/04/2023

"Propaganda makes mistakes too, one of the dead bodies came back to life just as they were counting the civilian deaths in Ukraine," one tweet said. Ironically, another tweet with the same footage blamed Ukrainian propaganda, *"Ukrainian propaganda doesn't sleep,"* it tweeted (AsiaTimes, 2022).

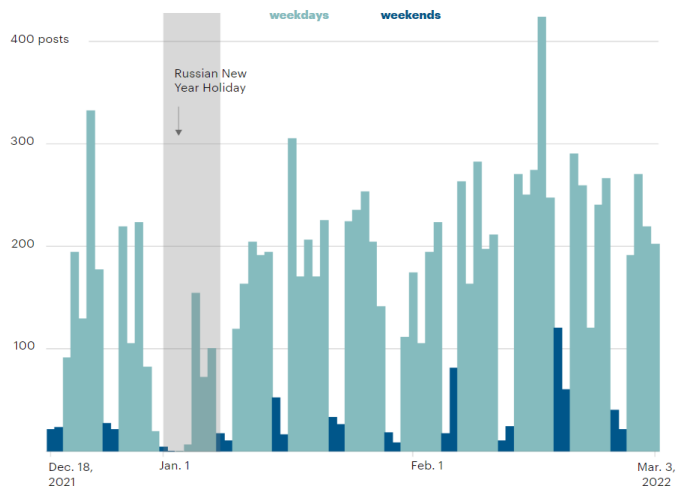


Figure 7. Russian Twitter accounts that spread propaganda posted more during weekdays, Source: <https://www.propublica.org/article/infamous-russian-troll-farm-appears-to-be-source-of-anti-ukraine-propaganda> accessed on 25/04/2023

According to Darren Linvill, a professor at Clemson University, along with another professor, Patrick Warren, the behavior, content and coordination of these accounts are consistent with the Russian troll factory Internet Research Agency - the network of pro-Putin troll accounts spread on Twitter, TikTok and Instagram. *"These accounts express every indicator that we have to suggest they're from the Internet Research Agency, and if they're not from the IRA, it's worse, because I don't know who is,"* Linvill said (ProPublica, 2022b).

An analysis by the Clemson Media Forensics Hub and ProPublica found that posts originating from these types of social media accounts were shared at a certain time interval, consistent with IRA business hours, and contained similar or identical text, photos, and videos across different accounts and platforms. The number of posts on Twitter accounts decreases considerably on weekends and during Russian legal or religious holidays, suggesting a regular work schedule for making and sharing this type of posts (ProPublica, 2022b).

According to a new report by Indiana University's Social Media Observatory and the Polytechnic University of Milan, shown in Figure 8, on the day Russia invaded Ukraine, the number of new Twitter accounts created nearly tripled. The report indicates that 38,000 new accounts were created on the day of February 24, 2022, up from 13,500 on the previous day.



Figure 8. Daily number of Twitter accounts created during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Source: <https://www.statista.com/chart/27229/number-of-newly-created-twitter-accounts-almost-tripled-on-the-day-russia-invaded-ukraine/> accessed on 25/04/2023

The social networking site TikTok has been particularly successful in promoting Russian government statements, where they mock US President Joe Biden and share disinformative videos. These posts garnered over 250 million views and over 8 million likes (Foreign Affairs, 2021). On Twitter, troll accounts attacked jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny and accused the West of preventing Russian athletes from competing under the Russian flag at the Olympics (ProPublica, 2022a). As of the end of February 2022, the network of troll accounts have set their focus almost exclusively on Ukraine, replaying similar narratives and content on accounts and platforms. One troll account on Twitter accused the Ukrainian military of using civilians as human shields in a post. This account also portrayed Ukraine as challenging Russia at the behest of its "*masters*" in NATO. Both tweets received hundreds of likes and retweets and were posted on the same day as the body bag video (ProPublica, 2022b).

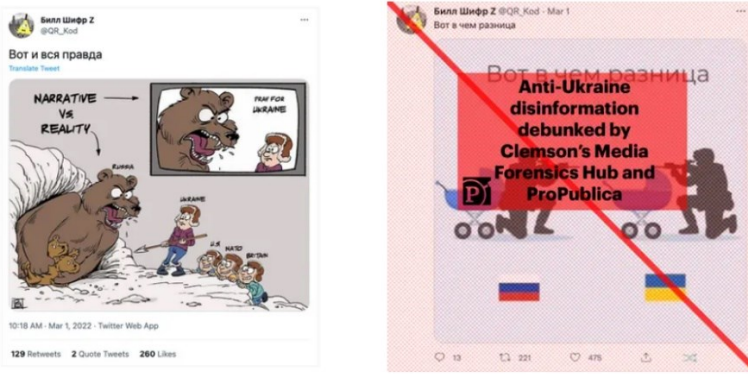


Figure 9. Twitter accounts have distributed memes reflecting propaganda spread domestically by Russian state media, Source: <https://bit.ly/3qeNkv6> accessed on 25/04/2023

The findings indicate that professionalized trolling remains a force in Russian propaganda efforts domestically and continues to adapt across all platforms, according to Linvill (AsiaTimes, 2022). Since late February 2022, Russian troll accounts on social media have picked up messages from Russian officials justifying the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These accounts also blamed NATO and the West in the context of the current situation in Ukraine and sowed doubts about the true death toll among Ukrainian civilians and Russian military failures. When the Western sanctions packages came into effect and several Western companies began to withdraw from Russia, Russian trolls declared that this was good news for Russia on the grounds that Russian products "*are better and of higher quality than Western ones*" (AsiaTimes, 2022).

Also during this period, the Russian government enacted a legislative package restricting Russian citizens' access to social media networks such as Twitter and Facebook, and passed a law under which people who contradict the Russian government's official position on the war risk up to 15 years in prison. The pro-putinist troll network included around 60 Twitter accounts, more than 100 Tiktok accounts and at least 7 on Instagram during the early days of the conflict, according to analysis by the Clemson Media Forensics Hub and ProPublica teams (ProPublica, 2022b).

Conclusions

This study set out to investigate the role of propaganda and disinformation in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, focusing on how these strategies were implemented through online platforms between March 2022 and March 2023. The objectives were twofold: first, to explore the impact of Russian misinformation on global perceptions of the conflict and, second, to assess the implications of social media platforms' efforts to combat misinformation, particularly in terms of freedom of expression. The research addressed these objectives by answering two key questions, both of which are central to understanding the evolving nature of information warfare.

The first research question sought to examine the extent to which Russian disinformation has influenced global perceptions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The findings reveal that Russia's disinformation strategies - mainly the use of false narratives, troll farms, fake accounts and manipulated media - have had a substantial impact on public opinion formation, both in Russia and internationally. Russian campaigns have been designed to blur the lines between truth and falsehood, creating confusion about the

legitimacy of Ukraine's position, the motives of Western countries and the nature of the conflict itself.

However, the research also demonstrates that while these efforts have managed to influence certain audiences, particularly those already predisposed to pro-Russian narratives, they have failed to completely dominate the global discourse. Ukraine's strategic use of social media to portray itself as a victim of aggression, coupled with widespread condemnation of Russia's actions by international institutions and Western governments, has countered much of Russia's disinformation. As a result, Russian disinformation has largely failed to change the general international consensus, which continues to support Ukraine's sovereignty and to view Russia as an aggressor.

The second research question focused on how measures taken by social media platforms to combat disinformation have affected the quality of public discourse and the balance between controlling false information and maintaining freedom of expression. The research found that platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and TikTok have implemented a variety of measures, including removing Russian state-affiliated media, downgrading disinformation content and demonetizing accounts linked to disinformation. These actions have significantly reduced the visibility of Russian propaganda, limiting its reach and influence, especially in Western countries.

However, the study also highlights the challenges and risks associated with these measures. By actively moderating and limiting certain types of content, social media platforms have entered a complex space where the distinction between legitimate control of harmful disinformation and potential censorship is blurred. The blocking of certain accounts, while justified in the context of limiting the spread of false information, raises questions about the potential for overreach and erosion of free speech rights. In particular, critics argue that these actions could set a precedent for the suppression of politically inconvenient information in other contexts, leading to wider implications for freedom of expression in democratic societies.

This study highlights the evolving nature of modern conflicts, in which the informational battleground is as important as the physical. In an era in which digital platforms serve as the primary source of information for a large part of the global population, the ability to control narratives, combat misinformation and maintain the integrity of public discourse is crucial. The findings of this research contribute to a broader understanding of information warfare, providing insights into the strategies employed by state actors such as Russia, as well as the responses of digital platforms tasked with mitigating their impact.

The study concludes that while efforts to combat disinformation are necessary and largely effective, they must be balanced against the need to protect democratic values, in particular freedom of expression. In the future, it is essential that both governments and technology companies develop clearer guidelines that protect both the public from harmful disinformation and the fundamental rights of individuals to free and open communication.

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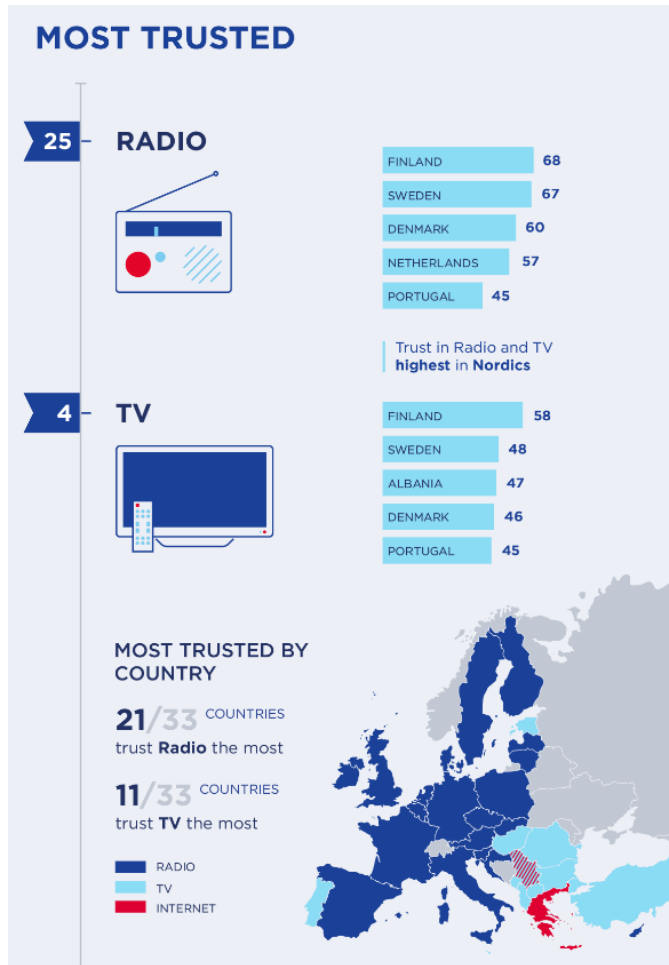
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Annexes

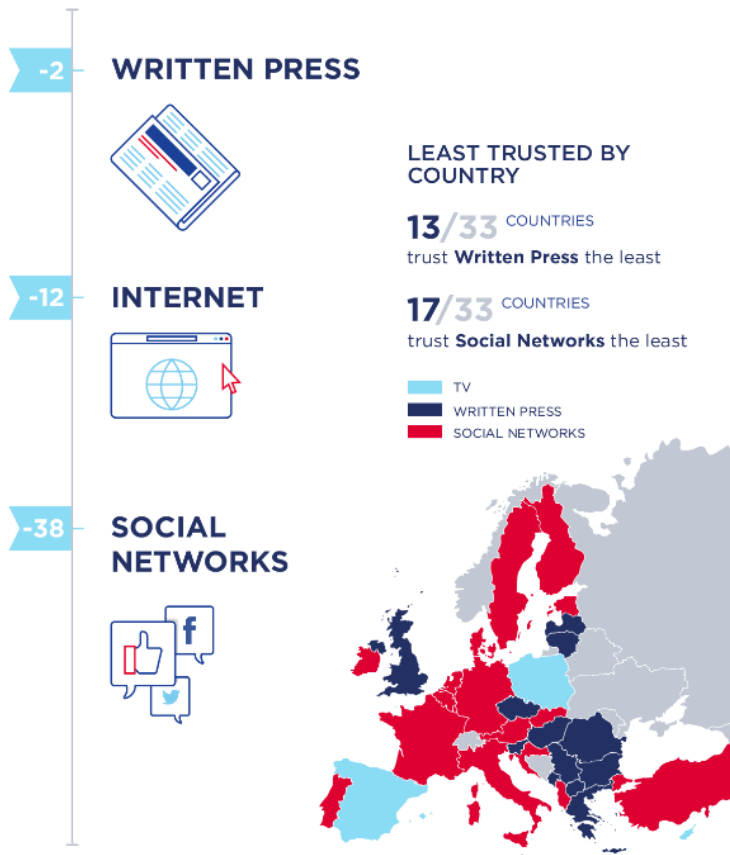
Annex 1. Most trusted sources in Europe



Source: <https://www.ebu.ch/news/2017/05/trust-gap-between-traditional-and-new-mediawidening-across-europe> accessed on 19/04/2023

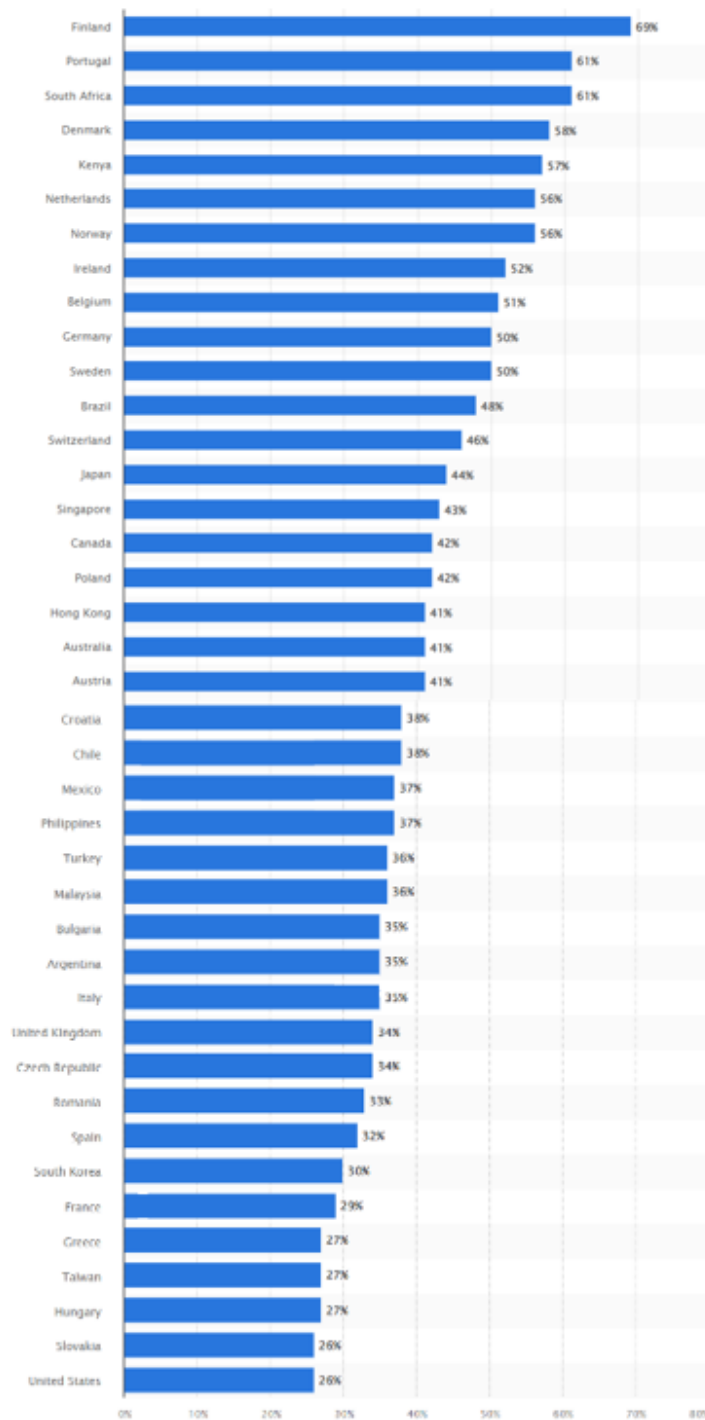
Annex 2. Europe's lowest-interest sources

LEAST TRUSTED



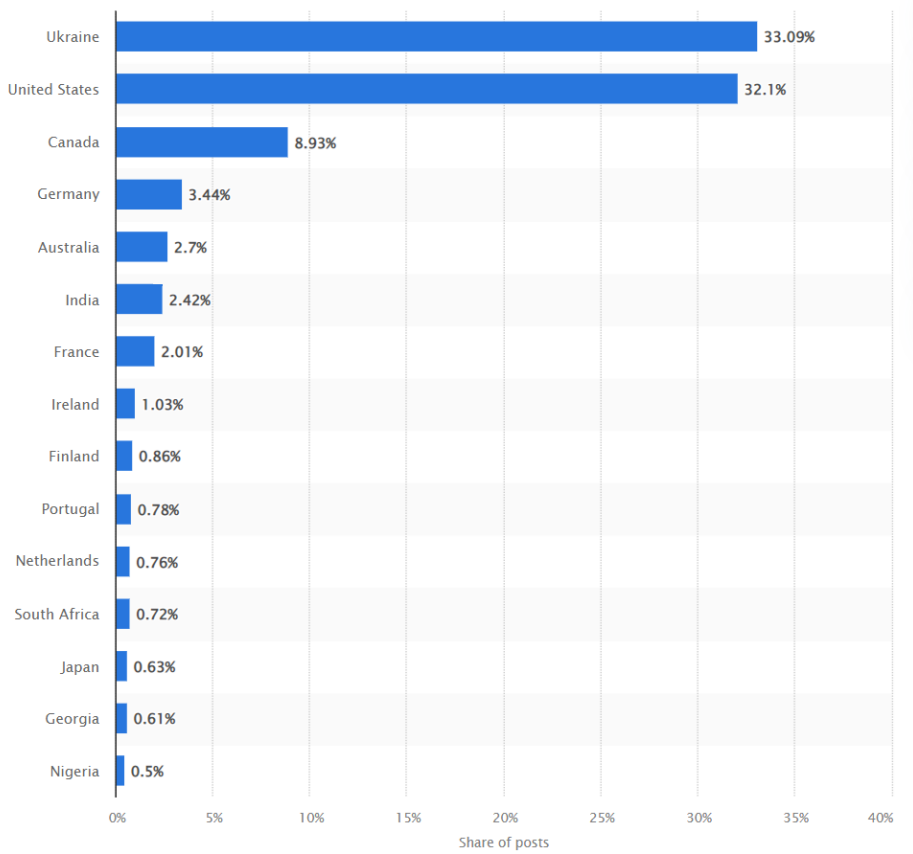
Source: <https://www.ebu.ch/news/2017/05/trust-gap-between-traditional-and-new-media-widening-across-europe> accessed on 19/04/2023

Annex 3. Share of adults who trust the media most in selected countries worldwide in February 2022

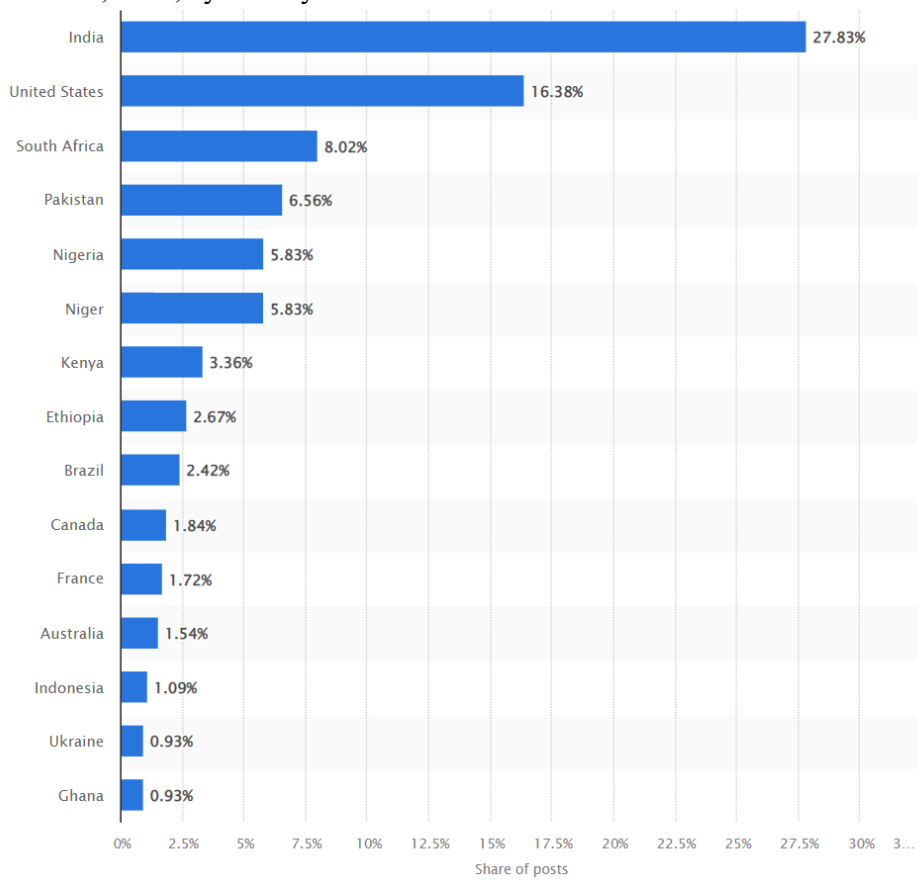


Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/308468/importance-brand-journalist-creating-trust-news/> accessed on 15/04/2023

Annex 4. Share of social media posts containing #IstandwithUkraine worldwide on December 23, 2022, by country



Source: <https://bit.ly/3BZENi0> accessed on 17/04/2023

Annex 5. Share of social media posts containing #IstandwithRussia worldwide on December 23, 2022, by country

Source: <https://bit.ly/3MzV6XO> accessed on 18/04/2023

THE ROLE OF MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

*Ana DAMASCHIN**

Abstract. *This research provides an overview of the most important theoretical concepts and practical issues by describing the negotiation process in the contemporary international system with multinational corporations. Through the context, the author also addresses the defining role of multinational corporations in negotiations and their levers of power. The proposed novel element describes the rational bargaining model applied by multinational corporations in the context of international business negotiations, emphasizing also the influence of multinational actors on foreign policy through corridor/informal bargaining (lobbying practice).*

Keywords: *negociation, multinational corporations, international system, international business negotiations, lobby.*

Introduction

As the borderless economy has advanced in all economic regions and most global companies have expanded their businesses beyond national borders to maintain their competitiveness, multinational corporations have become impossible to ignore players in the international socio-political arena, and with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the role of multinational corporations in the global community has increased. Due to the intense process of globalization, in contemporary society multinational corporations are not only production centres providing essential goods and trade, but they have grown in value and size to such an extent that they act as economic, political, social and cultural actors; non-state actors that set the terms of global developments at the highest level. Multinational corporations are a socio-economic, political and cultural mechanism growing mechanism. Although the position of these entities is the result of development over several centuries, multinational corporations have gained most of their power in the last two decades, in the process of increasing economic liberalization and globalization.

Over the last 150 years, corporations have grown significantly, emerging from relative obscurity to become the world's dominant economic institutions. Economic interdependence and the close relations between national governments and multinational entities have today transformed global corporations into extremely powerful institutions, real economic forces, to the extent that some non-state actors possess resources far greater than most of the world's nation states, realize sales figures far greater than the GDP of some states. The literature in the field of international relations and European studies states that these giant corporations are proving to be power centres that can influence international organizations, nation states, the relations between them and the domestic affairs of their home countries, due to their capacity and power of economic integration.

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Therefore, we conclude that the scale of their economic and commercial activities requires not only economic, but also political and social power. The strengthening role of multinational corporations in the international economic and political sphere has led to numerous debates on the world stage. These mechanisms have eroded the positions of state actors; the dynamic vector of business has generated significant opportunities for multinational corporations at the expense of international subjects.

This research presents an approach to grounding a basis for negotiations in the contemporary world and understanding the role of multinational corporations in global governance and in the context of contemporary international negotiations. Whereas global governance institutions are the outcome of a series of negotiations between corporations (as non-state actors) and states, multinational corporations exist in a variety of forms, ranging from smaller companies small companies investing abroad to large groups managing subsidiaries in a large number of countries, and because the boundaries between a corporation and its environment have become lax, foreign subsidiaries frequently cooperate with local companies and interact autonomously with other actors in their local business environment, such as, suppliers, distributors, customers, government - we argue that the preferences and power of multinational corporations vary across issues and sectors and across negotiating forums, thus representing the uneven and fragmented nature of the system of resolution.

Methodology

This study is explanatory background research through both literature review and practical analysis to find out how multinational corporations influence the international negotiation and business process from three perspectives - the analysis of the levers of multinational corporation's bargaining power, the analysis of rational bargaining model and informal bargaining (lobbying practice).

Regarding the levers of the multinational corporation's bargaining power in international negotiations, the author analyzes the four classical levers: information, power, resources and time. As a part of the rational bargaining model to determine how multinational corporations act as negotiators in international economic relations the author is based on the analysis of four hypotheses (structural and soft power of multinational corporations, BATNA, ZOPA and the relative capacity of multinational corporations' coalition in negotiations). And to specify the growing political importance of multinational corporations on foreign policy, the author analyzes informal bargaining through lobbying.

1. Approaches to the International Negotiation Process: Perspectives on Negotiation

Over time, eminent scholars have studied and explained "negotiation" across various disciplines, including economics, sociology, psychology, and law (Ciot; Fisher; Ury; Cohen; Kissinger; Puşcaş; Meerts). Diplomats view negotiations broadly, while international trade specialists focus on commercial transactions. This distinction arises because the conceptual framework of negotiations includes closely related notions that contribute to achieving each participant's strategic objectives. The set of notions related to negotiation is exclusively shaped by the specific situation, and the interpretation of the concept of negotiation is determined solely by the issue at hand and the influencing factors.

The theoretical and practical approach to negotiations from the perspective of problem-solving has become advantageous when viewed constructively. By diversifying the fields of application of the negotiation process, it has been possible to establish well-defined fundamental theories that treat negotiations as an economic-legal and psychological concept, thereby contributing to the formation of a distinct theory of negotiation. The outcome of the negotiation process is the "gain," which underscores the economic aspect of negotiation (Şargu, 2020).

The complexity of contemporary economic-social and politico-cultural processes contributes to the formation of new perspectives on negotiations (Şargu, 2020). Research on negotiation has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars in international relations as the conceptual development has evolved concerning the parties and issues negotiated (Dias, 2020). As societal, economic, and academic environments undergo changes, the vision of processes related to negotiation is also refined. Approaches to negotiations are viewed as actions, processes or methods, means, domains, acts, or arts, across practically all socio-cultural, political, psychological, legal, and economic fields, presenting themselves as a complex, dynamic, and multifaceted concept.

Negotiation is <i>a fundamental</i> means of obtaining what you want from others— Roger Fisher & William Ury (2015)
Negotiation is <i>a field</i> of knowledge and effort that focuses on gaining favor from people from whom we want things — Herb Cohen (2019)
Negotiation is <i>the action</i> of dealing with someone to conclude an economic, political, cultural, etc., agreement — DEX (The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, 2022)
Negotiation is a <i>process</i> that involves multiple discussions to reach a certain outcome — Cambridge Dictionary (2022)
Negotiation is <i>a method</i> of mutual and friendly understanding through which two or more participants analyze a set of decisions, arguments, goals, and objectives with the aim of establishing a contract that is mutually agreed upon and accepted by all parties involved — Şargu Lilia (2020)

In the broad sense of the term, William Ury, co-author of the seminal work "Getting to Yes," defines negotiation as "the act of back-and-forth communication, trying to reach an agreement with others." (Ury & Fisher, 2015). Similarly, Jeswald Salacuse (2015), in his scholarly study, elucidates that negotiation is fundamentally a communication process through which two or more individuals endeavor to advance their individual interests through collective actions. Historically, negotiations were confined to the realms of international security and international trade. However, they have now expanded to encompass a wide array of subjects, including environmental issues, science, technology, and humanitarian concerns (Ciot, 2021). This evolutionary trajectory has precipitated a transition from traditional negotiation methods to alternative approaches, characterized by increased informality, a long-term perspective, and collaborative problem-solving (Ciot, 2021).

Paul Meerts conceptualizes negotiation as "an exchange of concessions and compensations within the international order accepted by sovereign entities," likening it to "a sandwich between cooperation and competition" (Ciot, 2021). Building on this, Professor Vasile Puşcaş, as cited by Ciot, extends Meerts' ideas in international relations and European studies. Puşcaş advocates for a culture of cooperation through negotiations aimed at forming partnerships. He defines partnerships as interactions that preserve distinct identities and have become prevalent due to globalization's interdependencies. In this context, competition

occurs within a cooperative framework, necessitating a collaborative, creative, and constructive negotiation approach. In other words, the formation of strategic partnerships has become a contemporary reality in political, economic, and social domains, emerging as a new paradigm through negotiation (Ciot, 2021).

Professor Vasile Pușcaș further elaborates on this by defining negotiation for the realization of partnerships as a multifaceted field, incorporating elements of bilateral and multilateral negotiations, business negotiations, as well as international, commercial, and politico-diplomatic negotiations. These negotiations possess specific characteristics that pertain to the initiation or termination of partnership relationships (Ciot, 2021). Negotiation is an intensive, interactive form of interpersonal communication in which two or more opposing parties seek an agreement to resolve a common issue or achieve a shared objective. In the business realm, negotiations, both large and small, are integral to business operations and development. However, few individuals possess the requisite knowledge to negotiate effectively; the majority do not prioritize negotiation and are unaware of the value they can derive from mastering effective negotiation skills (Carroll, 2015). Negotiation can yield functional outcomes like problem-solving, relationship maintenance, and conflict reduction. Conversely, it can also lead to dysfunctional outcomes such as conflict escalation, relationship deterioration, indecisiveness, and future disagreements. Thus, international negotiation requires navigating unique challenges and uncertainties. Even experienced intercultural communicators may sometimes act against their own interests in international negotiations. (Harvard Business School, 2022).

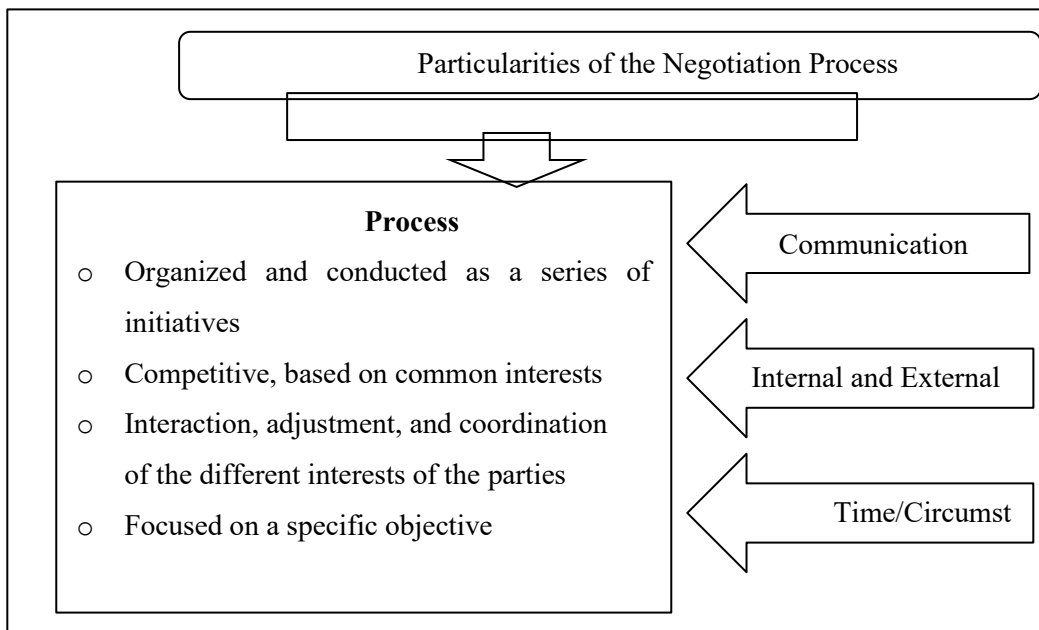
The American school of thought in international, politico-diplomatic, and business negotiations defines international business negotiations through three benchmarks: interests, rights, and power. This approach views negotiation as a means of resolving disputes by reconciling interests, determining rightful claims, and assessing power dynamics. It also considers the cost of disputes, satisfaction with outcomes, effects on relationships, and recurrence of disputes. Conversely, negotiation can be seen as a process where two or more parties communicate to reach a mutually acceptable agreement (Ciot, 2021). In the specialized literature, various scholars define negotiation using analogous terms.

Leigh Thompson, in her seminal work "The Mind and Heart of the Negotiator," characterizes negotiation as an "interpersonal decision-making process" that becomes "necessary when we cannot achieve our objectives single-handedly." Similarly, Max H. Bazerman and Don A. Moore, in their authoritative text "Judgment in Managerial Decision Making," assert that "when two or more parties need to reach a joint decision but have different preferences, they negotiate" (Harvard Business School, 2022). Building on this framework, Brett conceptualizes international negotiation as a form of bargaining where parties exchange offers, engaging in transactions directly or electronically to equitably distribute resources. However, as Ciot elucidates, negotiation extends beyond concluding deals over fixed resources. It serves as a complex, dynamic process for dispute resolution and decision-making within teams across diverse cultures. (Ciot, 2021). Proficient business negotiators are adept at analyzing each situation, structuring negotiations in ways that are advantageous to their side, navigating cultural differences, managing foreign bureaucracies, and overseeing the international negotiation process to achieve a consensus (Harvard Business School, 2022).

1.1. Theory and Practice of Negotiation

Negotiation is a process requiring mastery of both substance and process. Commercial negotiators often focus on substantive issues, neglecting the initiation, development, and management of a deal. While substantive issues are crucial, effective negotiators must also attend to the negotiation process. Most individuals negotiate with a specific model in mind, influencing their actions at the table. Various interests may predominate, including common interests (coinciding desires), specific interests (differing but negotiable), opposing interests (contradictory desires), intangible interests (economic, organizational, and political characteristics), and real interests (differing from initial declarations and needing agreement during the process). (Şargu & Coman, 2020). It is essential to consider the particularities of the negotiation process in light of these diverse interests.

Figure 1. Characteristics of the Negotiation Process

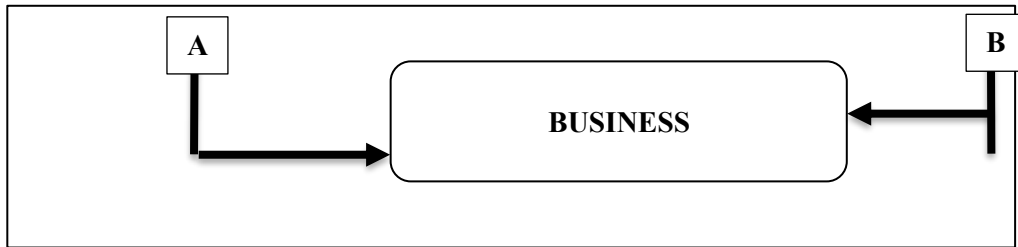


Source: Adapted from Şargu and Coman, 2020, p. 9

According to Şargu and Coman, negotiations become necessary and feasible under four specific conditions. First, negotiations, as an organized process, involve a series of initiatives, message exchanges, contracts, and confrontations between business partners, adhering to established rules and customs within a legal, cultural, political, and economic context. These typically occur in formal settings, even with less experienced negotiators (Şargu & Coman, 2020). Second, as a competitive process, negotiations develop based on common interests, aiming to reach agreements that satisfy both shared and individual advantages. Third, negotiation as a process of interaction, adjustment, and coordination of differing interests implies that mutual agreements are beneficial, based on the principle that all negotiators can win without anyone losing. Fourth, negotiation as a goal-oriented process emphasizes the practical importance of success, evaluated by the profitability of the resulting contract (Şargu & Coman, 2020). The negotiation process

is underpinned by three models: negotiation as a compromise, negotiation as domination, and negotiation as a solution to existing problems (Salacuse, 2015).

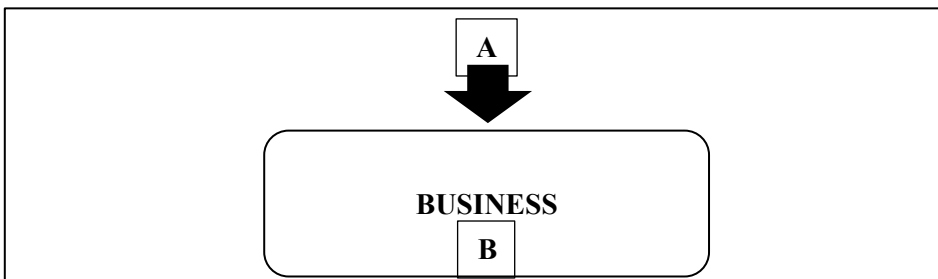
Figure 2. Model I: Negotiation as a Source of Compromise



Source: Adapted from Salacuse, 2015, p.18

Professional negotiators understand that making strategic concessions at the right moment can be an effective tactic in negotiations (Harvard Business School, 2022). The negotiation process is essentially one of compromise, aiming to reach an understanding somewhere between their initial offer and that of their counterpart. As negotiations commence, each party typically establishes, but does not disclose, a point beyond which they will not go to make a deal—referred to as the "zone of possible agreement" (ZOPA), (Salacuse, 2015). As suggested by Smolinski and Xiong (2020), all negotiation processes involve an exchange of concessions, with compromise being an agreement based on mutual concessions. A "concession" can be defined as a revision of a negotiating position that has both positive and negative impacts on various elements of the negotiation process and its outcome, thereby aligning more closely with the adversary's desires, or as a revision of a previous offer to the advantage of the counterpart. It could be a compromise or a promise made to reach an agreement (Smolinski and Xiong, 2020).

Figure 3. Model II: Negotiation as a Dominant Element

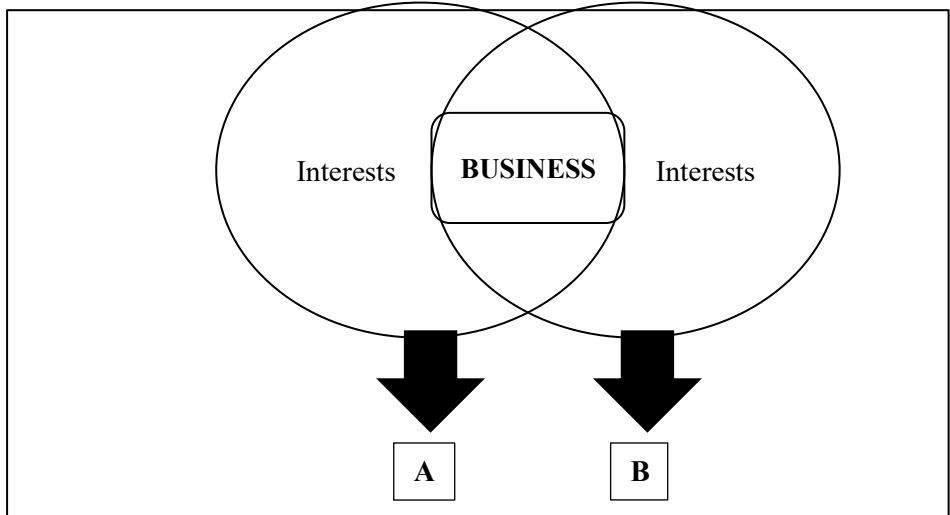


Source: Adapted from Salacuse, 2015, p.19

Starting from the fundamental premises of negotiation (where this process is seen by some actors as an agreement, a struggle, or a means to dominate a business adversary), Salacuse classifies the second model—negotiation as a dominant element—as a competitive approach where one party aims for an agreement but simultaneously employs a variety of power plays and techniques inappropriate to the process, attempting to manipulate the opposing party in various ways. Thus, at its core are sources of power and methods of influence. Model II is essentially just a variant of Model I. In both models, the parties consider their interests incompatible and genuinely believe they are fighting

for a common interest. The main difference between the models lies in the harsh tactics used in Model II. While Model I may be guided by agreed-upon norms or standards, Model II is invariably driven by power and can even be considered extreme negotiation (Salacuse, 2015).

Figure 4. Model III: Negotiation as a Joint Problem-Solving Solution



Source: Adapted from Salacuse, 2015, p.19

The third approach to negotiation conceptualizes the process as an exercise in problem-solving. In Model III, negotiators view their task as resolving a problem that both parties share, treating negotiation as a win-win strategy. This form of negotiation, often referred to as integrative negotiation, involves participants considering their goals to be compatible or aligned. Instead of attempting to divide a fixed asset, they seek ways to expand it so that both parties can satisfy their interests as fully as possible. In this approach, the parties begin by seeking to understand each other's interests and then strive to reach an agreement that considers and integrates these interests into a well-crafted transaction, as illustrated in the presented figure. Model III has also been termed profit-based negotiation, as understanding the parties' interests is crucial to the process. To reach an integrated solution, the parties' interests do not need to be identical, but they must be compatible or at least not mutually exclusive. In many cases, both parties in a negotiation assume conflicting interests, thus conducting the negotiation process from the outset as an exercise in compromise, if not control. According to the author, one important point to remember when analyzing the three basic models of the negotiation process is that general problem-solving involves a "both sides" model of negotiation. Every negotiation has both a competitive and a cooperative aspect. Models I and II emphasize the competitive side of negotiations, while Model III highlights the cooperative side.

2. How Do Negotiations with Multinational Corporations Arise?

The well-being of international societies is determined by several key actors. According to Huibregtsen (2018), each of these actors has lost their preeminence in making our societies successful. Multinational corporations have increasingly focused on

creating value for shareholders, thereby failing to recognize their instrumental role in the functioning of all stakeholders in their local, national, and ultimately global societies (Kim & Milner, 2021). We are consumers of their products and services, we are their employees, advisors, or suppliers, and we are their investors, through governments or private funds. National governments, caught in a global regulatory arbitration, continuously adapt the national regulatory and taxation landscape to try to make the country as hospitable as possible for corporations to invest in the long term, so that these enterprises do not uproot and move to more welcoming jurisdictions. Our understanding and perspectives on the world and culture are substantially influenced by these corporations, as they provide us with digital platforms on which we watch news, find entertainment, and engage in social and political discourse. In some respects, we, the people, are the corporation, and through many threads, our prosperity and well-being are tied to the success of the corporation (Filtzgerald, 2020).

Therefore, the analysis of negotiation strategies employed by multinational corporations in national and international markets worldwide only makes sense when these strategies are viewed within the context of socio-economic globalization. The position and role assumed by these corporations in the process of economic, social, and political globalization are extremely important due to their primary responsibilities, namely, the transfer of technology—especially in the current international context—managerial and marketing know-how, the transfer of corporate culture, job creation, the enhancement of the local workforce's skills, and, not least, the creation of a competitive framework. The relationship between the process of economic globalization and multinational corporations is reciprocal. On one hand, the process of economic globalization creates a favorable framework for these companies to operate globally; on the other hand, these global giants, through the scale of their activities and the responsibilities they assume, play a significant role in expanding the process of economic globalization. Multinational corporations are a crucial channel of globalization. They serve as the backbone of many global value chains, connecting and organizing international production and acting as a significant conduit for the exchange of capital, goods, services, and knowledge between countries (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015).

Today, multinational corporations account for one-third of global production and two-thirds of international trade. Since 2000, the global output of multinational corporations has tripled (Cernohous & Slačik, 2020). This level of economic power has transformed multinational corporations into formidable financial, economic, social, and political forces. The economic and financial dimension involves capturing the impact of these multinational entities on host economies due to their substantial economic power, which is impressive, considering that some of these operators achieve turnovers greater than the GDP of certain states. It is noteworthy that the efforts of developing countries increase when it comes to attracting direct investments into host countries, but this does not mean that developed countries do not also strive to attract multinational corporations. However, as stronger socio-economic and political entities, their negotiating power regarding market entry conditions is greater.

The social dimension involves these companies assuming the role of global corporate citizens with social responsibility within local communities, directly through infrastructure projects, cultural and educational initiatives, and the imposition of internal standards codes regarding their activities. This role is assumed through the integrity and organizational ethics that govern these multinationals. Multinational enterprises are also subject to the laws of the host country, directly adhering to minimum standards of social

behavior, creating a generally accepted framework for social conduct, and implementing its behavioral structure (Cernohous & Slačik, 2020). Certainly, multinational giants play a significant role in the world's economies by assuming their socio-economic and other responsibilities. However, there are few studies that examine their political influence on foreign policy formulation and decision-making processes. The political dimension of the analysis carries much more subtle implications. Here, we can refer to national attitudes. There are countries where the access of non-state actors has been met with great enthusiasm by national actors, but there are also countries where national actors have shown reservations about the access of non-state actors to the domestic market.

According to the perspectives offered by Ocran (2015), practical research on negotiation as a subject of international relations involves framing it within four characteristics. These characteristics focus on analyzing subjective issues that frequently arise in the field of negotiation to deepen technical knowledge and enhance the negotiation capacity of the involved actors and subjects. In the specific domain of multinational corporations, the technical issues often raised in the negotiation process of investments include:

1. The tax systems of both the home and host states of the investment
2. Project evaluation methods, which aim to determine the project's viability and ensure more favorable economic and social rates of return
3. Transfer pricing and other restrictive trade practices
4. The corporate structure of the project and its implications for corporate policy development, financing, and management
5. Financial arrangements, including currency regulations, technology transfer, employment, and labor relations
6. And the issues of applicable law and dispute resolution mechanisms (Ocran, 2015).

A second category of studies, historical in nature, describes the process and outcome of specific negotiations, with limited attempts to formulate general propositions for explaining or predicting other negotiations. The third category focuses on identifying underlying factors that influence the relative positions of parties in negotiations and shape income distribution structures. This approach includes postulating general hypotheses to analyze or explain negotiation outcomes based on empirical data from areas such as corporate mergers, labor disputes, international disputes, and political crises. It also involves constructing models to predict negotiation outcomes based on behavioral assumptions consistent with the concept of rationality in traditional economic theory.

The fourth category of studies is directed towards understanding negotiation styles and techniques, emphasizing behavioral analyses and considerations (Ocran, 2015). To begin with, negotiations arise because parties perceive a potential profit or gain achievable only through agreement. Each party aims to maximize its profit, often at the expense of the other parties involved. Consequently, negotiations pursue conflicting objectives to maximize individual interests and reach a group agreement, transforming individual interests into group interests within the agreement.

Negotiations with multinational corporations can occur in three basic ways:

1. The host country may enter a specific agreement tailored to a particular project due to perceived inadequacies in general laws addressing foreign investments.
2. The state may assume obligations under a standard agreement with standardized procedures for all enterprises, eliminating the need for formal negotiations.

3. The state may assume obligations from general laws applicable to foreign investment projects, including tax incentives. This case-by-case approach recognizes the unique nature of each project and allows flexibility to consider changing variables like technological advancements and market conditions (Ocran, 2015).

Negotiations with multinational companies can occur both in the pre-establishment and post-entry phases of their operations. A review of terms is justified if there has been a fundamental change in circumstances, such as significant shifts in economic indicators. The changing economic situation explains why many host states push for renegotiation clauses in initial agreements. However, prolonged persuasion to renegotiate is unnecessary if such clauses were previously stipulated. Overall, the principle of renegotiation is becoming more acceptable to multinational entities, despite their reservations about explicit provisions.

3. The Defining Role of Multinational Corporations in Negotiations

Multinational corporations are by no means a new economic and political actor. As part of the world's leading multinationals, British and Dutch East India companies played a crucial role in colonial projects in South and Southeast Asia, extracting and transferring resources and wealth from the colonies to their metropolises and acting as a means of direct or indirect political authority. Moreover, since the emergence of the international national system in the mid-1600s, non-state groups, including enterprises, have competed and cooperated with governments regarding the authority to set rules and provide public goods and services.

In fact, the market order in most parts of the world has long been characterized by an authority structure where multinational corporations not only experience tension but also maintain synergistic relationships with nations and societies. In short, the question of "who controls" from the early days of global capitalism was not just the state and its officials but also multinational corporations (SPERI, 2021). Recent transformations have significantly amplified the political and economic power of businesses. The intense liberalization of domestic and global markets in the 1970s granted enterprises new freedoms for cross-border movement and, more importantly, empowered self-regulation in certain markets.

The era of economic globalization marked a period where a company's right to operate, own, and generate profits increasingly surpassed its ability to effectively regulate the activities of national and international organizations (SPERI, 2021). Furthermore, advancements in communication and transportation technologies have facilitated the rapid globalization of production systems. Consequently, enterprises and institutional investors have distanced themselves from the impact of production activities on labor, ecosystems, and social stability, thereby avoiding criticism and legal implications and placing greater emphasis on the negotiation process. Debates on the importance of multinational corporations in negotiations stem from the evolving nature of these organizations over the years. In recent years, multinational corporations have responded to rapid global changes by increasing their internationalization, not only as a competitive imperative but also in the pursuit of new business opportunities. The international business environment is conducive not only to achieving economies of scale but also to developing knowledge about new needs that drive innovative efforts towards new products and services (Sarfati, 2010).

3.1. Levers of Negotiation Power of Multinational Corporations

In the past two decades, multinational corporations have been viewed not only as leaders of the global economy through a complex network of cross-border investments but also as powerful global players, informal negotiation actors, and regulatory influencers. At times, it was believed that corporations were on par with states in terms of their power. During the height of globalization discussions, these entities were even described as being more powerful than states, particularly in their ability to influence the course of the global economy. Research on multinational corporations has often focused on their growth in size, sales, or transnationality, frequently as an indicator of "globalization." Studies on transnational production and location strategies have reinforced the idea that large corporations can develop their corporate strategies as they see fit, regardless of political, social, or environmental objectives, due to their negotiating position (Nolke, 2018). But what is the relationship between power and negotiation, how can we understand the negotiation power of multinational corporations, and what are the main levers of power?

Generally, according to hypotheses offered by Ciot (2021), analyses of negotiations aim to explain the outcomes achieved, which ultimately involves identifying causalities arising from a causal process. Explaining causality involves seeking the notion of power. From this perspective, power must be addressed as a central point in the analysis of negotiations. According to the same author (Ciot, 2015), in theories of convergence and/or concession, power can be marginally addressed concerning the constraints on the concession behavior of the parties (time costs, and power can be used as a tactical skill). Regarding the levers of negotiation power of multinational corporations, classical arguments generally rely on four levers: information, power, resources, and time.

Information. Regardless of the type of negotiation or the actors involved in the process, information is one of the most important resources at the international level. The particularity of accumulating and managing information in negotiations is distinct from other fields, activities, or needs. On one hand, any source of information obtained can be used as a disadvantage for the adversary in the negotiation process. Information can simultaneously serve as both a strength and a weakness. Information disclosed during negotiations can also be dangerous for the holders if not used in calculated doses, with appropriate intonation, and in reasonable quantities (Şargu & Coman, 2020).

Power. Power represents more of an ability that involves having control over a situation or a party. The main assertion of the negotiation model is that the outcomes of interactions between multinational corporations and the host country or government are derived from the relative negotiating power of these corporate entities on one hand and the host governments on the other. This negotiating power is, in turn, dependent on the negotiation resources of each party. According to this model, parties with higher levels of negotiating power are likely to obtain more favorable terms in the negotiation process. The negotiation model focuses on the relationship between the multinational corporation and the national state. In this relationship, the host government's goal is to maximize national wealth, while multinational entities focus on maximizing their own interests.

Negotiations are practically driven by conflicts of interest: where their objectives overlap, the two parties can act together, but in areas where they have conflicting objectives, the relationship can become tense. In many cases, the parties' interests differ, as multinational corporations primarily focus on economic efficiency and profitability, while host countries focus not only on economic growth but also on political objectives

or maintaining national sovereignty. Generally, conflicts in negotiation are caused by differences in the interests of the two parties, and the outcomes of negotiations depend on the respective resources and sources of power of the parties involved. Given that negotiation inherently involves an adversary, negotiating power is a dynamic and relative concept. The merit of the negotiation model is that it allows us to observe both sides of the negotiation process simultaneously. The negotiating power of multinational corporations derives from the possession of firm-specific advantages, such as capital technology and management skills. The negotiating power of the host country is due to location-specific advantages, such as the size of the domestic market, the endowment of natural and human resources, and industrial infrastructure, which are constantly in flux.

In negotiation processes, typically conducted between a multinational corporation and the host state, the former exercises three types of power:

1. instrumental power, the most traditional form is business lobbying (corridor negotiation).

2. structural power, this can include companies' locational choice sets, the ability to transfer risks to suppliers, and generally the ways businesses introduce or keep things off the policy agenda. It is associated with the relative importance of the company in the context of the national economy and connected with the size of the organization.

3. soft or discursive power, this refers to the ability of enterprises and business associations to frame and define issues of public interest in their favor—shaping ideas that become taken for granted as the way things should be done, even for non-business entities like governments (Ruggie, 2018).

As previously stated, the key factor in negotiations is the perception of negotiating power, which requires distinguishing between potential and actual power. Derived from political economy and dependency negotiation theory, potential negotiating power is represented by each actor's commitment, while actual power depends on the capacity and willingness to implement this potential power. Alternatives indicate the mobility of multinational corporations and the alternative economic development options for governments, while commitment is a function of each party's strategy. Capacity is influenced by political constraints and institutional structures, whereas the willingness to exercise power depends on tacit assumptions, particularly the government's perception of the benefits and costs of domestic investments. A formal negotiation model has been developed to conceptualize potential power and its implementation, serving as a heuristic tool for analyzing government-multinational corporation negotiations and other negotiation relationships. This model highlights the need for a detailed illustration of the sources of power, emphasizing the importance of understanding the dynamics of potential versus actual power in negotiations. According to Ruggie (2018), businesses exercise instrumental power through political campaign contributions, knowledge asymmetry, and privileged access to decision-making, especially where standards are set by private bodies or "clubs" of state representatives and lobbying. Instrumental power involves using specific resources to achieve goals, with lobbying being a prime example that has expanded internationally with corporate globalization. Structural power refers to a business's ability to influence outcomes in its favor without directly exercising instrumental power. Multinationals possess significant structural power due to their ability to choose locations, unlike territorially fixed states competing for investments. The legalization of private international commercial relations through *lex mercatoria* has transferred not only commercial transactions but also legislative processes and dispute enforcement (Ruggie & Sherman, 2015).

Several factors determine specific outcomes. First, foreign investors' rights to sue governments in binding international arbitration, a right not granted to states, with arbitrators applying the "applicable law" of the investment agreement without considering public interest. Second, transfer pricing allows companies to manage prices differently from market rates. Third, tax havens enhance structural power by allowing companies to reserve investments in third countries, making the tax haven the "home country" and cycling profits back. Fourth, the lack of transparency in firm-level trade flows impacts official trade policy (Ruggie, 2015). In addition to structural power, corporations use soft or discursive power to influence negotiations with states. Discursive power involves shaping ideas, norms, and identities through persuasion and emulation, rather than coercion (Sarfati, 2010). Empirical analyses of the discursive power of global companies are challenging due to its subtle nature, as noted by Ruggie (2015). Sarfati (2010) further elaborates that the soft power of multinational corporations in international relations and European studies is linked to the identity of clients at the micro level and states at the macro level. This power can stem from the company's image, constructed through marketing, and its relationship with epistemic communities, particularly scientific ones, which can legitimize corporate activities. Another significant dimension of multinational corporations' soft power is their relationships with think tanks, which can be created and supported by these corporations. Think tanks are crucial actors, especially for multinationals, as they influence public and media agendas and develop topics for multilateral negotiations, policy formulation, and EU-level negotiations.

Resources. There are four specific indicators characterizing a multinational corporation: efficiency, development, employment, and innovation. Multinational corporations produce in countries where their target markets are located, providing access to raw materials and lower labor costs. They offer higher wages than national companies, attracting local workforces and gaining local government endorsement due to significant tax contributions, which stimulate national economies. Multinationals employ local workers who understand local cultures, providing valuable feedback on local preferences, and hire both local and foreign workers, fostering innovation. They are sources of international capital and technology flows, know-how transfer, and direct investments (Olayinka & Loykulnanta, 2019). The ability of multinational corporations to leverage innovation competencies in globally dispersed sub-units and transfer knowledge internally across borders is an increasingly valuable competitive advantage. A significant negotiating power of multinational corporations lies in host countries' ability to provide technological packages efficiently, along with economies of scale and product differentiation.

Conversely, host governments' primary negotiating power is controlling market accessibility and attractiveness. Thus, the source of multinational corporations' negotiating power aligns with their competitive advantage in technology, economies of scale, and product differentiation. These companies must offer unique products or services and assess how government objectives impact their technology's value and competitive advantage. Economies of scale and experience curve effects further enhance their negotiating power. By establishing specialized factories in different countries and transporting components or products, they can produce efficiently and gain experience rapidly, making it harder for host countries to establish their own industries (Doz & Prahalad, 2021). Understanding the negotiation dynamics between companies and states, especially intergovernmentally, requires defining corporate interests in international commerce. Multinational enterprises prioritize survival in the international business

arena, linked to strategies ensuring long-term profitability. Their interests align with generating current and future profits, reflecting shareholder concerns. Thus, in multilateral negotiations, the focus is on maintaining profitability for shareholders in the short, medium, and long term, ultimately affecting profits.

3.2. The economic approach to the contemporary international negotiation context

Authors such as Şargu and Coman (2020) assert that the security and success of contemporary international negotiations are influenced by numerous factors that shape the economic approach to the international negotiation context. This economic approach is formed by both exogenous and endogenous factors. The exogenous factors influencing the negotiation context include: competition, market, society, in correlation with intercultural elements, politics and legislation. Economically, the market is the core where supply meets demand. In international negotiations, it serves as both the transaction venue and the negotiation starting point, with roles in intermediation, regulation, price formation, differentiation, and information dissemination. Market influence is evident in its typology, including labor, capital, investment, and commodity markets (e.g., oil, textiles, agriculture, pharmaceuticals). Geographically, markets can be global, national, regional, municipal, or international, and categorized by product (goods and services) or structure (monopoly or oligopoly). These types highlight numerous factors influencing international economic negotiations. (Şargu and Coman, 2020).

The role of power and competition in negotiations is crucial. According to Fousiani, Steinel, and Minnigh (2021), competition, closely linked to the market, varies based on participant structure and supply-demand ratios, influencing international economic negotiations both directly and indirectly. Direct influence occurs with multiple bidders, while indirect influence arises when resources are limited or offers are scarce. Competition significantly impacts the negotiation context and overall economic activity, with negotiations varying under perfect competition, monopoly, imperfect competition, or mixed competition. Additionally, international negotiations depend on the legal framework, which governs actions, transactions, modifications, and offers through laws, regulations, and decrees to ensure fairness. The legal framework mandates negotiations in certain cases, such as public procurement, but microeconomic negotiations face risks from legal changes, such as customs duties, short fiscal policy approval periods, and tax impositions.

Socio-cultural, economic, and political elements (education, culture, religion, development) significantly impact negotiations. These factors influence how individual, state, or business actors approach the process. Success in international negotiations depends on these elements, aiding decision-making. Culture shapes thought and behavior, affecting negotiation positions and actions (Osée, 2021). Recognizing cultural influence is crucial to avoid errors and achieve success. Globalization necessitates policy-making at national, regional, and international levels. Trade agreements must consider public welfare, resource management, and regional economies to support national development and poverty alleviation. Negotiators must understand the political environment, identify key players, and address governance roles. Different political systems impact negotiations, and political culture is unpredictable, influenced by a nation's size, history, and mentality. Government influence on negotiations varies.

Endogenous factors in negotiations include:

- *human capital*, essential for demonstrating competence and achieving optimal results.
- *resources*, determine the negotiation partner's capacity and potential, requiring effective leverage for success.
- *competitiveness* (Şargu & Coman, 2020).

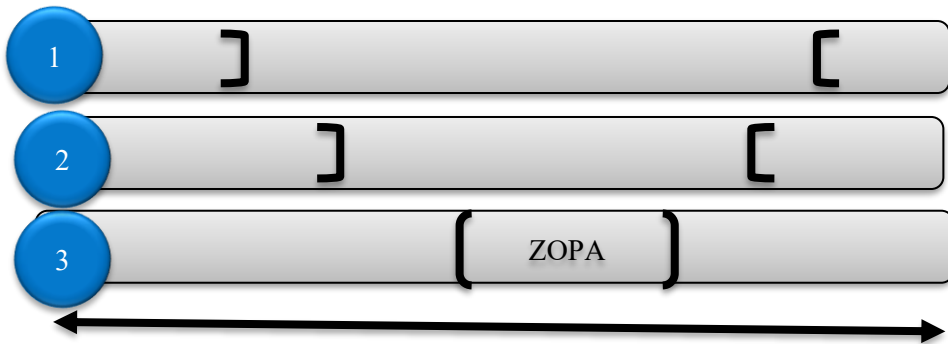
3.2.1. The rational negotiation model applied by multinational corporations in international business negotiations

Regarding the neoliberal and rational negotiation models, Sarfati (2010) proposes several hypotheses on how multinational corporations negotiate in international economic relations. The first hypothesis suggests that multinational corporations influence state and coalition preferences based on their economic importance and potential in the local economy, highlighting their structural power. They also use soft power through epistemic communities, marketing, and company image strategies to persuade local societies. The second hypothesis posits that a country's or coalition's vulnerability to a multinational entity's activities increases the influence of the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA).

A more attractive BATNA generally enhances a party's negotiating power, as each party must prefer the agreement over their BATNA for it to be mutually acceptable. The attractiveness of each party's BATNA determines the existence and location of a zone of possible agreement (ZOPA) (Sebenius, 2016). BATNA clarifies alternative options if negotiations fail and identifies potential approaches (Allert, 2015). According to Ciot (2021), "BATNA is the best offer option a party adopts during negotiations when at an impasse, involving the estimation of a party's value against the best offer of a negotiated agreement, even by changing that value, and an approach in the form of a set of concrete indicators, each representing specific reference factors for a particular domain." Sarfati's hypothesis outlines three special cases for implementing BATNA strategies:

- a) When the political and economic objectives of states or their coalitions align with those of multinational corporations, cooperation is more likely
- b) When the political and economic objectives of states or their coalitions do not align with those of highly vulnerable multinational corporations, forced cooperation (distributive strategy along ZOPA) is more likely
- c) When the political and economic objectives of states or their coalitions do not align with those of less vulnerable multinational corporations, there will be little to no influence (Sarfati, 2010).

These BATNA examples provide valuable lessons for business negotiators on when and how to disclose their alternatives if an agreement cannot be reached with their counterpart (Shonk, 2020). A third hypothesis relates to the Zone of Possible Agreement (ZOPA), which illustrates the overlap between the expectations of both parties. ZOPA is often achieved after multiple negotiation rounds, commonly seen in buy-sell negotiations. Figure 3.6 below demonstrates how both parties can move towards the agreement zone.

Figure 3.6. Schematic Representation of the ZOPA Concept in International Negotiations

Source: Adapted from Allert, 2015, p.54

According to the author, the first row illustrates the initial stage of negotiations where the expectations of the negotiating partners (demand and offer) are far apart. In the second row, rational negotiations have initiated an offer discussion, potentially adding value for both parties. In the third block, an agreement is reached. ZOPA is created due to a significant shift in one party's updated expectations, with the overlap in the value range designating the ZOPA. Brackets “[]” indicate the negotiators' positions during the process and their stance relative to the possible agreement zone. Analyzing the potential ZOPA, along with anticipating the partners' BATNA, provides insights into the negotiation's success or failure. This process involves numerous variables and is not a precise mathematical calculation. However, theoretical analysis is crucial for negotiating from a well-founded position. According to the fourth hypothesis, multinational corporations influence states and their coalition preferences. The degree of influence depends on the coalition's vulnerability to the multinational or the coalition's relative capacity in the negotiation game.

This suggests that the relationship between multinationals and states in an intergovernmental context is limited by state vulnerability to multinationals and the convergence or divergence of their interests. During multilateral negotiations, the interaction between multinationals and states is expected to yield significant outcomes. When state and multinational interests converge, a country's position is likely to align more closely with the desired outcomes of these companies. Model I of cooperation in the graphic representation below shows that multinationals and states tend to find integrated solutions to meet their needs. Similarly, Model II results indicate that even less vulnerable entities tend to converge towards integrated solutions that satisfy their needs (Sarfati, 2010). The outcome of forced cooperation indicates that a state's high vulnerability to multinational corporations, combined with a lack of interest convergence, can lead to distributive negotiation. This means the process focuses on dividing existing value rather than creating new value, without fully adopting the dominant party's demands. If states prevail in the process, it suggests a lack of interest convergence between the state and the corporation, along with the state's low vulnerability, leading to a distributive deal where the state disregards corporate interests.

3.2.2. Multinational corporations and lobbying practices (informal negotiation)

Multinational corporations play a crucial role in shaping the global economy, as their transnational activities have transformed international trade, investment, and technology transfer in the era of globalization. Despite their extensive economic activities worldwide, few studies have examined their political impact on foreign policy formulation. Lobbying (informal negotiation or corridor negotiation) is an integral part of the legislative process in many developed and developing countries, with its form and activity varying from state to state. Companies, as active participants, communicate their corporate priorities to decision-makers through lobbyists who facilitate information flows between the private and public sectors (Lee, 2020). Lobbying practices have evolved significantly, with many authors considering it the most influential business or political strategy for achieving personal or mutual objectives. Lobbying activities are generally assumed to provide sector-specific information and knowledge to decision-makers, enabling informed decisions (Kurt, 2022).

However, when these activities excessively influence decision-makers to restrict or shape regulations to benefit favored firms and prevent open market regulation, they can result in decreased welfare. The term "lobbying" has various interpretations in the literature. It involves individuals, businesses, unions, and NGOs convincing the government to change its policies. "Political persuasion" might be a more accurate term (BBC, 2022). According to LobbyEurope, (2022) a platform launched by the Society of European Affairs Professionals (SEAP), lobbying encompasses any activity aimed at directly or indirectly influencing the formulation or implementation of policy and decision-making regarding legislative or regulatory activities. It is a complex field that often requires practitioners to have solid knowledge of politics, business, negotiation, communication, and law.

In essence, lobbying requires a transparent and ethical framework. Darcy Nicolle (2019), a career lobbyist, considers lobbying vital for business success, though navigating the political landscape can be challenging. There are generally four types of lobbying in the literature. The first is "public lobbying," which includes consultancy services, parliamentary affairs, and ministerial communications. The second is "institutional lobbying," encompassing corporate affairs, institutional relations, and government relations development within corporate departments. The third is "class-based lobbying," typically represented by class entities. The last is "private lobbying," involving consultancy firms and private institutions. All types of lobbying involve strategies and techniques to influence and intervene in governmental actions and decisions. The author notes that in modern society, lobbying has emerged as a powerful strategic tool to shape the beliefs and perceptions of decision-makers, driving evolution. While traditional lobbying was led by influential individuals with social and governmental contacts, capable of swaying decision-makers through personal relationships, contemporary lobbying combines rigorous engineering techniques and various disciplines, promoting change on a global scale (Kurt, 2022).

The first step in understanding the political influence of multinationals is differentiating them from other entities. Empirical evidence shows that multinationals are generally larger, more productive, superior exporters, highly integrated into global capital, top employers of skilled workers, and major investors in research, development, and innovation. According to Song and Milner (2021), the second step is identifying multinationals' preferences regarding foreign policy, particularly economic policies like

trade, foreign investment, immigration, and exchange rates. The means of political influence used by multinationals vary by issue and country. In Song and Milner identify three major channels through which businesses influence foreign policy development: direct lobbying (informal negotiation), indirect influence as state instruments, and agenda-setting power.

Multinationals engage in political activities and campaigns to influence policy-making and prompt political leaders to meet their demands. They collaborate with industry groups and committees to promote their interests, leveraging their negotiating power by offering new investments or threatening to withdraw existing ones. Besides direct lobbying, businesses use informal ties with political leaders to provide information and persuasion. External lobbying includes public communication channels, such as contacting journalists, issuing press releases, organizing public campaigns, and hosting protests. Large companies are more politically active because policies are increasingly detailed, making lobbying a cost-benefit analysis advantage for private companies (Mizruchi, 2013). Leslie, Pel and Wellhausen (2019) demonstrate that globalization has led to an increase in lobbying, with more individual firms lobbying rather than through industry associations, contributing to "increasing particularism" in corporate lobbying. While multinational lobbying is most influential in developed countries like the United States, Japan, and Nordic EU states, multinationals can have similar roles in other countries, where their influence may be greater due to their significant presence in smaller economies.

Dependency literature focuses on how multinationals achieve their preferences and secure better deals with host countries through negotiation benefits. Recent emphasis is on how these entities protect their investments in host countries and which host country characteristics are most advantageous. Business literature highlights how foreign firms mitigate risk through alliances with domestic partners and host governments (Song & Milner, 2021), integration into global supply chains (Leslie, Pel & Wellhausen, 2019), political ties with host decision-makers, alliances with politically powerful multilateral institutions, and investor-state arbitration using bilateral investment treaties (Manabu, 2014).

Studies on the economic reform process show that in many developing countries, multinational corporations can influence local policy decisions by providing information and expertise on regulations from other countries, lobbying officials, especially in partnership with local actors. They promise benefits such as more jobs and access to new technologies, or threaten job cuts and withdrawal, thus helping leaders overcome entrenched local interests by offering more revenue or employment. The methods of influence in the host country are similar to those in the home country.

Multinational corporations also influence international institutions as well as domestic governments (Song & Milner, 2021). Hanegraaff *et al* (2015) note that the most organized domestic interest groups are also the most powerful actors in many international organizations. Indeed, we can argue that multinationals are now more powerful than ever in their influence due to globalization and the capital mobility it creates. However, the presented information suggests that corporations have numerous means to exert strong influence over the countries in which they choose to operate.

4. Conclusions

This study presents how multinational corporations influence the international negotiation process. The importance of these entities in defining key issues of the international economy has increased, yet they still depend on states at two levels: *domestic regulation* within each state and *intergovernmental regulation*, where states collectively define rules governing the behavior of multinational corporations. The general hypothesis suggests that multinational corporations attempt to influence states and their coalitions using their structural and soft power to affect the interests of states and their coalitions.

In a negotiation process, it is necessary to identify whether multinational corporations have influenced state coalitions, whether they have aligned their interests with the core interests of a coalition willing to support this position throughout the negotiation process. In a multilateral international context, multinational corporations must navigate a long path from national influence, through aligning interests with other corporations at the transnational level, aligning their interests with state coalitions, and ultimately influencing the overall negotiation process based on the power leverage of each involved party. The literature suggests that the power of the parties and the contemporary economic context play defining roles in the entire process.

An important theoretical contribution is the explanation of the circumstances under which multinational corporations act as negotiators in a multilateral international process, using their structural and soft power to influence, create transnational coalitions, and stimulate the formation of state coalitions that defend their interests in intergovernmental contexts. Additionally, the growing political importance of these entities on foreign policy through lobbying practices is highlighted.

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III. CULTURE, IDENTITY AND ISSUES OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

Alina STOICA, Ana ORJUHOVSCHI ⇔ *Russia`s Cultural Diplomacy in the Current Geopolitical Context*

Kudzai Cathrine BINGISAI ⇔ *The analysis of protecting cultural heritage in armed conflicts. Case of the Russian-Ukraine War*

Togashi KOSEI, Watahiki NOBUMICHI, Luiza GATAN, Cristian VLAD, Takatomo ITOI ⇔ *Differences in Ethical Judgment Based on the Presence or Absence of Buddhist Altars: An Application of the Bennett Method*

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RUSSIA'S CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN THE CURRENT GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

*Alina STOICA**
*Ana ORJUHOVSCHI***

Abstract. *In the context of geopolitical tensions at the eastern border of the European Union, cultural diplomacy is becoming a symbolic battleground for regional influence, with significant implications for security and stability in the region. The use of this soft power, which complements traditional foreign policy strategies, is aimed at strengthening relations with partner countries, countering negative narratives or attracting/maintaining sympathy with states where the state in question has political, economic, etc. interests.*

The context of the current world order, also generated by recent Russian-Ukrainian relations, is giving rise to numerous debates within international society and academia. Among these, an important aspect is cultural diplomacy's role in the current military conflict context on the EU's eastern border. We are considering the unique way, distinct from the approaches of Western states, of promoting Russia's national interests through cultural diplomacy.

The Kremlin has built a complex apparatus for realizing and disseminating information intended to be brought to the attention of public opinion and authorities in the international arena. These actions integrate actors from different levels and carry out complex influencing activities.

Keywords: *security, cultural diplomacy, world order, war, strategy*

Introduction

In recent decades, in order to face new geopolitical challenges, more attention is being paid to security in its three dimensions: individual, national and international. European, as well as global, states show concern when they observe the growing inability of their own institutions to effectively ensure national security (Constantinescu, 2013: 2). Consequently, it is necessary to identify a common line in order to ensure collective security. This vision should view the current challenges as a consequence of common vulnerabilities and threats, which require solutions of the same type or adaptation to each individual background. This must also be reflected in the sphere of states' foreign policy and, implicitly, in the way diplomacy is manifested, seen as an instrument for implementing the interests of the former, be they political or economic.

In a context where states have to respond to emerging challenges such as globalization, technology, transnational issues, power dynamics, etc., traditional diplomacy has to adapt, now supplemented by new forms of diplomacy: public, cultural, digital, celluloid, celebrity, etc.

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In this paper, we are mainly concerned with cultural diplomacy (CD), which is at the confluence with the other new forms of diplomacy, particularly public and celluloid diplomacy. By presenting a national image abroad, cultural diplomacy can overcome public suspicion of official messages and contribute to strengthening the national reputation. Domestically, it can support national social cohesion, especially when it targets ethnic minority groups. On the other hand, CD plays an important role in cultivating trusting relationships between countries and people, through cultural cooperation or the exchange of ideas and information, among others, to establish mutual understanding and find solutions. (Rodrigues, 2015:33)

During the 20th century, more and more countries have used the cultural factor to create a tradition of rapprochement, cooperation and exchange as a pillar of their foreign policies. In other words, nations, to a greater or lesser extent and in one way or another, have seen culture as an important component of their foreign policy, through which they influence their partners without resorting to military force. Thus, states have used culture to promote a positive image of themselves abroad, as well as to maintain international peace and stability (Goff, 2013:3) Scholars have noted that cultural diplomacy played a crucial role in protecting cities such as Paris or Rome during World War II. By promoting their cultural values and artistic heritage, these cities were able to attract international sympathy and support, thus demonstrating the importance of culture as a tool of influence in international relations (Ang - Isar, 2019).

However, it must be emphasized that cultural diplomacy is fundamentally a state activity and, although other non-state actors can (and should) participate, the prominent place of the state is obvious. Cultural diplomacy is also distinguished by the fact that it is supported not only by the appointment of professional diplomats, but also by the fact that they are accompanied by cultural attachés who skillfully promote the values of their nations' sciences and arts. These cultural attachés are sometimes prominent intellectuals, scientists or men of letters. (Guia Prático para as Missões Diplomáticas acreditadas em Portugal, 2022)

Among the actors of cultural diplomacy, promoters of cultural values and creators of important links between cultures, links designed to ensure global understanding and world peace, we list:

1. **Governments and state authorities** - coordinate and fund cultural exchange projects, support the organization of international events and encourage artistic mobility.

2. **Cultural institutions, national and international** - libraries, museums, theaters, cultural centers, art galleries, national cultural institutes (Romanian Cultural Institute for example), promoters of a country's language, culture and art abroad.

3. **Cultural diplomats** - ambassadors and cultural attachés, lecturers, directors of cultural institutes, etc.

4. **International organizations and NGOs** - (UNESCO for example) they support the protection of cultural heritage and promote education and art worldwide. Many cultural NGOs facilitate intercultural projects.

5. **Academic and educational institutions** - networks set up by universities, involving the development of international study programs, scholarships and mobility of teachers and students, projects, etc.

6. **Media and influencers** - essential tools in promoting a country's image and educating the global public about its culture and traditions.

Cultural diplomacy or propaganda?

If we were to start from the equation in which Carmen Burcea includes cultural diplomacy, namely "the complementarity of two elements, *politics and culture*, enhanced by a third, *propaganda*" (Burcea, 2005:12), in which "culture is the attractive shell of politics, and propaganda is the instrument that ensures their cohesion" (Burcea, 2005:12), then it should not be surprising that in recent years cultural diplomacy is considered a force in the foreign policy of every state. Nicolae Iorga, a vehement critic of public manipulation and the use of propaganda techniques to influence people's perceptions and feelings for political purposes, considered propaganda "a dangerous tool in the hands of those who wanted to gain power" (Iorga, 1926:463). The Romanian historian also emphasized that in the face of effective propaganda it is essential that citizens retain the ability to judge objectively and to resist unwarranted influence.

Although nowadays most of the talk is about "soft power" or cultural diplomacy, and *propaganda* was rather the motto of the inter-war period, Russia is among the countries that combine the two concepts in its foreign policy actions, especially in the current geopolitical context. Cultural diplomacy actions, reflected in the promotion of Russian language and culture through various institutions and programs such as the government agency Rossotrudnichestvo or the Pushkin Institute, are complemented by the other component of Russia's foreign strategy, namely the use of media and platforms to promote an image of Russia that is favorable to Putin's regime and necessary to justify military actions to a global audience. Therefore, while cultural diplomacy has a positive impact in shaping and strengthening Russia's foreign policy, propaganda can include misinformation, manipulation and the creation of narratives that serve its political purpose (Rataru, Iarovoi, 2019).

The European area is the Kremlin's clear target, where the problem of Russian propaganda and disinformation is reaching impressive proportions. EU diplomatic chiefs have taken numerous actions to combat Russian propaganda. For example, in 2016, Federica Mogherini stated in paragraph 8 of the European Parliament resolution of November 23, 2016: "The Russian government uses a wide range of means and tools, such as special think tanks and foundations (such as Ruskie Mir), special authorities (Rossotrudnichestvo), multi-language TV channels (such as Russia Today), false democratic values, to divide Europe, gain domestic support and give the impression that the EU's Eastern Neighborhood states are failed states." (European Parliament Resolution, 2016) The same resolution notes that Russia invests significant financial resources in its disinformation tools: political parties, organizations within the EU, in order to undermine political cohesion (European Parliament Resolution, 2016).

Russia between cultural diplomacy and propaganda

We said at one point in the above lines that the media is one of the basic tools for implementing cultural diplomacy. This role also applies to propaganda. Our study aims to bring forward elements of cultural diplomacy, but also of Russian propaganda on the favourable terrain of disinformation in Eastern Europe, especially in the Republic of Moldova. Russia's aim is to influence public opinion and undermine confidence in state institutions and to create a climate favourable to the geopolitical interests of Moscow, which continues to consider the former Soviet states as sister countries, holding itself *responsible*. Russia uses a broad spectrum of techniques and channels of communication to influence Moldova, which includes the media, social networks, education and direct action at the political level (Security Sector Governance in Moldova, 2024: 34).

1. *Here are some of the levels through which Russia conducts its propaganda in Moldova:*

➤ **Media** - Broadcasters such as NTV Moldova, RTR Moldova, or Pervii Canal are often criticized for broadcasting news and programs that support Russian narratives. These channels tend to promote negative images of the European Union and NATO, emphasizing the possible dangers of Moldova's integration into these structures and portraying Moscow as the protector and guarantor of the country's stability. Local media, especially in Transnistrian regions or in some areas with a majority of Russian speakers, can also be a vehicle for propaganda.

➤ **Online platforms** - controlled or influenced by Russia can disseminate disinformation and narratives favouring Kremlin interests, especially during elections or political crises in general. Social media influence campaigns are coordinated by government agencies or activist groups that create and distribute content to manipulate public opinion.

➤ **Campaigns to manipulate national and ethnic sentiment** - especially in Transnistria, Găgăuzia and among the Russian-speaking community. Russia is trying to promote an ideological model that claims Moldovan identity as closely linked to Russian traditions and culture. Russia also continues to support the mythology of an "independent Moldovan state" which, in the Kremlin's view, should work more closely with Russia and avoid integration into international structures such as the European Union or NATO. Linguistic fragmentation with emotional links to the history of the Russian Federation and the permeability of political manipulation with social and cultural tools have, over several decades, fuelled distrust in democratic institutions and the relativism of European values, which are opposed to communist ones.

➤ **Political and financial contacts:** Over the years, Russia has provided financial, political, and logistical support to political actors in Moldova who favor close relations with the Kremlin. These ties allow Moscow to influence Moldova's internal and external political decisions.

➤ The ultimate aim of these actions is to keep Moldova within Russia's sphere of influence, to prevent its integration into the European Union and NATO, and to weaken the authority of the Moldovan state.

2. *Strategies used:*

➤ **Disinformation and fake news:** By creating and distributing false or distorted news on social platforms, Russia attempts to create confusion and polarization among the Moldovan population. Such news may include conspiracy theories, misinformation about Moldova's domestic politics or the international situation.

➤ **Fake accounts and "botnets":** The creation of fake accounts that post messages in support of Russia or disseminate misinformation is a widespread practice. These accounts are used to amplify pro-Kremlin messages and minimize the impact of criticism against the Russian regime.

➤ **Influencers and coordinated campaigns:** In some cases, Russia may use local influencers or youth groups to promote a pro-Kremlin view. These campaigns are often subtle and focus on issues such as Moldovan sovereignty or criticism of the authorities in Chisinau and Brussels.

3. *Russia's influence in the identity building project of the Republic of Moldova*

Russia has played a significant role in this process, since on the one hand it had an impact on the language, culture and politics of the Republic of Moldova during the Soviet period, and on the other hand it continues to be a major power in promoting a Moldovan identity closely linked to Russian history and traditions, even after independence in 1991. By promoting and supporting the Russian-speaking identity in the Republic of Moldova, or the Moldovan identity, it has the clear aim of opposing Moldova's unification with Romania and its orientation towards the European Union and NATO.

3.1. History of the Republic of Moldova in the pro-Russian press. Moldovenism

In our analysis of the press in the Republic of Moldova we have identified numerous pro-Russian-oriented newspapers (*Karadeniz*, *Moldova Noastră*, *Moldova Suverană*, *Panorama*, *Sputnik Moldova* - the state news agency of the Russian Federation, which has an extensive network in the now independent republics that were formerly part of the Soviet Union, *Nasha Gazeta*, *Argumenty i Fakty*) and also numerous television channels, subsidiaries of Russian TV stations or local channels (*NTV Moldova*, *RTR Moldova*, *Perviy Kanal Moldova*, *TV 7*, *Prime TV*). It is very difficult for public opinion in Moldova to look objectively at the information transmitted by these media channels, all the more so as these sources of information are propagandistic in a way that seems to favor the Moldovan population. "After 1991, Moscow has constantly pursued its own strategy of keeping Soviet children in its bosom, with or without their will. It has a vital interest in not letting the West take over what it thinks is within its sphere of influence. If it cannot, in totality, get Ukraine, Moldova or the countries of the South Caucasus to give up their turn to the West, Russia is also capable of destroying them militarily so as to make them irrelevant to the West. The EU, assiduously courted by Ukraine and Moldova, is looking for ways to sustain its engagement with these states but is not taking any decisive steps for fear of a repeat of a new Ukraine. Attracting these countries to Russia or the institutional West involves more than mere geographical proximity. In the eyes of Moldovans, Europe, unlike Russia, does not have the trump cards of shared history, culture, religion, economic ties, and unique domestic political circumstances of each country" (Constantin, 2024).

Russia has continued to promote the concept of "Moldovenism," which essentially suggests that Moldovans are not a branch of the Romanian nation, but a distinct nation with its own culture and history. In this sense, Russia has advocated a historical view that Bessarabia has always been a separate region from Romania, and that its history and identity should be considered distinct. This was a direct response to the tendencies in the Republic of Moldova to promote ties with Romania and Romanian culture, especially in a context where a significant part of the Moldovan population feels connected to Romania and the Romanian language. (*Republica Moldova: o istorie fluidă a unui tărâm de frontieră*, 2015)

Russia's new foreign policy concept, approved by Presidential Decree on March 31, 2023, by Vladimir Putin, defines the role of the Russian state on the present international stage. "Russia isolates itself from the world in a 'civilization' that fits nowhere - being by definition self-sufficient. The description of the world offered in the Concept confirms that, indeed, for Putin's Russia there is no international space for it to fit into and that Russia does not want to live by the rules it does not set, and that Russia is the one that will decide how and by what means it will set its own rules" (Țăranu, 2023).

Elaborating on this topic at a roundtable dedicated to the issues of history and its perception in the media, the well-known Russian political scientist and analyst Nikolai Zlobin, director of Russian and Asian programs at the US Global Security Institute, noted that the main battle of our time is the "battle for minds" (Russian World portal editorial staff, 2024). This is well understood by politicians who use history and emotional attitudes to the Russian past for their own purposes. At the same meeting, representatives of the Ruskiyi Mir Foundation emphasized "Moldova's struggle with the past", based on education and teaching the history of the Moldovan, not the Romanian, lands in schools, the importance of monuments and symbols of the Soviet period, in parallel with the policy of the liberals, who are trying to fight through the mass media and school textbooks.

3.2. Russian language and celluloid diplomacy

In analysing the influence of Kremlin leaders on the media in the Republic of Moldova, it is necessary to take into account the local culture and the Russian-speaking population. Knowledge of the Russian language allows direct consumption of media products from the Russian Federation, without the need for adaptations, translations, i.e. the information is not filtered and fake-news reaches the press agenda more easily. In this context, not only news, talk shows, but also entertainment programs play an important role. We should also take into consideration the actions of celluloid diplomacy, which involves films dubbed into Russian, in which visions or even global problems are presented through the prism of conspiracies promoted by the Russian Federation, with the aim of political, cultural, religious, etc. manipulation. Two films considered to be Russian propaganda were to be shown in cinemas in Romania, not only in the Republic of Moldova: *The Challenge* (2023) and *Time of the First* (2017) (Despa, 2024). The particular target of Russian manipulation are Russophiles, and the post-communist nostalgia, which provokes frustration, subjects the population to information chaos, making it even more vulnerable. The media is a strategically sensitive sector, and appealing to emotional events allows the Kremlin leaders' policies to have the desired effects.

3.3. The role of civil holidays and the use of emotional events (historical commemorations or international conflicts)

Referring to the history of the Russian Empire and, later, the USSR, is the version of Russian state propaganda that is still current today in the Republic of Moldova. The project of identity construction of the Republic of Moldova alongside Russia, by emphasizing world events such as the Great Patriotic Defence War (1941 - 1945) is not only a means of manipulation through emotional attachments, but also through the identity "filter", which is a historical falsehood. Referring to such factors in a divided society is manipulation supported directly or indirectly also by local authorities through measures not implemented over several years. The event of May 9, which marks not only the end of the Second World War, but also Europe Day, is a divisive issue. On the one hand pro-Russian political actors who promote polemics around the Great Victory and their supporters, and on the other hand pro-European political actors who promote the ideas of a democracy within the European Union. It is necessary to mention that on June 23, 2022, the Republic of Moldova obtained the status of an official candidate state for accession to the European Union. In this context, with unfiltered information, the media agenda becomes the Kremlin's propaganda machine. They promote historical falsehoods by omitting details, thus combining several incomplete truths into a controlled, deeply

emotional message, transformed into a state doctrine promoted among the population and even in the education system. According to experts, the ambiguous attitude towards Victory Day is due to the fact that Russia, under Vladimir Putin's leadership, has completely "privatized" this holiday, and any association with this day is interpreted as an item on the pro-Russian agenda, implicitly becoming a propaganda tool.

One of the signs of such a "privatization" of the holiday is the invention of new rituals and ceremonies that did not exist before the 2000s, such as the St. George's ribbon, the orange and black ribbon (Vasilache, 2022). This is the brainchild of Surkov - a former deputy head of the Russian Presidential Administration, considered the Kremlin's main "ideologue". The orange and black ribbon was used as a badge of honor by Soviet sailors during the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. The ribbon was called "Guards" and began to be used with Soviet orders, for example, with one of the most popular medals "For Victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War" and with the Order of Glory of all ranks. (Vasilache, 2022)

The "St. George" campaign was launched in 2005, on the eve of Victory Day, when orange and black ribbons began to be distributed (Dubasova, 2024). In 2014, the St. George ribbon was used by pro-Russian activists in Donbass. And with the beginning of a full-scale war in Ukraine, the ribbon, with the Z-sign, became one of the symbols of the Russian invasion. In the Republic of Moldova, the production, distribution and wearing of the St. George's ribbon is sanctioned. This decision was introduced on the initiative of the Action and Solidarity Party in 2022. However, this did not prevent the pro-Russian opposition from using black and orange balloons on Victory Day, and protest participants wore black and orange clothes. Many people completely ignored the ban, including the former president of Moldova, socialist leader Igor Dodon. In 2022, he said that the St. George's ribbon would become a symbol of the opponents of the current Moldovan President Maia Sandu. The ribbon has not become such a widespread symbol, but most of the fines issued by police for wearing it have been overturned by the courts. Including in the case of Igor Dodon. The fact is that in order to recognize the crime, it is necessary to prove that the ribbon was worn specifically as a sign of support for the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, and on May 9 this cannot be proved. (Borodin, 2024)

3.4. *The role of religion*

When it comes to Russian propaganda, the religious element is extremely important. In the Republic of Moldova, some parishes belong to the Moldovan Metropolitanate and are subordinate to Moscow, while others are subordinate to Bucharest. The autonomous influence of the Orthodox Churches on public opinion cannot be denied, but their ability to mobilize the masses should not be exaggerated either. Analyzing from this point of view the magnitude of the changes in the Republic of Moldova, we can see that religious developments mirror political ones. Thus, the Orthodox hierarchy as a whole is following the general line imposed by the political powers. Taking into account the current internal and external situation, it was proposed that all churches should come under the jurisdiction of Orthodox parishes subordinate to Bucharest, which has aroused controversial reactions from political groups that are Russia's clients. The new draft law thus served as a means to promote religious-based polemics. Youth activists and other representatives of the Victoria political bloc organized several protests across the country, during which they expressed their indignation at the pressure they believe the authorities are exerting on the Moldovan Archdiocese (Gradinaru, 2024).

The demonstrations were aimed at protecting traditional values and the Orthodox Church, while campaigning against attempts to split it. Holding placards with the inscriptions "One Church - One Nation", "For peace in every church" and "Sandu, don't touch our church", "EU will make you pray to other gods", the protesters demanded respect for the unity and autonomy of the Orthodox Church. One of these rallies took place in Chisinau, in front of the Moldovan Metropolitan. The participants in the demonstration also drew attention to the fact that lately the pressure from the authorities on the Orthodox Church has increased and therefore all Orthodox Christians must unite in the struggle for the values of a "healthy" society. In fact, their slogans are elements of manipulation, since accession to the European Union does not imply an exchange of religion and does not promote other values, nor does it affect the maintenance of the values of the people („Sandu, nu atinge biserica noastră”, 2024).

Analyzing the Russian propaganda, we cannot exclude the political aspects and illicit money that feed the propaganda apparatus of the regime promoted by the Russian Federation in the Republic of Moldova. The funds obtained through legal and illegal mechanisms from the Kremlin leaders or oligarchs, coupled with the double game of local authorities, which are the main emitters of fake-news, represent a failure of the public media, and the main arbiters who should sanction - the Audiovisual Councils - do not regulate the situation, as they are politically enslaved. In this context, the new democracies on the frontline of combating Russian propaganda, or the current government, is forced to quickly invent new means and models to combat fake news. On December 16, 2022, the Commission for Exceptional Situations suspended the broadcasting licenses of six TV stations during the state of emergency: Accent TV, NTV Moldova, Orhei TV, First in Moldova, RTR Moldova and TV6. On the proposal of the Information and Security Service (SIS), the Commission for Exceptional Situations (CSE) suspended the broadcasting licenses of six more TV stations (Orizont, Prime, Publika TV, ITV, Canal 2, Canal3) on the grounds that the Russian Federation would try to influence the 2023 local elections in Moldova (Coptu, 2023).

Conclusions

Since the Soviet period and continuing after 1991, Russia has made extensive use of media and educational channels to promote a vision of Moldovan identity that relates more to the Soviet past than to Romanian traditions. Russian television, radio and online media have been used to spread narratives favoring a distinct "Moldovan" identity, often in opposition to the image of Romania. Russia also supported educational initiatives in Moldovan schools, including in Transnistria, that promoted Russian-language teaching and Soviet values. These channels have had a significant impact on public perceptions, particularly in the eastern regions of the country and in Russian-speaking areas, where a strong link with Russia and the Soviet past has been cultivated.

Russia's involvement in Moldova's identity construction project has therefore been and continues to be a significant influence. From the policy of Russification during the Soviet period, to the continued support for separatist regions and the advocacy of a pro-Russian Moldovan identity, Russia has had a profound impact on the cultural and political orientations of the Republic of Moldova. However, this identity project is in constant competition with pro-Romanian and pro-European tendencies aimed at integrating Moldova into international structures such as the European Union. Moldova's national identity thus remains a battleground between different geopolitical forces, and Russia's influence continues to play a significant role in this dynamic.

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THE ANALYSIS OF PROTECTING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN ARMED CONFLICTS. CASE OF THE RUSSIAN- UKRAINE WAR

*Kudzai Cathrine BINGISAI**

Abstract. *The current study sought to contribute to the discussions relating to the destruction of cultural heritage in armed conflicts. The relationship between cultural heritage and national identity cannot be separated. The 21st century particularly 2022 has experienced the most violent and radical Russian-Ukraine war from which the spillover effects go beyond geographical borders. The study argues that at the expense of Russia's geopolitical interests, the destruction of cultural heritage is a global protection crisis. By using secondary data sources, this study sought to analyse the challenges of protecting cultural heritage during armed conflicts. The findings present that cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible is an important representation of national identity and promotes cultural diversity. The Russian-Ukraine war has witnessed the destruction of heritage sites, churches and monuments in Ukraine. From a comprehensive point of view, the study presents that regional and international organizations should establish effective efforts and rethinking for the preservation of cultural heritage. The paper argues that technological advancement has also complicated the protection of cultural heritage in global politics thereby threatening the achievement of sustainable development goals.*

Keywords: *cultural heritage, protection, armed conflict*

Introduction

This study sought to examine the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts with specific reference to the 2022 Russian-Ukraine war. The issue of preserving cultural heritage has been preached at national and international dialogues and it has been taken through international law interventions. The purpose of the law interventions as manifested in Conventions sought to protect cultural heritage in times of conflict. Notwithstanding the efforts to promote peace in the international system, human lives together with cultural property are on the edge of destruction. As the Russian-Ukraine war continues to mark the field of socio-economics and politics, it is therefore critical to analyse the challenges in the protection of cultural heritage. Acknowledging that the quest for the protection of cultural heritage is made complex due to Russia's geopolitical interests, the impact that the war has made so far cross-cutting socio-economic, and technological pillars should not be ignored. Nonetheless, in the complexity of preserving cultural property in times of war and the historical memory of communities, this paper sought to analyse the divergent discourses surrounding the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts concerning the Russian-Ukraine war.

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Literature review

The 21st century has witnessed a resurgence of regional armed conflicts coupled with the devastating loss of human lives and heritage sites. Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provides an understanding of cultural heritage in the form of monuments, architectural buildings and archaeological sites. It is important to note that the Convention provides that member states must preserve cultural heritage. The Convention sought to protect the World's cultural and natural heritage whilst embracing sustainable development. Likewise, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, (ICOMOS), (2002) expresses that cultural heritage can be recognized as tangible or intangible. From which tangible cultural heritage could be in the form of buildings and monuments. According to UNESCO (2015), intangible cultural heritage includes expressions such as oral stories, performing arts, knowledge and skills.

In addition, the efforts to protect the loss of such cultural heritage in times of war have seen the global community signing treaties in recognition of the importance of cultural heritage. The two Protocols (1954 and 1999) of the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflicts of 1954 provide for the protection of cultural heritage. The 1954 Hague Convention article 7 provides State parties; 'to undertake to introduce in time of peace into their military regulations or instructions such provisions as may ensure observance of the present Convention, and to foster in the members of their armed forces a spirit of respect for the culture and cultural property of all peoples'

Accepting the difficulty of protecting cultural heritage in the event of war due to the demand of complex circumstances and diverging deep root causes (Cunliffe and Fox, 2022), the destruction of cultural heritage still implies the violation of the right to heritage and identity. Concerning protecting cultural property, Article 5 of the 1999 Hague Convention provides for safeguarding of cultural property including emergency removal of property to prevent destruction in times of conflict. In the same vein, the Universal Declaration of People's Rights of 1976, refers to the rights of all members including their heritage and nationality, and that it is not subtracted by other States or by individuals. Henceforth, cultural heritage is typically part of national identity (Capuano, 2022). Çağın *et al.*, (2023) also acknowledge that cultural heritage signifies national historical values and identity. Heritage on its own, according to Ashworth (2011), is historical artefacts including artefacts, events and performances which are derived from the past and interpreted for the present and future.

Indeed, during wartime, cultural heritage is prone to destruction (Luce, 2023), and its attack violates the international instruments that stand for the protection of cultural property. The Russian-Ukraine war is not an exception in concerns over the destruction and protection issues of cultural heritage. However, such protection of cultural heritage in the Russian-Ukraine war has been compromised. Armed conflicts have the risk of demolishing heritage sites such as museums, galleries and monuments. The war has caused the horrible destruction of heritage sites and monuments (Bilgin and Hazarhun, 2023). Cultural heritage is an element of cultural identity, its destruction has been used by Russia as a weapon of war. Like any other armed conflict, The Russian-Ukraine war has drawn global attention as well as condemnation over the loss of both human lives and the destruction of World Cultural Heritage. Literature indicates that the Russian-Ukraine conflict has massively destroyed the cultural heritage of Ukraine (Capuano, 2022). The

massive destruction and the demolition of cultural heritage have intensified as the war continues to unravel.

Article 7 of the 1954 Hague Convention mentions that the Parties ought to generate peace strategies including joint involvement of civilizations with the aim of the protection of cultural property.

‘The High Contracting Parties undertake to introduce in time of peace into their military regulations or instructions such provisions as may ensure observance of the present Convention, and to foster in the members of their armed forces a spirit of respect for the culture and cultural property of all peoples.’ (Article 7(1) of 1954 Hague Convention)

Resultantly, the cultural heritage in times of war is on the target. To this end, as the war continues, how reality is international law protecting cultural heritage in times of armed conflicts as the effects pose terrible effects on cultural heritage protection and threats to human security? Unfortunately, it seems the international instruments and laws mandated to protect cultural heritage are challenged by the prevailing geopolitical challenges.

In addition, the Russian-Ukraine war has resulted in profound socio-economic and political effects on the global arena. The spillover effects of the Russian-Ukraine war have made the war an international concern. Likewise, Shydlovskiy *et al.*, (2023) state that the destruction of Ukraine's cultural heritage has become a global concern. Regrettably, it is sad to note the war has shaken global economies, threatened food security, and resulted in mounting fuel prices. The war has not only threatened the destruction of cultural heritage but instead impacted negatively the socio-economic sector including food security (Pereira *et al.*, 2022). One of the major consequences of the Russian-Ukraine war is Russia's aggression and attack on Ukraine's agricultural production threatening economic and food security. This includes the attack on Ukraine's agriculture facilities (Devadoss and Ridley (2024), leading to worsening the global humanitarian situation and straining global aid assistance. The war has created a global economic crisis in countries that depend on Ukraine's agricultural exports including African and developing Middle Eastern countries (Martyshchuk *et al.* 2023; van Meijl *et al.*, 2024). The war has severely impacted global food insecurity (van Meijl *et al.*, 2024), alarming an urgent need to advocate for peace and security. The delays in effective negotiation skills and Peace Plans continue to worsen the already struggling global economies and political environments.

On another critical note, both Russia and Ukraine are signatories to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC) from which Article 15 of the ICESC provides for the right to take part in cultural life, which includes the right "to benefit from the cultural heritage. In addition, Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR 1966), to which Russia and Ukraine are also parties provides that; “[i]n those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their religion, or to use their language.”

This must be understood that both parties are obliged to respect the principles of the Covenants. Amidst the international instruments, Ukraine's cultural heritage is at risk. In the same motive of protecting cultural property and promoting sustainable development, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly recognized the protection of cultural diversity from which the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030

endorsed the provision. Hence, the protection of cultural heritage is interwoven with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 11 provides for cities and human settlements to be inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. However, despite being party to international instruments that promote the protection of cultural heritage, there are serious complex challenges in protecting cultural heritage due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Pereira *et al.*, (2022) state that the Russian-Ukraine war affects the realization of sustainable development goals. The protection of cultural heritage places value and importance on culture in global initiatives of sustainable development. The main question is why it has been so difficult to protect cultural heritage using laws and Conventions as a medium of transition.

Due to Russian aggression, some of the destructed monuments, museums and religious sites include the Memorial to the Victims of Totalitarianism (built in 1991–2000), the Church of St. Theodosius, Regional Children's Library (former Vasyl Tarnovsky Museum of Ukrainian Antiquities) and Ivankiv Museum (UNESCO, 2022). Making matters worse, the exact statistics of the destroyed property are unknown, recent news indicated that Russia has attacked more than 900 historical sites¹. Hence, the attack is not only between Russian and Ukrainian cultural property but also against World Cultural Heritage. In the same vein, the destruction of cultural heritage is not only Ukraine's burden instead a threat to global security including socio-economic and political instability. With the ongoing war, the major concern is the destruction of Ukraine's cultural heritage, its monuments and historical sites that served as the backbone of the Ukraine community (Gerstenblith, 2024). Unfortunately, efforts to promote the protection of cultural heritage and existing legal instruments seem to stand isolated and distanced from achieving the mandate.

Theory of conservatism

This study made use of the theory of conservatism by Wilson (1941) to analyse the complex challenges of protecting cultural heritage in an armed conflict. Wilson (1941) states that conservatism fights to conserve existing fundamental practices in society. The underlying argument in conservatism is that cultural values and institutions ought to be protected and preserved. Wilson (1973) defines conservatism as preserving traditional structures and behaviour against change. Conservatives are devotees of their cultural values and beliefs assumed by tradition and historical practices. Based on the reality situation in aggression, is there respect for conservative ideas and values in times of conflict? Hofstede (1980) expresses that it is cultural values that serve as fundamental principles of national pride. Wilson (2013) states that in times of conflict, the aggressor always attacks what is deemed important to the opponent. Conservatism perspectives posit the fears of change or uncertainty to social and habitual action. Relating to conservatism, this study aligns the protection of cultural heritage with conservatism. The situation in Ukraine calls for an increased theoretical and practical analysis of the

¹ Denys Shmyhal. All cultural heritage sites affected by Russian aggression will be included in a special state register to determine the amount of compensation from Russia. Government Portal Official Website, 29 February 2024. <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/denys-shmyhal-usi-postrazhdali-vnaslidok-rosiiskoi-ahresii-objekty-kulturnoi-spadshchyny-vnesut-dospetsialnoho-derzhreiestru-dlia-vyznachennia-rozmiriv-kompensatsii-vid-rf>, accessed on 11 March 2024.

principles of conservatism. How can conservatism preserve cultural property with the continuous reality of bullets firing at both humanity and heritage?

As the Russian-Ukraine war ravages, there is a challenge of preserving cultural property for the present and future generations. The war is resulting in the loss of Ukrainian cultural property, heritage values and global historic development. The crisis is having to protect humanitarian and preserve both tangible and intangible property. Due to the globalization and continuous restructuring of the international system, the future of conservatism has been questioned (O'Sullivan, 2023). At the moment of writing this paper, no one knows when the bullets are going to cease, for sure, when the time comes many destructions will have been caused and who knows what it will take to heal the wounds of the Ukrainians. Is the reconstruction of heritage sites going to restore peace? Is the global world ready to handle post-trauma recovery and restoration of destructed or stolen property? The continuous effects of the Russian-Ukraine war on the destruction of cultural heritage has led to analysis and consideration of survival of conservatism due to limited safeguarding and protection of heritage in times of war. This study sought to analyze the prospects of preserving cultural heritage during the armed conflict from which the role of international institutions cannot be ignored in the protection of cultural property.

Methodology

This paper made use of qualitative data from the growing secondary data sources. The use of secondary data sources provides the researcher with a wide range of collective information (Ruggiano and Perry, 2019). Research based on qualitative secondary data makes use of already existing sources to construct new critical analysis and understanding of the concept (Irwin, 2013). Guided by the questions; what is the role and importance of international organisations in the protection of cultural heritage? What are the associated challenges towards the protection of cultural heritage and will the focus primarily be on cultural heritage amongst global changes? The study draws an empirical analysis from the growing literature on cultural heritage in the context of the Russian-Ukraine War.

Discussions of Findings

In the contemporary system, the office of international organisations has been playing crucial roles in solving global challenges. Like any other common challenge, the protection of cultural heritage in Ukraine has attracted much attention across all sectors across the globe including the academia, independent actors and international organisations. The nature of the mandate of the international organizations remains widespread to promote peace, security and achievement of sustainable development. The 21st-century challenges require international institutions to provide strategic solutions to contemporary problems (Crockett, 2012). The United Nations including regional and international organisations including Australia, the United States and Britain have condemned Russia's aggression over Ukraine (Kliem, 2024). The UN Security Council has been praised by praised for its Resolution 2347 which is centred on safeguarding cultural heritage at an international level. Nevertheless, Russia's act has been declared a violation of international law on the protection of cultural heritage, such that, the ongoing experiences in the war are shocking to the presence breach of international law.

The war broke out on the 24th of February 2022 (Zollmann, 2023) and this was just after the European Union (EU) - Africa Union (AU) Summit held on 17-18 February 2022 held in Brussels. The two Unions had pledged to solve common global challenges.

The EU-AU member states agreed on collaborating with a joint vision of solving global challenges in promoting solidarity, peace, security and global sustainable development (EU-AU, 2022). How capable are the global efforts in protecting cultural heritage in armed conflicts?

Although no study has investigated on efforts of the AU in promoting the protection of cultural heritage in Ukraine. The African Union having fifty-five member states is mandated to promote regional and external peace and security (AU, 2015; Moolakkattu, 2010). The tragic effects of the Russian-Ukraine war have transcended geographical borders threatening global human security and the destruction of cultural property has questioned the capability of the AU to deliver a package of peace and security. One of the aspirations of AU Agenda 2063 provides for the promotion of cultural identity, values and diversity (AU, 2015). In concurrence with the UN Economy Report (2015), which states that the promotion of cultural diversity leads to safeguarding the achievement of sustainable development goals. Instead, the war has worsened the vulnerability of the Continent through soaring energy prices, fertilizers and food security (Staeger, 2023). The conflict has confronted Africa from socioeconomic security lenses providing no choice other than promoting global peace.

On the other hand, Russia's presence in Africa dates back to the Cold War era (Besenyő, 2020), due to Russia's sanctions and condemnations after the annexation of Crimea, Africa has been a priority for Russia's economic and political bilateral relations (Hedenskog and Persson, 2019). Cultural heritage connects the global world through intercultural diversity for peace (Weiss *et al.*, 2022). In addition, the AU member states sought to exercise their mediation skills between the two presidents since the effects of the war transcend geographical borders². Weiss *et al.*, (2022), state that wherever cultural heritage is destroyed in the international system the universe, humanitarian and security concerns are threatened since the global world is united through cultural diversity. It appears that Ukraine was attacked without a standby plan to protect its sites in case of emergency and mitigate incidences of looting. To what extent then can the AU partnership with external regional organisations contribute towards promoting peace and the protection of cultural heritage in conflicts? The mechanism for effective jurisdiction should be awakened to save cultural heritage destruction. There is no denying that the destruction of cultural heritage is a violation of international law. The Russian army seems to have mastered the art of destroying cultural heritage in Ukraine. It is the concern of this paper to discuss the discourses on the destruction of cultural heritage and its effects on the socio-cultural and economic environment towards the achievement of global sustainable development.

Unlike its previously mentioned counterpart, the EU is one of the major donors to humanitarian aid in times of conflict (Trebesch *et al.*, 2023). It is important to note that the aid has been in the form of military, financial and humanitarian support (Anteezza *et al.*, 2022). In the same vein, the response of the EU has also been witnessed in calling for peace and condemning the horrible actions in the case of the Russia-Ukraine war. In the same vein, Raik *et al.*, (2024) state that the EU did not support Russia's aggression on Ukraine resulting in economic sanctions and condemnation as the invasion threatened Europe and global peace. However, a comparison of unity and commitment shows much

² Jesupemi Are, Russia-Ukraine war: African leaders meet with Putin, Zelensky to 'seek road to peace', The Cable News, 18 June 2023, <https://www.thecable.ng/russia-ukraine-war-african-leaders-meet-with-putin-zelensky-to-see-road-to-peace>, accessed on 11 March 2024.

concern of the EU concerning Russia's move in Ukraine as compared to the Israel-Gaza conflict (Mros, 2024), is it because the Russia-Ukraine war is closer to home than the latter? The tension underlying the destruction of cultural heritage is centred on geopolitical interests. As such, the role of international institutions in protecting cultural heritage has been proven susceptible to the capacity to confront Russian aggression on Ukraine. It seems the Russian-Ukraine war is a complex challenge coupled with socio-economic and political global effects on the international system.

The prevalence of the Russian-Ukraine war has revealed the weaknesses of States and Non-State Actors towards the protection of global cultural heritage alongside principles of international law. The destruction and protection of cultural heritage have been a major issue of concern in conflicts. This is because the war has disclosed the complications and twists in identity conflicts (Qaisraini *et al.*, 2023; Jakupec, 2024). As previously mentioned, the Russian-Ukraine war caught the international system unexpectedly in February 2022, just after the international system had been trying to get back on its feet from the effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Since the day of the invasion, the war has been considered a violation of human rights due to extensive strikes on sites and civilians. Pereira *et al.*, (2022) state that both effects of COVID-19 coupled with Russian Ukraine war are drawing back the United Nations Agenda 2030 achievement for Sustainable Development Goals. The paper acknowledged that ongoing conflict directly affects infrastructural development, climate and socio-economic environment. Inevitably, the continuous geopolitical rivalry between the two forces over geopolitical power has led to alarming regional and international concerns over the destruction and protection of cultural property.

The intentional destruction of cultural heritage is an emergency concern towards the protection of heritage sites. As the war continued to ravage, the efforts to save buildings became extremely challenging. The war continues to present complexities protection of human lives and cultural heritage. The Russian army is targeting Ukraine cities and heritage sites (Schmitt, 2022; Sapuppo, 2023). Besides the condemnation of the global world and archaeological experts, cultural heritages are deliberately attacked as a cleansing force to the destruction of Ukraine's ethnic and nationalism. As such, Russia focuses on gaining victory irrespective of the methodology that brings triumph.

An observation from the existing literature is that the protection of cultural heritage in Ukraine is under siege. The concept of protecting cultural property in the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war is a complex one. Findings present that the ongoing terrifying loss of human lives and cultural heritage threatens the protection of cultural heritage. With the continuing armed conflict, the decision to protect human lives and cultural heritage has revealed complex challenges in efforts to protect cultural property. However, Matthes (2018) states that the notion of saving lives or stones cannot be separated. The author strengthened the Principle of Inseparability that the efforts towards the protection of human lives are jointly linked to efforts of protecting monuments. The UN Security Council Resolution 2347 (2017) affirms unlaw attacks on cultural heritage sites. The Law of Ukraine on Protection of Cultural Heritage (2000) provides for the saving and protection of cultural heritage for the present and future generations. The findings present that cultural heritage plays a vital role in fostering cultural identity and diversity which the war seeks to erase. As indicated in a study by (Giannini and Bowen, 2023) indicated that cultural heritage interconnects both local and international communities.

Indeed, the research findings present that the protection of cultural heritage in Ukraine has been a major concern and challenge to Ukraine and the global community. Shydlovskiy *et al.*, (2023) state that the rate at which Ukrainian cultural heritage is being demolished goes way beyond 1945. EU (2021) acknowledges that awareness is the critical first step towards the protection of cultural heritage. Likewise, awareness campaigns and international bodies have been held to discuss the protection of cultural heritage in Ukraine. For instance, Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online (SUCHO) provides initiatives to identify and preserve Ukrainian cultural heritage institutions. Furthermore, Culture Policy Lab shows attempts towards protecting Ukraine's culture and identity (Culture Policy Labs Report, 2023). Nevertheless, despite the existence of international instruments in the protection and respect of cultural heritage, concerning the Russian-Ukraine war, the issue has proven a complex one.

Discussing the protection of cultural heritage is a difficult task with the advent of technology and scientific advances in the world. Technological inventions have proved to be a double-edged sword since they both cause massive destruction in armed conflict and also support digitalization protection of heritage sites. The destruction of cultural heritage in an armed conflict is highly threatened. Krepinevich (1994) cited in Chin (2019) states that technology has contributed to armed military win wars. Due to the complex global arena, the development of new technology with greater capacity has caused widespread permanent destruction of buildings and heritage sites. The conflict zone is stationed with geospatial technologies and drones. Kumar (2022) states that cyber-attacks and drone surveillance have complicated the battlefield in contemporary wars. In a study by Duguin and Pavlova (2023) on the role of cyber technology in the Russian-Ukraine war, the study unravelled the reality massive effects of cyber-attacks in war. However, upon reflection, the digitization of collections is a way to preserve cultural works for the future. Priority actions have been posed by the Europeana platform in support of Ukraine and the display of digitized collections of Ukrainian cultural heritage. Furthermore, the EU (2021) states that the use of digital technology can be adopted in identifying and providing opportunities for long-term preservation. In addition, Gosart and Diadyk (2023: 4) state that SUCHO has provided digitalized technology to libraries in Ukraine in response to protecting digitalized collections of cultural objects. Technology advancement is crucial in the protection of cultural heritage for future humanitarian efforts in times of war. As such, the devotion to the protection of cultural heritage should prevail as a global concern.

As mentioned previously, in the wake of the Russian-Ukraine war, Ukraine's heritage sites are endangered by the armed conflict, a loss of both tangible and intangible heritage on Ukraine's side. In their study, Gosart and Diadyk (2023), identified the risk of losing cultural heritage in the Russian-Ukraine war despite efforts by Ukrainian libraries to preserve cultural heritage materials during times of war. Research findings present that it is very complex and challenging to safeguard cultural heritage in an armed conflict. Taking this into consideration, Stone (2016) identifies looting of cultural property and the principle of no strike on cultural heritage as some of the challenges placing cultural heritage at high risk in times of war. Likewise, there have been several concerns involving Russian soldiers looting Ukraine artefacts (Wille, 2022; Druhak, 2023). It can also be argued that different stakeholders and individuals have varied interests as the property is also prone to theft. Some properties have been expropriated and transferred to Russia, while in other cases, artefacts have been pillaged by Russian soldiers to keep or sell (Spinney, 2022). Unfortunately, this act of accusations of stealing

cultural objects limits the effectiveness of international law regarding the protection of cultural property and heritage. Cultural heritage looting and stealing is a major crisis in the Russian-Ukraine war. The war revealed the weaknesses and failure of international law to prevent such activity in times of war. The major question is how the international community can prevent the theft of cultural artefacts and save human lives at the same interval. How can the international system appreciate and value cultural diversity when it is prone to theft and destruction in a conflict?

Empirical evidence reveals that as the Russian-Ukraine war continues to unfold, efforts to safeguard and protect cultural property in Ukraine have been uneven. Given the ongoing conflict, it is not yet possible to assess the damage to the cultural heritage (Shydlovskiy *et al.*, 2023). The war has threatened global security-peace and security. With the massive effects of the war, why then is the prevailing low-level commitment to safeguarding cultural heritage? The war is intertwined with socio-cultural, historical experiences and geopolitical interests. Christensen (2024) argues that 21st-century conflicts have proved to be complex limiting to urgent need to tackle threats to cultural heritage protection. National and international efforts have not been able to effectively do much in preserving cultural heritage probably because of the myriad of global challenges. Russia's geopolitical interests, inaccessibility of other regions in Ukraine, global economic instability, climate change and environmental issues, and civil wars are among the global challenges. However, the effects of the war are not only felt in Ukraine but the global community as a whole. The consequences of the Russian-Ukraine war are not only based on loss of human lives instead extend to the destruction of museums, libraries and historical sites. The study presents a critical challenge in the protection of cultural heritage. Despite the effects of the war on cultural heritage preservation, the 2024 Russian elections ushered President Putin into another term in office³. The political field and aggression remain tilted to the disadvantage of Ukraine's identity protection and loss of World cultural heritage. Within this complex scenario, protection for cultural heritage in times of armed conflicts is interdisciplinary as it lies on discourses of socialism and political economy.

Conclusions and recommendations

This study sought to analyse the protection of cultural heritage in the war. The issue of cultural heritage protection has not been well safeguarded in the Russian-Ukraine war. The study concludes that despite Russian geopolitical interests, the destruction of cultural heritage stands as a war crime. The Russian army grossly violates international norms and conventions concerning the preservation of cultural heritage. As the war continues to ravage, the priorities of international communities remain being pushed towards the protection and value of cultural heritage. The paper urges the global community to establish a strategic roadmap to facilitate the protection of cultural property effectively since, the destruction of cultural heritage in Ukraine not only affects Ukraine's ethnicity instead, implicates the protection of World Heritage Sites. The destruction of heritage sites equally means destroying historical achievements and memories.

The major question remains, what can be proffered to mitigate the destruction of cultural heritage in times of war in the contemporary international system? The protection

³ Oxford Analytica. (2024). A landslide win gives Putin six more years. Expert Briefings. 18 March 2024. <https://dailybrief.oxan.com/Analysis/DB285886/Landslide-win-gives-Putin-six-more-years>. Accessed on 26 March 2024.

of cultural heritage is anchored in respect of international law. Of course, geopolitical interests turn a blind eye to law, hence, the paper recommends State Parties to consider critical analysis of the existing law and the need for amendments to the articles of international law. As it stands, despite having the law, there is a gap that ought to be filled to enhance the effectiveness and scope of the protection and preservation of cultural heritage in times of armed conflicts. The international institutions and State Parties need to stand firm in unity and implement consequences for violation of the law on the aggressor to protect cultural heritage.

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DIFFERENCES IN ETHICAL JUDGMENT BASED ON THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF BUDDHIST ALTARS: AN APPLICATION OF THE BENNETT METHOD

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Abstract. *This research analyses ethical judgement processes in Japanese organisations, in relation with the presence or the absence of Buddhist altars within the premises of the firm. While seeking to illustrate the impact of collectivism on organizational behaviour, this research sheds light on culture and the concept of shame in Japanese society, connecting this to the collective nature of people working in Japanese companies and how this specific behaviour evolved into competitive advantage over the years. Nevertheless, in regard to the focal points of employee interest, this research indicated that there was no evidence of collectivism, as it is usually described by Japanese business managers. The findings highlight important and intriguing issues for future research and scientific consideration.*

Keywords: *culture, ethics, values, strategy, business, leadership, japan*

1. Introduction

In discussions of Japanese society, it is commonly asserted that decision-making processes and corporate behaviours exhibit a collectivist tendency. However, the justification for this claim is often questionable. Many existing studies either lack thorough investigation or uncritically cite these assertions without substantial evidence.

Nisbet (2001, p. 96) discusses the Oriental perspective, noting that while Westerners prioritize individuality and strive to enhance their self-image, Eastern cultures place a strong emphasis on harmonizing with their surroundings and ensuring personal actions align with social norms. He suggests that this approach is beneficial, yet questions arise regarding the oversimplification of these cultural dynamics.

In a separate analysis, Inoue (2018), an architectural researcher, offers a critical view of Japan's urban landscape. He contrasts the controlled urban planning of Western

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Europe, where building height, color, and materials are regulated despite private ownership, with the lack of cohesion in Japanese cityscapes. Inoue argues that this disarray reflects a departure from collectivism, as individuals pursue personal desires without restraint.

Furthermore, studies in social psychology reveal that, contrary to the cultural narrative of collectivism, Japanese individuals often exhibit individualistic behaviours.

2. Location of the problem

2.1 Definition of Collectivism

Individualism is characterized by the maximization of individual interests, whereas collectivism is defined as a behavioural principle that prioritizes the interests of the group over those of the individual, presenting itself as an opposing concept.

In common discourse, "collectivism" is often interpreted to mean that individuals cooperate extensively due to their subordination to the group, yet they may lack individuality because they have not fully established a personal identity. In the context of psychological research, "collectivism" is frequently described as "prioritizing the goals of the group over the daily goals of the individual" (Triandis, 1990).

2.2 Ruth's Argument

According to Benedict (1946), Japan is characterized as a culture of shame, where individuals are guided by a sense of being observed by "Seken," which translates to self-regulation to avoid shame or criticism. This raises the question: is it the world rather than society that exerts this influence?

In Japanese, there is a nuanced distinction between "world" and "society." "Society" refers to a network of interest-based connections formed through education, whereas "world" implies a physical space experienced through daily life (Inoue, 1981, p. 17). This distinction is illustrated by a Japanese proverb, "they say you leave your sense of shame at home when travelling to new places," which suggests that ethical restraints are easily loosened when one is outside their usual environment.

2.3 Advocates of Japanese Management

Abegglen (1958) focused on manufacturing companies, particularly factories, and sought to explore the relationship between social structures, such as blood and geographical ties, and productivity (efficiency) within these settings. Initially, such organizational structures were perceived as inefficient.

However, in subsequent work (Abegglen, 1985, p. 18), the emphasis shifted to "collective achievement" rather than "individual achievement," highlighting concepts such as "collective belonging," "self-identification with the company," and dedication "for the company." This perspective is also echoed by Dore (1973).

Japan's economic growth was notably significant during the bubble economy that emerged in the late 1980s. It is believed that this growth contributed to the perception that the collective nature of Japanese companies evolved into a competitive advantage.

2.4 Japanese Management Scholars

Ito (1969, p. 3), Hazama (1964), Tuda (1971), Odaka (1984), and others, initiated discussions premised on the notion that Japanese companies inherently exhibit collectivist characteristics. Similarly, Iwata (1984, p. 131) adopts the premise of collectivism as an axiomatic principle. Consequently, a significant portion of the

discourse on Japanese-style management uncritically builds upon prior research that characterizes Japan as fundamentally collectivist, often culminating in accolades for Japanese corporations.

The question arises: why did Japanese business scholars of the era readily accept this premise? Initially, the term "collectivism" bore negative connotations; however, this perception did not persist in Japan. Furthermore, in the post-World War II period, these studies may have signified a sense of emancipation from the complex sentiments associated with Japan's wartime defeat, coinciding with a period of rapid economic growth.

Additionally, the concept of "No ie," which will be elaborated upon later, further contributes to understanding this perspective. "The distinction between collectivism and familialism is not significantly pronounced" (Iwata, 1984, p. 138).

In this context, Mito (1991) contends that the collectivism observed in Japanese companies was a deliberately constructed phenomenon in the early 1900s, functioning primarily as a slogan.

Nevertheless, many Japanese business leaders assert that the strength of Japanese companies lies in their collectivist nature.

2.5 The Theory of Desire for Approval

However, Lu, Jin, and English (2021) suggest that Japanese individuals exhibit less collectivism compared to Italians. Although this study focuses on students and is thus restricted to a demographic that has not fully undergone socialization, limiting its generalizability to the broader Japanese population, it nonetheless prompts a reevaluation of the assumption that Japanese society is inherently collectivist.

In this context, Yamagishi (1998, 1999), Takano (2008), and Ota (2011, 2019) have unequivocally refuted the notion that Japanese individuals are inherently collectivist, attributing this misconception to the cultural practices of "hon" (genuine feelings) and "tatemae" (public facade). Specifically, when actions or behaviors are perceived as "for the group," Japanese individuals typically strive to avoid being labeled as selfish or incurring resentment from others. This behavior is largely driven by a desire for social approval and the aspiration to be perceived as virtuous within an organizational setting.

2.6 Purpose

Consequently, it is imperative to critically evaluate whether Japanese companies genuinely embody collectivist principles. As previously mentioned, Christianity and other monotheistic traditions assert that moral judgments of good and evil are made independently through a covenant with God, a claim that remains open to skepticism. Therefore, the objectives of this study are twofold: (1) to investigate whether there is a significant divergence between the religious beliefs genuinely held in Japan and those of other cultures, and (2) to explore whether such religious differences influence ethical disparities.

As an initial phase, a preliminary experiment was conducted using Japanese students as participants.

3. Ethical Testing Methods

3.1 Religious Views

The Japanese perspective on religion markedly differs from that of monotheistic traditions. Shinto, a native folk religion, features myths yet lacks strict taboos. However, it recognizes concepts such as Amatsu Tsumi (Heavenly Sins) and Kunitsu Tsumi

(Earthly Sins), which are not commandments like the Ten Commandments of Moses but rather guidelines to avoid ominous actions. This perspective may appear incongruent to those from monotheistic cultures, yet many Japanese also adhere to Buddhism.

Approximately a millennium ago, the fusion of polytheistic religions began, resulting in a syncretism of Shinto and Buddhism. Original Buddhism, known as Hinayana Buddhism, emphasizes personal spiritual salvation through discipline. However, in Japan, there is a strong inclination towards Mahayana Buddhism, culminating in Jodo-shiso (Pure Land thought). Consequently, Japanese Buddhism is perceived as being adapted to the local context, distinctly differing from its origins in India as well as from the practices in neighboring China and the Korean Peninsula. This syncretism persists in contemporary Japan. Sekimon Shingaku, a traditional Japanese philosophical system, is more influenced by Buddhist ethics than by pure Shinto ethics, frequently incorporating Buddhist terminology. In many modern Japanese homes, it is common to find both Buddhist altars and Shinto kamidana, unless the household belongs to a Shinto priest (guji) or a Buddhist monk.

Furthermore, there is a notable distinction in the perception of objects of worship. Monotheism, rooted in the concept of original sin, necessitates a constant awareness of God to avoid transgressions. In contrast, Shinto deities, as described by Norinaga Motoori in "Kojikiden" (The Records of Ancient Matters), are characterized by extraordinary virtues and awe-inspiring phenomena beyond human comprehension. Shinto scholars, including Okubo (1996), have extensively commented on this notion, emphasizing the experiential aspect of feeling the divine presence. In Buddhism, the Buddha represents an individual who has attained liberation from all worldly troubles, and thus becomes an object of veneration as an ideal state of being, and thus becomes an object of veneration as an ideal state of being.

Due to these fundamental differences, making direct comparisons with monotheistic beliefs can be challenging. Consequently, we explored whether the household in which one was raised possessed either a Buddhist altar or a kamidana (Shinto altar) to better understand these traditions. This situation arises because the majority of students reside in dormitories, which do not allow for personal spaces to accommodate such items. Furthermore, the environment in which one is raised is considered vital.

3.2 Subjects

The focus of this study is on engineering students who commenced their studies in April 2024. In Japan, school admissions occur in the fourth month of the year, which is why the study was conducted shortly after their enrollment. These students have not yet studied law or ethics as specialized subjects. Consequently, they lack prior experience with scenarios similar to those depicted in the vignette below. At the age of 18 or 19, these students have typically engaged in part-time work but have not held positions with significant responsibilities. They are unmarried and without children, which constrains their ability to respond beyond the limits of their imagination.

3.3 Vignettes

The vignette method is a psychological experimental survey technique used to compare responses by presenting participants with detailed descriptions of fictional scenarios.

In this study, the following scenario was constructed: An individual has recently been appointed as the head of the accounting department. Both their family and the family of a colleague are in good condition. However, it is discovered that the individual has discreetly misappropriated a portion of their colleague's sales money for several years. Participants were asked to indicate the course of action they would take in such a situation. This method was chosen for its effectiveness in eliciting judgments about hypothetical and unfamiliar scenarios.

According to Japanese law, under the Whistleblower Protection Act, an accounting head is obliged to report such misconduct to a director. However, the participants may not be aware of this legal requirement. The complexity of the accounting operations involved makes it challenging to ascertain if there is a reporting obligation.

In the long term, we also examined questions in English in order to compare them with other countries, but in order to avoid thinking being influenced by language (Chomsky 1993), we asked Japanese people to ask questions and answer only in Japanese.

3.4 Representation

There are the following reasons why we asked for answers with free descriptions of more than 200 characters (equivalent to more than 120 words in English): The purpose of this study is to explore key keywords in the thought process that led to the subject's answer. Based on the similarity of the relationship between words and the appearance patterns of words in a sentence, we aim to visualize the connection of those words in a sentence as a co-occurrence network diagram.

Next, the intermediary centrality is obtained on the co-occurrence network created, and it is illustrated. Betweenness centrality is a valuable tool for understanding the relationships among significant words, phrases, or topics within text data, and for analyzing the flow and structure of information. Firstly, it facilitates the identification of crucial words and phrases. By employing betweenness centrality, one can pinpoint essential terms in a text that function as intermediaries, bridging connections between other words and phrases. This approach enables the recognition of words that are highly influential within a given context and identifies vocabulary that plays a central role in semantics.

Secondly, it aids in the extraction of key phrases and topics. By representing the connections between multiple words and phrases as a network and identifying nodes with high betweenness centrality, this method proves effective in isolating key phrases and significant topics within a document.

Thirdly, network analysis provides insights into the document's structure. By depicting entire sentences in graph form, where words are represented as nodes and their relationships (such as co-occurrence) as edges, one can elucidate the overall structure of a document and the interrelationships between concepts. Nodes with high betweenness centrality serve as "bridges," connecting disparate topics and contexts, thereby allowing for the extraction of pivotal elements.

4 Results

4.1 Presence or Absence of Buddhist Altars and Reporting to Superiors

In this study, the total number of valid responses was ($n = 66$). Among the respondents, 33 individuals reported having either a Buddhist altar or a kamidana in the

household where they were raised, while the remaining 33 indicated the absence of such religious artifacts in their upbringing environment.

		Report fraud to your boss		
		Does it	Doesn't do it	Total
Buddhist altars	Yes	22	11	33
	No	25	8	33
		47	19	

In the survey, 47 percent of respondents indicated they would report misconduct to their superiors, while 19 percent stated they would not. Detailed data regarding this finding can be seen in Table 1. The statistical analysis yielded a chi-square value of $\chi^2 = 0.269$ with 1 degree of freedom and a p-value of 0.59, indicating no significant relationship between the ownership of a butsudan (Buddhist altar) and the respondents' willingness to report misconduct.

4.2 Differences in Expression

Subsequently, an analysis of the co-occurrence network was conducted. In this network, the size of each circle represented the frequency of occurrence, and the centrality strength indicated higher significance.

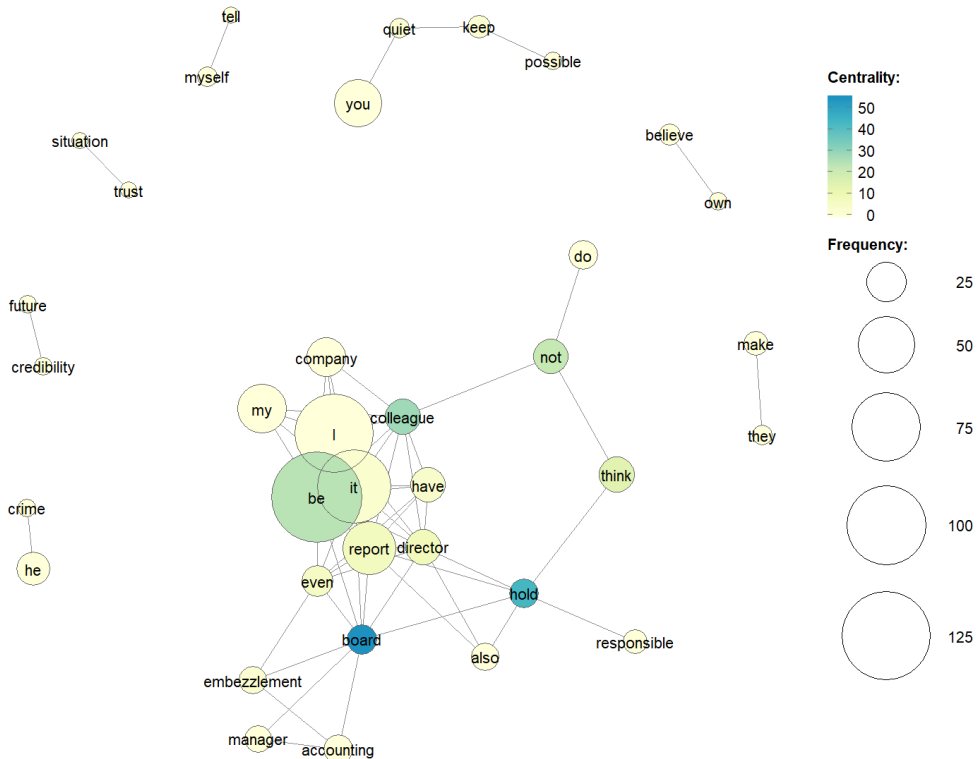


Figure 1. Presence of a Buddhist altar - Likely to report

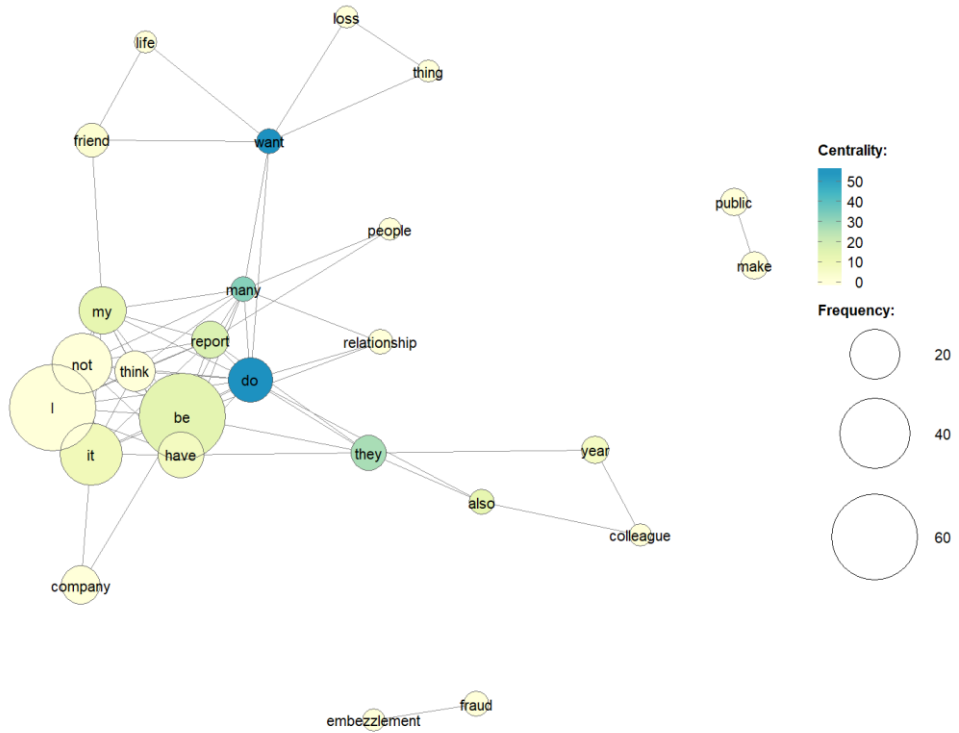


Figure 2. Presence of Buddhist altars - Unlikely to report

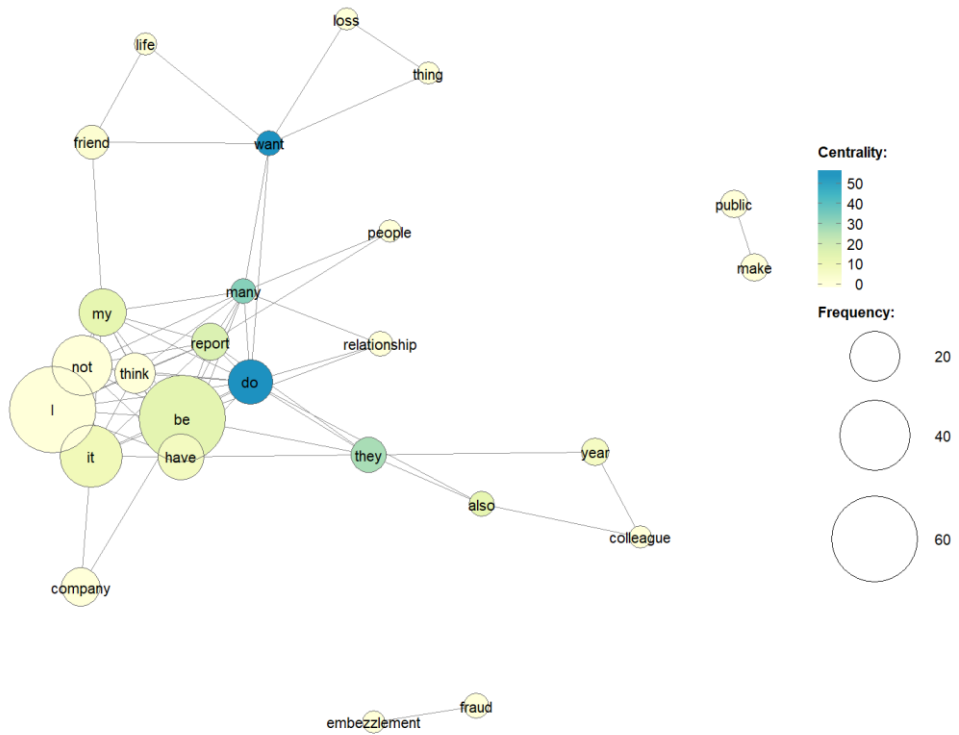


Figure 3. Absence of Butsudan - Likely to report

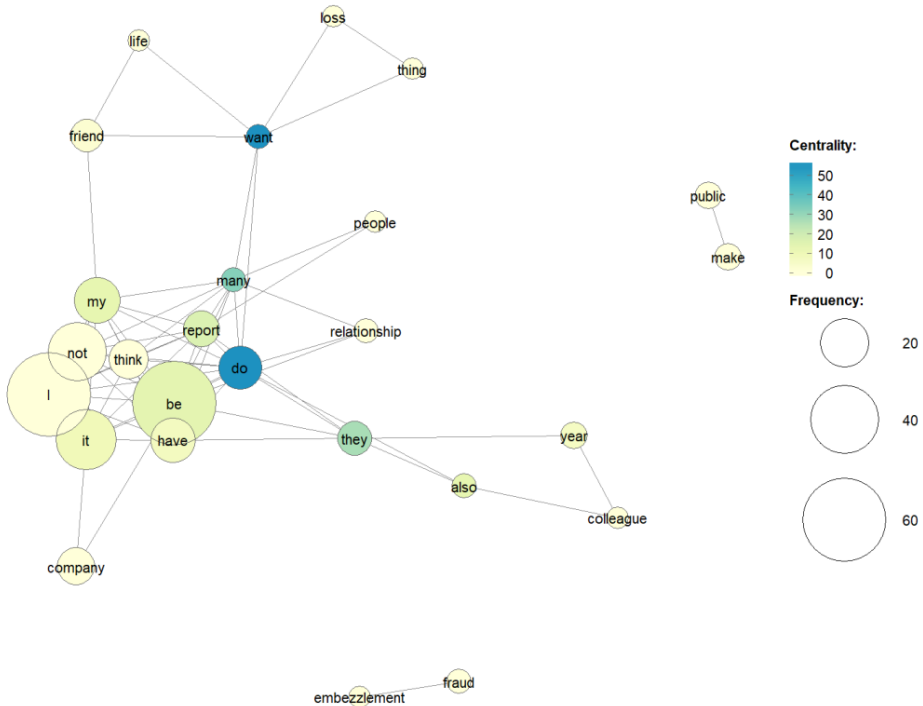


Figure 4. Absence of Buddhist altars - Unlikely to report

Table 1

Range	Buddhist Altar present				Buddhist altars not present			
	Report		Doesn't report		Report		Doesn't report	
	Words	Number of times	Words	Number of times	Words	Number of times	Words	Number of times
1	be	131	be	61	be	149	I	49
2	I	97	I	61	I	135	be	44
3	it	86	it	31	it	88	it	28
4	report	45	not	29	my	41	report	20
5	my	38	my	18	report	40	he	18
6	you	35	have	17	colleague	34	not	18
7	company	24	do	16	company	30	colleague	12
8	colleague	20	think	13	he	30	my	11
9	director	20	company	12	you	30	they	11
10	think	20	report	11	have	29	embezzlement	10
11	have	19	they	10	not	27	do	8
12	not	19	friend	9	think	22	have	8
13	he	17	he	7	director	19	company	7
14	even	15	make	6	make	19	you	7
15	board	14	public	6	accounting	18	even	6
16	discover	14	year	6	do	17	think	6
17	accounting	13	also	5	embezzlement	16	director	5
18	do	13	fraud	5	manager	15	reason	5

Although the ranking of keywords differs slightly, terms such as "report," "company," "colleague," and "director" prominently appear among those who indicated they would report an incident. This suggests that, for individuals employed under a

company contract, their primary focus is on their professional responsibilities, which consequently leads them to report fraudulent activities.

Notably, among the group with a Buddhist altar (butsudan) who chose not to report, the term "director" is absent from the top rankings, while "colleague" emerges as "Friend." This implies that the designation of "Friend" might hold more significance than the contractual relationship of "colleague" within the company. For these individuals, the emphasis lies not on their relationship with the company but rather on regional or community ties. This phenomenon parallels the concealment of crimes in closed societies, as discussed by Inaba (2017) and Kanemitsu and Inaba (2017).

5. Conclusion

In this experiment, there was no discernible difference between the presence or absence of a Buddhist altar and the propensity to report misconduct to a superior. Consequently, it is premature to assert that "the influence of Japanese religion on ethics is not significant." This conclusion is influenced by the correlation between age and religious faith, as noted by Zushi (2019). The subjects in this experiment may not necessarily practice religion, even if they were raised in religious households.

Moreover, there was no evidence of collectivism, as typically emphasized by Japanese business managers, regarding the focal points of employees' interests. While it is challenging to draw definitive conclusions from this study, the findings highlight important issues for future research and consideration.

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LA MIGRATION TERMINOLOGIQUE INTERDISCIPLINAIRE DANS LE LANGAGE POLITIQUE CONTEMPORAIN

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Abstract. *The interdisciplinary terminological migration in contemporary political language refers to the dynamic process of linguistic exchange and adaptation across various disciplines within the political realm. This phenomenon reflects the interconnectedness of diverse fields such as sociology, economics, and international relations, where terminology evolves and transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries. The migration underscores the fluidity of language in addressing complex political issues, fostering a shared lexicon that facilitates communication among experts from different backgrounds. This interdisciplinary approach enhances the precision and inclusivity of political discourse, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary challenges. It also reflects the evolving nature of political thought, as terms from one discipline find resonance and applicability in others, contributing to a richer and more nuanced vocabulary for discussing global issues. In essence, the migration of terminology across disciplines in contemporary political language promotes collaboration, knowledge integration, and a holistic approach to addressing the multifaceted aspects of the modern political landscape.*

Keywords: *migrating concepts, transdisciplinary exchange, internationalization of the lexicon, contemporary political language, terminological migration, interdisciplinary terminology, transfer of concepts.*

Introduction

La porosité des frontières entre les domaines académiques et professionnels a conduit à une intégration croissante de termes empruntés à d'autres disciplines dans le discours politique. Cette migration terminologique, loin d'être un simple changement sémantique, reflète la manière dont les idées et les concepts circulent et se transforment au sein de la société.

La migration conceptuelle dans le langage politique, un phénomène complexe et dynamique, suscite l'intérêt croissant de chercheurs issus de différentes disciplines. Cette dynamique témoigne de l'interconnexion croissante entre les différentes sphères de la

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société et de l'évolution constante du langage politique. Cette étude vise à analyser les mécanismes sous-jacents à ce processus, en examinant ses implications dans la construction du discours politique contemporain. En s'appuyant sur des références interdisciplinaires, cette recherche propose une exploration approfondie des tendances actuelles de migration conceptuelle, illustrée par des exemples concrets.

La migration conceptuelle, définie comme le déplacement et la réinterprétation des concepts au sein du langage politique, joue un rôle central dans la façon dont les idées et les idéologies sont communiquées et perçues. Ce phénomène est influencé par des facteurs tels que l'évolution socio-économique, les changements culturels et les avancées technologiques.

La migration conceptuelle peut être analysée à travers le prisme de différentes disciplines telles que la linguistique, la psychologie sociale et la science politique. La linguistique cognitive offre des outils pour comprendre comment les mots acquièrent de nouvelles significations au fil du temps, tandis que la psychologie sociale examine comment ces changements affectent la perception publique. Pour mener cette étude, une analyse approfondie des discours politiques contemporains a été réalisée, en mettant l'accent sur les moments clés de migration conceptuelle.

L'évolution de l'herméneutique, considérée « une science universelle – philosophique » dans les années 60 - 70 du XX^{ème} siècle, a mis en évidence l'importance de l'analyse du langage politique. Les dernières années, la politologie occidentale utilise comme méthodologie de l'analyse du langage politique l'analyse des concepts, une méthodologie proche à l'herméneutique, qui concerne l'analyse concrète des significations, de l'étymologie, de l'évolution et le fonctionnement des concepts de divers domaines (politique, économique, religieux, culturel et social) (Гаджиев 1996: 57-59).

Les caractéristiques du langage politique

L'étude du langage politique suppose non seulement un essai de décrire certaines particularités, mais encore la compréhension de « l'intérieur » d'un ou autre domaine, d'un ou autre phénomène politique qui est inadmissible en dehors de l'acte de la parole. Le langage politique est lié tant à la sphère de la conscience sociale qu'à la sphère socio-politique, c'est à dire au monde politique, si l'on considère que la politique représente l'expression de l'image et des relations humaines.

L'une des principales caractéristiques du langage politique est le fait qu'il est considéré « *langue de bois* ». Le terme « *дубовый язык* » est enregistré en 1935, mais il tire ses origines du langage secret des révolutionnaires du XIX^{ème} siècle. Le sens de « *langue de chêne* », grossière, lourde, sans aucun sens politique, peut être associé au sens du syntagme français « gueule de bois ». On retrouve ce concept en 1950 en polonais « *dreptwa nowa* » avec le sens métaphorique « parole consternée » qui essaie de rendre le caractère rigide des formulations de l'époque. Les principaux qualificatifs attribués à la « *langue de bois* » sont ceux qui se rapportent à l'ossification, à la consternation de ce jargon qui a l'aspect du langage spécialisé, officiel. L'aspect stéréotypé, mécanique, le style lourd a contribué à qualifier la « *langue de bois* » comme un langage de propagande, d'intoxication. En français, l'expression « *langue de bois* » a été utilisée dans les commentaires concernant le parti communiste français, plus tard ce syntagme a été appliqué aux régimes Giscard d'Estaing et Chirac. Le dictionnaire *Larousse* définit le terme « Phraséologie stéréotypée (liée seulement à « certains partis communistes ») » (*Dictionnaires Larousse français disponible à l'adresse <https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais>*). La « *langue de bois* » est une expression française qui désigne

un langage artificiel, évasif, ou politiquement correct, souvent utilisé par des personnes publiques, politiques, ou des représentants d'organisations, afin d'éviter de répondre directement à une question, de contourner un sujet délicat, ou de dissimuler la véritable nature de leurs propos. En d'autres termes, c'est un langage qui vise à camoufler la réalité, à embellir les faits, ou à minimiser les problèmes.

L'usage de la langue de bois peut rendre les discours moins transparents, moins sincères et plus difficiles à interpréter. Cela peut être perçu comme une tentative de manipulation de l'opinion publique en utilisant un langage vague, bureaucratique, ou technocratique pour éviter de traiter directement des questions sensibles. L'expression « *langue de bois* » est souvent utilisée de manière critique pour dénoncer un discours qui manque de franchise, de clarté, ou d'honnêteté.

Le but de l'utilisation de « *la langue de bois* » est d'annihiler la pensée des masses (des récepteurs) qui peuvent être soumis à une suggestion collective. L'intention réelle et l'effet obtenu à la suite de l'utilisation de « *la langue de bois* » sont l'imposition de l'autorité par le secret et le prestige du code détenu, par des connaissances technocratiques et par la dissimulation d'une réalité souvent défavorable. Les principales caractéristiques de « *la langue de bois* » sont:

- L'abondance des éléments lexicaux, des unités stéréotypées, des clichés, avec un sens déterminé dans le contexte d'une certaine autorité ;

- L'utilisation stéréotypée – dogmatique d'une idéologie ou des sous – systèmes idéologiques, économiques, technologiques, politiques et culturels qui détiennent un pouvoir ou une autorité;

- L'imitation et la soumission de la part d'un pouvoir politique ou des groupes d'individus;

- La diffusion obsédante, la répétition fréquente dans les mass média (*Thom Françoise, 1993: p.33-35*).

Grâce à la mondialisation et à l'intégration européenne, on peut mentionner le caractère historique, international et national, la vocation ouverte vers l'emprunt de la terminologie politique. Dans le contexte de l'intégration européenne on utilise souvent les mots « *langue européenne* », « *euro langage* », qui représentent du point de vue lexical un ensemble de termes spéciaux qui sont employés dans le contexte de nouveaux phénomènes politiques en Europe. Par conséquent, on peut citer la famille lexicale: « *européisme* », « *européiste* », « *européanisation* », « *pro-européen* », « *anti-européen* », « *politique externe* », « *politique internationale* », « *politique mondiale* ».

Le langage politique est souvent influencé par des termes empruntés à d'autres domaines. Voici quelques exemples :

- Terminologie militaire: *offensive* et *défensive* - utilisés pour décrire des stratégies politiques; *attaque* et *défense* - employés dans le contexte des débats politiques.

- Économie: *bulle* (comme dans *bulle économique*) - utilisé pour décrire des situations de marché excessivement optimistes; *investissement* - employé pour discuter des efforts dans des projets ou des politiques.

- Technologie: *algorithme* - utilisé pour décrire des processus ou des méthodes utilisés dans la prise de décision; *plateforme* - utilisé pour parler de la base ou des principes fondamentaux d'une politique ou d'un programme.

- Environnement: *développement durable* - utilisé pour décrire des politiques respectueuses de l'environnement ; *émission* - utilisé dans le contexte des gaz à effet de serre et également dans le langage politique pour parler de déclarations publiques.

- Médical: *diagnostic* - utilisé pour analyser les problèmes politiques ; *traitement* - employé pour décrire des solutions proposées à des problèmes spécifiques.

- Informatique: *piratage* - utilisé dans le contexte de l'espionnage informatique, mais également dans le langage politique pour décrire des attaques sur la vie privée ; virus - souvent utilisé pour décrire des idées ou des influences négatives qui se propagent rapidement.

- Sport: *stratégie offensive* et *défensive* - utilisées pour décrire des approches politiques; *match* - parfois utilisé pour décrire des confrontations électorales.

Ces exemples montrent comment le langage politique peut incorporer des termes provenant d'une variété de domaines pour décrire des concepts, des actions et des situations spécifiques.

La vocation d'ouverture du langage politique pour l'emprunt est spécifique et pour la terminologie de la République de Moldova. Si dans la deuxième moitié du XIX^{ème} siècle on empruntait souvent du français et de l'allemand, à l'heure actuelle les emprunts par l'intermédiaire de la presse viennent de l'anglais. La presse représente « le quatrième pouvoir » dans un état démocratique, elle a la fonction informative et persuasive. La presse contribue à l'enrichissement, à la diversification et à l'internationalisation du lexique d'une langue. Grâce à son audience, par l'autorité du mot imprimé ou prononcé, la presse a eu et continue d'avoir un rôle significatif dans la diffusion des innovations linguistiques, et notamment, les mots empruntés à d'autres langues et d'autres domaines (*Dumitrescu 1997: p.15*).

L'emprunt des termes anglo-américains représente un phénomène socioculturel qui a commencé après la seconde guerre mondiale dans la plupart des langues européennes: *lobby* - groupe de pression; *lobbying* (*lobbyisme*) - action menée par un lobby (*Stichițoiu-Ichim, 1996: p.37-39*).

Les termes politiques empruntés connaissent diverses étapes de pénétration et d'adaptation: à partir de l'étape de xénisme (*feedback, focus, impeachment*) jusqu'à l'étape de l'intégration totale, avec les signes morphosyntaxiques de cette intégration (le *feedback, le focus, l'impeachment*). Pour éviter la fréquence fâcheuse des emprunts, on recourt parfois au calque syntagmatique, la traduction de chaque élément du syntagme: ex. fr. *gestion des crises* – gestionarea crizelor; angl. *sustainable development* – dezvoltare durabilă.

Certains néologismes du domaine politique ont subi une mobilité sémantique par l'adaptation de la signification à l'usage international: par exemple *le dialogue* « forme d'activité linguistique » est considéré aujourd'hui la principale manière de solutionner les problèmes et les divergences nationales et internationales. Ce terme a perdu sa connotation et a acquis le sens spécialisé « la démocratie, le compromis, la négociation » dans le domaine politique, des relations publiques et du marketing.

En analysant la terminologie politique, on peut affirmer qu'elle a un caractère international. Une approche comparative de cette terminologie dans diverses langues met en évidence un fond d'unités quasi-identiques dans toutes les langues. Ainsi, un nombre considérable de termes politiques sont d'origine grecque: *démocratie, hégémonie*; d'origine latine: *État, république*; avec étymologie multiple: *politique* (une combinaison de termes grecques et latins), *gérontocratie* (lat. geronf – vieux+ gr. kratos – pouvoir); italienne: *irrédentisme, vendetta*; russe: *glasnost, perestroïka*; espagnole: *guérilla, guérrillero, caudillo*; arabe: *ayatollah, jihad*; française: *étatisme*; anglaise: *impeachment*; allemande: *chancelier, realpolitik*; africaine: *apartheid*; japonaise: *kamikaze, shogun, tycoon*, etc.

Le concept de migration conceptuelle

Le langage politique est riche en concepts migrants, nommés encore concepts nomades. On a affaire à une forme de nomadisme, une migration de concepts qui appartiennent à d'autres terminologies, par exemple, celle juridique: *de facto*, *de jure*, *arbitrage*, *capacité*, *compétence*, *conflit*, *contact*, *convention*, *procédure*, *succession*, *habeas corpus*, *manu militari* etc. On observe qu'un terme dans sa littéralité passe d'un champ à l'autre, et qu'une partie au moins du contenu notionnel associé se maintient d'un usage à un autre, il paraît normal de juger que quelque concept a fait le voyage du premier domaine jusque dans le second. Une interdisciplinarité détermine des termes communs avec l'économie: *macroéconomie*, *microéconomie*, *capital*, *concurrence*, *source*, *unité*, *valeur*. Le lexique socio-politique emprunte une série de termes philosophiques : *argument*, *analyse*, *développement*, *forme*, *idée*, *principe*, *rapport*, *raison*, *esprit*, *réalité* etc. Dans la même situation se trouvent les termes linguistiques : *centre*, *égalité*, *formule*, *groupe*, *indicateur*, *ordre*, *rapport*, *règle*, *unité*, *variante*, *variable* etc. Le lexique socio-politique est constitué grâce à l'interférence avec d'autres domaines, les termes étant empruntés par l'intermédiaire du langage commun de la biologie: *adaptation*, *cellule*, *centre*, *noyau*, *association*; de la géographie: *clivage*, *ressource*, *géographie politique*; de la physique : *agrégation*, *équilibre*, *force*, *pouvoir*, *état*; du domaine militaire: *conflit*, *front*, *garde*, *ordre*, *compagnie*; de la médecine: *immunité*, *incompatibilité*, *apathie*; de la psychologie: *comportement*, *raison*, *représentation*; de la littérature: *action*, *acteur*, *valeur*; du sport: *équipe*, *arbitrage*; de la météorologie: *climat*, *degré*. On peut de même signaler des termes qui sont issus des doctrines, des orientations, des mouvements politiques: *agrariénisme*, *anarchisme*, *bolchevisme*, *menchevisme*, *fondamentalisme*, *mondialisation*, *globalisme*, *islamisme*, *laburisme*, *libéralisme*. Certains termes, qui désignent des tendances politiques, développent des sens dérivés de celui de base : *cléricalisme*. La question des emprunts conceptuels d'une discipline à une autre, des circulations entre domaines est une question qui vise l'interdisciplinarité.

Le concept de « migration conceptuelle » fait référence au déplacement ou à la transition d'un concept d'un domaine à un autre, souvent dans le contexte de changements ou d'adaptations de sens. Cette migration peut se produire entre des domaines disciplinaires distincts, des sphères de la société, ou même des langues. En d'autres termes, il s'agit du transfert d'un concept d'un contexte initial vers un nouveau contexte, impliquant souvent des ajustements de signification ou d'usage.

La migration conceptuelle peut être un processus complexe influencé par divers facteurs, notamment les besoins de communication, les évolutions sociales, les avancées technologiques, et les interactions interdisciplinaires. Lorsqu'un concept migre d'un domaine à un autre, il peut subir des modifications, des extensions ou des restrictions de sens pour s'adapter au nouveau contexte d'utilisation. Par exemple, dans le domaine de la linguistique, le concept de « migration conceptuelle » pourrait être appliqué à l'étude des termes empruntés d'une langue à une autre, où ces termes peuvent subir des ajustements sémantiques pour correspondre aux nuances culturelles et linguistiques du nouvel environnement. Dans le contexte politique, la migration conceptuelle pourrait se manifester par l'adoption de termes issus de domaines spécialisés tels que l'économie, la psychologie ou la médecine, pour décrire des phénomènes politiques complexes. Cette migration peut avoir des implications profondes sur la manière dont les idées sont formulées, perçues et discutées dans le discours politique. Par conséquent, la migration conceptuelle est un processus dynamique qui témoigne de la porosité des frontières entre

les domaines de la connaissance et de la manière dont les concepts évoluent à mesure qu'ils traversent différents contextes.

Les types de migrations conceptuelles

La migration conceptuelle peut prendre différentes formes en fonction des contextes disciplinaires, culturels, linguistiques, et sociaux. Voici quelques types de migrations conceptuelles:

1. *Transfert interdisciplinaire*: Cela se produit lorsque des concepts sont empruntés d'un domaine académique à un autre. Par exemple, l'utilisation de termes économiques dans le discours politique ou l'intégration de concepts biologiques dans le langage informatique.

2. *Migration linguistique*: Il s'agit du déplacement de termes d'une langue à une autre. Certains termes peuvent être adoptés directement, souvent avec des ajustements phonétiques ou orthographiques, pour s'adapter à la structure linguistique du nouvel idiome.

3. *Adaptation culturelle*: Les concepts peuvent migrer d'une culture à une autre, subissant des ajustements pour refléter les nuances et les valeurs spécifiques à la nouvelle culture. Cela peut se produire dans des contextes tels que la traduction littéraire ou la diffusion d'idées à travers les frontières culturelles.

4. *Transposition médiatique*: Les concepts peuvent être transposés d'un médium à un autre. Par exemple, des idées provenant d'une œuvre littéraire peuvent être adaptées dans un film, entraînant des changements dans la façon dont le concept est présenté et compris.

5. *Migration entre disciplines professionnelles*: Les concepts peuvent passer d'un domaine professionnel à un autre. Par exemple, des termes utilisés dans le domaine médical peuvent être adoptés dans le domaine de la gestion pour décrire des stratégies organisationnelles.

6. *Migration historique*: Certains concepts peuvent évoluer dans le temps, passant d'une signification à une autre en fonction des changements sociaux, culturels ou politiques. Cela peut entraîner des variations dans la compréhension d'un concept au fil des générations.

7. *Adoption politique*: Les concepts peuvent être intégrés dans le discours politique pour influencer l'opinion publique. Des termes techniques provenant d'autres domaines peuvent être utilisés pour légitimer des politiques spécifiques ou pour rendre des idées complexes plus accessibles au grand public.

Chacun de ces types de migrations conceptuelles illustre la flexibilité et la dynamique des concepts dans différents contextes. Ils soulignent également la manière dont les idées peuvent être remodelées et réinterprétées à mesure qu'elles traversent des frontières disciplinaires, culturelles ou linguistiques. Par exemple, le terme *sécurité* a évolué pour englober non seulement la sécurité nationale, mais aussi la sécurité économique et environnementale. Cette migration conceptuelle reflète les préoccupations changeantes de la société et l'adaptation du discours politique en conséquence.

Laurent Fedi repère trois « théories des migrations conceptuelles » dans l'histoire de la pensée (Laurent 2003). La première est celle d'Auguste Comte qui se présente comme une théorie des régimes d'importation interdisciplinaires de concepts. Partant du constat que certaines catégories comme celles de *statique*, *dynamique*, *fonctionnalisme*, *structuralisme*, *pragmatique*, *communication digitale* etc. représentent un ensemble

lexical qui apparaît comme effet de la migration des termes entre plusieurs domaines différents (la politique, la linguistique, la philosophie, la logique, la mécanique, la sociologie, la biologie etc.), Auguste Comte suggère qu'on leur reconnaisse une certaine universalité. L'approche de Michel Foucault organisée autour de la notion d'épistémé, vise à décrire des régimes de savoirs typiques d'une époque donnée et à saisir l'émergence de nouveaux régimes. Ceux-ci sont détectés grâce à des « mouvements de surface », repérés dans les discours, en particulier la présence d'un concept qui devient commun à plusieurs domaines (Foucault, 2008: p.79-88). C'est le cas notamment, de la notion d'organisation qui, à partir de la fin du XVIIIème et au XIXème siècle, va apparaître chez les économistes, les naturalistes, les linguistes et les politologues, signalant qu'à l'épistémé classique organisé autour de la notion d'ordre, s'est substituée une nouvelle notion centrée sur le concept interdisciplinaire d'organisation.

Laurent Fedi fait apparaître une troisième théorie qui pose la thèse d'une mobilité inhérente au concept, par nature composite, réunissant « des morceaux ou des composantes venus d'autres concepts, qui répondaient à d'autres problèmes et supposaient d'autres plans » (Laurent 2003). Guerreau Alain, Isabelle Stengers dans l'ouvrage *D'une science à l'autre. Des concepts nomades* affirment que la formulation d'un concept est elle-même une opération significative « opération de redéfinition des catégories et des significations, opération sur le champ phénoménal, opération sur le champ social » (Guerreau 1988: p. 146-147). Considérant le champ scientifique comme intrinsèquement instable, on souligne le coup de force que doit accomplir tout scientifique pour véritablement imposer un nouveau concept.

Le phénomène de propagation des concepts est-il lié à ce pouvoir d'extension et d'organisation ou à une activité de propagande ? C'est en retraçant avec précision l'histoire des concepts nomades, à partir de cas précis, qu'il devient possible de répondre à cette question. Isabelle Stengers propose de distinguer deux modes de propagation des concepts: l'un se fait sur le mode de la diffusion, l'origine disciplinaire du concept est reconnue, il s'agit des cas d'emplois métaphoriques. L'autre propagation se fait sur le mode de l'épidémie, la source du concept est oubliée, il se présente « comme « pur », détaché du langage naturel, se définissant à partir du formalisme de la science qu'il organise » (Guerreau 1988: p. 146-147).

En réalité, les migrations des concepts laissent entrevoir l'existence d'une zone de confusion au sein de la politologie, en ces lieux où elle côtoie les mathématiques, la physique, la biologie, la philosophie, les sciences humaines etc. Pour ressaisir les glissements de sens du concept dans leur signification essentielle, il faut restituer chaque concept dans les agencements spéciaux correspondant à chacun de ses usages, mais aussi remonter aux problèmes que ces agencements permettent, chacun, de résoudre, étant entendu qu'ils existent principalement pour remplir cette fonction résolutive.

L'analyse sémantique de la terminologie politique démontre, en principe, qu'aucun terme ne s'emploie identiquement, du point de vue sémantique, avec les autres termes d'autres domaines. Le transfert des termes de différents domaines dans la terminologie politique se réalise le plus souvent par l'intermédiaire du langage commun (par exemple: *actualisation, adaptation, assimilation*) ou par métaphorisation: *cartographie électorale, climat politique, bloc parlementaire, cellule de crise, polarisation socio-politique, équipe gouvernementale*.

L'utilisation d'un terme dans plusieurs terminologies constitue, en général, un facteur d'ambiguïté sémantique, qui viole le principe de l'univocité du sens dans la communication scientifique. L'ambiguïté des termes politiques est due à une double

appartenance de ceux-ci, à un plan général, représenté par la terminologie politique comme domaine d'activité professionnelle (scientifique, didactique, pratique) et à un plan extrêmement diversifié, développé par les concepts généraux, qui se rapportent aux systèmes terminologiques spécifiques de certains auteurs, courants etc. (créées par des associations particulières concept-terme).

Comprendre la migration conceptuelle dans le langage politique a des implications profondes pour la communication politique. Les leaders politiques peuvent utiliser délibérément cette migration pour influencer l'opinion publique et légitimer leurs actions. L'impact de la migration conceptuelle sur le récepteur du message peut être significatif et influencer la manière dont le message est compris, interprété et intégré dans le contexte du récepteur. Voici quelques aspects de cet impact :

1. *La compréhension* : La migration conceptuelle peut altérer la compréhension du message par le récepteur. Si le concept migré est familier dans le domaine d'origine mais moins dans le domaine d'arrivée, le récepteur peut avoir du mal à saisir pleinement le sens du message, ce qui peut entraîner une mauvaise interprétation.

2. *Le niveau d'expertise*: L'impact dépend souvent du niveau d'expertise du récepteur dans le domaine source du concept. Si le récepteur n'est pas familier avec le domaine d'origine, il peut se sentir exclu ou mal à l'aise face à des termes techniques ou spécialisés, affectant ainsi sa capacité à assimiler le message.

3. *La réception émotionnelle*: La migration conceptuelle peut également avoir des implications émotionnelles. Si le concept migré est chargé émotionnellement dans le domaine d'origine, cette charge émotionnelle peut se transmettre au message, influençant les réactions émotionnelles du récepteur.

4. *L'acceptation du message*: La façon dont un concept est migré peut affecter l'acceptation du message par le récepteur. Si la migration est bien réalisée et que le concept s'intègre naturellement dans le nouveau contexte, le récepteur est plus susceptible d'accepter le message. En revanche, une migration maladroite peut susciter la méfiance ou le rejet.

5. *La nouveauté et la créativité*: La migration conceptuelle peut introduire une dimension de nouveauté et de créativité dans le discours. Pour certains récepteurs, cela peut être stimulant et intéressant, ou au contraire, déroutant et difficile à assimiler, en fonction de leur ouverture à de nouvelles idées.

6. *L'influence sur la perception*: La migration conceptuelle peut façonner la perception du récepteur sur la crédibilité du message et de l'émetteur. Si la migration est perçue comme une tentative de manipulation ou de dissimulation, cela peut nuire à la confiance du récepteur dans le message.

7. *L'effet sur l'engagement*: Une migration conceptuelle réussie peut renforcer l'engagement du récepteur en rendant le message plus accessible et pertinent. À l'inverse, une migration conceptuelle maladroite peut entraîner un désengagement en raison de la confusion ou du désintérêt.

L'impact de la migration conceptuelle sur le récepteur dépend de divers facteurs, tels que la clarté de la migration, le contexte de réception, le niveau d'expertise du récepteur et son ouverture à de nouveaux concepts. Les communicants doivent être conscients de ces dynamiques pour optimiser l'efficacité de leur message.

Comprendre les motivations, les exemples et les conséquences de cette migration terminologique est essentiel pour analyser le langage politique contemporain et promouvoir une communication politique informée et transparente.

De plus, la migration terminologique peut servir à transmettre des idées complexes de manière plus accessible. Les termes techniques, originaires de domaines spécialisés, peuvent être adaptés pour rendre les concepts abstraits plus compréhensibles pour le grand public. Cela facilite la communication politique. Examinons quelques exemples concrets de migration terminologique dans le langage politique :

Écosystème - Initialement un terme biologique, *écosystème* désigne un ensemble d'organismes vivants interagissant avec leur environnement. Dans le contexte politique, le terme *écosystème* a été adopté pour décrire la complexité des relations interdépendantes entre les acteurs politiques, économiques et sociaux impliqués dans la gestion de l'environnement. Par exemple, un politicien pourrait utiliser ce terme pour décrire la nécessité d'un *écosystème politique* favorable à la mise en œuvre de politiques environnementales efficaces. Cette migration terminologique permet de visualiser de manière imagée les relations complexes et interconnectées entre les différents acteurs politiques, renforçant ainsi la nécessité d'une approche globale dans la prise de décision environnementale.

Algorithmes - En informatique, un *algorithme* est une séquence d'instructions précises destinée à résoudre un problème ou à accomplir une tâche spécifique. Le terme *algorithmes* a été intégré dans le discours politique pour discuter des processus décisionnels automatisés, en particulier dans le contexte de la régulation des plateformes technologiques. Des déclarations politiques pourraient ainsi aborder la nécessité de réguler les *algorithmes* pour assurer la transparence et l'équité dans les décisions automatisées. Cette migration souligne les préoccupations croissantes liées à la technologie et à la nécessité de garantir que les processus automatisés soient conformes aux normes éthiques et sociales.

Immunité collective - Un concept médical, *l'immunité collective* se réfère à la protection indirecte contre une maladie qui se produit lorsque suffisamment de membres d'une population sont immunisés. Le terme a été adopté dans le discours politique pour décrire les niveaux de protection collective contre les crises sanitaires. Les responsables politiques peuvent discuter de la nécessité d'atteindre une *immunité collective* contre une maladie, souvent en référence à la vaccination de la population. Cette migration souligne l'importance de la collaboration collective dans la lutte contre les pandémies, tout en soulignant les défis liés à la vaccination et à la gestion des risques sanitaires à l'échelle nationale et internationale.

Projection - ce terme a migré de la psychologie pour décrire le phénomène où les individus attribuent à autrui leurs propres sentiments, pensées ou motivations. En politique, cela est souvent utilisé pour dénoncer des tactiques où un acteur politique accuse ses adversaires de comportements dont il est lui-même coupable, créant ainsi une atmosphère de suspicion.

Bulle de filtre (Filter Bubble) - ce concept a été introduit par Eli Pariser pour décrire la sélection algorithmique de l'information basée sur les préférences passées d'un individu, limitant ainsi l'exposition à des points de vue divergents. En politique, ce terme a été utilisé pour discuter des dangers de l'auto-segmentation de la société en groupes idéologiques distincts, où les individus sont principalement exposés à des opinions qui renforcent leurs propres croyances, créant des divisions.

Écologie politique - ce terme a migré de la science environnementale pour décrire une approche politique qui met l'accent sur la durabilité, la responsabilité environnementale et la protection des ressources naturelles. Il a influencé la création de partis politiques et de mouvements qui intègrent des préoccupations environnementales

dans leurs plates-formes, donnant naissance à des politiques axées sur le développement durable.

Main invisible - ce concept d'Adam Smith, issu de l'économie, a été utilisé en politique pour décrire la croyance que les actions individuelles poursuivant des intérêts personnels contribuent au bien commun sans qu'il soit nécessaire d'intervenir directement. Cela a influencé les politiques économiques axées sur le laisser-faire et la minimisation de l'intervention gouvernementale dans l'économie.

Narratif - ce terme est originaire du domaine de la narration et de la communication. En politique, il est utilisé pour décrire la manière dont les acteurs politiques façonnent et contrôlent les récits entourant des événements ou des questions politiques. La gestion habile des narratifs peut influencer l'opinion publique et façonner les perceptions des électeurs, devenant un aspect essentiel de la communication politique.

Par conséquent, on peut affirmer que la transgression des sens (dans le cas de certains termes qui appartiennent à d'autres domaines) représente des tendances fréquentes en français dans le cadre desquelles les termes acquièrent des sens nouveaux par déviation à l'égard de leur statut sémantique et contextuel. La jonction de la fonction de communication avec celle expressive de la langue représente une justification de la dynamique des sens. Ainsi, le langage politique s'est enrichi avec: - des termes techniques: *désamorcer un conflit, assainir une situation, polariser l'électorat, la société, manipuler l'opinion publique*; - des termes médicaux: *myopie politique, collapsus économique, thérapie de choc*; - des termes juridiques: *flagrant délit*; - des termes mathématiques: *algorithme politique*; - des termes physiques: *spectre politique*; - des termes des sciences naturelles (écologie): *pollution politique*; (géologie): *clivage, séisme politique* etc. La modification sémantique des termes se matérialise dans la réalité extralinguistique caractérisée par les changements politiques, économiques et sociaux du moment actuel.

L'analyse des exemples montre que la migration terminologique dans le langage politique va au-delà de la simple appropriation de termes. Elle façonne le discours politique en lui apportant des nuances spécifiques et en favorisant la compréhension du public, tout en reflétant les préoccupations émergentes de la société moderne. Cette migration témoigne de la manière dont les concepts provenant de domaines divers enrichissent le langage politique et influencent la manière dont les politiques sont formulées et communiquées.

Conclusion

La migration terminologique interdisciplinaire dans le langage politique contemporain témoigne de la richesse et de la flexibilité du discours politique, qui puise dans une multitude de domaines pour décrire des réalités complexes. Les emprunts à des disciplines telles que la psychologie, l'informatique, l'écologie, l'économie et la communication reflètent la capacité d'adaptation du langage politique face aux évolutions sociales et technologiques. Ces transferts terminologiques ne se limitent pas à des emprunts lexicaux, mais englobent des concepts entiers, modifiant ainsi la façon dont les acteurs politiques comprennent et présentent les enjeux.

Cette migration a des conséquences profondes sur la façon dont les politiques sont formulées, débattues et perçues par le public. Elle introduit de nouvelles nuances, métaphores et cadres conceptuels qui peuvent influencer les politiques publiques et les orientations idéologiques. Cependant, elle pose également des défis, car l'utilisation de termes empruntés peut parfois conduire à des malentendus ou à des interprétations

divergentes. Néanmoins, cette dynamique démontre la porosité des frontières entre les disciplines, favorisant un dialogue intellectuel qui enrichit la sphère politique et permet d'aborder les défis contemporains avec un langage plus adaptatif et novateur. En somme, la migration terminologique interdisciplinaire témoigne de la complexité et de la vitalité du langage politique dans notre monde en constante évolution.

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IV. COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY. DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC REALITIES

Cosmin CHIRIAC, Constantin-Vasile ȚOCA ⇔ *Intercommunity
Development Associations in Romania. A lost opportunity?*

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INTERCOMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATIONS IN ROMANIA. A LOST OPPORTUNITY?¹

*Cosmin CHIRIAC**
*Constantin-Vasile TOCA***

Abstract. *The Intercommunity Development Associations (IDA) were introduced in Romania with the purpose of covering the need of local or county territorial administrative units (TAU) to implement common development projects that would benefit the communities of multiple territorial units. The need was especially greater in the case of rural local territorial administrative units, that have a limited financial power, while also being part of a very fragmented administrative level. Thus, the development of larger projects is impossible for some TAUs on their own.*

The objective of this research is to analyse the IDAs created so far in the Bihor County, considering the legislation that made them possible was introduced almost 20 years ago, even if some associations predate this legislation. The purpose is to understand if there are certain aspects that favour their establishment, without focusing on their activity. Through this study, we are putting together a methodology that will be applied to the entire country, to understand whether our findings for the Bihor County can be applied to other counties as well.

Keywords: *Intercommunity Development Associations, Bihor County, Romania,*

Introduction

It is hard to say when, or if, the need for Intercommunity Development Associations (IDA) was ever felt in Romania, however, they have been around since 2006. Considering that almost two decades passed since they were included in the Romanian legislation, we think that now would be a good time to understand whether they had any impact on the development of the communities they represent. However, our research will not try to understand the aftereffects of the activities of these associations, or, to put it in another way, how did the territories of these associations benefit from them, but, rather, how did they associate, to what purpose, and identify any patterns in their formation.

In short, this is what this paper is about. Looking at the bigger picture, our interest stems from the fact that such associations are imported structures into our legislation and

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practice, especially in the context of Romania's adherence to the European Union in 2007 (Soare 2020:11), and the preceding candidacy process. This leads to an array of questions around the topic: How many IDAs were created? To what purpose were they created? What is the nature of their association? Are there local administrative units that are centres of gravity for such structures? Are there local administrative units that aren't interested in such associations and how many are there? When were they created and is there an incentive for their establishment? What is the activity of such associations? What kind of projects did they implement? What are the funding sources they mostly use?

It is easily noticeable that these questions target two aspects: one regards the way in which these entities were created and the other reflects on their activity. To be more explicit, on the one hand, our interest lies in telling the story of how and why these associations were created in the Bihor County, which requires data regarding the existing associations. The second aspect regards the activity of these associations, which is strongly linked with financial sources and financing programmes available for such entities. Both aspects are important, but in this study, we're targeting only the first aspect. The reasons are both methodological as well as pragmatic. They are methodological, as we need to understand how and why these associations were created to be able to analyse their activity in a meaningful way. They are pragmatic, as an in-depth analysis of their activity requires a large amount of data that must go through a qualitative and quantitative analysis, which is time consuming as well as complex.

To summarize, our long-term aim is to understand whether these structures had any real effect on the successful association of Romanian local administrative units. This analysis would answer only part of the question we have posed in the title of this paper, which helps us understand if the territorial administrative units from the Bihor County have used the opportunity that these constructions have provided.

The paper is divided in 6 sections, including the current one, the introduction. The second section presents our methodological process and presents the Romanian speciality literature that covers the topic of Intercommunity Development Associations which is quite limited, as we shall see. It also presents the data and the data sources that we used to analyse the IDAs from the Bihor County. The third section focuses on the evolution of the Romanian legislation through which IDAs were introduced to the Romanian administration. The fourth presents briefly the local administrative units from the Bihor County. The fifth section discusses the way in which the local administrative units from our research area have associated. The conclusion summarizes our findings, mentions its limitations and future research needs that result from our results.

Methodology

The methodological aspects that we need to mention refer to the way in which the IDAs were defined and how the data was collected and processed, to reach our conclusions.

As the speciality literature is scarce, especially regarding the IDAs defined by the Romanian legislation, this activity was not intensive, and the results are briefly presented here, though they are not exhaustive, as much of the literature was not necessarily relevant to our research. One study, financed by the Chamber of Deputies of the Romanian Parliament, published briefly after the law was enacted, analysed the potential effects and the possible solutions for the problems that were anticipated for these types of associations, including, for example, unclear legislation or limited funding (Pop, SUCIU, and Stănuș 2007). Stănuș investigates the reasons for success behind

institutionalization of cooperation, through a survey sent to all local governments from Romania however, it does not exclude cooperation with private entities, which is not the case of our study (Stănuș 2011:194). Lașan (2024) also analyses success factors in the implementation of projects through IDAs, however, the study does so from a project management perspective. One other study opposes these entities to an obsolete, top-down, form of association that had little success, proposed in the North-Western Region of Romania (Chiriac and Bucur 2015). A few laws related studies are available as well, however, this aspect is discussed in the section dedicated to the legislative aspects of this research. There is, obviously, a gap in the research, in understanding whether these associations are successful or not, and why.

The section describing the legislative bounds has the purpose of analysing the relevant laws, to understand who can constitute an IDA, and to what purpose. These are the main aspects we are interested in, for this research, though, these associations can be characterized in more manners.

The Bihor County was also analysed from an administrative and demographic point of view. This serves the purpose of understanding whether there's an influence of these aspects on the formation of IDAs. Demographic data was collected from the Tempo platform, provided by the National Institute for Statistics of Romania. These data were represented through choropleth maps. The administrative details were confronted with the data provided by the Methodology and Summary of administrative changes that the National Statistical Institute offers through its administrative classification system (Institutul Național de Statistică 2024). The demographic data shows the situation for the year 2022, while the administrative data presents the situation of the year 2024, which was mostly the same in 2022, except for one TAU, which doesn't affect our research.

To analyse the IDAs created in the Bihor County, we collected data from various sources such as the data.gov.ro (Ministerul Dezvoltării Regionale și Administrației Publice 2016) platform, the website of the National Institute for Statistics of Romania (Institutul Național de Statistică 2023) and the website of the General Secretariate of the Government (Secretariatul General al Guvernului 2020). However, the data.gov.ro data was last updated in 2016, and it is unclear in what context were the other lists provided and how accurate are they. To overcome this issue, the lists obtained from these sources were confronted with data from the *Firme on line* (FirmeOnLine 2024) platform and the databases of the *Romanian Ministry of Finance* (Ministerul Finanțelor n.d.), through their online search platform.

A script written in the R programming language for statistical analysis, through R Studio, was used to collect up to date information regarding the IDAs, based on their Fiscal Identification Number obtained from the data provided by the General Secretariate of the Government website. Through this script, we have obtained the date when they were created, their status (active or not), and their location. Furthermore, based on constitutive documents found on-line, official websites of these entities, the data.gov.ro platform, or simply their name, the member TAUs were identified as well as the purpose for which they were constituted. Both the R programming language and Microsoft Excel were used for data clean-up and processing. Microsoft Excel was also used to prepare and provide data for cartographic representations as well as for graphically presenting data.

When needed, and when possible, this data was associated with map layers, to cartographically present the results of our analysis.

QGIS was mostly used to create the cartographic representations presented in this research. The year and purpose coverage with IDAs of the county's territory was

achieved by using the virtual layer functionality to combine the data through a 1 to many relationships of the layer containing the TAUs of the Bihor County and a table containing the IDAs with and their corresponding TAU members. The membership of the IDAs reflects the most recent known configuration for each association. Thus, the maps presenting the coverage of the IDAs doesn't reflect the correct membership for previous years. Still, this doesn't affect our findings.

Legislative bounds

As it was already mentioned in the Introduction and in the Methodology, some interest was shown for the concept of Intercommunity Development Associations in the speciality literature from a legislative perspective, which is the focus of this section.

Vlad-Cristian Soare is one of the authors that covered this topic in detail in several publications, from a legislative point of view. His most extensive work is a book published in 2020, in which the above-mentioned author compares these associative structures with similar ones from other European countries (Soare 2020). Even though the Administrative Code (published on the 5th of July 2019), which replaces the original law that introduced the Intercommunity Development Associations, came into effect just before the release of this book, Soare (2020:12, 99) highlights the fact that the new law didn't bring in major changes to these structures, and the provisions of the old law are still relevant as most existing IDAs came into existence before it was published. Furthermore, for the timeframe we are considering for our research, the old law still applies². Since this book is fairly recent and covers extensively the topic of IDAs from a legislative perspective, we're relying on it, and on the legislation to extract the relevant legislative aspects.

Soare highlights three main categories of laws that are relevant for these associations. The first category is relevant for their establishment, the second one includes various laws depending on the purpose, or purposes, for which they are constituted. The third category includes laws relevant for their operation (for details see: Soare 2020:96–97). Out of these categories, our interest lies with the first one, which defines the way in which they can be constituted, who can, and for what purpose, amongst others.

Thus, their main characteristics are the following:

- They are cooperation structures.
- They can be constituted by territorial administrative units (of various levels).
- They can be constituted for the purpose of implementing *development projects of zonal or regional interest* or *for providing public services* to their communities (Soare 2020:98, 99).

The territorial administrative units that can constitute these associations can be either local administrative units (municipalities, towns, communes) or county level administrative units (county councils).

The IDAs can take three forms, depending on the members of these associations. They are:

- Metropolitan Areas (MA),
- Urban Agglomerations (UA), and
- regular Intercommunity Development Associations.

² except for the last few months, which doesn't make much of a difference for this research.

Both the old and the new laws define *Metropolitan Areas* as *Intercommunity Development Associations* constituted around the capital of Romania or first rank cities (county seats) and *Urban Agglomerations* constituted by one or more urban territorial administrative units, either with or without rural territorial administrative units found within their influence area. However, the purposes for which they can be constituted are to some extent limited from those for which any other IDA can be constituted (Parlamentul României 2007: art. 1; Guvernul României 2019: art. 5). Both the old and the new law mention that the two special types of IDAs (MAs and UAs) can be constituted for the purpose of infrastructure development and for common development objectives (Parlamentul României 2007: art. 11, 2nd paragraph; Guvernul României 2019: art. 89, 2nd paragraph). However, infrastructure development projects and common development objectives fall under the umbrella of development projects of zonal or regional interest, which excludes the possibility to provide public services for these types of IDAs, which we understand to be different from developing the needed infrastructure for those services. This means that urban TAUs that are members of MAs or UAs, must also be member of additional IDAs if they wish to be included in associations that provide public services to multiple communities. Thus, regular IDAs can be constituted by all other types of territorial administrative units (rural ones and county level units) or by any type of territorial unit, if the purpose is to provide public services.

Considering the above, IDAs can be categorized depending on their purpose or on their constituting members. These categorizations will be reflected in the 5th section, in which we're analysing the data collected for the IDAs created in the Bihor County.

As already mentioned, there are several other laws that are relevant for these structures, some of them strictly dependent on the purpose for which they were created. However, we will not look at those laws as they are not relevant for the purpose of this study.

Administrative make up and evolution of the Bihor County

As already mentioned in the introduction, understanding the administrative make-up of the Bihor County serves the purpose of understanding some of the outcomes of the data analysis of the IDAs created by the Bihor County local TAUs. Even though this is information that can be easily obtained in various other sources, we considered this section necessary. Especially the administrative levels of the constituting entities are of significance, but other aspects as well.

The Bihor County contains 101 local administrative units. Currently, 10 of them are urban administrative units, however, there is a big difference between Oradea, the county seat, and the other urban entities.

As the map in figure one shows, Oradea, which is the county seat, is the largest administrative unit demographically, which is reflected in other aspects as well (economy, institutional presence, various territorial structures and trends, etc.). The Bihor County includes nine other urban administrative areas, however, none of them get close to the size of the county seat. There are four municipalities in total, including Oradea, which implies that these urban settlements meet certain criteria (size, infrastructure, etc.) that such a rank comes with.

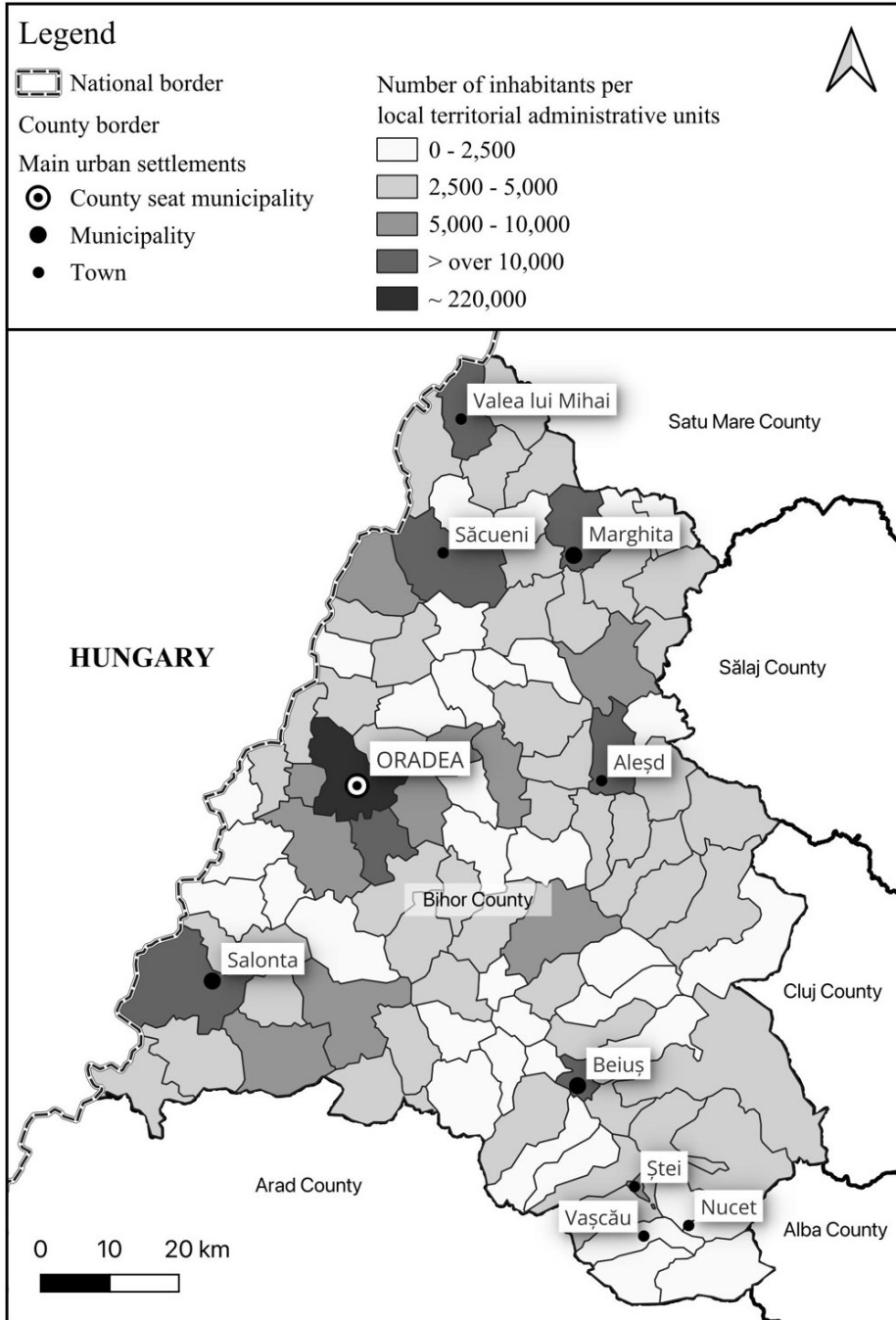


Figure 1. Administrative and demographic map of the Bihor County, representing the situation in 2024 – Own elaboration (Spatial data sources: Crăciunescu 2022).

Besides Oradea, all other local administrative units, whether urban or rural, have less than 20,000 inhabitants, which places them at a large distance from the county seat in terms of demographic size, which, as mentioned, is reflected in other aspects as well.

Amongst the 10 largest administrative units from the county three are rural areas, Sântărmartin (4th with over 13,000 inhabitants), Sântăndrei (9th with over 9,000 inhabitants), and Tinca (10th with over 8000 inhabitants). The first two have grown largely due to their vicinity to Oradea. Most local administrative units around Oradea have grown, due to migration from the city to new neighbourhoods developed in some of the settlements that make them up (a more detailed account of this trend, which did not stop yet, can be found here: Filimon 2017).

The other municipalities from the Bihor County are Salonta (since 2001), Beiuș (since 2003), and Marghita (since 2003). There are six other urban local administrative units in the county, Săcueni being the one that reached this statute most recently (since 2004). However, they are all declining demographically, especially Ștei (dropped to about 6500 inhabitants in 2024 from over 9000 in 2000), Vașcău (little over 2000 inhabitants), and Nucet (less than 2000 inhabitants). The last three urban administrative units mentioned here are in close vicinity, so, together, they might form a larger urban area but, still, their demographic decline suggests a lack of attractiveness.

All demographic data, unless explicitly specified otherwise, reflect the current situation, more specifically, that of the year 2024.

There are a few takeaways from this section that we can mention. First, Oradea is, by far, the largest and most developed TAU from the county, having a visible effect on the neighbouring TAUs. The other municipalities and towns from the county, besides the county seat, are much smaller demographically. Finally, the urban TAUs are distributed in a rather balanced manner within the territory of the county.

As we shall see later in the paper, these takeaways explain, to some extent, the way the IDAs were established in the county, but fail to explain other aspects.

Intercommunity development ASSOCIATIONS IN the Bihor County

The data collection process presented in the methodology section uncovered a few facts about the IDAs created by TAUs from the Bihor County. In total, there were 29 associations created, out of which 28 are still active according to the database of the Ministry of Finance.

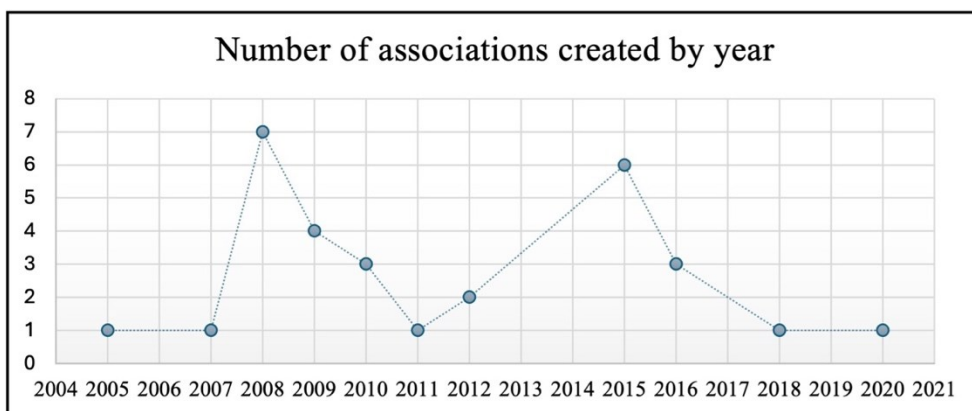


Figure 2. Number of associations created by year, in the Bihor County, between 2004 and 2020 - Own elaboration.

The chart below presents how many IDAs were created each year since the law was introduced, until 2020. It highlights the fact that there are two moments which

favoured the establishment of IDAs. They are both at the beginning of long-time budget time frames of the European Union, which is when the opportunity to apply for EU financed projects arises.

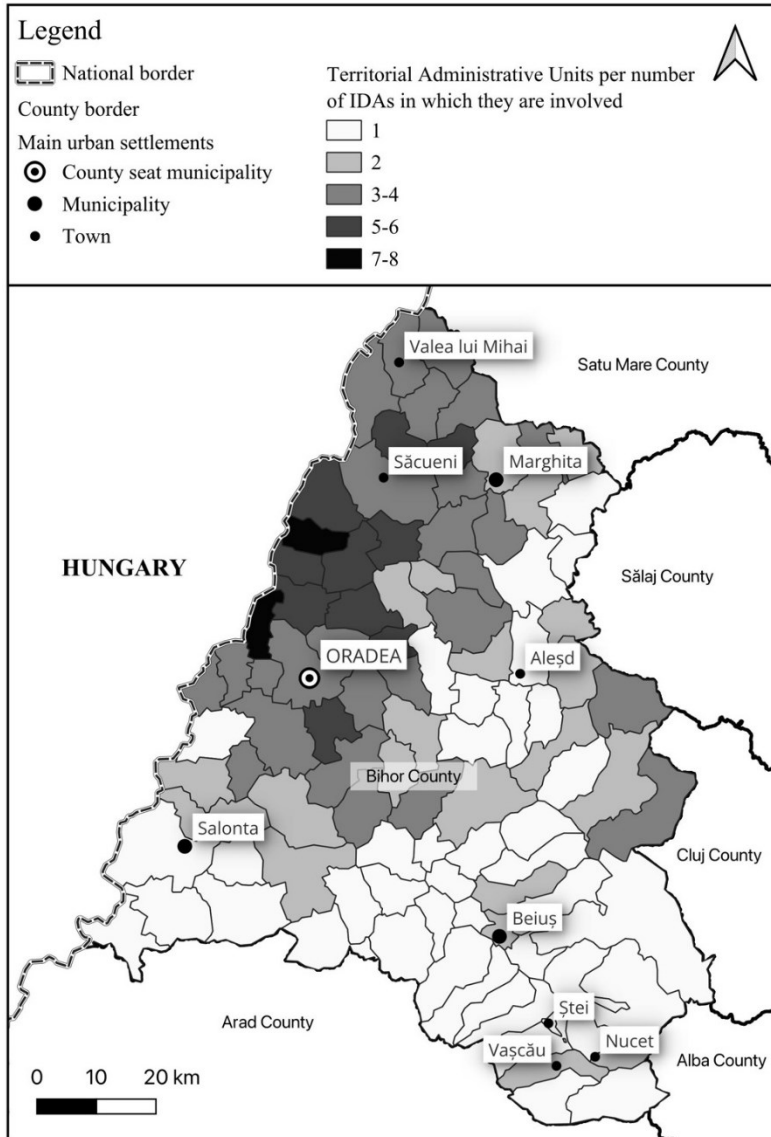


Figure 3. Number of IDAs in which each TAU from the Bihor County is a member (2024) – Own elaboration – Own elaboration (Spatial data sources: Crăciunescu 2022)

For 6 out of the 28 active IDAs we found no data, statutes or constitutive documents that would attest to the purpose for which they were created. Out of the 22 IDAs for which we managed to collect such data, around two thirds, 16 to be exact, were created for a purpose that falls under the more general scope of creating *development projects of zonal or regional interest*. The rest of them, 6 in total, have a very specific purpose: 3 of them are for providing public utilities services of water supply and

sewerage, 1 is for sanitation, 1 for energy production, and 1 for public transport. Only one has a mixed purpose, including both scopes mentioned by the law.

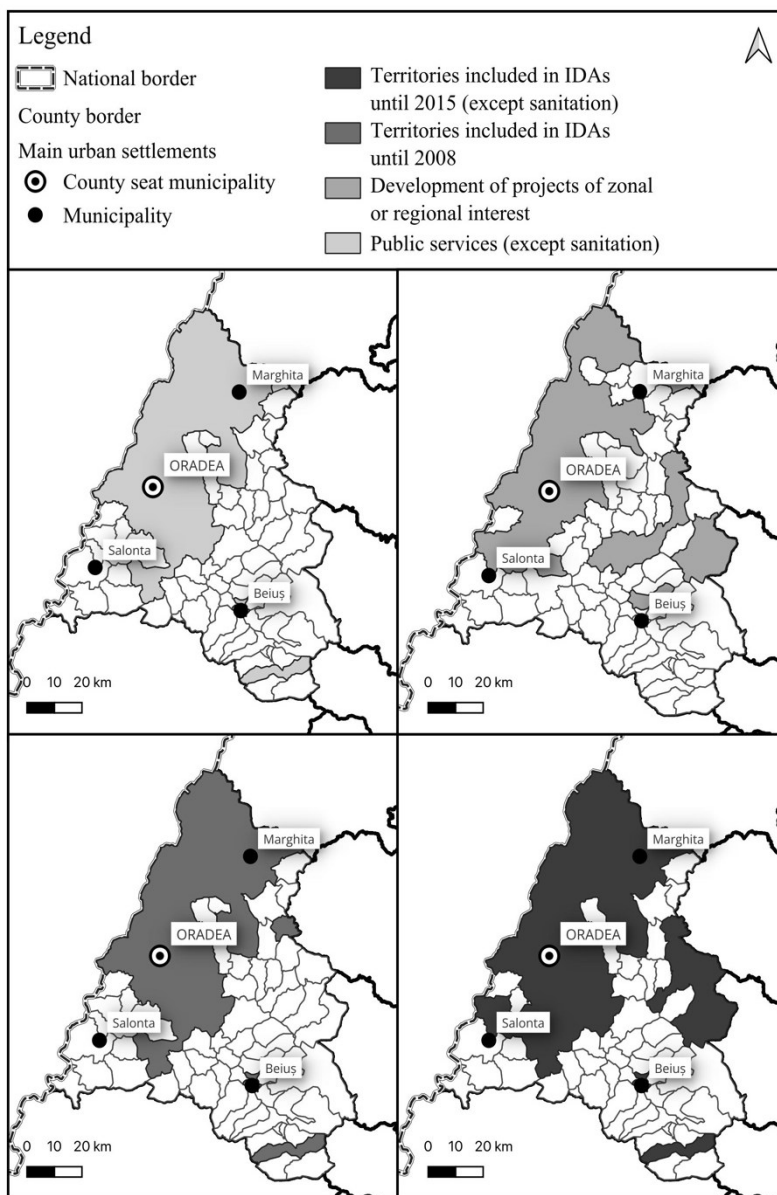


Figure 4. Territorial extent of all IDAs by their scope and the year they were established – Own elaboration (Spatial data sources: Crăciunescu 2022)

Considering that MAs and UAs are defined by the types of members included in them and that they cannot be created for providing public services, we can consider that all three types of IDAs are present in the Bihor County. More specifically, Oradea, as the county seat municipality is present in 5 IDAs. One is that of the Metropolitan Area of Oradea, which is also the oldest existing IDA in the county and one of the first from

Romania. The rest of the IDAs that include Oradea provide public services, which probably stems from the fact that an MA or an UA cannot provide public services so it cannot do it through the MA. Again, considering their members and their scope, there is one Urban Agglomeration in the Bihor County, though not explicitly declared as one, which includes the Săcueni town. This town is also a member of several other IDAs. The rest of them are regular IDAs. The Council of the Bihor County is included in only one IDA, which also includes 23 local TAUs, created to provide water supply and sewerage services.

The territorial distribution of IDAs within the territory of the Bihor County is presented in the map in figure 3. Two aspects are immediately noticeable through this cartographic representation. First, all TAUs from the Bihor County are involved in at least one IDA. Second, there seems to be an increased activity in certain parts of the county. More specifically, around Oradea, around the three northern urban TAUs of the Bihor County (more around Săcueni and Valea lui Mihai than Marghita) and there is also a concentration to the north of Oradea.

If we look at the distribution, by scope, of the IDAs within the Bihor County, nothing really changes. There is still a grouping of the IDAs around the western, northern and north-western part of the county. Figure 4 shows the IDAs that were created for the generic purpose of *development of projects of zonal or regional interest* as well as for various *public services*, except sanitation, which is not represented because it covers the whole county. The western, northern and north-western part of the county was covered by various types of IDAs as early as 2008. Afterwards, IDAs were slowly created outside of this area but, as we already know, only timidly, or for new purposes mostly in the same area.

All other municipalities and towns seem to be less active from this point of view and are not representing a polarizing force for the nearby TAUs.

There are also two IDAs which cross the limit of the county, forming smaller associations, however, these are exceptions. Still, this shows that where it makes sense, these structures provide the opportunity for bottom-up initiatives outside of the administrative divisions of the country.

Conclusions

As we can see, at least to some extent, some TAUs have seized the opportunity provided by the Intercommunity Development Associations. Whether they are actually used or not, that is not clear yet. Thus, the question in our title is not answered in full, for now.

Nevertheless, we can briefly summarize our findings as follows:

- There seems to be a strong connection between funding possibilities and the establishment of these associations.
- A TAU might need to be part of multiple IDAs to cover the needs of their communities.
- Most IDAs are grouped in the western, north-western, and northern part of the county.
- Many TAUs are only members in one IDA, that covers the entire county.
- Most IDAs from the Bihor County were created for the purpose of implementation of zonal or regional development projects, only a third of them having the purpose of providing public services.

These conclusions bring up further questions that would need further investigation. For example: How active are the existing IDAs? What financing sources do they prefer? Why are there so few IDAs created to provide public services? Are the projects implemented by the IDAs, if any, reflected in any way in their territories and in their communities? Why are so many TAUs not using this legislative tool? Is the situation any different in other counties?

Obviously, there is no easy way to find answers to these questions and large amounts of data and intensive documentation and research activities are required, which is to be accomplished in subsequent studies.

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BRIDGING THE GAP: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN ROMANIA'S EVOLVING LABOR MARKET WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION FRAMEWORK. STUDY CASE IN BIHOR COUNTY, ROMANIA

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Abstract. *This study examines the role of human resource management (HRM) practices in addressing labor market challenges in Romania, a relatively new member of the European Union (EU). Focusing on Bihor County, the research investigates how Romanian employers adapt their HRM strategies to navigate labor shortages and align with EU competitiveness standards. Through a quantitative analysis of 254 private sector employers, the study explores the interplay between post-communist entrepreneurial culture, evolving HRM practices, and EU-driven economic objectives. Findings reveal a persistent parochial management approach, with employers reluctant to engage professional recruitment services or explore international labor markets. The research identifies a significant mismatch between employer demands and available skills, particularly in vocational and technical fields. While employers recognize the value of workplace training, there is less emphasis on other retention strategies such as competitive compensation or work-life balance initiatives. The study highlights the need for closer collaboration between educational institutions and employers to align training programs with market needs. It also underscores the importance of developing more sophisticated HRM strategies to address ongoing labor shortages and enhance Romania's competitiveness within the EU. This research contributes to the understanding of HRM's role in bridging the gap between Romania's economic potential and its current performance within the EU framework.*

Keywords: *European Union, Romanian Labor Market, Post-communist Entrepreneurial Culture, Human Resource Strategies.*

1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) has long recognized the intrinsic link between sustainable economic growth and competitiveness among its member states (European Commission, 2024). As the EU strives to maintain its position in the global economy, it becomes increasingly apparent that the success of individual member states is crucial to

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the collective prosperity of the union. As a relatively new member state, Romania presents a compelling case study in this context. Despite possessing significant economic potential, Romania faces challenges in fully leveraging its resources to achieve the level of competitiveness envisioned by EU standards.

Central to unlocking Romania's economic potential is the development of a competent management class capable of navigating the complexities of modern business environments and aligning with EU objectives. Within this broader management landscape, the specific domain of human resource management (HRM) emerges as a critical factor in successfully implementing European goals within the Romanian economy (Brewster, Mayrhofer, & Farndale, 2018). Effective HRM practices not only contribute to organizational success but also play a vital role in fostering innovation, adaptability and productivity key drivers of national competitiveness (Boxall & Purcell, 2022).

The importance of HRM in this context is multifaceted. Firstly, it serves as a bridge between organizational strategies and the workforce, ensuring that human capital is optimally utilized to meet both company and national economic objectives (Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank, & Ulrich, 2012). Secondly, in an era of rapid technological advancement and changing labor market dynamics, HRM is instrumental in developing and retaining talent, which is essential for maintaining competitiveness in knowledge-based economies (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016). Lastly, as the EU emphasizes sustainable and inclusive growth, HRM practices that promote diversity, equity, and work-life balance become increasingly relevant in aligning business practices with broader societal goals (Farndale, Horak, Phillips, & Beamond, 2019).

The focus on HRM takes on added significance when considering the current state of the Romanian labor market. Romania is grappling with a severe labor shortage, driven by a confluence of demographic trends and economic factors. High levels of emigration (Sandu, 2005), particularly of skilled workers to other EU countries, have depleted the domestic workforce (Andr n & Roman, 2016). The loss of workforce is compounded by low fertility rates, resulting in an aging population and a shrinking labor pool (World Bank, 2024). Paradoxically, these challenges are occurring against a backdrop of sustained economic growth, which has further intensified the demand for skilled labor across various sectors (National Bank of Romania, Annual Report 2023¹).

This labor shortage on the market presents both a challenge and an opportunity for HRM practices in Romania. On one hand, it necessitates innovative strategies for talent attraction, development, and retention to mitigate the impacts of workforce scarcity. On the other, it underscores the potential for HRM to play a transformative role in shaping Romania's economic landscape by optimizing the use of available human capital and fostering conditions that might encourage skilled expatriates to return.

However, the implementation of effective HRM practices in Romania faces several challenges. These include the legacy of communist-era management styles, a mismatch between educational outputs and labor market needs, and the ongoing brain drain of skilled professionals to other EU countries (Grigore & Mitroi, 2012). Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from various stakeholders, including policymakers, educational institutions, and business leaders.

This paper aims to explore the role of human resource management as a key element in bridging the gap between Romania's economic potential and its current

¹ <https://www.bnro.ro/DocumentInformation.aspx?idDocument=45715&idInfoClass=6874>

performance within the EU framework. By examining the interplay between HRM practices, national competitiveness, and sustainable economic growth—all within the context of Romania's unique labor market challenges—we seek to identify strategies that can enhance Romania's position within the European economic landscape and address its pressing demographic and workforce issues.

2. Empirical Objectives and Theoretical Framework

From an empirical point of view, we propose the general hypothesis that the HR adjustment strategies implemented by the employers depends on variables such as employer size and type of activity. The number of employees positively correlates with a more diverse employee structure, which permits a larger array of human resource strategies such as internal hiring. In addition, larger companies are more likely to organize HR departments or to hire HR specialists to diversify their approach towards human resource management (Brewster, Wood, Brookes, & Ommeren, 2006; Purcell, 2014). The type of activity of the employer determines the structure of professions that have different availabilities in the labor market. To underline this aspect, we used the variable "Workforce deficit" designed to underline the labor shortage as experienced by the employer, which also expresses the motivational component of the adjustment process to labor market conditions. Considering the context of our analysis, we can narrow down the general hypothesis as follows: Human resource adjustment measures, implemented by employers in Bihor County, which are conditioned by the entrepreneurial culture, are predicted by variables such as company size and labor shortage.

The Romanian labor market presents a unique case study of economic transition and its impact on human resource management practices. This chapter examines the interplay between Romania's post-communist entrepreneurial culture, its evolving educational system, and employers' strategies for adapting to labor market challenges. By applying theoretical frameworks from sociology and economics, we aim to elucidate the complex dynamics shaping human resource management in Bihor County, Romania.

2.1 Romania's Post-Transition Context

Following the 1989 revolution, Romania embarked on a transition from a communist system to a democratic, capitalist society with a free market economy (Sandu, 1999). This transition has resulted in a post-transition society with distinct characteristics that continue to influence economic behavior and labor market dynamics.

The Romanian educational system has undergone significant changes since the fall of communism. While the communist-era system was ideologically constrained, it nonetheless provided diverse scientific training programs. The post-communist period saw attempts at reform and democratization, coupled with increased international cooperation. However, these reforms have been criticized for lacking coherence and failing to adequately respond to economic needs (Hannah, Elizabeth, Kirsteen, Anne, & Soumaya, 2017).

A notable trend has been the massification of higher education (Tight, 2019), mirroring Western patterns but without commensurate increases in resources to maintain quality (Curaj, Deca, Egron-Polak, & Salmi, 2015). This expansion of university education, driven by social prestige, has come at the expense of vocational training, contributing to a mismatch between educational outcomes and labor market demands.

The economic transition in Romania necessitated a shift from a centralized, bureaucratic economic management model to an entrepreneurial one. This process has given rise to a unique entrepreneurial culture that blends elements of communist-era political-administrative management with imported Western capitalist practices (Marinescu, 2013). Key characteristics of this entrepreneurial culture include:

- Blurred boundaries between public and private economic spheres
- Preference for "experiential" management approaches based on intuition
- Reliance on self-taught training due to a lack of professionalized economic management education

These cultural elements significantly influence employers' strategies for adapting to labor market conditions.

2.2 Employer Adjustment Strategies

In the context of the Romanian entrepreneurial culture, the employer's adjustment process can be better approached using the theory of social action (Craib, 2015), which gives the fundamental concepts necessary to analyze the „orientation and motivation” of action of an „actor” in the social system. Also, we can use the sociological and economic approach to labor market analysis proposed by Granovetter in which he emphasizes the ”intertwining of economic and noneconomic” aspects on the labor market (Granovetter, 2017). In the present research, the actors are employers, who are oriented towards a social system represented by the labor market, as well as the processes and institutions that influence it.

Along with immediate responses to environmental stimuli, the actions of the actors represent a system of expectations about the environment. An actor, such as an economic agent, can be viewed as an instrumental action-orientation sub-system, in which the institutional patterns of the component roles determine “expectations of action involving the fulfilment of an actor's technical goals, exchange relationships, and cooperative relationships” (Ormerod, 2020). Transposing these ideas in the present research, the empirical model includes the actor (private companies) that, responding to environmental stimuli represented by the labor market, manifests social actions such as gathering information about the labor market used to develop adjustment strategies that determine certain expected results (sustainable economic activity). Regarding the employer's adjustment strategy, it can be differentiated between two sets of actions: short- and medium-term measures that influence internal factors over which the management has significant control, such as the organizational structure, recruitment methods, employee retention conditions, and long-term policies regarding the labor market favored by the employer's management, such as governmental policies in the fields of demography, education, and the regulation of the national labor market.

3. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach to investigate employers' HR strategies in response to labor market dynamics in Bihor County, Romania. The research focuses on private sector employers, as they are key actors in driving economic growth and responding to market forces (Acemoglu & Autor, 2011).

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

The sample was constructed using stratified random sampling, considering both the type of activity and size of employers. This method ensures representation across

different sectors and company sizes, enhancing the generalizability of findings. The sampling frame was stratified into four categories based on activity type fig.1:

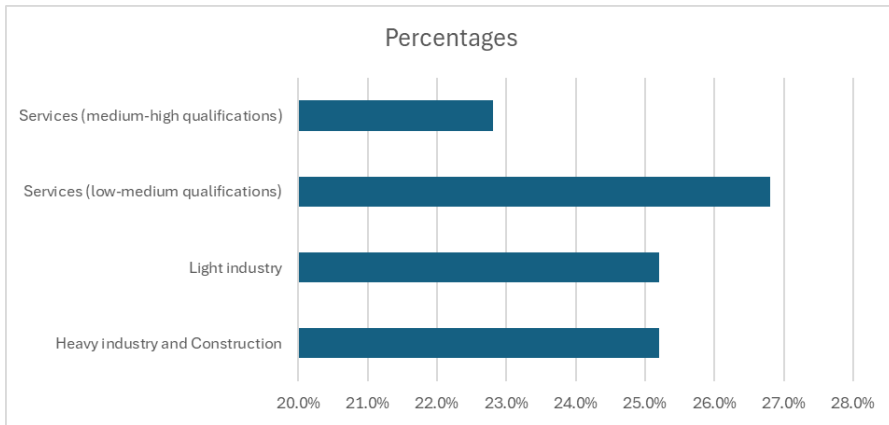


Figure 5 Sample, activity type.

Source: research data

Company size was also considered in the stratification (fig.2), with an intentional overrepresentation of small, medium, and large enterprises relative to microenterprises. This decision was made to account for the higher likelihood of active employment in larger companies (Birch, 1981).

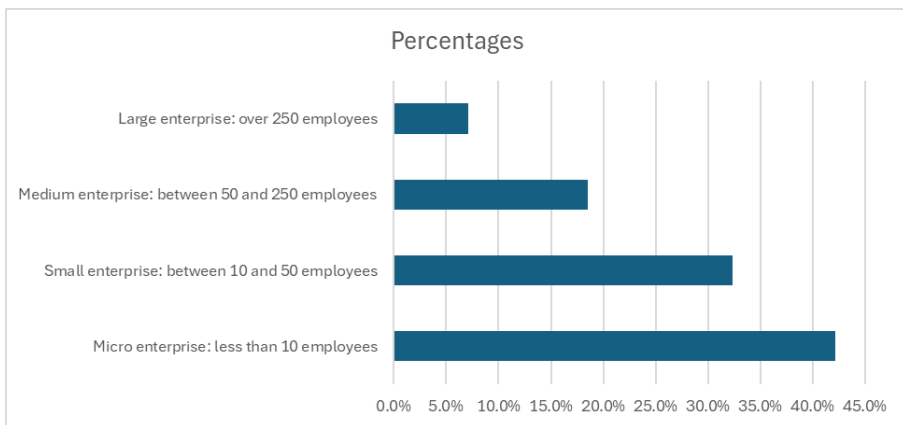


Figure 6 Sample, company size.

Source: research data

The final sample consisted of 254 employers, providing a representative cross-section of the private sector in Bihor County. Data were collected between November 2022 and January 2023 through questionnaires administered to company representatives who were responsible for the HR management.

3.2 Instrumentation

The research team organized a focus group in October 2022 with seven human resources specialists from Bihor County representing private companies and the local employment authority, which provided us with valuable information to develop our

questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to capture several key aspects of employers' labor market strategies:

- Information-seeking behaviors regarding the labor market
- Recruitment strategies
- Use of labor market intermediaries
- Short- and medium-term measures adopted or planned in response to labor scarcity

These measures align with theoretical frameworks on organizational adaptation to environmental changes and strategic human resource management (Schuler & Jackson, 1987).

Short- and medium-term measures were also analyzed as indicators of entrepreneurial culture and strategic response to labor market conditions. These measures included aspects such as changes in organizational structure, recruitment methods, and employee retention strategies (Huselid, 1995).

3.3 Explanatory variables

We stated above the following hypothesis: human resource adjustment measures, implemented by employers in Bihor County, which are conditioned by the entrepreneurial culture, are predicted by variables such as company size and workforce deficit. Next to the variable company size (see fig.2) we measured the variable workforce deficit (see fig.3).

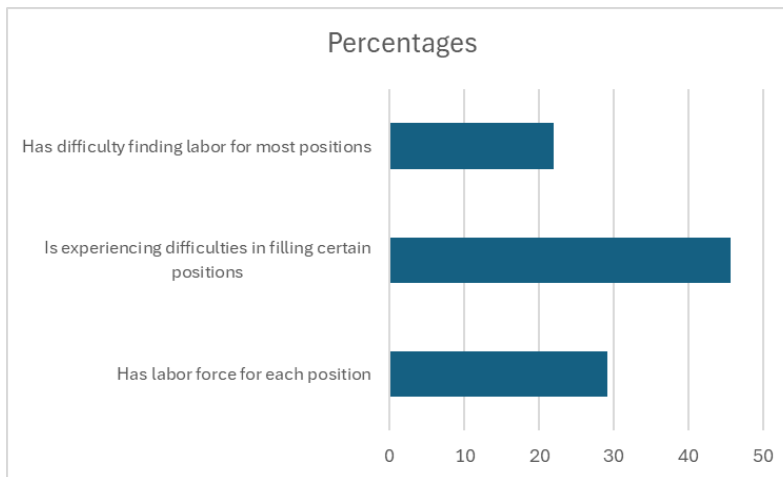


Figure 7 Workforce deficit experienced by the employer.

Source: research data

3.4 Limitations and Generalizability

While the study is geographically limited to Bihor County, its methodological approach and findings may be relevant to other regions with similar socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. However, caution should be exercised in generalizing results to significantly different contexts (Yin, 2009).

4. Results & Discussion

4.1 The profile of HR managers

The people who were responsible for the HR management had different titles (see fig.3), only 36,6% had the title HR managers. If we take in account, the fact that 74.4% of the companies had less than 50 employees, the percentage of dedicated HR managers is impressive and is pointing towards the professionalization of human resources management.



Figure 8 Position held by the respondent.

Source: research data

We measured aspects of entrepreneurial culture through the variable such as "The last educational level completed by the respondent". Interestingly, we found extremely high homogeneity in educational levels among respondents (fig.4), suggesting that entrepreneurial culture may function more as a constant in our analysis, providing an explanatory backdrop rather than a variable factor.

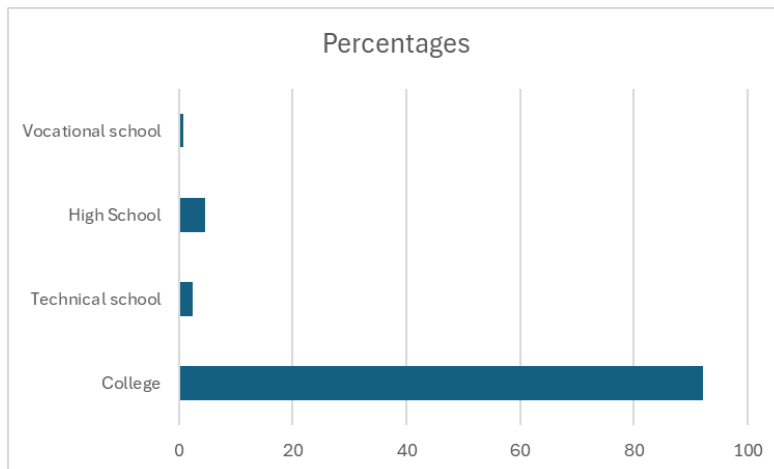


Figure 9 The last educational level completed by the respondent.

Source: research data

4.2 Gathering information about the labor market

We can observe in fig.5 that 69.3% of employers consider themselves informed "to a great extent" about the local labor market, a percentage that drops significantly regarding the national (21.3%) and international (7.9%) markets.

Regarding the process of gathering information about the labor market, the modal analysis clearly shows that the surveyed employers are oriented mainly towards the local labor market and less towards the national market. The international labor market is very unlikely to be part of the adjustment strategies adopted by employers. Employer size has no influence on how informed employers are about the local, national, or international labor market ($p > 0.005$). Employers who are generally less informed about the local labor market have a greater worker deficit (Kendall's tau-b = -0.254, $p = 0.001$). Regarding the level of information about national and international markets, we did not find a significant relationship with worker deficits.

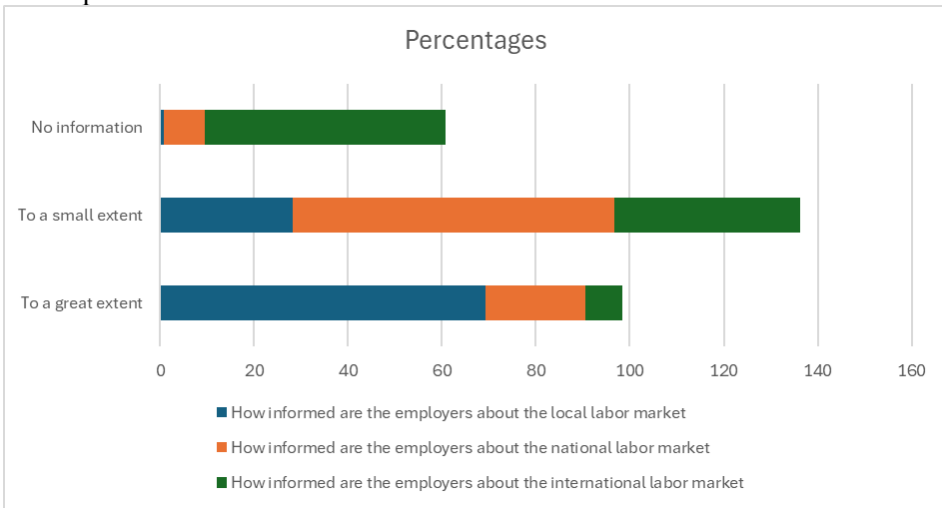


Figure 10 Employer's information about the labor market.
Source: research data

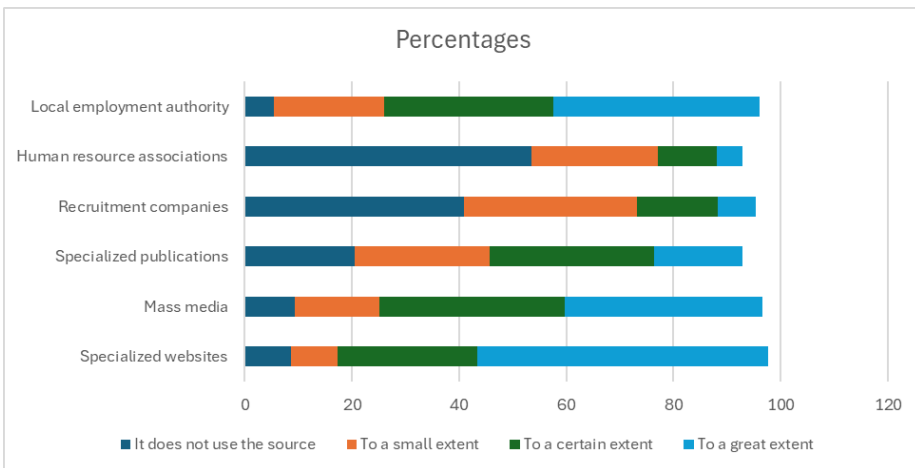


Figure 11 Employer's sources for information about the local labor market (percentages).
Source: research data

From the fig.7-9 we observe that the main sources of information about the labor market, at the local and national level, are websites. In the focus group, human resource specialists suggested differentiating between the positions targeted by the recruitment method. Accordingly, we differentiated these positions into three categories: management positions, positions for office work, and positions in the production area. Employers are mainly informed about the local and national labor markets from specialized websites, mass media, and local authorities (see fig.7-9). The answers received were checked by asking the respondents to mention the most important source. There were many answers for websites, but no specialized publications or human resource companies were mentioned. These results are in line with the premise of Romanian entrepreneurial culture, which is based on the personal experience of the manager, has an "ad-hoc" approach, and is still dependent on the administrative solutions of the state, relying less on independent forms of organizations, such as recruitment companies or human resource associations.

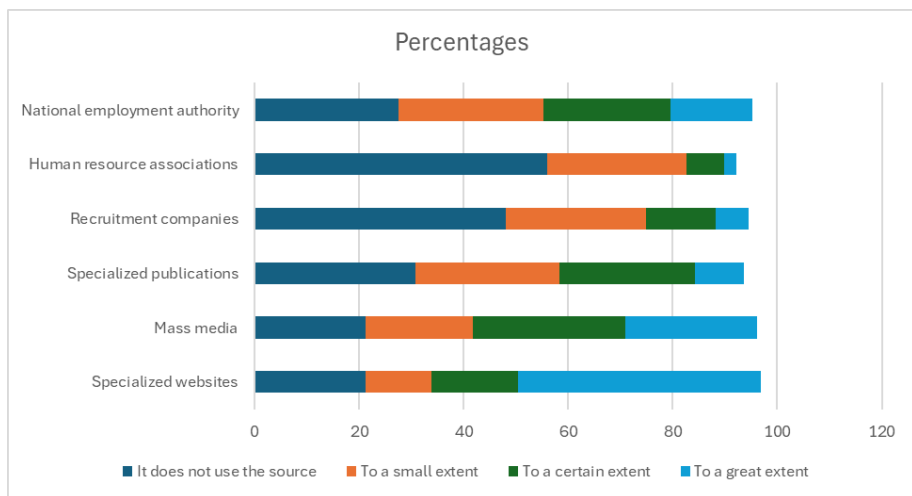


Figure 12 Employer's sources for information about the national labor market (percentages).
Source: research data

Fig.10 shows that employers are able to fill vacancies with trained employees to a certain extent as they try to avoid hiring untrained employees. Employer size had a statistically significant association with all variables in fig.10 ($p < 0.005$). There was a positive correlation between employer size and employer willingness to fill positions with employees with accredited professional training and without experience (Kendall's tau-b: 0.204, $p < 0.001$) and without employees without accredited professional training and experience (Kendall's tau-b: 0.175, $p = 0.001$), which signals the willingness of larger companies to organize their on-the-job training. We observed a negative correlation between employer size and employer ability to fill positions with accredited professional training and experience (Kendall's tau-b: -0.166, $p = 0.003$), indicating that smaller companies experience difficulties in hiring trained personnel. Regarding workforce deficit, we observed a statistically significant negative correlation with employer ability to fill positions with accredited professional training and experience (Kendall's tau-b: -0.286, $p < 0.001$), which means that as the employer's work deficit worsens, it is less able to find trained workers. The other two variables from fig.10 did not have a statistically significant relationship with worker deficit ($p > 0.005$).

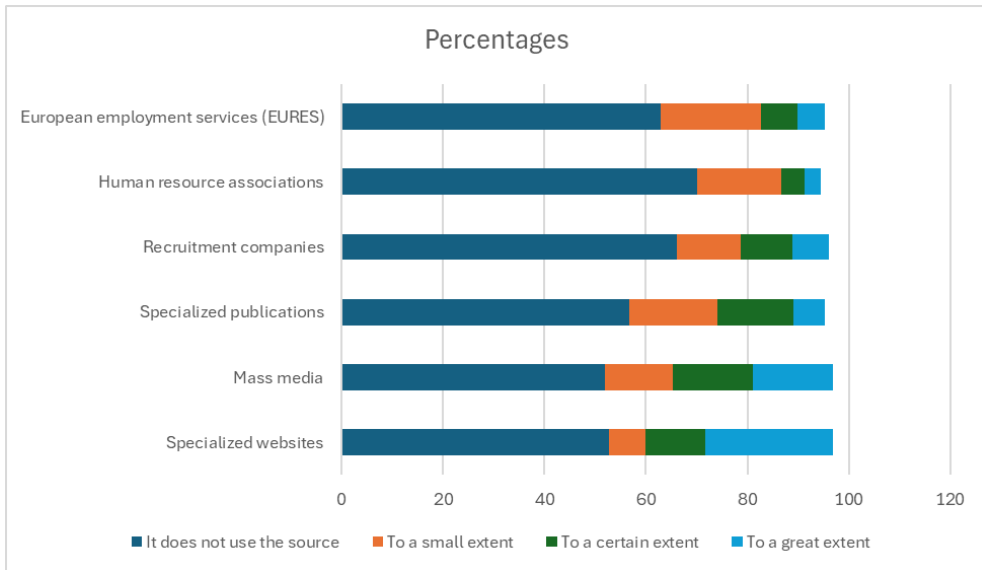


Figure 13 Employer's sources for information about the international labor market (percentages). Source: research data

4.3 Recruitment issues and strategies

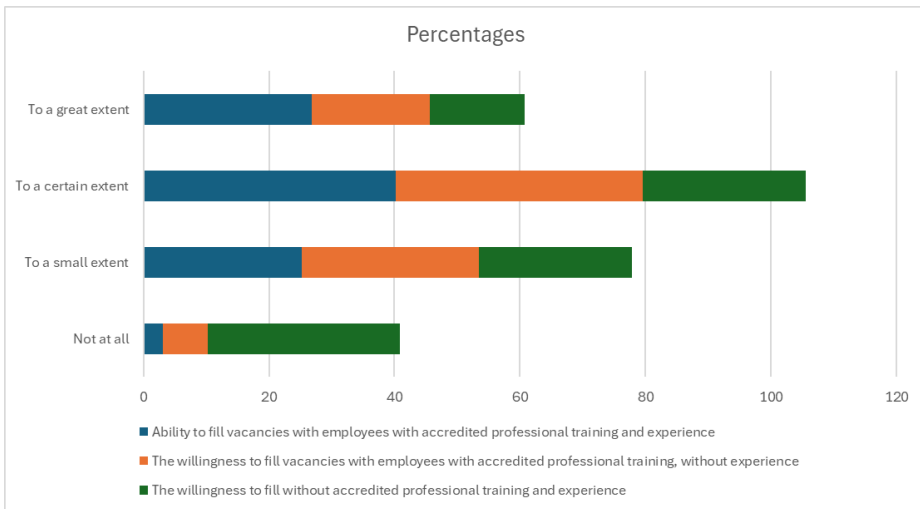


Figure 14 The employer's ability/willingness to fill vacancies according to training and experience (percentages)
Source: research data

Fig.11 presents the structural aspects of the recruitment process regarding the level of training required to fill the positions. The variables followed four levels of training: higher, post-high school technical training, vocational, and no professional training. Employers had the most difficulty hiring employees with vocational-technical training. Emphasis on higher training at the university level creates an oversupply of qualifications that are less in demand. We found a statistically significant positive

correlation between employer size and the extent to which employers are able to fill positions that require vocational schooling (Kendall's tau-b: 0.211, $p < 0.001$) and unskilled workers (Kendall's tau-b: 0.230, $p < 0.001$). This means that larger employers appear to have a higher tendency to fill positions that require vocational schooling and are more willing to hire unskilled workers. The data showed no statistically significant correlation between employer size and employer ability to fill positions that require higher training or post-secondary education ($p > 0.005$). Workforce deficit presented no statistically significant correlations with the variables in fig.11 ($p > 0.005$).

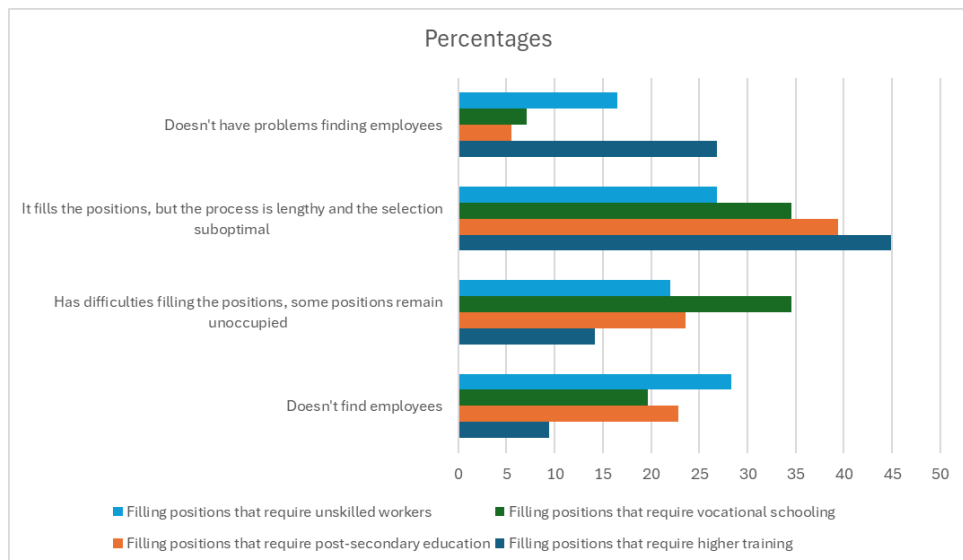


Figure 15 Recruitment and the level of training (percentages).

Source: research data

From fig.12, it can be observed that the differentiation between the types of positions did not show significant differences between recruitment methods. The most commonly used methods are direct contact (recommendations, head hunting), job announcements, and internal hiring.

Direct contacts and job announcements were the most used recruitment methods by employers, which underlines certain aspects of the entrepreneurial culture that do not use independent forms of organizations such as recruitment agencies. A high level of internal hiring indicates scarcity of labor. Employer size did not significantly influence the most commonly used recruitment methods for management positions ($p > 0.005$). However, for recruitment methods used for positions in the production area and office work, we found a statistically significant relationship with employer size ($p < 0.005$). From the contingency table, it appears that, for positions for office work, micro and small enterprises rely heavily on direct contact and less on job announcements, medium enterprises use mostly job announcements, while large enterprises favor internal hiring. For positions in the production area, micro enterprises rely on direct contacts, while small enterprises use mostly job announcements. Medium enterprises also favor job announcements, while large enterprises favor direct contacts. Regarding the relationship between worker deficit and the variables in fig.12, we did not find any statistically significant relationships ($p > 0.005$).

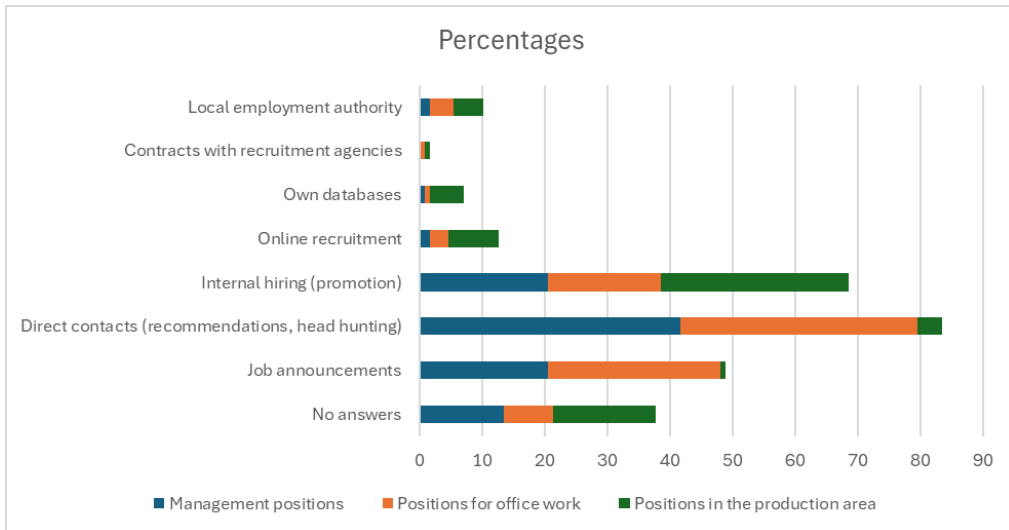


Figure 16 The most used recruitment method (percentages).

Source: research data

4.4 Short- and medium-term measures

Employers are reluctant to orient themselves regarding the recruitment of new employees towards the national labor market and, even less so, towards the international labor market (see fig.13). The relocation of the activity is also rejected by the majority of employers as a solution to the problem of scarcity of the labor force. With regard to employer size, the analyzed data revealed a statistically significant negative correlation with the employer's willingness to reduce the number of positions in the company (Kendall's tau-b: -0.179, $p=0.001$), which means that larger companies are slightly less inclined to reduce the number of positions. We did not find a statistically significant correlation between employer size and other variables in fig.13 ($p>0.005$). There were no statistically significant correlations between workforce deficits and the variables shown in fig.13 ($p>0.005$).

In fig.14, we analyze dichotomous variables regarding the measures expected by employers to retain employees. We observed a division among employers regarding the increase in material benefits in accordance with the local market and regarding the provision of career development opportunities. The idea of salary increases at the Western level, and the reduction in working hours is clearly rejected. Employer size is associated with the way the employer's representatives would consider the provision of attractive material benefits compared to the current practice in the local labor market ($p=0.004$) and give additional free time to improve employee retention ($p=0.001$). From the contingency table, we find that micro, small, and medium enterprises are divided regarding the provision of attractive material benefits compared to the current practice in the local labor market, as the representatives of large companies reject the measure.

4.4 Short- and medium-term measures

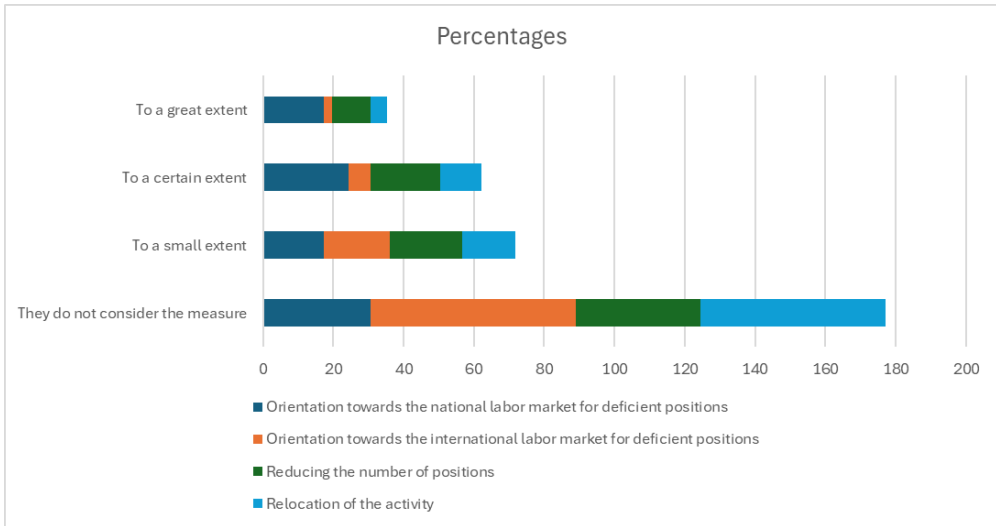


Figure 17 Measures taken by the employer in case of labor shortage (percentages).
Source: research data

On the contrary, regarding providing additional free time to improve employee retention, the representatives of micro, small, and medium enterprises reject the measure, but large companies are divided. We did not find a statistically significant correlation between employer size and the other variables in fig. 14 ($p > 0.005$). Workforce deficit has an influence ($p = 0.001$) on the way the employer’s representatives would consider giving additional free time to improve employee retention. From the contingency table, we observed that representatives from companies with higher worker deficits would consider this measure less. We did not find a statistically significant correlation between workforce deficits and the other variables shown in fig. 14 ($p > 0.005$).

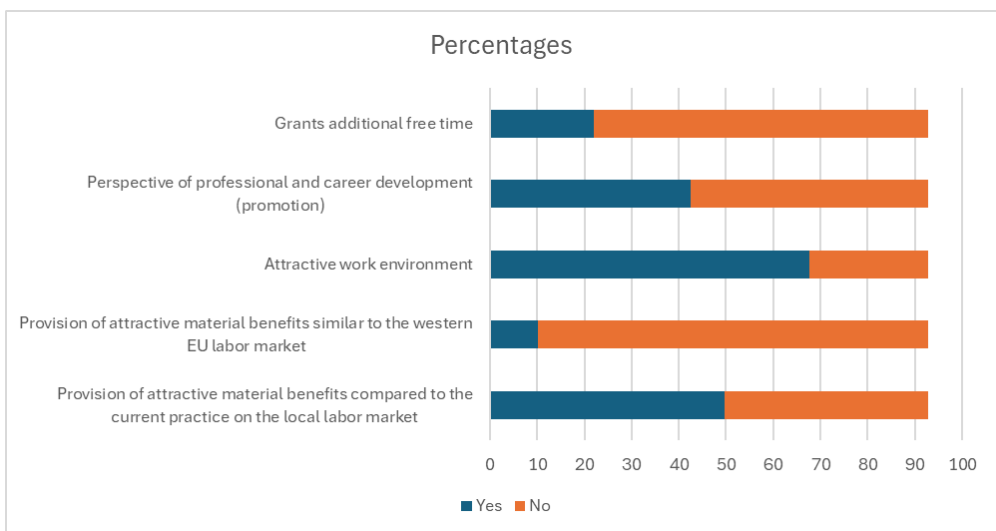


Figure 18 Measures regarding employee retention (percentages).
Source: research data

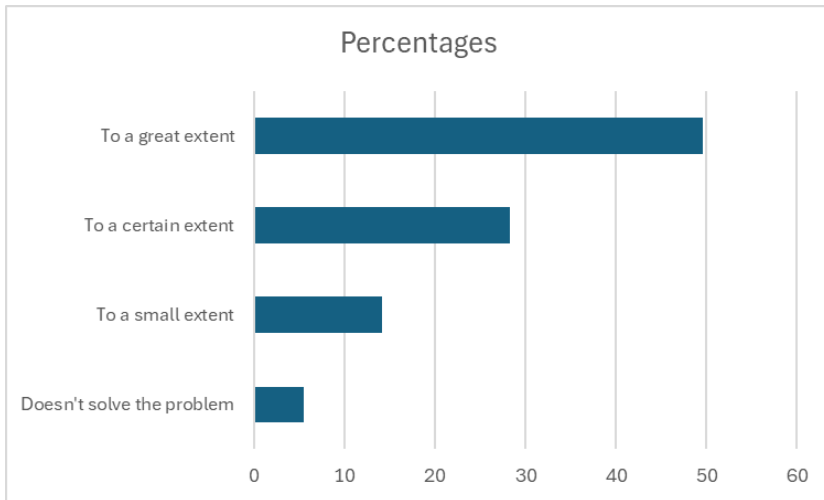


Figure 19 Professional training at the workplace as a measure to alleviate labor shortage (percentages). *Source:* research data

Employers recognize the possibility of reducing problems related to the lack of staff through professional training at the workplace (see fig.15). We found no statistically significant results regarding the effect of employer size and workforce deficit on the variables in fig.15 ($p > 0.005$).

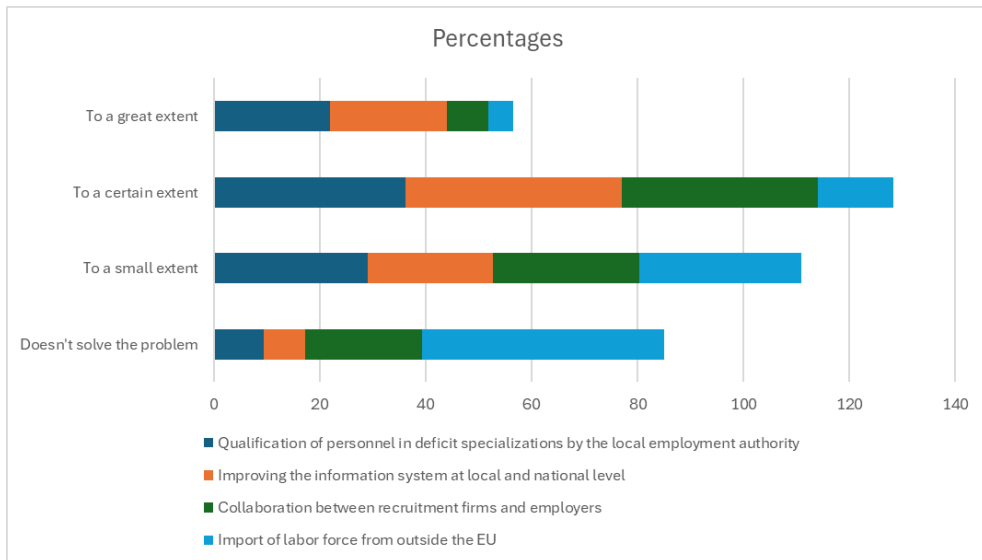


Figure 20 Employers' favoring extra-organizational medium-term policies to alleviate labor shortage (percentages). *Source:* research data

In fig.16, there were included variables regarding the opinion of the employers' representatives regarding the extra-organizational solutions with an impact on the labor force in the medium term. Employers' representatives consider that a better information system about the labor market and local employment authority could help alleviate labor

scarcity. There is some reluctance to involve recruitment agencies and a strong reserve regarding importing labor from outside the EU. Regarding the effect of employer size, there was a positive correlation with the variable that refers to importing labor from outside the EU as a solution for labor scarcity (Kendall's tau-b: 0.200, $p=0.001$). This could mean that larger companies consider this option more. We did not find a statistically significant correlation between employer size and the other variables in fig.16 ($p>0.005$). Workforce deficit does not have a statistically significant correlation with the variables in fig.16 ($p>0.005$).

Conclusions

Our theoretical premise about Romanian entrepreneurial culture, which does not separate the public and private domains clearly enough and assumes an approach based on the intuition and self-taught training of the entrepreneur, was partially confirmed by the answers received from the employers' representatives. The recruitment methods used and the way the employers inform themselves about the labor market confirm the characterization of the entrepreneurial culture, as the most utilized sources by employers to obtain information are specialized websites, the mass media, and local authorities. Regarding the recruitment methods used, employers mostly used direct contact (recommendations, head hunting), job announcements, and internal hiring. Employers were reluctant to collaborate with independent organizations such as recruitment companies or human resource associations, to recruit new employees from national or international markets, or to relocate their activities.

Regarding the hypothesis that employer size and worker deficit could be used as predictors for the adjustment process of the employers, it can be observed from chapter 4 that the variables "Employer size" and "Worker deficit" presented a series of correlations and associations with the variables that comprise the adjustment process, but these correlations are moderate to weak and inconsistent, so we have to reject the hypotheses that these variables are good predictors for the employer's adjustment process to the labor market in Bihor County. Our research emphasizes the importance of a sociological approach when there is no explanatory model that properly fits the problem at hand. We did not find a significant difference in the approach to the process of adapting to the labor market depending on the size of the employer or the labor shortage experienced, which emphasizes the lack of structuring of the employer's response to the situation, an aspect that makes the process of adjusting to the labor shortage workforce in Bihor County less predictable, while remaining dependent on state-led solutions.

The findings of this study highlight the complex interplay between Romania's post-communist entrepreneurial culture, evolving HRM practices, and the challenges posed by the current labor market. The reluctance of employers to engage with professional recruitment services or explore international labor markets suggests a persistence of traditional, parochial management approaches. This tendency, while potentially limiting in terms of access to talent, also reflects the strong local orientation of Romanian businesses. The study also reveals a significant mismatch between the skills demanded by employers and those available in the labor market, particularly in vocational and technical fields. This misalignment points to the need for closer collaboration between educational institutions and employers to ensure that training programs are better aligned with market needs.

Furthermore, the research underscores the importance of developing more sophisticated HRM strategies to address the ongoing labor shortage. While employers

recognize the value of workplace training, there appears to be less emphasis on other retention strategies such as competitive compensation or work-life balance initiatives. This suggests an opportunity for Romanian businesses to adopt more comprehensive and innovative HRM practices to attract and retain talent in a competitive market.

In conclusion, while the study provides valuable insights into the current state of HRM practices and labor market dynamics in Bihor County, it also highlights the need for further research to develop more robust predictive models for employer behavior in the Romanian context. Future studies could explore additional variables that might better explain the variability in employer responses to labor market challenges, potentially incorporating qualitative methods to capture the nuances of decision-making processes in different organizational contexts.

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IN-HOUSE SHRINES IN JAPANESE CORPORATIONS AND THEIR BACKGROUND

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Abstract. *This paper illustrates the tradition of displaying an in-house shrine (kamidana) at Japanese organizations, focusing on the roles of spirituality and purpose in Japanese traditional organizations. The paper further describes how Japanese organizations and employees value tradition, spiritual connections with their legacy business while trying to innovate on products and services, transform business models, operations and revamp strategy.*

Keywords: *Innovation, Organization, Culture, Purpose, Sustainability, Strategy, Management, Japan*

I Introduction

Upon visiting corporations in Japan, it is not uncommon to encounter shrines within the premises, known as *kamidana*. *Kamidana* serves as a place of worship in the Shintoism, the ethnic religion in Japan. Encountering a *kamidana* is prevalent in a variety of professional settings, from traditional businesses and older industries to modern sectors such as information technology, and it extends even to maritime vessels operated by the current Japanese Navy (Kuno, 2014). A comparable practice exists within the Christian tradition with chaplains, and among Orthodox adherents, icons are similarly enshrined in corporate environments. Notably, *kamidana* are erected for practitioners of Shinto as well as in workspaces where there are people of other religions. Additionally, Shinto rituals like ground-breaking ceremony remain integral to the inauguration of new corporate structures and public thoroughfares alike; intriguingly, even computers are not exempt from these rites, as documented in textbooks on *norito* (Ono and Kaneko, 2004:10). Details of *norito* will be described in section II 3.

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While the melding of Shinto and Buddhism can be attributed to syncretic influences, it is essential to note that the polytheistic nature of Buddhism fostered a higher degree of compatibility. Despite this, issues regarding the transgression of religious liberty were seldom broached in the wake of Christianity's decriminalization. Noteworthy is the absence of debate on this topic, with a singular instance in 1932 where a *kamidana* being installed within Sophia University—a Christian institution—sparked protests as documented by Nakamura (1986). Nevertheless, such instances of conflict were anomalies and did not escalate to widespread animosity even with the assimilation of Christian practices.

This paper will investigate the implications of introducing *kamidana*, an emblem of Shintoism indigenous to Japan, in professional environments. Unlike more expansive in-house shrines usually positioned on company's premises or on the roof, *kamidana* are smaller fixtures located indoors. For clarity, corporate-managed shrines will henceforth be referred to as in-house shrines from now on.

II What kind of religion is Shintoism?

In regards to Shintoism, it must be acknowledged that it is a faith without an unequivocal genesis, its foundation lies not in doctrine but mythology¹ and tradition². Predominant among its characteristics is an animistic perception held by its followers. However, it is the long-standing belief that both the sovereign and citizenry are progeny of deities which has engendered the customary practice of enshrining ancestral gods—a practice deeply rooted since antiquity. (Nishimuta 2005:4) The Shinto religion's context is highly ethnocentric, presenting challenges for interpretation by non-natives, further compounded by the linguistic constraints faced by missionaries, as noted by Ono (1963:6).

The 6th-century introduction of Buddhism to Japan heralded a syncretic period where Shintoism and Buddhism coalesced, paralleling the amalgamation of Roman and Greek deities in antiquity. It was not until the 18th century that Japanese scholars, spurred by the colonial aspirations of Western European nations in Asia, advocated for a resurgence in authentic Japanese cultural practices and beliefs. The initiative to restore Shintoism as it existed prior to the advent of Buddhism was championed by Norinaga Motoori. This movement gained momentum from the mid-19th century up until the Meiji Restoration, specifically post the promulgation of the Shinbutsu Bunreiri (Ordinance Distinguishing Shinto and Buddhism) in 1868, which sought to reestablish Shintoism as the fulcrum of indigenous Japanese ideology.

Nevertheless, this demarcation faded concerning public devotion, and there was no sustained effort to distinctly separate the two religious practices over an extended period. For instance, the concept of ancestor veneration is absent in Buddhism. Yet, contemporary Japanese Buddhists frequently continue to honour their ancestors, under the belief that they safeguard the living.

¹ Originally, the history of the country was treated as history, b"shed in 712) and "Nihon Shoki" (established in 720) as written papers. Before that, it was communicated orally. "Jindai hen" relates myths, and in recent years, evidence has been unearthed that a part of that myths actually occurred.

² There are two types of sins, Tianjin sin and Kunitsu sin, but they are different from the concept of sin in monotheism religions. In monotheism, it is a breach of contract with God, whereas in Shinto, sin refers to something that people dislike or are ominous.

1. Kami (God)

Turning to theological perspectives, “Kami” in Shintoism and monotheistic “God” exhibit divergent characteristics.

Monotheistic deities represent a singular absolute entity, whereas Shinto adopts a relational interpretation. Norinaga Motoori elucidates that in Shinto, phenomena evoking reverence or awe are not perceived as ordinary events. Such uniqueness is mirrored in the Japanese term “shinkyo (supernatural),³” denoting skills that are unparalleled and unreplicable. In linguistic comparisons—such as “Dumnezeu” in Latin languages or “Herr” in Germanic—the divine is distinctly separate from humanity. In contrast, Japanese deities are addressed with familiar honorifics like “Yebisu-san” or “Daikoku-san,” connoting an intimacy closer to familial relations than formal titles.

Analysing texts like “Kojikiden Jindai Ichinomaki,” one observes that while monotheism often embodies dualistic relationships epitomized by Cartesian dichotomy—good god versus evil devil—Shinto includes deities with tumultuous origins such as Susanoo-no-Mikoto who may transition into benign patrons of enterprise. According to this interpretation, the divine has a rough side (Aratama) and a peaceful side (Nigitama), even within a single deity⁴. The term aratama can denote the tumultuous spirit associated with natural calamities or warfare, as well as the spirit of an individual who has passed away. On occasion, a shrine may be erected to appease this spirit. Furthermore, the Japanese ethos is characterized by facets such as Sakimitama, which bestows blessings like bountiful harvests upon people, and Kumishitama, known for imparting wisdom (Yoshimura 1906:68-80). This illustrates the profound diversity inherent in these beliefs.

Additionally, in monotheistic traditions, God is perceived as the Creator and humans are His creation, with salvation dependent upon adhering to His covenant, despite human imperfections. By contrast, Shintoism posits a continuum between deities and humans. Humans are innately considered descendants of deities and it is believed that deities reside within individuals, even in adversarial relationships. This underpins the Japanese perception of Shinto gods as intimately familiar entities.

Chapter 3 analysis the treatment of the deceased. Regarding the treatment of the deceased, monotheistic religions typically assert that souls will ascend to heaven or descend into hell subsequent to divine judgment after death. In traditional narratives such as the “Nihon Shoki” and “Kojiki,” the depiction of the afterlife is limited to the realm of Yomi⁵, with specific accounts focusing on deities like Izanami and Izanagi⁶.

In Shintoism, however, the lines between the world of the deceased and that of the living are notably blurred⁷. A salient feature of this religious tradition is the deification of ancestors post-mortem.

³ Kojikiden Jindai Ichinomaki

⁴ In Japanese, “Hashira” is the term used when counting gods.

⁵ Or just go to the world of the root country, the bottom world. The influence of Buddhism is accounted for saying that you are evaluated for your deeds during lifetime and go to paradise or hell after death.

⁶ It is similar to the Gilgamesh epic, but in the case of Japan, it is a story where a husband who runs away escapes to the end.

⁷ For example, according to the second volume of “Makibashira” by the famous theologian Atsutane Hirata, “There is no boundary between the invisible world of the dead and the visible world of the world. The soul goes to a shrine or shrine or is in a graveyard. “See Kobayashi (2017:103) for details.

The Yasukuni Shrine venerates those who perished subsequent to the Meiji Restoration as deities; this incorporates not merely military personnel but also non-combatants who lost their lives during conflicts⁸. This tradition has also been passed down to the current Japanese Navy, and Kamidana is present unless it is a very small ship (Kuno, 2014). Such a tradition suggests the crew is regarded akin to an extended family or local community. Worship at these altars is not obligatory for the crew members, and the existence of a kamidana aboard does not appear to provoke any religious discord.

Furthermore, it is not unusual for local contributors to be posthumously honoured as divine entities in shrines—this is sometimes done with the intention of ensuring that such individuals do not return as malevolent spirits.

2. Kamidana

There is little research on kamidana, and its origins remain somewhat ambiguous.

It is presumed that the consistent installation of kamidana in private residences began in the 18th century⁹. Prior to this period, they were traditionally placed outdoors, being brought inside only temporarily for specific rituals. Picture 1 displays a miniature shrine situated outdoors. These shrines vary in size, ranging from approximately 30 cm in height to those sizable enough for an adult to enter.

Kamidana were typically found on the grounds of comparatively substantial homes, businesses, or factories. Within the Shinto faith, it is believed that deities inhabit these sacred spaces. Historically located at the communal level, it is noted in chapter 5 that regional protective deities (Ujigami)¹⁰ and their associated deities are venerated within these structures.

This discourse includes all forms of kamidana installations – even those positioned externally as depicted herein.



Picture 1 Hokora (small outdoor shrine)

⁸ In the official website of Yasukuni Shrine, it is written that "people who died due to official duties to protect their homeland are gods." <https://www.yasukuni.or.jp/history/detail.html> (Yasukuni shrine 2022/12/22)

⁹ "Shinto Dictionary" Linchuan Bookstore July 19, 1937, 356 pages out of 1474 pages

¹⁰ According to Ono (1958:166), Ujigami was traditionally the guardian deity of a specific family based on blood relations, but in rural areas it was not uncommon for the entire village to have blood relations, so it is sometimes equated with the god of the land.

Picture 2 presents the simplest one for indoor use. The same is true of the small shrine, but it is shaped like a house, and a talisman is placed inside it. It is made of wood and is a *yorishiro* (*yorishiro*)¹¹ of God. In that respect, *kamidana* represents divine presence analogous to icons or crosses in other religions. At shrines, these talismans can be rented for a fee and are considered to embody the shrine's enshrined deity's spirit, customarily replaced annually with new ones from the shrine itself. Typically comprising three tags honoring *Amaterasuomikami* (the foremost earthly deity)¹², *Ujigami* (a guardian deity), and *Suukeishin* (other revered deities)¹³



Picture 2. Kamidana

Picture 2 illustrates a *kamidana* set before an edifice-like structure with a circular mirror and where offerings are placed: typically rice, water, salt, and sake¹⁴. Distinctions between sacred and profane spaces are marked by evergreen plants and paper cords. In places where *sakaki* (*Cleyera japonica* Thunb) leaves are scarce, alternatives such as bamboo or pine are used signifying vitality through their persistent greenery.

The dimensions of domestic *kamidana* extend from approximately 30cm up to nearly 2 meters – reflecting household affluence. Upon relocation, it is usual to acquire a new *kamidana*; hence some have been in use for over two centuries while others might be custom-ordered or inexpensively purchased at home improvement stores.

Within these practices lies particular importance attributed to the mirror element. In the "Age of the Gods" volume of "Nihon Shoki," also known as "The Chronicles of Japan," there exists a segment titled "Hokyohosai no Shinchoku". This refers to a divine message conveyed by *Amaterasu Omikami*, the preeminent deity in Shinto belief, to *Ninigi no Mikoto* upon his transformation from divinity to humanity.

The oracle instructs, "My progeny, when gazing upon this mirror which represents treasure, do so as if you are regarding me. Place this reflective object within your abode as my embodiment and utilize it during religious ceremonies."

Such a directive intimates the Shinto perspective that humans are God's progeny and innately possess the facility to discern moral correctness. This notion constitutes the

¹¹ It means the object in which God dwells.

¹² *Amaterasu Omikami* is the highest god and goddess on earth.

¹³ A revered god is the God that you most respect or feel close to among the many gods.

¹⁴ At the shrine, rice, ear of rice plant, sake, mochi, fish, birds, sea vegetables, vegetables (onions, garlic, etc. with a strong smell are avoided), fruits, sweets, salt (natural coarse salt taken from seawater), and water are offered.

foundational principle underpinning the Japanese concept of innate moral virtue. In contemplating one's reflection, an individual is implored continually to evaluate their ethical alignment as a divine descendant.

3. Religious service

In relation to sacred rites within this context, 'Nikkusai' embodies the routine homage paid to deities. This term signifies devotion and is enacted through offerings. Specifically, households with a 'kamidana,' or Shinto shrine, engage in worshipful acts after awakening and then again post-employment activities.

Meanwhile, 'Norito,' denoting prayerful utterances, supports ad hoc invocation irrespective of structure. Nonetheless, it has been historically proscribed to solicit individual advantage through prayer; rather, supplications traditionally orient towards civic administration and societal tranquillity, agricultural bounty, and familial well-being. For example, Atsutane HIRATA (1811) recommended the following method of prayer.

"Many gods in heaven, many gods that have descended to earth, and a thousand and five million gods that are in various shrines, large and small, all over Japan. Even in the presence of the hundreds of millions of gods who follow that god, the gods of Edamiya Edisha¹⁵, and Sohodo no kami¹⁶, (we) should be modest and respectful, and if (we) make mistakes, we will review and listen to them, each person will understand, follow God's merits, receive grace and happiness, and give achievements in the way of God. We convey our profound veneration unto you."

It is articulated that while the substance of norito—Shinto prayers—may vary according to necessity, based on Hirata Atsutane's¹⁷ scholarly works pertaining to Shintoism dated early 19th century, such prayers ought to primarily invoke national tranquillity. Subsequently, should those beseeching commit errors, they seek guidance from the divine entity to enlighten them about their missteps.

This concept arises from the notion that human actions in the tangible realm and the deeds of various deities in the intangible dimension intersect, which can result in Amatukuni transitioning into Yominokuni¹⁸ based upon the binary moral assessment (Kobayashi 2016:166).

Contemporary emphasis often lies on extracting immediate benefits from the corporeal world; notwithstanding, it is deemed prudent to fulfil human obligations and defer to the divine verdict hereafter or to supplicate for divine vigilance in recognition of earnest future endeavours.

This aspect is markedly divergent from monotheistic faiths such as Christianity and Islam, where adulation of the deity is central.

In Shinto practice, petitions to divinity (Norito) are vocalized explicitly. Norito distinctly contrasts with monotheistic invocations due to Shinto's belief in the inherent

¹⁵ A branch office to the head office of the shrine. It is a shrine that was set up by dividing spirits.

¹⁶ "Tamatasuki. According to Volume 6 " 2 of Atutane Hirata, Sohori is the deification of the scarecrow: the god of rice fields, the god of agriculture, and the god of land.

¹⁷ Hirata, Atutane "Tama Tasuki" vol.6 p.28 (1819? Year of publication unknown)

¹⁸ There is an explanation that the kingdom of Tianjin is heaven and the kingdom of Yomi is hell, but the old Shinto belief means that the kingdom of Tianjin is a wonderful place in the country where the gods live, and the kingdom of Yomi is an ominous place as the afterlife.

indwelling of divinity within humans and that by uttering words one imbues them with spirit. This spiritual concept is explored further in a different study.

4. Rituals based on agriculture

Shintoism is fundamentally intertwined with agricultural activities, particularly those surrounding the cultivation of rice. The importance of rice cultivation extends beyond its mythological narratives. It is an agriculturally efficient practice, supporting a greater population per unit area than wheat farming or pastoral agriculture, while demanding significant human labour inputs. In Japan, where the distinction among the four seasons is pronounced, individual management of key agricultural tasks such as water regulation, sowing, pest control, and harvesting is not feasible. Despite Japan's generally abundant rainfall, there are periods, such as summer, when water is scarce, necessitating cooperative management of this critical resource among adjacent rice paddy owners. This collaborative approach extends to pest control; isolated efforts are futile unless carried out community-wide. A lack of collective participation in these agricultural tasks can adversely affect crop yields for all surrounding farmers—hence the necessity for unified action from preparation through to harvest time¹⁹. This communal interdependence also reflects in fiscal matters; villages were taxed as a whole entity. Consequently, any inability of individual villagers to fulfil their tax obligations imposed a collective liability upon the entire village community to compensate for the shortfall. The obligation to sustain sharecroppers inevitably rests upon the landlord, who, in the final analysis, must assume responsibility. Accordingly, the dynamic between Japanese landowners and sharecroppers diverged substantially from the European model of gentry and serfdom.

Annually, over ten rituals and ceremonies are observed at the village shrine, affirming a strong bond akin to a community of shared destiny.

5. Treatment of the believers

For believers of Monotheistic faiths, this aspect presents considerable difficulty in comprehension. The fundamental principle is to safeguard all denizens within the precincts venerating the ujigami. The ujigami serves as the tutelary deity of a specific region or village, with each locality honoring a distinct principal deity. As such, both Buddhists and Muslims fall under the protection of the ujigami. The inclusive nature of this practice does not shun those considered pagans, nor does it seek affirmation from individuals about their personal convictions. Unlike other religious traditions, there is no requisite rite or ceremony signalling confession of faith or formal admission, nor an expectation for renunciation. Irrespective of one's personal beliefs in Shintoism, one is considered to be under the protection of a deity. Those who are members of the faith are termed parishioners, and their status is equivalent to that of practitioners only if they reside within the local domain. Relocation leads to a transfer from being a parishioner of one's current location to that of the new domicile.

This indicates that the deities safeguarding an individual are affiliated with the community to which they belong. As previously noted in section III, this is presumed to have a profound influence on the role and placement of kamidana within corporations.

¹⁹ Because the seeds are washed away by water when planted directly in the paddy field, it is necessary to grow them into seedlings of about 15 cm before replanting them in the paddy field.

6. Ujigami and Ujiko

Consequently, it becomes imperative to reevaluate the role played by ujigami. While parishioners may be regarded as believers out of necessity, their role should not be conflated with that of adherents belonging to other religions. In this context, 'clan' refers to an extended family group, and 'child' denotes offspring. Therefore, ujigami represents the parental figure, whilst ujiko symbolizes a filial connection.

According to Ono (1958:173), these can be delineated into five distinct classifications:

1) Individuals residing within the jurisdictional boundaries of a shrine are automatically considered as part of its domain.

2) Original inhabitants (indigenous settlers) and newcomers (new settlers) establish ties with the local ujigami.

3) Collaborative efforts by settler groups result in the establishment of a communal ujigami.

4) A ruler may adopt an extant ujigami belonging to former inhabitants as their own protective deity.

5) Individuals can be bestowed with the ujigami associated with a principal family through mechanisms such as servitude or enslavement.

Within the context of a contemporary, the traditional notion of (1) working in an office has evolved into a state of congregation, (2) the dynamic between incumbent employees and new recruits is redefined, and (3) the establishment of a corporation is characterized by the founder's selection of a congregation member. (4) In situations involving takeovers, (5) it is notably observed when a subsidiary venerates the tutelary deity venerated by the parent company.

III Corporate Shrines

1. The beginnings of Japanese Corporations

Research on the existence and role of corporate shrines within Japanese corporation is surprisingly low. For instance, in Nakamaki and Hioki's 2009 publication, considerations in Shinto studies appear to concentrate on differentiating residential from professional realms with no significant exploration of corporate shrines.

Up until around 1870 in Japan, businesses operated exclusively as private ventures due to an absence of any legal framework governing corporations. Typically, these businesses were family-oriented, managed by the proprietor together with his family members and domestic workers. Particularly, child labourers known as 'Decchi', initiated into work life approximately from age ten, were simultaneously educated in literacy and arithmetic by their employers. During this apprenticeship phase, they were treated akin to adopted kin. Upon serving roughly a decade, these apprentices would ascend to 'Tedai', or middle management positions. Subsequently, after an additional decade or more, only the most exemplary amongst them would rise to 'Bantou', which signified senior management roles; notwithstanding, the instances of such advancements were rare.

Individuals who belonged to the merchant class and remained in service from their thirties to forties were typically compensated with severance pay that enabled them

to establish their own ventures through 'noren-wake' or noren splitting²⁰. Considering that life expectancy during that era hovered around fifty years, this arrangement signified an almost lifelong professional association. In the sphere of business relations, the bond shared between corporate entities and their employees notably mirrors the intimacy of a domestic environment, rather than the formalities of a contractual agreement. This paradigm persisted into the early decades of the 20th century, approximately until the 1930s. The dynamics akin to those in a master-servant relationship, which are closely related to parental filial interactions (as discussed in Watahiki's 2017a and 2019a works), have historical roots that extend into contemporary Japanese management practices.

2. Corporate Entities and Local Community

Concerning Corporate Entities and Local Community Interactions, it was not until the promulgation of legislation in 1890 that Japan saw widespread adoption of the corporate model. Similar to trends observed globally, share transfers were conducted with relative freedom. However, distinct from industries necessitating substantial capital investment—like shipbuilding or railroad companies—there persisted a tendency for geographic concentration of shareholders, wherein up to 90% resided within a vicinity of 10 kilometres, (Watahiki 2017b). During this era, textile manufacturing took precedence as the industry's nucleus with sericulture as well encapsulating spinning and weaving processes. For an extensive duration, these activities remained ancillary occupations for agriculturalists, characterizing them as home-based crafts. A settlement bank is created for that purpose. To facilitate these endeavours, communal banks materialized analogous to farmers' cooperatives where all designated officers and examiners were from an area not exceeding a 400-meter diameter.

The onset of the 20th century saw technological advancements such as steam engines augment industrial capacity; this transitioned these homebound crafts into semi-industrialized factories processing locally-sourced silkworm cocoons. These burgeoning industries that required modest capital injections typically comprised of financiers and executives primarily from proprietorial classes; yet contributions from smallholder landowners and independent farmers were significant as well.

During the period in question, the class of landowners exhibited a hierarchical composition akin to familial relationships, suggesting that within local societies, there existed intricate ties among employees, enterprises, and their managers, much like the bond between parent and child (Ariga 1943, Soga 1992). This is evidenced by the prevalence of landlord figures who simultaneously occupied positions as corporate executives and major shareholders. Despite the assignment of a small cadre of engineers from other locales, these individuals did not engage in conflict with local communities; rather, they were seamlessly integrated into them.

3. Corporate Shrines in contemporary Japan

In this chapter we shall look into the current situation of the matter. In contemporary Japan, post-World War II reforms initiated by the General Headquarters (GHQ) resulted in a comprehensive excision of Shinto influences from public life. This

²⁰ It means that a servant is allowed to open a store by his master's house. Similar signs and store names are allowed. It has a character like a free franchise, but there is a big difference between the noren division of Edo period and the modern franchise system in terms of business object, contract relationship, status relationship, etc.

purging involved three primary actions: the eradication of moral instruction predicated on Shinto principles; the emancipation of sharecroppers; and the dismantling of the zaibatsu conglomerates. Regarding zaibatsu, their dissolution was due in part to their family-centric governance structure—a structure which, despite operating within joint-stock company models, was insular and operated under closed networks that inadvertently marginalised Shinto traditions. Although official policies targeted the public manifestations of Shintoism for removal, extirpating long-established beliefs and practices from the private sector proved challenging.

Numerous Japanese enterprises, some of which have been producing sake and soy sauce for centuries, maintain in-house shrines that date back to historical times. Moreover, it is not uncommon for even newly established companies to erect such shrines.

Currently, businesses of all ages, from those with rich historical backgrounds to recent start-ups, feature in-house shrines. For instance, Mitsukoshi Department Store has enshrined the Mikoshi Shrine²¹, while Subaru honours Nishinomiya Shrine within its premises.

Japan is recognized globally for its numerous enduring corporations. This phenomenon parallels rice agriculture; the intention is not purely to maximize profits but rather to sustain the company as a means of generating sufficient income for livelihood.

IV Case Studies

As explained in chapter III.1, there is little research on in-house shrines in corporations and it remains a fact that there is no specific scholarly work addressing which particular companies host certain types of shrines within their precincts. This subject remains deeply private within the corporate sphere, and larger companies often seclude their sacred sites from public view—placed away from areas like the CEO's office or other easily visible spots. In fact, larger sanctuaries might be situated in locations off-limits to non-employees, such as atop corporate buildings or ensconced amidst other structures. As such, these shrines have sparked interest among business executives seeking to balance tradition with modern management practices.

This phenomenon is elucidated in academic discussions and public dissemination, as seen in special features or editorials in widely distributed magazines. An illustrative work accessible to lay readers is "Aoki ed (2014:114-115)," which details the shrine custodianship practices of several corporations. Such practices are systematically categorized into four distinct types:

Classification

1.1 Type of Founder's Ujigami

This category pertains to shrines where deities held in esteem by the founder, or the *ujigami* (clan gods) associated with the founder's family, are venerated. Traditionally, *ujigami* were deities bearing the family name (*ujina*) and represented familial lineage deities. Historically revered solely within the *ujijin* (clan community), these deities often embodied ancestral spirits.

²¹ Mitsukoshi, Limited is a department store founded in 1673.
<https://www.mitsuipr.com/sights/spots/009/>

1.2 Chinju - The Patron Deity of a Locale

Chinju refers to deities presiding over specific territories, safeguarding both the land and its inhabitants. Following the Heian period, with the advent of the shoen (manorial estate) system, private domains under aristocrats, samurai control, and religious institutions were established, precipitating a decline in ujigami worship as clan society dissipated. Consequently, shoen proprietors began venerating local patron deities to protect their estates.

Given that Japan's agricultural society did not engage in nomadic or pastoralist practices during this era, movement was minimal. It was common for chinju and ujigami to be conflated within these stable environments.

1.3. Profession related kami (gods) type

Within the pantheon of Japanese deities, there is a prevalent linkage between divine entities and specific professional spheres. The divinities exemplified by such associations include Amaterasu Omikami as the deity of weaving, Susanoo no Mikoto associated with arboriculture, Inari no Kami—potentially synonymous with Ukanomitama or Ukemochi no Mikoto—as the deity of agriculture, along with Okuninushi no Mikoto. Further examples envelop Amenouzume as the deity of the performing arts, and Oyamatsumi, who oversees mining or ferrous metallurgy. These associations derive from foundational texts such as the "Kojiki" and "Nihon Shoki". Nevertheless, some mythological figures have had occupations retroactively applied in a manner that could be construed as contrived.

1.4 Business luck/founder's worship type

In the context of commerce, Inari no Kami is often revered as a tutelary god of business prosperity, alongside deities such as Yebisu and Okuninushi no Mikoto. Despite the lack of extensive empirical data, it is observed that in an era where relocations are commonplace and local communities weaken in cohesion, there is a diminished reliance on local guardian deities (Chinju-kami), coinciding with an increased prevalence of corporate shrines.

1.5 Employee/Achiever type

With respect to workplace dynamics and employee recognition, Aoki ed (2014) has posited four distinct categories to date. However, it is feasible to contemplate additional categories. Companies may establish memorials to honour employees whose efforts have significantly advanced or individuals who tragically perished in work-related incidents. Instituting regular commemorative ceremonies not only serves to memorialise those individuals but also acts as a conduit for reinforcing awareness regarding workplace accidents and promoting occupational safety education. This assists in relaying the core policies of a corporation by crafting dialogues concerning its originators and the personnel who have accomplished notable achievements.

It appears that this model adopts a form where the principal divinity is positioned foremost and venerated jointly, rather than idolizing the company's founders and employees.

1.6. Non-classifiable

One might also consider retrospective classifications. For instance, it is plausible that the local deity of the founder's place, the deity esteemed by the originator, and the

patron god of their profession could coincide. Inari-kami would be a typical example of this. Originally, Inari-kami was revered as a deity of cereals and agriculture; however, it is presently recognized as a protector of all sectors, encompassing trade and industry. This broad scope defies placement within categories 1-4. Hence, there is an inherent challenge to ascertain any unintended amalgamation or deliberate intent in such installations. An individual may become capable of discerning the installer's intended purpose through verification.

Table 1 Examples of major Japanese corporations with their respective in-house shrines

Classification	Name of the corporation	Year of establishment	Employee number	Company profile	Location	In-house Shrines	Overview
1	Mitsubishi Group ²²					Tosa Inari-jinja Shrine	The shrine was established within the storeroom residence of the Tosa Domain, marking the origin of the group's founder, Yataro Iwasaki.
1	NIPPON STEEL CORPORATION	1934	52,205	Japan's premier crude steel manufacturer and ranks fifth worldwide. Revenue 3,487.7 billion yen	2-6-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo	Takami-jinja Shrine	The Takami-jinja Shrine serves as the guardian deity of the erstwhile Hachiman Village and honors 19 deities, including Empress Jingu.
1	Kao Corporation	1887	33,603	Excelling as Japan's leading corporation in the production of detergents and toiletries and securing second place in cosmetics sales nationally while attaining seventh in the global market share for cosmetic and toiletry companies. Revenue 1,502,241 million yen	1-14-10 Nihonbashi Kayabacho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo	Kao Shrine	Kao Shrine venerates both Toyokawa Inari and the company's founder along with employees and martyrs who fell in wartime.
1	Shiseido Company, Limited	1872	39,035	It dominates the domestic cosmetics market at first place and holds fifth place globally. Revenue 920.88800 million yen	1-6-2 Higashi-Shimbashi, Minato-ku, Tokyo	Success Inari-jinja Shrine	The Success Inari-jinja Shrine originated from Toyokawa Inari with acknowledgment under Mankin Ryujin Success Inari (Success Inari) with acknowledgment under Mankin Ryujin Success Inari (Success Inari)
2	Hitachi, Ltd.	1920	368,247	Hitachi covers various sectors including IT, energy, industry, mobility life statement to automotive systems and metals. Revenue 10,264,602 million yen	6-6 Marunouchi Ichichome, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo	Kumano-jinja Shrine	Kumano-jinja Shrine was enshrined following factory expansion.

²² The Mitsubishi Group includes kameyamashachu, which was established in 1865, but is now merging with the Mitsui Group.

Classification	Name of the corporation	Year of establishment	Employee number	Company profile	Location	In-house Shrines	Overview
2	SEKKEIKAN SAKI CO.,LTD	1637	365	It is engaged in crafting alcoholic beverages chiefly Japanese sake along cosmetics and bath salts aligned with food and beverage operations. Revenue 23.4 billion yen	247 Minamihama-cho, Fushimi-ku, Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture	Inarisha	Their head office serves as the protector deity for Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine.
2	SUZU MOTOR CO., LIMITED	1916	44,299	It has become world's second-largest entity by volume within medium-sized trucks sector. Revenue 2,514,291 million yen	1-2-5 Takashima, Nishi-ku, Yokohama	Suzu Shrine	It was built approximately 50 years ago within the Fujisawa factory by the factory manager from that time. The deity enshrined is Amaterasu Omikami.
2	OJI PAPER CO., LTD.	1910	Undisclosed	5th largest paper company in the world. Revenue 239,315 million yen	4-7-5 Ginza, Chuo-ku, Tokyo	Oji Shrine	Shrine it offers divine protection over land development mountain forestry residing within main Tomakomai Factory vicinity.
2	TOSHIBA CORPORATION	1875	116,224	Japanese general electronics manufacturer. Revenue 3,389,871 million yen	1-1-1 Shibaura, Minato-ku, Tokyo	Chinju shrine and others	A guardian shrine is enshrined at each factory and office. Izumo Shrine remains in Lazona Kawasaki, the former location of the company's headquarters.
2	TOYO SUISAN KAISHA, LTD.	1953	4,880	Trade and export of marine products and manufacture and sale of processed foods instant noodles. Revenue 417.5 billion yen 11.00 million yen	2-13-40 Konan, Minato-ku, Tokyo	Koinari Shrine	It started when it was separated from the Chinju-jinja Shrine.
2	TOYOTA MOTOR CORPORATION	1933	372,817	The world's largest car company. Revenue 29 trillion 929 billion 9200 million yen	1 Toyota-cho, Toyota City, Aichi Prefecture	Toyooko-jinja Shrine	It enshrines the three pillars of Atsuta • jingu Shrine, Kanayama Hiko-no-kami and Kanayama Hime-no-kami, the guardian deity of iron.
3	ASAHI BEVERAGES, LTD.	1949		The company ranks 2nd in the Japanese market with a share of more than 40%. Revenue 725.13200 million yen	23-1 Azumabashi Itchome, Sumida-ku, Tokyo	Asahi-jinja Shrine	It enshrines the three gods of Ise Jingu Shrine, Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine, the god of business prosperity, and Matsuo Taisha Shrine, the god of sake.
3	Japan Airlines Co., Ltd.	1953	35,423	It has a history as the longest airline in Japan. Revenue 682.71300 million yen	4-11 Higashi-Shinagawa Nichome, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo	Nikko Katori-jinja Shrine	It was built in the Narita Airport maintenance area to pray for the safety of the sky.
3	NIPPON EXPRESS CO., LTD.	1872	72,366	The largest comprehensive logistics company in the industry in Japan.	2, Kanda Izumi-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo	Shoichii (Senior First Rank) Wire Mesh Inari	As the guardian god of the Hikyaku wholesaler of the predecessor of Nippon Express, it began to enshrine a branch spirit of Fushininami Inari Taisha.

Classification	Name of the corporation	Year of establishment	Employee number	Company profile	Location	In-house Shrines	Overview
3	Shoda Shoyu Co., Ltd	1873	425	Manufacturing, sales and research and development of soy sauce brewing and processed seasonings. Revenue 25.2 billion yen	3-1 Sakae-cho, Tatebayashi City, Gunma Prefecture	Shoda Inari-jinja Shrine	It was founded about 500 years ago and was later transferred from the town to the Shoda family. It is enshrined on the grounds of the brewery.
3	Showa Sangyo Co., Ltd	1936	2,899	Manufacture and sell a wide range of food materials and foods such as flour, cooking oil, pasta, glucose, feed, and frozen foods. Revenue 255,997 million yen	2-2-1 Uchikanda, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo	Inari-jinja Shrine	Because it was a company that handled grain, it was split up from Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine, which has the divine virtue of bountiful harvests.
4	TOKYO GAS CO., LTD.	1872	16,697	Notable gas company, holding a significant market share in the metropolitan Tokyo district as well as surrounding areas, which consist of strategic urban centers within one city and six prefectures located in the Kanto region. Preminent city gas operator on a global scale. Revenue 1 trillion 9,252 billion 3,500 million yen	5-20 Kaigan Itchome, Minato-ku, Tokyo	Inari-jinja Shrine	Inari-jinja Shrines are enshrined at the factories in Negishi, Sodegaura, and Ogishima.
4	TOPPAN INC.	1908	52,401	In addition to printing, it also focus on digital image processing and electronic products that apply printing technology, liquid crystal color filters used in color liquid crystals, and photomasks used as raw plates for semiconductor manufacturing. Revenue 1,466.93,500 yen	3-3, Suido Itchome, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo	Myozen Inari Okami	When it was founded, it was separated from Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine. It occupies a revered presence not only within central offices but also throughout factories across the country.
5	The Mainichi Newspapers Co., Ltd	1872	1,900	Publishing, printing and sales of newspapers, magazines, books, etc. (Morning edition) About 195.0 million copies 4th place in Japan. Revenue undisclosed	1-1-1 Hitotsubashi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo	Mainichi-jinja Shrine	It enshrines an amulet that was sent to the Mainichi Shimbun's Airplane Nippon-go, which succeeded in global circumnavigating.
5	Mazda Motor Corporation	1920	48,750	In the fiscal year of 2021, it reported worldwide sales reaching a volume of 1.25 million vehicles. Revenue 3,120,349 million yen	3-1 Shinchi, Fuchu-cho, Aki-gun, Hiroshima	Inari-jinja Shrine	The Inari-jinja Shrine was erected as a tribute to commemorate employees who perished in a devastating fire.

Classification	Name of the corporation	Year of establishment	Employee number	Company profile	Location	In-house Shrines	Overview
6	KIKKOMAN CORPORATION	1917	7,645	It secured its position as an industry leader in the realm of seasonings and processed foods, with its core product being soy sauce. Revenue 468,119 million yen	250 Noda, Noda City, Chiba Prefecture	Kotohira-jinja Shrine	It was established following its separation from Kompira-gu Shrine located in Kagawa Prefecture. The shrine also serves to solicit prosperity for Noda Town—the location of the company's headquarters.
6	Hazama Corporation	1889	2245	Corporation activating within the construction and civil engineering sector, merged into Ando-ma. Revenue 197,899 million yen	2-5 Toranomon Nichome, Minato-ku, Tokyo	Magumi Guardian Shrine	Reputedly inaugurated during the Taisho era, it venerates both Magumi-jinja and Magumi Inari-jinja as protective deities.
6	TOKYU RAILWAYS Co., Ltd	1922	24,655	Operates across multiple sectors including railway services, real estate management, transportation solutions as well as hotel and resort operations complemented by lifestyle service offerings. Revenue 935.927.00 million yen	5-6 Nanpei-cho, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo	Toyoko-jinja Shrine	It was founded by separating from Ise Jingu Shrine. A memorial service is held to comfort the spirit of the person of merit and the martyr.
6	OMRON Corporation	1948	28,254	Major electrical equipment manufacturer. Achieving unrivalled market dominance for products including automatic ticket gates and home-use electronic blood pressure monitors. Revenue 655,529 million yen	801 Minamifudo-cho, Shiokoji-dori Horikawa Higashi-iru, Shimogyo Ward, Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture	Inari-jinja Shrine	Inari-jinja Shrine is located behind the head office, the exact year of its establishment is unknown.
6	Wakodo Co., Ltd.	1953	Undisclosed	Grocery and baby goods brand. It is a long-established store of domestic baby food and the largest in the industry. Revenue undisclosed	4-1 Ebisu Minami Nichome, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo	Wako Inari-jinja Shrine	Originally it was on the roof of the head office building, but now it has been moved to the site next to the head office.

Table drafted by the author based on AOKI.ed (2014:118-119)

2 Cases

2.1 Automotive parts manufacturer business luck/founder's worship type

This parent corporation originated in 1946 with the manufacture of timepiece components and speedometer parts before segueing into liquid crystal display production and information technology. One particular enterprise, post its demarcation from the original information technology department in 1985, presently boasts a workforce numbering 500.

An in-house shrine within this company's domain contains an emblem from Hakkaizanzon-jinja Shrine. The deities venerated here encompass Kuni no Sazuchi no Mikoto, Amatsuhikohononinigi no Mikoto, Konohanasakuyahime no Mikoto, Oyamazumi no Mikoto, and Yamato Takeru no Mikoto.

The rationale for instituting such shrines within the company grounds can be traced back to the founder of the parent company who received a significant insignia from a highly esteemed shrine. Historically located within office precincts, this shrine saw employees partaking in "in-house shrine visits" on the day designated for salary disbursements at year-end²³. These rituals involved no one other than the office personnel and were voluntary; compulsion towards worship did not feature.

Presently, this shrine resides within the confines of the president's office. It remains under his direct oversight; reportedly, he commences each morning by performing rites there.

To date, there has been no recorded dissent concerning these practices of veneration within company space.

The Human Resources Manager interviewed exhibits a pre-existing familiarity with the notion of a company shrine, having been encompassed by such influences potentially before his professional engagement commenced. Consequently, it is mysterious why the author become interested in in-house shrines as such establishments were a natural scene in the workplace.

2.2 Food Processing company business luck/founder's worship type

The enterprise was established in 1975 and it currently sustains a workforce not exceeding 300 individuals. In close proximity to the corporation resides the venerable Inari-jinja Shrine, whose foundations date back at least 1,300 years. Despite the precise year of its construction remaining elusive, this shrine notably harbours an auxiliary spirit derived from a distinct sanctum. his subsidiary shrine venerates two primary deities: Takeminakata, attributed with a role in Japan's foundational history, and Yasakatomenokami, his consort.

Pertaining to the identity of deities revered—whether Tajimamori no Mikoto, the deity of confections; Inari, or Okuninushi no Mikoto, associated with commerce—the response elucidates that Inari is symbolically linked with foxes, perceived as creatures adept at deception within Japanese folklore and deemed Inari's messengers. It's probably a joke made by the president.

What appears to be whimsical commentary by the company president underscores his Nagano Prefecture origins—a region mythologically significant for national genesis—insinuating reverence for a specific deity aligned with his ancestral roots.

The president assumes as self-evident the incorporation of an in-house shrine within the company structure, prompting him to question the author's inquiry regarding such a practice.

The corporation's operational ethos augments religious observance by permitting employees unrestricted access to venerate independently at the company's shrine.

²³ The last business day of the 12th month.

2.3 Corrugated board manufacturing company business luck/founder's worship type

This is a corrugated board manufacturing entity instituted in 1938 that engages in production of paper packaging materials. As part of its supply chain network are purveyors of paperboard, adhesives, and entities offering die cutting services. A diverse array of clients ranging from prominent confectionery producers to agricultural distributors and electronics manufacturing sectors constitute its clientele. In Myoko City within Niigata Prefecture circumscribed by 1967 stands another corporation-affiliated Inari-jinja Shrine. Adjacent amenities under corporate ownership complement this sanctuary. Traditionally entwined with this establishment is veneration for long-serving employees posthumously recognized within sacred grounds.

This corporation's leadership along with top-tier representatives from principal partner firms convene biannually to commemorate traditional festivals during spring and fall seasons exclusively. Practitioners possessing credentials related to Shinto rites assemble en masse; these ceremonials are orchestrated according to established ritualistic frameworks. Subsequent festivities involve neighbourhood participants converging on premises eventually transitioning into Naorai—a convivial assembly inviting executives spanning industries from locales within a 300km ambit for extensive intersectoral networking. Documented records suggest nearly forty distinct companies participating meaningfully through events including communal overnight lodging arrangements and subsequent day-time leisure pursuits such as fishing or golf contests.

Oversight responsibilities for shrine management were relegated to the General Affairs Department's superior officer. This setting also served as an innovative platform wherein employees directly engaged in developmental processes partook in new product presentations reinforcing internal communication channels alongside external stakeholder relationships.

V. Impact of In-house Shrines

This chapter considers the impact of in-house shrines within corporate settings. While the three examined enterprises did not articulate any specific influences of their in-house shrines, it is conceivable that religious sensitivities may preclude such discussions. Consequently, this paper will approach the subject from a religio-cultural anthropological perspective.

1. A symbol of the company

According to Aoki (2017:119), as emblems of corporate identity, in-house shrines serve as critical embodiments and repositories of a company's founding principles, visions, and values. For example, during the inaugural General Assembly of a bank founded in 1890 in Yamagata Prefecture, oratory praises not only lauded the institution's establishment but also projected regional development aspirations and its pivotal role within the community. Such declarations of corporate mission and prospective trajectories often find themselves inscribed in anniversary commemorative notes and are revisited during such celebrations.

As part of reinforcing corporate culture, founder's calligraphy—executed in brushwork—is usually displayed adjacent to the shrine (kamidana), thus fostering continuous visibility and reminder to employees. This practice appears instrumental in communal assimilation of core corporate policies and ideologies, particularly prominent amongst organizations characterizing "Employee/achievement type" as per Aoki's

previous categorization (Aoki 2017). In particular, this trend is likely to be strong when praising the previous classification 5 "Employee/achievement type."

2. The shrine as a reflective surface reinforces self-examination (Aoki2017:119).

Let's go back to the mirror topic mentioned in II 2. This earlier analogy of a mirror—envisioning deity within it to promote self-worship— fosters a belief that humans, conceived as divine progeny, can achieve societal harmony and personal well-being by eschewing selfish ambitions.

Herein lies an implication that worship serves as a solemn introspection into whether one's actions are righteous or detrimental towards others' interests— an approach entailing significant conscience-checking decisions reminiscent of glancing at oneself in a mirror.

3. Commitment to objectives and gratitude for realized successes informs Shinto prayer practices (Aoki 2017:120).

Contrary to simply acquiescing to divine will, traditional Shinto orations involve articulating pledges to deities for personal commitments while seeking their protective benevolence. Ono and Kaneko (2004:66) emphasized that such devotions are often framed requesting business prosperity through altruistic contributions towards worldly welfare and societal enrichment.

Subsequently, these invocations are complemented by expressions of gratitude for divine safeguarding.

4. Intertwining corporal identity with employee cohesion and community outreach through shrines is highlighted by Aoki (2017:120).

Consider Case 3's business model: establishment of both an internal shrine on corporate premises and an external larger shrine situated approximately 50 kilometres away radiates its ethos outwardly. By hosting bi-annual grand festivals with local villagers participating along with interactions with visiting executives from afar and leveraging local commerce connections—these engagements implicate unique interlayering as distinct from Christian traditions.

So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" John 2:13-16

V. Summary

Individuals with experience residing in Japan may frequently encounter phenomena they perceive as unusual. The country exhibits a syncretism of its indigenous Shinto traditions alongside the globally diffuse Buddhism; post-war, Christian practices have additionally gained traction. To the Japanese, such a melding of religious customs is not deemed peculiar. Analogously, one might express astonishment at the deep affinity many employees harbour towards their corporations, perceiving them akin to a familial abode. The nexus between Japanese workers and their employers mirrors more closely the interconnectedness found within local, kin-based communities than that characterized by contractual agreements.

This dynamic can be partially attributed to the historical evolution of entities such as 'Nippon Co., Ltd.' which originated directly from agrarian sideline occupations—for instance, from sericulture to yarn spinning, weaving, and subsequently to textile processing—with supporting financial institutions having emerged predominantly within the familiar confines of a 3 kilometres radius from the farmers' locations, thereby entailing a longstanding operation by local inhabitants who served as both investors and directors (Watahiki 2017b, 2019b).

Although Table 1 delineates this paradigm through specific instances, it's noteworthy that such traditions persist even within multinational corporations. For the Japanese populace, Shinto represents the foundational operating system (OS) essential for managing each societal construct, atop which markets and legislations function. Emblematic of this symbiosis is the presence of sanctuaries within corporate establishments.

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DEVELOPMENTS IN BORDER AND MIGRATION MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN REGION

POLGÁR István *

Abstract. *The European Union's South Eastern border region, and bordering countries are representing a so-called epicenter of the migration process. Basically, it is one of the main migration routes, also called the Western Balkan track, used by thousands of migrants and refugees on their way to the EU member states.*

Managing migration in the EU and in the neighboring countries is a social and economic investment that enables societies to strengthen their cohesion and resilience and become more prosperous. It can be considered also a societal process in which the responsibility does not rest with a specific group, but with several.

The increased and more complex mixed migration movements from recent years have placed additional pressure on the already strained capacities of the authorities dealing with migration management. This extra pressure led to difficulties in terms of effectively manage the borders and address arising border security issues.

The study aims to realize an inventory of the measures, proposals and activities which had an impact on transnational institution building which focuses on migration and border management.

Keywords: *border, migration, management, civil society, Western Balkans*

Introduction and context

The significant variation and diversity in migration and displacement in South East Europe make grasping the new trends difficult. Migration issues and demographic issues are two of the key elements of modern society, bringing benefits and conflicts both to the receiving places and to the place of origin and raising issues of security, social measurements and multiculturalism in our globalized world (Polgár 2016).

The overwhelming majority of people migrate internationally for reasons related to work, family and study, involving migration processes that largely occur without fundamentally challenging either migrants or the countries they enter. This migration is mostly safe, orderly and regular. In contrast, other people leave their homes and countries for a range of compelling and sometimes tragic reasons, such as conflict, persecution and disaster (World Migration Report 2024).

Regular migration pathways boost public confidence in migration systems, while also protecting migrants. International migration and mobility occurring within regional and global economic, social, political and security environments increasingly reflect migration policy settings. Where, how, when and with whom people migrate often

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depends on the options available to them, with many of these options being determined or shaped by national level policies as well as regional integration (World Migration Report 2024).

One of the great challenges of the South East European space is related to migration, border management and the need for integration of minority communities, including immigrants. Evaluations conducted have shown that there is a great need for expertise and policies regarding the integration of minorities in both their countries of origin and in the new host countries which are dealing with migration (Polgár 2016).

In recent years, the discourse on migration has become increasingly negative. It is more and more obvious that the complex, transnational migration challenge cannot be handled or managed anymore only by the state. Especially because the states are no longer the most important actors in the migration process (Newland 2010). As a consequence, there is an increasing tendency to advocate for closing the borders and trying to stop migration. If we are trying to figure out how to manage migration, or how to elaborate comprehensive and sustainable migration policies, the issue of integration of migrants it must to be considered. Usually, the question of integration, or the method of integration is a very sensitive subject. When it is already difficult to discuss whether and how the migratory trajectory should happen, it is even harder to discuss how and whether immigrants should be helped to integrate (Polgár 2023).

There is a different perception between countries with regard to the definitions of the terms: migrant, national minority and ethnic minority. In some cases, states from the South East European region are treating migrants and minorities like own citizens, in other cases like non-citizens - their migration or minority background is viewed as irrelevant in statistical terms (Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services 2011). There are also differences in the way these people are viewed as having an ethnic minority background irrespective of how long they have been in the certain country (Polgár-Popescu 2016).

The new socio-political realities, associated with a process of consolidation and strengthening democracy, have led to the redrawing of the social structures in the Balkan space. Competition and mutual distrust marked the first two decades after the fall of communism, but slowly, these societies matured and the injuries of the past began to heal and the idea of liberal democracy started to be more and more implemented (Polgár 2023).

The region of the Western Balkans, despite the fact that it is a major sub-region of Europe and is surrounded by EU member states, has remained out of EU borders. The European integration process has moved, but very slowly. The EU membership has been vital goal for the six Western Balkan states. The EU's condition-setting approach made a huge impact on the design of the democratization reforms in the region. The EU also through its wider political, economic and security presence in the region provided incentive for the development of the democratization-oriented strategies (Brie–Jusufi–Polgar 2021). The process of European integration seemed to be the solution in the context of widespread aspirations of the populations of these states towards democratization.

Managing migration in the EU and in the neighboring countries is a social and economic investment that enables societies to strengthen their cohesion and resilience and become more prosperous. It can be considered also a societal process in which the responsibility does not rest with a specific group, but with several. Border management and migration management are cross-compatible and can be achieved simultaneously through committing political support, resources, and respect for existing obligations and

commitments. Border management should not be seen in isolation, but as part of strengthening the national human rights system for the benefit of migrants, border communities, state institutions and the whole of society.

Methodology

The increased and more complex mixed migration movements from recent years have placed additional pressure on the already strained capacities of the authorities dealing with migration management. This extra pressure led to difficulties in terms of effectively manage the borders and address arising border security issues. While authorities from the South East European region, with international and EU support, have developed national identity management systems, some aspects thereof remain outdated, and do not provide the adequate legal and operational frameworks to effectively respond to the new, evolving challenges.

The lack of fully digitalized procedures and updated IT systems has hampered the efficiency and effectiveness of border management processes, thus causing delays in the effective identification of migrants and referral to appropriate rights-based services, in line with international and EU migrant protection standards, amongst others. Consequently, such insufficient capacities for effective ID management have left migrants in vulnerable situations without effective access to documentation and registration.

The emergence of civil society has been a major feature in many areas of everyday life. While a large amount of work has been developed on its significance for the legitimacy of a democratic regime, the question of its relationship with the European values and integration processes on one hand and conservative, or illiberal political systems on the other has been answered in limited ways. However, in a context in which the common understanding of European values is regularly undermined, civil society and its organizations are facing challenges such as the reduction of their advocacy role. At least as it relates to recent major developments that have affected the quality of democracies of the South East European states. While there has been a rapid and extensive spread of civil society institutions and practices in the region, the ‘internalisation’ of the ‘norm’ of civil society has emerged as a benchmark in assessing the capacities of civil society to bring or contribute to a change. Thus, the role of civil society in both integration processes and anti-migration tendencies can be further enlightened with the application of the benchmark of internalisation of the norm of civil society. However, the nature, culture, and dynamics of civil society, provide the government actors with numerous points of co-optation or capture of civil society. Civil society has its own organisational culture and dynamics and has a tendency to accommodate or remain receptive to new demands of the government. In this direction, the illiberal tendencies tend to contest the diffusion of civil society norms, resulting in a halting of internalisation of the norms related to civil society.

The cases of South East European countries, as we argue in this paper, are a case in point. From this discussion emerges the two hypotheses of our study: (H1): “Civil society organizations play an important role in border and migrant management”; (H2): “Civil society organizations working on the ground play a role in monitoring the implementation and impact of new policies and initiatives”. Contributing to the empirical literature on the relationship between civil society and border management and migration management this article looks to tackle and answer the following research questions: Is cooperation improving between state authority’s and civil society organizations in the

field of border and migration management? Has civil society acted as a counterbalance in the question of border and migration management against political scepticism?

We use a qualitative approach to choose data that comprised major developments as regards border and migration management and its obstacles in South East European countries, mainly after 2015. After collecting the data, we identified events that could be considered important factors in the developments surrounding the role of an integrated border and the management of civil society in migration management.

The cases of South East European countries are important in two main aspects. First, countries from the specified region have approximately 30 years of history of the emergence of civil society. Thus, assessing the relationship between civil society and border management or migration management tendencies can shed an important light on the role that civil society has. The second, most of the initiatives proposed by the civil society organisations in this region, in terms of migration management, are facing political scepticism or refusal.

South East European countries democratised during the post-Cold War era in the early 1990s with civil society mobilisation playing a crucial role in the downfall of their former communist regimes. Nevertheless, only in some countries from the region civil society was able to act as an effective counter to democratic backsliding and bring an end to it.

Migration trends in the Western Balkan subregion.

The European Union's South Eastern border region, and bordering countries are representing a so-called epicenter of the migration process. Basically, it is one of the main migration routes, also called the Western Balkan track, used by thousands of migrants and refugees on their way to the EU member states.

Based on the statistical data, the Western Balkan route can be considered **one of the main migratory ways towards the EU**. After the record number of arrivals in the European Union in 2015, the number of irregular migrants choosing this route fell steadily for a few years. However, since 2019 it has started to pick up again (European Council 2024).

Many irregular migrants reaching the EU via the Western Balkans route, move from the EU member state in which they first arrived to another EU country. This results in high numbers of detections of irregular migrants and asylum applications in Europe.

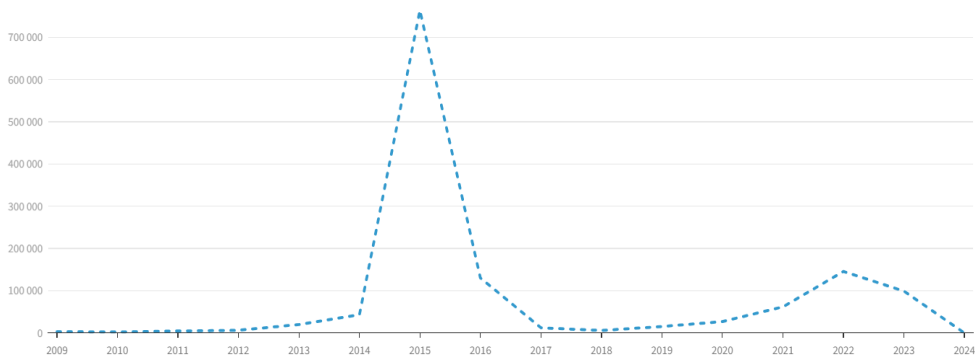


Figure 1. Illegal border crossings on the Western Balkans route

Source: European Council (2024), *Illegal border crossings on the Western Balkans route*

This region can be characterized also through its specific features, context and trends in the fields of economy, demography, socio-politic environment and migration. Although there are several differences between the countries of the region, the so-called sub regional migration dynamics connect these countries and create similar challenges and opportunities. The majority of the common issues and challenges are identified as a side effect of migration. These issues are concerning demographic shifts, skills and labor gaps, human trafficking and stranded migrants, inadequate access to health care, environmental and climate change impacts, irregular migration, and return and reintegration, as well as unaccompanied and separated children (International Organization for Migration 2020).

The history of South Eastern Europe, with a population consisting of different ethnic groups that overlap national borders makes it challenging to define and measure migration. Nowadays the region is experiencing an unprecedented influx of migrants, making the so-called Western Balkan route the most frequented migratory track.



Figure 2. Main migration travel routes in South Eastern Europe. *Source:* Global Data Institute (2022): IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM): Migration Trends in The Western Balkans

Often with the assistance of smugglers, the Western Balkan subregion is a major transit area and characterized by mixed migration flows, particularly for migrants trying to reach Western and Northern Europe. The western Balkan route, referring to irregular arrivals in the European Union through the western Balkans, including via countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, among others in the subregion, has seen an increase in arrivals since 2018. Serbia continues to be the main transit hub, with the highest number of registrations in 2022. Upon arrival in the western Balkans, the routes most use are through North Macedonia, Serbia and then direct attempts to cross into the European Union across the Hungarian border. The three largest nationalities arriving in the Balkans include Afghans, Syrians and Pakistanis. The transit period of migrants

passing through the western Balkans was shorter in 2022, with many spending fewer days in each country compared to previous years (IOM 2023).

As it is presented in figure 2, as migrants reach the Western Balkan countries, the most active routes are through North Macedonia, Serbia and then directly attempting to cross into the European Union through the Hungarian border. Alternatively, once in Serbia, many others cross the border into eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina and then attempt the crossing into Croatia from the north and north-western part of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Migrants take varying routes into the Western Balkans. The routes they travel depend on their nationalities, networks and financial means. In 2023, visa restrictions have played a role in reducing the numbers of specific nationalities in the Western Balkans.

These mixed migration movements are those in which different categories of people are travelling together, generally in an irregular manner, using the same routes and means of transport, but for different reasons. People travelling as part of mixed movements have varying needs and profiles and may include asylum seekers, refugees, trafficked persons, unaccompanied/separated children, and migrants in an irregular situation (IOM 2019).

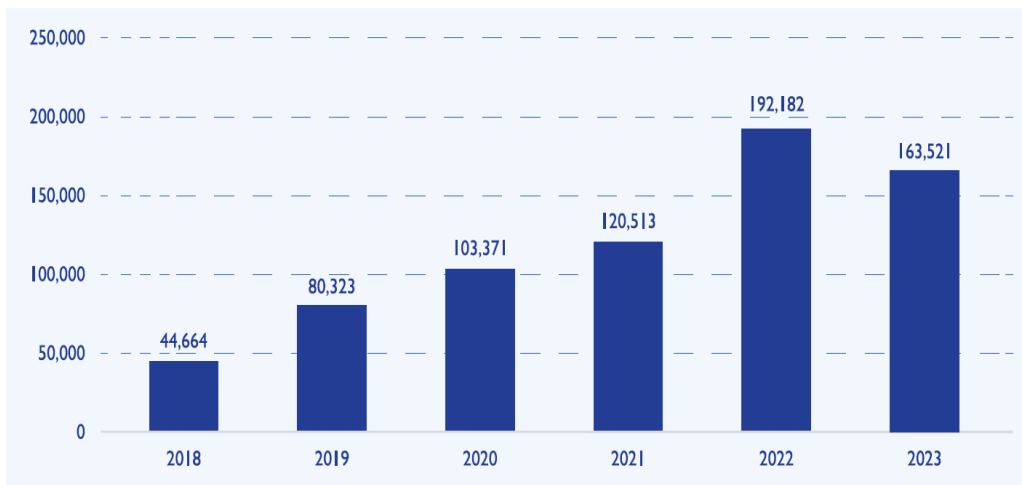


Figure 3. Annual arrivals of migrants in the countries and territories of the Western Balkans, 2018 – 2023. *Source: Global Data Institute (2023): IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM): Migration Trends in The Western Balkans*

The route north through the Western Balkans is not a new one, and has long been a pathway for those coming from the Middle East or Eastern Africa. According to the official statistical data, since 2018, authorities in the Western Balkans have consistently been registering more migrant arrivals.

As it is presented above in figure 2, in 2022, authorities registered 192,266 migrants in the Western Balkan countries. This is a 59.5 per cent increase in arrivals compared to 2021 and a 348 per cent increase when compared to 2018. High registrations on arrival continued in 2023, with 163,521 registrations. These numbers refer to any registration of a migrant in one of the six countries or territories of the Western Balkans (Global Data Institute 2023).

Registrations on arrival's refer to the registration of a migrant by official authorities. These registrations include migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as migrants enter the countries or territories of the Western Balkans in mixed migratory flows. A migrant may be registered by multiple authorities or institutions in the Western Balkans, meaning that double counting is possible as one migrant can be registered in multiple countries or territories.

Once migrants are inside the Western Balkans, the majority travel through Serbia having entered either directly from Bulgaria or from North Macedonia and in rare occasions from Kosovo. As shown in Figure 4 below, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina record the highest numbers of registrations on arrival, as these are the two exit points into Western Europe. The prevalence of the Bulgarian route has also resulted in changes to the routes within the Western Balkans.

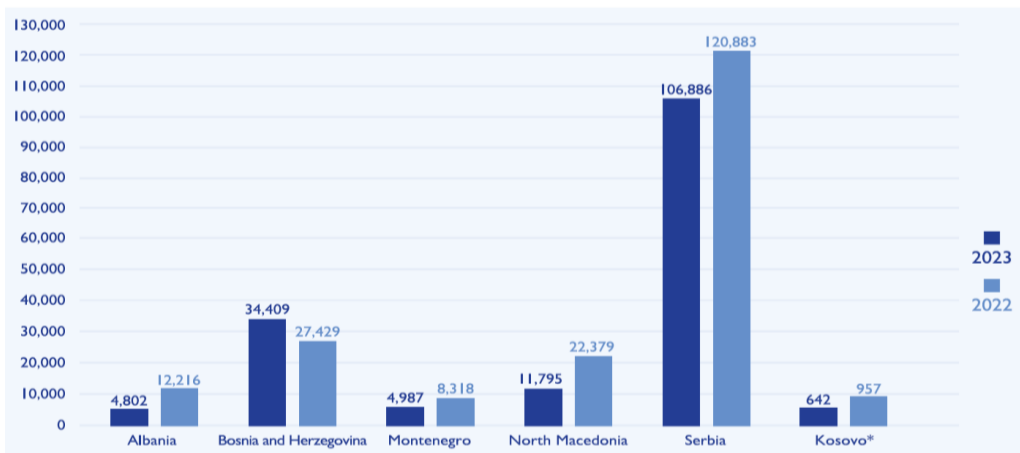


Figure 4. Yearly arrival figures broken down per country or territory

Source: Global Data Institute (2023): IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM): Migration Trends in The Western Balkans 2023

Based on the data from figure 4, a small decrease is visible in the number of migrants registered in all countries or territories in the Western Balkans in 2023 compared to 2022. This reduction is possible because in the past years fewer migrants choose the Western Balkan route, probably because of the 2023 visa restrictions. Serbia remains the main transit hub in the region, accounting for almost two-thirds of all registrations (Global Data Institute 2023).

Situation becomes even more complicated, if we check the composition of the migratory flows. According to the figure below, mixed migratory flows present an increasing tendency, what makes the process of migrant management more complex.

As the figure shows, the still increasing number of arrivals and high turnover rate are representing a significantly bigger challenge to the civil society organizations involved in humanitarian actions. Authorities from the region face the same issue, their institutions are overwhelmed by the scale of the problem. In this case, neither the legal framework which stipulates the process of handling migrants and asylum seekers is enough. Over the logistic problems, there are missing mechanisms which should ensure the implementations of the laws and procedures (Malkki 1995). Even if these mechanisms or methodologies would exist, several times these are inadequate. All these

remarks are underlining the need of cooperation and common work between state and civil society organizations (Polgár 2023).

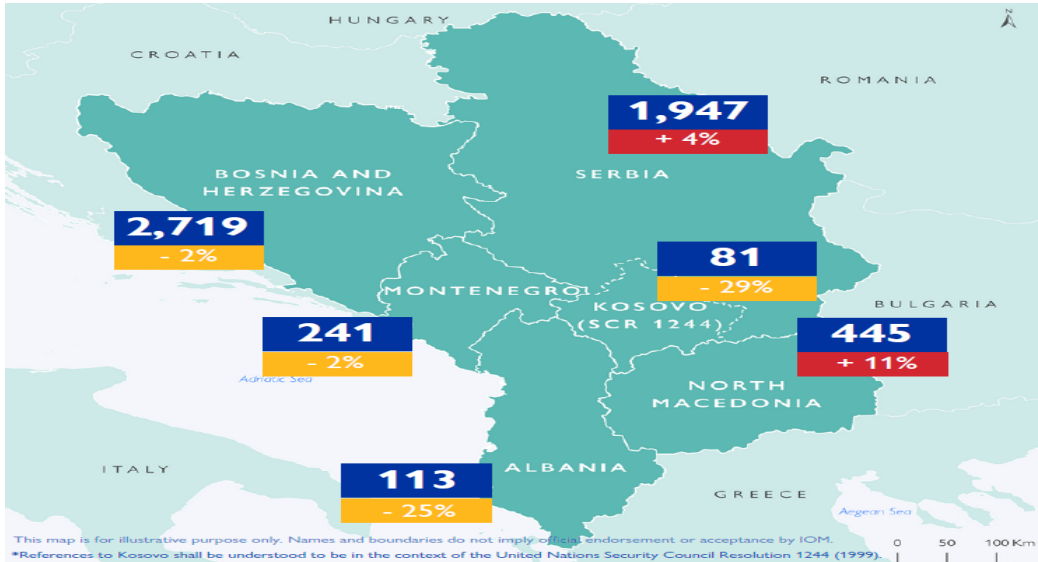


Figure 5. Mixed migratory flows in the Western Balkans (September 2024)

Source: Global Data Institute (2024): IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM): Western Balkans Mixed Migratory Flows report (September 2024)

But, over the high number of migrants, logistic and social issues, the role of civil society in migration management also represents a sensitive policy concern to. Most of the actions delivered by civil society organizations are taking place in border areas. These borderlands, or border areas represent key sovereign objectives over which states claim full control (Fauser-Di Stefano-Fattorelli 2023). Because of the specific reasons mentioned above, actions delivered by the civil society organizations face specific challenges. These specific challenges can represent a serious obstacle especially if the beneficiaries (migrants) have needs that are unrecognized or even forbidden by the state authorities (Polgár 2023).

In order to present some specific examples, first we choose the case of undocumented migrants. For these the most important thing is to stay and not to be deported. Another example is the case of migrants in transit, specific to the South East European territories. For them the most important is to continue their journey towards the destination country. All these situations are difficult to be handled and solved by the civil society organizations, since most of these needs are considered illegal by public authorities. Interfering and delivering actions to solve these issues can generate legal problems, both for the migrants and the civil society organization (Cuttitta-Pécoud-Phillips 2023). Since, the given context and status quo is at least awkward, but the need for support in migration management is high, compromises are necessary. This compromise means that civil society organizations are limiting their actions to humanitarian support for migrants, covering their basic needs. This way legal and political issues are avoided. On the other hand, we must emphasize that through these humanitarian actions, civil society organizations directly contribute to the fulfilment of governments agenda (Cuttitta 2018).

All the data and information's presented above underlines the complex and multi-faceted roles of civil society as a distinct category of actors working in contemporary migration and border regimes. It is also visible that there still are unclear situations, lack of unity and motivation in the actions of civil society organizations. Also, there is no clear antagonism between civil society and public authorities, as both can perform the same tasks. But it is more than obvious that public authorities need to focus and consider the role of civil society in migration management (Polgár 2023).

Border management in the Western Balkan subregion

Countries in the South-eastern Europe region grapple with the dual challenge of securing borders and addressing irregular migration while enabling free movement. In terms of modern migration towards the EU member states, the Western Balkans, are located in a strategic region. This geographical position inevitably implies shared challenges and opportunities for cooperation with its European neighbors.

Not only in the case of the EU, even in the case of the Western Balkan region, we can admit that a high number of institutions and actors are involved in activities and tasks related to border management. While they clearly have a different focus and thus different objectives depending on their responsibilities and powers, they all work towards a common strategic goal. Traditionally, the strategic goals at the state level in relation to border management lie in the protection of the borders against threats to national security, the national economy and public health, but also in the prevention of cross-border criminal activities and unlawful entry into or exit from the state (European Commission 2007).

Since the beginning of 2018, the WB region has re-emerged as a transit route for migrants towards the EU. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2022 was “a paradigm shifting year” for migration in the Western Balkans: the number of irregularly travelling migrants rose, however the length of their stay in each transit country before attempting to enter the EU became shorter (IOM 2023).

The increasingly complex mixed migration dynamics at the borders of the WB countries, have revealed important institutional needs and gaps in the field of border management and border security in the region. Although significant efforts by the authorities have improved immigration and border management structures and capacities in place, migrant presence in the WB region continues to pose a significant challenge in management of mixed migration flows, including registration, identity and nationality determination, and effective referral to procedure and services (IOM 2024).

Most of the discussion regarding border management has been led in the context of securing the EU's external borders. Migration management represents an important issue in terms of EU neighborhood, development and international co-operation strategies, with corresponding funding that has been allocated to this end. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) increasingly supports third countries through technical co-operation agreements. The trend is set to continue during the 2021–2027 budget cycle, including through the pre-accession funds earmarked for the Western Balkans.

In this framework the European Commission's September 2020 proposal for a New Pact on Migration and Asylum has for the last three years provided the reference framework for these conversations and political negotiations (OSCE 2023).

In December 2022, the European Commission presented the EU Action Plan on the Western Balkans, spelling out its priorities for managing migration and enhancing

border management in the region. 20 operational measures are set out in 5 key thematic areas:

1. strengthening border management,
2. swift asylum procedures and supporting reception capacity,
3. fighting migrant smuggling,
4. enhancing readmission cooperation and returns,
5. achieving visa policy alignment (European Commission 2022a)

The European Commission has foreseen the increased deployment and joint operations involving Frontex on the territory of the non-EU members on the basis of so-called status agreements. Such agreements have been concluded with Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Bosnia and Herzegovina is seeking to conclude one in the coming period (Swaton 2023). Since late 2022, limitations on the deployment of Frontex corps to the border areas with EU Member States have been lifted and operations can now extend to the whole territory of the partner country's (European Commission 2022b).

The Screening Regulation proposed as part of the New Pact foresees the establishment of independent monitoring mechanisms at the external borders of the EU, with the view to ensure that the proposed screening procedures for third country nationals seeking to enter the EU are in line with human rights obligations (European Parliament 2020).

Conclusions

Managing migration in the European Union and at its South Eastern borders is a social and economic investment that enables European societies to strengthen their cohesion and resilience and become more prosperous. It can be considered also a societal process in which the responsibility does not rest with a specific group, but with several: migrants, host communities, public authorities and institutions, social and economic partners, civil society organizations, churches, religious and other philosophical communities, and the private sector.

Efficient cooperation among relevant actors from the field of border and migration management is probably more important than in any other policy area. Depending on the political ideology sometimes public authorities speak different languages when dealing with migration. This phenomenon is even more visible in the case of the dialog between state authorities and civil society organizations. Variations in the use of terms are also common depending on the person's field of work.

It is critical for borders to be open for trade and the movement of persons. They have also to be open for regional cooperation, a cornerstone of future integration and membership in the EU. They have to be open both within the region and also between the region and the EU. The facilitation of regular cross-border flows enhances the economic development of the whole region. Free trade and the movement of persons are key elements of the stabilization and association agreements.

In order to achieve and establish an efficient and well-functioning border management system and to have open but secure borders, national and international coordination and cooperation among all the relevant authorities and agencies involved in border security and trade facilitation represents a basic ingredient.

Civil society and its organizations play an important role in migration management in all the target countries. These carry out valuable work assisting or even substituting for governments by providing guidance and support in integration processes. However, their involvement in the design of migration management policies and integration activities does not always correspond to the importance of their role.

Basically, the results of this study confirm H1, which assumes that civil society organizations play an important role in border, but especially in the process of migration management. Therefore, South East European states should step up their efforts to achieve more structured cooperation between civil society organizations and government authorities so as to create synergies and make better use of the knowledge and resources available on both sides. The expertise of the civil sector should be much more used and capitalized when designing integration strategies and measures in order to increase their efficiency.

The second hypothesis which assumes that civil society organizations working on the ground play a role in monitoring the implementation and impact of new policies and initiatives is also confirmed. Civil society and social partners operate at different levels. Some organizations are active at EU level, others at national level, and others at regional or local level. Activities at different levels complement each other (EESC, 2020). Civil society working on the ground are monitoring the implementation and impact of new policies and initiatives. However, in addition to impacting political decisions, civil society also exists to actually deliver services to the people it represents (Polgar 2023).

Generally speaking, countries facing migration should apply a multi-stakeholder approach involving local and regional authorities, employers, trade unions and civil society organizations when developing border management and migration management policies to ensure that they correspond to actual needs and circumstances and benefit migrants and refugees in an optimal way.

The overall picture that emerges from the article presents that societies from the South East European region are in fact becoming more confrontational, more political, more polarized, and less open to compromise: these characteristics apply both to the government and to civil society itself (Polgar 2023). Civil society acts as a counterbalance in this so-called social turbulence, with a special focus on the question of migration management and integration, drawing new policy recommendations (Freedom House 2022).

The civil sector remains at the forefront in the defense and promotion of values across the South East European states, but its constant and tireless endorsement of values is not without challenges in the present volatile and interdependent national, European and global contexts.

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V. BOOK REVIEWS

Eduard SIMION ⇔ *Between War and Peace*

Ioana Lucia BORDEIANU ⇔ *Guide for Development of International Cooperation the Case of Bihor County*

Anca OLTEAN ⇔ *Managing the European Funds and International Projects. Introductory guiding lines*

BETWEEN WAR AND PEACE

*Eduard SIMION**

Book review of Mircea MALIȚA, *Între război și pace (Between war and peace)*. Editura RAO: ISBN 978-606-006-809-9, București, 2022.

Keywords: *diplomacy, conflicts, actors, international system.*

Volume *Between war and peace*, presented through a trilogy format, is a true plea for diplomacy and the importance of international relations. The author, demonstrating a vast culture and extremely varied knowledge skills, navigates a demonstrative tour of the two historically global antagonistic states: war and peace. The way in which he prepares this creative journey is an ingenious, logical and flowing one with recourse to philosophical, historical, psychological, anthropological, political and of course geopolitical elements.

At the same time, the first chapter is impressive and surprising, where the author identifies the primary springs of human warlike nature, including biological nature. This creates the preamble to the understanding of the conflictual nature at the individual and group level and subsequently of the need for conflict/war that tends to expand uncontrollably in the absence of factors, elements or institutions with a regulating, balancing role (an aspect explained in detail in the following chapters). The author's training as a diplomat survives throughout his creation, relevant being the following conclusion – I quote – *The problem does not lie in combating aggression but in discovering alternative ways of manifestation...* – and further – *The first tool of war (not the mace, not the stone, but the bow and arrow that struck at a distance) has ruined the balance between the potential for destruction, instinct and inhibition mechanism.*

Competition, explained in an evolutionary context from a Darwinian perspective and later historical and sociological, is seen as a determining factor in the nature of conflict/war. However, the author, using a *mirror technique*, constantly creates an alternative to inhibit violence, relevant being the taking of a quote from Montagu – *It is culture that allows people to face the challenges of the environment, not a genetically determined instinct; it is the genetic ability to learn intelligence.*

This technique of alternating presentation is extremely suggestive, finally revealing the diplomatic, pacifist nature of the author, a follower of solutions based on norms, dialogue and negotiation. Incursions into ancient history have the gift of intelligently demonstrating the arguments presented.

The European continent is used as a case study in arguing the nature of great wars. Resorting to an incursion into the main currents of thought of classical theories,



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analyzing wars from the perspective of the balance of power, the theory of cycles, the economic factor, the continuous dialectic of change from a cyclical perspective.

He describes the period after the fall of communism as a preamble to a new global order. The US and its military actions during the war on terror are presented from a realistic perspective, a special note being the disagreement with Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations placed in a religious key (Islam versus Christianity), all demonstrated with solid scientific arguments.

The rather rhetorical question at the end of subchapter 1 remains relevant - *In a world that has entered the new millennium with dozens of unextinguished fires and others breaking out everywhere, how local will these conflicts remain and how safe will it be to avoid contagion?*

The author presents the risks generated by nuclear weapons at a global level and declares himself a supporter of their non-proliferation as the only way to reduce nuclear accidents. It does so in a reasoned logic using well-documented bibliographic sources.

In the same logic of the spiral of the arms race and the dangers represented by it, the space arms race, the so-called *Star Wars* under its official name *Strategic Defense Initiative*, is inscribed. Based on the case study of the strategic competition between the main global actors with power in the field, the US and Russia the author demonstrates the danger represented by this new military vector, being presented as one perhaps even more dangerous than the nuclear one.

The mythological incursion may seem surprising, but it comes to preface some of the most relevant theories of war inspired by the most important strategists of history: Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, but also famous thinkers who have left their mark in their interpretation, such as: Kautyilia with his description of the *ideal kingdom*, Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes with his *security* dilemma, Raymond Aron head of the French school of political studies and international relations, Thierry de Montbrial, Edward Lutwak.

The chapter called *Irene the hardworking. The Olympians of civilization* once again uses the modality of mythological analogy to introduce a new analytical perspective of peace (identified as science - irentology) as the supreme goal. Kanti's analysis of peace opens the way to an analysis of European projects destined for the same desire, a distinct subchapter being dedicated to Erasmus, the spokesman of the Renaissance. Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu as promoters of pacifist values are not forgotten either.

The institutional approach and its value in peacekeeping are addressed in the Hague subchapter, the author managing a very convincing historical chronological enumeration of the Peace Conferences held in this area, making intense use of the substrates that generated the important events. Mediation and arbitration are identified as the basic means in international diplomacy, the Hague phenomenon being an indisputable catalyst for the subsequent emergence of the League of Nations and later of the UN, with President Wilson in the foreground. The two international institutions that emerged as a result of the suffering generated by the world wars are x-rayed in their effort to establish peace and capture the element of failure identified as the impossibility of a solid disarmament solution. In Roosevelt we identify the primary intentions of globalization through his effort to continue Wilson's initiative, that of creating a global institution for a lasting peace, for the first time there is talk of collective security

In the chapter *Irene's Sisters. The long road of the humanization of war*, is used as a preamble, again Greek mythology to highlight the multidimensional character of peace and the importance of the jurisprudence of international law and the concept of the right to war (*jus in bellum*).

The role of church and religion is analyzed from a state perspective, demonstrating the beneficial role, a possible conclusion being that in the modern era war tends to proliferate in the absence of a church with real powers in the state.

Peace is x-rayed in a liberalist key, with regimes playing a central role. The lesson of Europe is widely reproduced in the post-war era through the peace solutions identified.

The author captures the defining currents defined by fragmentarism as opposed to regionalism and globalism, Europe being a promoter of the latter, with the advantages deriving from it. The main schools of thought are approached from an antagonistic perspective through the prism of Wallerstein, the systemic ones (liberalism and conservatism), or the antisystemic ones (socialism in all its forms). The North-South competition, so much discussed today, is associated with the southern protest manifested by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, emigration or economic boycott, all of which inevitably lead to *several futures*.

The second volume, *Games on the World Stage*, analyzes the nature of conflicts from a complex perspective and proposes innovative solutions for achieving the security balance.

The theory of international relations is mapped by describing the main schools of thought, the concepts held and the currents of thought. War is presented in different forms of manifestation, including new concepts such as intention and credibility along with deterrence, crisis management, the law of war, just/self-defense war, etc.

The UN is seen as the main means of deterring war, the author identifying important legal concepts such as: investigation, good offices, conciliation, arbitration, as well as the role of the International Court of Justice.

The second part is dedicated to the negotiations and their importance. The meticulous nature of this exhaustive presentation as well as the detailed elements approached betray the author's predilection for this type of diplomatic activity. The second part is a veritable manual for those involved in negotiation activities.

The third part of the volume is dedicated to diplomacy, approached in its complexity from a historical perspective and beyond.

The last volume of this trilogy is called *Big and Small* with direct reference to the relations between the states of the world from a geopolitical perspective. The author points out, from a demonstrated historical perspective, the importance of small actors and the way they relate to the great powers, including the policy of smart alliances.

Diplomacy is resumed from the perspective of modern history, from a globalist perspective, by presenting the great figures of diplomacy in European history.

Finally, the author reviews the multiple systemic crisis in which he finds ourselves, the causes that generated it as well as possible approaches to solving them.

The author's final interview with Prof. Dan Dungaciuc focused on the Black Sea issue is inspired and relevant in the current context.

As a concluding remark, I would point out the author's remarkable intellectual effort through his vast research activity, impressive by the diversity and eloquence of the fields studied. His pragmatic approach and perfect logic in arguing his position are impressive.

The volume is shaping up to be a real - must read - for both those who work in the field of international relations, security, diplomacy and, not the last, the general public.

In conclusion, I would like to note the extremely relevant nature of *War and Peace* in terms of the timing of its publication. What better time can be imagined for a

plea for peace than the one we are experiencing today. Global security imbalances are unprecedented since the Second World War. Global tectonic plates are rearranging themselves in a format that we cannot yet anticipate in full format. We can only live with the hope that the global leadership will have the wisdom to keep alive the path of dialogue and negotiation, so much valued by the author of the book.

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GUIDE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION THE CASE OF BIHOR COUNTY

*Ioana Lucia BORDEIANU*¹

Review of: Mircea Brie, Mirela Mărcuț, Istvan Polgar *Guide for development of international cooperation. The case of Bihor County*, Debrecen University Press, Editura Universității din Oradea, 2023, 281p, ISBN 978-063-490-527-1, ISBN 978-606-10-2261-8

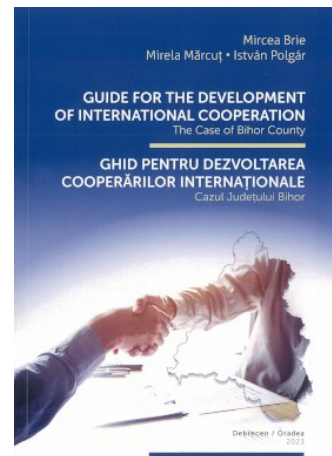
International cooperation is a pillar of the utmost importance for a sustainable development mainly focusing on an integrated strategic vision.

This important new book on development of international cooperation is an original and well-written paper and it explores the legal and institutional framework of regional, interregional, cross-border development and international partnerships, providing templates and standard document examples for cooperation agreements, while showing situations of good practices.

The paper makes a compelling case upon the stage of international cooperation at the level of Bihor county, drawing an analyses mainly upon the cross-border cooperation in recent years of development, in order to propose solutions that allow improving mostly the efficiency of European political capacity in managing development into a very sensitive area such as international cooperation, in a state of utter changes firstly because of globalization, but more because of the different international angles of overviewing the perspective of transformations.

The book titled *Guide for the Development of International Cooperation* is a comprehensive resource that explores the legislative, institutional, and practical frameworks necessary for fostering and maintaining international cooperation, particularly from the perspective of Bihor County, Romania. It presents a structured and thorough examination of Romania's integration into the European Union (EU) and how this transformation has reshaped its approach to international partnerships and cooperation.

The book offers a valuable and detailed guide for both practitioners and policymakers involved in international cooperation, especially in regions like Bihor County, which are on the frontier of cross-border and transnational cooperation. Its mix of theoretical analysis and practical examples makes it a useful tool for understanding



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how international partnerships are built, maintained, and evaluated in the context of EU regulations and programs.

The book is structured on five important chapters and the key theme is the development of international cooperation in the case of Bihor County according to its geographical positioning in the border area. The five chapters are: I. Context, Concepts, Legislative, and Institutional Framework, II. Analysis of the stage of International Cooperation at the level of Bihor County, III. Identification, detailed presentation and analysis of examples on the initiation, maintenance and development of international cooperation, IV. Drawing up and grounding of practical recommendations regarding the development of international cooperation and V. Conclusions.

The first chapter of the book provides a historical and political context of Romania's accession to the EU, discussing the shifts in policy and governance required to support international cooperation. The geographic and strategic importance of Bihor County, situated in a cross-border area, is emphasized, serving as a case study of how border regions are uniquely positioned to foster international and cross-border cooperation.

Key concepts such as international cooperation, bilateral cooperation, multilateral cooperation, and cross-border cooperation are analyzed in depth. These frameworks are further contextualized through the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) program for 2021-2027, focusing on mechanisms like the *Interreg Program* (European Commission, 2020) and *Danube Transnational Program* (European Commission, 2021).

This section highlights the complexity of multilevel cooperation—from regional to European Union initiatives. The explanation of these concepts is particularly useful for understanding the different types of international collaboration Romania engages in, from direct cooperation with neighboring countries to broader multilateral initiatives within the EU.

The first chapter lays a strong foundation by situating Romania's entry into the EU as a pivotal moment for its international cooperation strategies. The book illustrates how Romania's EU membership brought significant changes to its policies and approaches in promoting partnerships, particularly in border regions like Bihor County.

While taking into account European Policies and Programs, the chapter provides a detailed look at the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) framework for 2021-2027 (European Parliament, 2021), highlighting specific mechanisms such as the *Interreg VI-A Cross-Border Cooperation Program* between Romania and Hungary, as well as the *Danube Transnational Program*. These programs emphasize cooperation in regional development, infrastructure, and cultural exchanges, stressing how Romania benefits from participation in such initiatives. "From a public policy viewpoint, what INTERREG is doing is basically lowering these entry costs, making the first engagement less costly." (Basboga, 2020: 545)

The book further explores the institutional and legislative frameworks that govern regional and international cooperation in Romania. This section is particularly valuable for understanding the structural aspects of cooperation, discussing the national and regional institutions involved in managing EU structural funds and developing cross-border projects. It outlines how Bihor County navigates these frameworks to foster local development and international engagement.

A forward-looking analysis of potential changes in international cooperation is presented in this part of the book. It discusses the future of European integration,

Romania's potential accession to the Schengen Area, and the implications of the *New Multiannual Financial Framework (2021-2027)* (European Parliament, 2021) on Romania's international relations.

The strengths of this part of research we consider being the comprehensive analysis because the book offers a thorough examination of the multifaceted nature of international cooperation, particularly within the EU framework. Its detailed approach to breaking down various cooperation mechanisms is particularly helpful for those new to the subject or seeking an in-depth understanding of cross-border partnerships but also by focusing on a specific region, such as Bihor County, the book provides a grounded example of how theoretical frameworks and policies are applied in practice.

Legislative and institutional insight is being considered a value because the guide effectively outlines the intricate relationships between national, regional, and European institutions, offering a clear understanding of how different layers of governance interact in international cooperation.

“The main explanatory factor for the sharp rise in cross-border regions that has been witnessed over the 1990s, when the EU launched its large-scale programmed to promote CBC (Interreg)” (Perkman, 2003:167).

The second chapter dives into a detailed analysis of how Bihor County and its public institutions engage in international cooperation. The typologies of international collaboration, including town twinning, cultural, educational, and socio-economic development projects, showcase the broad scope of cooperative efforts.

The emphasis on *cross-border projects*, particularly with Hungary, underscores the importance of geographic proximity in these partnerships. The analysis is backed by examples of specific projects, agreements, and partnerships, offering a pragmatic view of how international cooperation operates at the local level.

In the *Guide for the Development of International Cooperation*, chapter II provides an in-depth analysis of the stage of international cooperation at the level of Bihor County, Romania, with a focus on both territorial administrative units and public institutions under the authority of the Bihor County Council.

Furthermore, while taking into account the typology of international cooperation we can see that this chapter classifies various forms of international cooperation in which territorial administrative units in Bihor County participate. It highlights different types of cooperative efforts that reflect the region's priorities, geographic positioning, and cultural dynamics, such as international cooperation through the twinning of localities, specific projects of international cooperation and cross-border cooperation, international cooperation agreements, projects for cultural and educational development and projects for socio - economic development.

While mentioning the factors influencing international cooperation the section focuses on identifying the key drivers that affect the success and sustainability of international cooperation at the local level. Factors such as geographic proximity, shared historical and cultural ties, availability of financial resources (including EU funding), and the presence of effective institutional frameworks all play crucial roles in fostering successful international partnerships.

One of the important parts to discuss about is the analysis of international cooperation at the level of public institutions subordinated to the Bihor County Council.

The public institutions under the Bihor County Council engage in a variety of international cooperation mechanisms. These institutions focus on fostering regional and

cross-border development through strategic partnerships, international projects, and formal agreements.

Similar to territorial administrative units, public institutions are influenced by various factors in their international cooperation efforts. Access to EU funding, political support, administrative capacity, and the ability to forge and maintain strong partnerships are essential to the success of international cooperation initiatives. Additionally, the legal and institutional framework provided by both national and European legislation plays a key role in enabling these cooperative efforts.

By analyzing the mechanisms, challenges, and opportunities in international cooperation, the book provides a practical roadmap for local authorities and institutions to navigate and optimize their international relations in a European and cross-border context.

The third chapter identifies and analyzes examples of successful international cooperation at local, regional, national, and international levels. The book showcases practical case studies that highlight the successes and challenges of these projects, which serve as models for future initiatives.

In chapter III of the *Guide for the Development of International Cooperation*, the focus shifts to the identification, presentation, and analysis of real-world examples that showcase effective strategies for initiating, maintaining, and developing international cooperation. The examples are divided into three distinct levels: county, national, and international and is offering a comprehensive understanding of how cooperation is achieved and sustained at various scales.

In the section of county level (local and regional) there are presented case studies from Bihor County and surrounding regions that exemplify successful local and regional international cooperation efforts. These examples demonstrate how local authorities, municipalities, and regional organizations have managed to establish and maintain productive international relationships, particularly through cross-border and twinning projects.

Romania's participation in EU-funded programs, such as the **Interreg** and **Danube Transnational Programs**, has been instrumental in fostering cooperation across borders. These programs help create a framework for collaborative projects aimed at regional development, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability.

Mainly being part of different regional projects, "the countries of Eastern Europe and particularly the new Member States of EU, experienced a remarkable economic boom" (Gorzela, Bachtler, Smętkowski, 2010: 30), which is also the case of Romania.

The book provided examples of large-scale national projects that focus on research, innovation, and economic development, supported by partnerships with EU institutions or neighboring countries. These initiatives illustrate the importance of leveraging national capabilities to build strong international partnerships.

"Romania's overall strategic objective based on international commitments in development cooperation is to contribute to the eradication of extreme poverty by promoting security and prosperity through effective partnerships with the beneficiary countries, in order to support their own development goals" (Guvenul României, 2022).

The fourth chapter of the book provides well-reasoned and practical recommendations aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of international cooperation efforts. Recommendations for the planning, initiation, maintenance, and evaluation of partnerships are particularly valuable for public authorities and institutions looking to expand their international relations.

There is a strong focus on responsibility and sustainability in using resources for international cooperation, encouraging thoughtful and long-term planning. Draft models and standard document forms provided in this section add a practical dimension, allowing institutions to apply the book's insights directly into their processes.

In the fourth part of the *Guide for the Development of International Cooperation*, the focus is on providing practical recommendations to improve the effectiveness of international cooperation. These guidelines are grounded in the analysis of current experiences, best practices, and the needs of local and regional actors in fostering productive partnerships.

This chapter emphasizes the importance of building on existing expertise and knowledge in international cooperation. It suggests leveraging prior experiences to refine processes, improve communication, and enhance collaborative efforts. Recommendations include both knowledge sharing, training and development but also institutional memory referring to documenting and preserving institutional knowledge.

To strengthen international cooperation, the guide suggests refining the planning and analysis stages of partnership development. Practical steps include needs assessment, strategic planning and stakeholder involvement.

Based on examples of good practices, the guide offers suggestions to improve the implementation of international cooperation activities, focusing on efficiency, coordination, and sustainability. Recommendations include clear objectives and timelines, collaborative frameworks, and sustainable partnerships.

Monitoring and evaluation are crucial for ensuring the success and sustainability of international partnerships. The guide recommends performance indicators, regular reporting and feedback mechanisms.

The part of the book with recommendations regarding responsibility in the use of resources and tools for international relations provides guidelines for fostering responsible attitudes in the use of resources and tools that support international cooperation. It highlights the need for accountability and transparency in managing these resources.

The sixth part of this chapter with draft models and standard document forms for international cooperation concludes by offering practical tools and templates that can be used during different stages of international cooperation, ensuring a standardized approach across municipalities and institutions.

The fifth chapter emphasizes the conclusions on following the objectives and the research questions and it defines the five conclusions accordingly.

The review finds the topic announced in the title of the book, to be important and the results of the research to be meaningful and interesting. We believe that the subject does have enough arguments for the professionals and the specific readers. The paper reflects a lot of scientific research against common arguments in the topic area and provides enough comparison documentation and acknowledgment of sources, but is also showing the difference between real facts and great expectations. The author tries to gain attention of the subject and end up in revealing the problems in the three dimensions mentioned above looking thoroughly at the cooperation level.

The book of Mircea Brie, Mirela Mărcuț and Istvan Polgar is mainly focusing on cooperation having the input of a postmodern concept and its role in influencing the international relations. The work is not only increasing the importance of existing body of professionals in the field of studies, but also support the innovation and institutional development.

Conclusions

The *Guide for the Development of International Cooperation* is a valuable resource for policymakers, regional authorities, and scholars interested in the mechanics of cross-border cooperation, especially in the context of Romania's EU integration. Its detailed analysis of legislative and institutional frameworks, along with its exploration of European programs like Interreg and the Danube Transnational Program, provides a robust foundation for understanding international partnerships. However, its highly technical language and focus on Romania may limit its utility for a broader audience outside of academic or professional fields.

The book offers a detailed breakdown of how Bihor County engages in international cooperation, both at the level of local administrative units and through public institutions under the County Council. It outlines the various types of cooperation that are vital for the region's socio-economic and cultural development, including town twinning, cross-border projects, and international agreements. Additionally, it explores the factors that influence the success of these collaborations, offering valuable insights into the complexities of regional and international partnerships.

The Guide provides a valuable collection of examples at the local, national, and international levels, showcasing effective practices for fostering international partnerships. By analyzing these cases, the book highlights the importance of cooperation in areas such as cross-border projects, cultural exchange, bilateral agreements, and participation in European and global initiatives.

These examples serve as practical models for other regions or countries looking to develop and enhance their international cooperation strategies. Through these case studies, the guide offers insights into the best practices for initiating, maintaining, and expanding international cooperation across various levels of governance and institutional involvement.

The paper is a practical toolkit for enhancing the effectiveness of international cooperation at the local, regional, and national levels. By providing concrete recommendations for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating cooperation initiatives, the guide helps local authorities and institutions optimize their efforts in fostering international partnerships. The use of draft models and standard documents further simplifies the administrative processes, allowing for smoother initiation, maintenance, and development of international relations.

The researchers show originality of thought and creativity on topics of interest as international cooperation, outlining the project's main objectives clearly and thoroughly underlining the changings that took place after Romania joined EU. The research provides an adequate documentation and acknowledgment of sources while focusing on the main ones.

The authors treat topic of international cooperation in a sound manner and provides adequate conceptualization, they also demonstrate a logical and sufficient methodology and presents a logical and sufficient rationale regarding cooperation. The paper reflects knowledge of relevant literature in the topic area and provides adequate documentation and acknowledgment of sources.

The researchers are introducing a subject of interest to a large segment of readership, the audience targeted by the author is evident and the work is truly useful for the readers, having an important contribution in the field of international cooperation domains of interest showing the difficulties in developing the problematic and implementing it in different situations. The book is relevant to education and community

engagement and has a pedagogical value in teaching and civic engagement, contributing to future research and hybrid topics.

The authors present the material concisely, and in the same time they are clearly and logically communicating important information about the topic in times of many transformations and they are doing this a bilingual context which is a highly plus value for the readers. The book contains appropriate examples for illustration of concepts and is underlining the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding the tool showing possibilities for further product improvement. The research is also readable and written so as to maintain reader's interest in the area of international relations.

The research results presented in the book are a valuable source of knowledge and information not only for cooperation subjected area but for general. There is an important issue to be observed here: the cooperation between experts in the field of international relations.

We congratulate the authors for the hard work and commitment while doing the research. The book is valuable and is focusing on problematics of main interest, dealing with the concepts, legislative and institutional framework, stage of international cooperation, standard document forms, best practices and practical recommendations for monitoring and evaluating international cooperation. We recommend the book to be used by professional and in general, being not only well structured but also using a critical approach in the area of international cooperation with the possibility of enlarging the sphere of interest for many European models.

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MANAGING THE EUROPEAN FUNDS AND INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS. INTRODUCTIVE GUIDING LINES

Anca OLTEAN*

Review of: Istvan Polgar, *Guide for European Funds and International Project Management*, Debrecen/Oradea, 2023, ISBN 978-963-490-528-8, ISBN 978-606-10-2264-9.

The book of Istvan Polgar, *Guide for European Funds and International Project Management* is an exhaustive analysis of the discipline of project management seen from a practical perspective, as a tool to help researchers and managers to develop new projects having a theoretical background, viable objectives and aims and excellent project writing skills.

In the introduction part, Polgar Istvan defines a project as a “a modern activity that implies a <<new vision>> concerning its needs and reuse of its results” (Polgar, 2023:9).

The discipline „project management”, explains the author, appeared in the XXth century (Polgar, 2023:10) and implies interdisciplinarity, involving knowledge from disciplines such as „sustainable development”, „law”, „economy”, „finance”, „accountancy”, „marketing”, „marketing”, „psychology”, „information technologies”, etc. (Polgar, 2023:10).

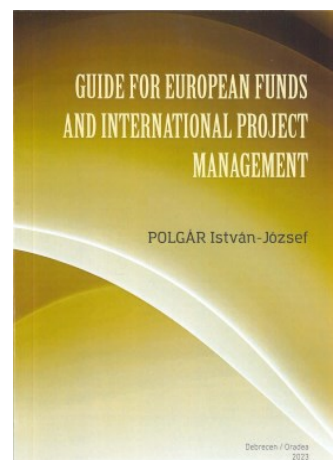
Starting with the European integration phenomenon, the project management had become a tool for promoting the policies of European integration process.

In the chapter I, *The Project. Concept and features*, the author intends to present „the fundamental concepts, specific to the field of project management” (Polgar, 2023:15).

The societies are in a changing process, and at the origins of a change there is always a project, considers the author (Polgar, 2023:15). The author mentions that projects can be carried on in different directions of research: „industry”, „health”, „economy”, „politics”, „IT”, „education”, „law”, etc.

Globalization, considers the author, determines the project managers to have skills or knowledge other than theoretical (Polgar, 2023:16), the author expressing his intention that his book to help project managers to develop more projects.

The author provides details regarding the development of projects. Thus they can be implemented at all organization levels, they can involve a person or a team while the



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organization must develop an organisational culture to favor the implementation of different projects.

The author explains the etymology of the word „project” that was inherited from Latin language „projectum”, deriving from the verb „projecere” that means „to put something forward” (Polgar, 2023:18). The author provides several definitions of the project as defined by different experts.

The projects are defined, in the opinion of the Istvan Polgar, by „uniqueness of results”, „the finite duration”, „the size of the project”, „the degree of innovation and the complexity of the projects”.

The author Polgar Istvan offers a classification of the projects according to their extent, field of activity and size. According to their extent, the author identifies several types of projects: international, national, regional, local, organizational (Polgar, 2023:26). According to their field of expertise, the author identifies several types of projects: industrial, social, commercial, cultural, environmental protection projects, scientific/ research, educational, management. According to their size, the author identifies small projects, medium projects, large projects. A second classification of projects provided by the author Istvan Polgar is according to their theoretical division. We have bread and butter type projects focusing on improvement of goods and services; pearl type projects intending to make a revolution in the commercial field, Clam projects targeting towards technological advances, White Elephant Projects – searching for visibility, but lacking sustainability.

The author makes distinction between projects and programs, a program including several projects.

The author Istvan Polgar emphasizes the importance of the function of planning the projects.

The author identifies several types of programs that can be defined as such: „international programs, national programs, regional or local programs, programs at the organizational level as internal programs of administrative institutions, commercial companies, non-governmental organizations” or by financing source (programs with external funding and programs with internal funding).

The financing instrument of the programs, explains the author, is European Union.

The objective of the programs are financed by structural instruments: The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) that helps less developed regions in the field of economy, infrastructure, local development, education, health, The European Social Fund that helps the social policy of the European Union, The Cohesion Fund that helps the member states to implement projects in the field of infrastructure development. The European Agricultural Fund for rural development is designed to support common agricultural policy of EU. The European Fund for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs which implements the policy of community in the field of fishery.

Chapter II is entitled *Project management*. The author intends to explain terms such as „structural organization and strategic management” of the projects. The author defines project management in the view of authors such as Harold Kernzer, Dennis Lock, Larry Richman or Romanian authors (Simona Iovănuț, Constantin Opran, Mocanu M., și Schuster C). He defines project management „as the process by which the project manager plans and controls the stages and activities of a project, and the resources that a public or private entity makes available to the project” (Polgar, 2023:53).

The author tries to define the principles of project management that are simple principles involving tens or hundreds of activities that depend on each other. Thus he mentions the principle of commitment that implies that between the financier and the institution who wants to carry on the project that must be a fair commitment before the activity begins. The second principle is the principle of predefined success which mentions that the rules for a project of success must be defined from the very beginning. The third principle established by the author is the principle of efficiency/ internal consistency/ interdependence that, „refers to the interdependence relationships that exists between the scope of the project, the allocated time, the established budget and the projected quality of the final product” (Polgar, 2023: 56). The fourth principle is the principle of strategy that mentions that all projects must have at their base a strategy. The fifth principle mentioned by the author is the principle of control and monitoring policies. The sixth principle is the principle of communication channel which mentions that between financier and project manager must be an information channel that to communicate the vital informations. The last principle is the principle of stimulating work environment. For implementing a project, it takes a competitive team of people and a stimulating working environment.

The second part of the second chapter is named *The structural Organization of Project Management* which is based on 3 coordinates: “project coordination”, “matrix organization of project management” and the “independent organizational structure of project management” (Polgar, 2023: 58).

Chapter III is entitled *Planning of the project* and it tries to explain the topic „by formulating objectives, results, benchmarks, with its technical requirements and limits” (Polgar, 2023: 82). The author defines the planning process as a „management function necessary to facilitate understanding of complex issues involving interacting factors, and the project manager is the person who is the key to successful planning” (Polgar, 2023: 82).

Planning is important in order to reduce uncertainty, to improve efficiency to understand the goals, to improve efficiency to understand the goals, to improve monitorization and evaluation of projects (Polgar, 2023: 82). The documentation of the project is also important thus the project manager can foresee the costs and supervise the performance of each step of the project (Polgar, 2023: 83).

Polgar Istvan defines the structure of activities that determines „how long it will take and what the costs will be” (Polgar, 2023:84). It must be realistic so that managers can have realistic perspectives and estimations.

Polgar Istvan underlines that to attract funds by means of the project is a decisive activity carried in the stage of conception of the project (Polgar, 2023: 88-89).

Chapter IV has the name *The process of regional development* which makes a debate and an analysis of the issue of „regional development” from the theoretical and practical perspective, intending to see the evolution in time of growth, processes depending of the evolution of societies and economies (Polgar, 2023:103). The author analyses different theories of regional development. These theories of regional development are placed in the context of theories of economic development and the issue (process) of European integration.

The word „region” was a subject of interests during the past for sociologists, economists, historians, geographers and the origins of the discipline of regional development resides in the German school (Friedrich Ratzel, Karl Ruprecht) and in the French school represented by Paul Vidal.

Regional development theory evolved in three stages: the time of classical theory, the time of neoclassical theory and the period of recent regional theories (Polgar, 2023:105).

In his work, Polgar Istvan tries to define concepts such as: „region”, „regionalism”, „regional development policies”, „decentralization”, „sustainable development”, „strategic and territorial management”, „planning instruments”, „financial instruments” (Polgar, 2023:106).

For defining types of regions is not sufficient the geographical dimension of this term because the regions are „human constructs” implying also a social approach. The author shorts to its readers how the regions differenciate according to their size, to the national belonging, in terms of internal structuring of the relations between the comprising entities of a region (Polgar, 2023: 117).

Chapter V has the title *Implementation of the project*. The implementation of the project is the most important step of the project, following the project development phase, a passage from document phase of the project to implementation. The author defines the process of implementation „Therefore, implementation is that stage in the project lifecycle wherein the works are actually carried on, the objectives are met and the results are achieved” (Polgar, 2023:124). The author fouses on this chapter on project documentation phase. The debut stage states Istvan Polgar is marked by kick-off meetings when partners meet for the first time and decide together upon important ellements of the project. The author Polgar Istvan considers that „the purpose of the documentation is to check how and what was proposed to be achieved in the project application form was carried out or not” (Polgar, 2023:127).

The author mentions an important component of project management that is the financing contract that “represents the legal framework of the project” (Polgar, 2023:129). Contractual relations must be managed by the coordinator of the project. Last but not least, chapter VI with the title *Valorization of the project results* that focuses on dissemination of results and sustainable accomplished goals.

The present book worths reading for describing the main steps of conceiving and organising responsible a project and its tasks focusing on theoretical knowledge of the management of projects discipline. The language of work is specific to the approached domain, being used terms of speciality and a proper vocabulary. The introductive notions in the management of projects are comprised in an organised and sinthetised structure.

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